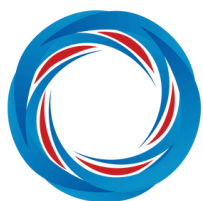


CONFERENCE SUMMARY



CAUCE 2025

Brock
University



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KNOWLEDGE KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES: THE POWER OF LIFELONG LEARNING

As providers of continuing education, our mission is to encourage and facilitate lifelong learning for everyone, regardless of their age, profession, or background. We believe that knowledge is a never-ending pursuit and that it should not be limited by any traditional boundaries.

This conference recognized the importance of lifelong learning as a driving force that goes beyond standard limitations. Learning is both a personal endeavor and a shared commitment to the constant search for knowledge. Continuing Education units play a crucial role in enabling individuals to overcome any obstacles that might prevent them from accessing education and professional development opportunities.

At this conference we discovered how we, as CAUCE members and visiting delegates, can be partners with learners on their lifelong learning journey. We celebrated the enduring strength of continuous learning through storytelling, exemplars, technology and opportunities, demonstrating that the pursuit of knowledge leads to personal growth, adaptability, and positive change in society, both here in Canada and beyond.



"Great sessions, even better conversations, and food that makes networking feel like a five-star experience. If learning, laughing, and snacking were Olympic sports—I'd be a gold medalists by now!"

-CAUCE 2025 delegate

CAUCE 2025: ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO

In May 2025, continuing education practitioners from across Canada gathered both virtually and in-person in St. Catharines, Ontario to participate in the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education's (CAUCE) 71st Annual Conference and second hybrid conference. Embracing this year's theme Knowledge Knows No Boundaries: The Power of Lifelong Learning, conference delegates also celebrated and recognized leaders in the field of continuing education.

Hosted by Brock University, Professional and Continuing Studies, our 71st annual conference took place on the Brock University campus in St. Catharines, Ontario. St. Catharines and Brock University are in the heart of the Niagara Peninsula, home of natural beauty, amazing history, and world-famous attractions. Our delegates explored and enjoyed wine country, arts, sports, recreational trails, festivals and more, only an hour from Toronto and just across the border from Buffalo.

Held annually since 1954, this year's CAUCE conference continued to meet its mandate of enlarging the scope and quality of educational opportunities for adults at the university level. The conference also upheld CAUCE's goal of maintaining professionalism in program development, management, and administration, and stimulating and disseminating creative ways to provide programs that continue to meet the continuous changes in the workplace.



"I have loved connecting with new people in continuing education!"

-CAUCE 2025 delegate



The CAUCE 2025 conference provided valuable learning opportunities and fostered connections among CE professionals.

- **Networking and Interaction:** Attendees appreciated the opportunity to network, share ideas, and connect with colleagues from across Canada. The conference schedule allowed for breaks to increase opportunities to network.
- **Relevant Information:** Delegates found the sessions relevant and applicable to their work, providing insights and innovations in continuing education.
- **Diversity and Attractive Features:** The diversity of attendees and session topics stood out. Some attendees wished for more time to attend talks and interact with vendors.
- **In-Person Networking:** In-person networking was highly regarded, along with the sessions, food, and conference swag.
- **Timely Topics:** Sessions covered timely topics related to continuing education (CE) in Canada and the world.



"I am taking home many gems of knowledge from the concurrent sessions.

It was a great conference!"

-CAUCE 2025 delegate

STATEMENT FROM CAUCE PRESIDENT ROD LASTRA

Conferences are always a time to reconnect, with each other, with new ideas, and with the evolving mission of what we do and why we do it. The 71st Annual CAUCE Conference, held May 28–30, 2025, at Brock University, was no exception. Under the enduring banner of lifelong learning and the transformational power of knowledge creation, transformation, and mobility, we gathered to reflect on the present and future of University Continuing Education in Canada. Since 1954, a pivotal time marking the early expansion era of higher education, this annual tradition has served as a mirror to the evolution of our sector. Over the decades, we've witnessed countless examples of **innovative ideas that have pushed the boundaries of knowledge and learning**, redefining not only how we approach education and training, but also for whom. This year's conference was a powerful continuation of that legacy, reminding us how far we've come and challenging us to keep moving forward.

This year's conference pushed me (and I believe many of us) to think critically about how access, creation, and delivery must be continually reimagined. Not just to accommodate the learners of today, but to prepare for the needs of tomorrow. The conversations didn't shy away from complexity. While credential innovation was certainly explored, we returned, more importantly, to the heart of our work: **learning innovation**. Who are we serving? How are we designing learning ecosystems that are adaptable, inclusive, and driven by curiosity rather than conformity? These were the questions that surfaced again and again, both within formal sessions and in the vibrant, informal exchanges that unfolded in hallways, parkways, and evening gatherings.

This year's conference also reminded me of the unique and irreplaceable value of gathering in person. These moments of human-to-human interaction offer more than formal presentations, they create space for genuine exchange, critical reflection, and the kind of intellectual friction that nudges us beyond our comfort zones and closer to the frontier of new thinking. Insights and ideas were shared and created well beyond the session walls, with the seeds of new opportunities planted throughout the event. Many of these seeds | - conversations started, collaborations imagined, and possibilities envisioned -| will grow long after the final session, perhaps bearing fruit in the months and years to come.



At the core of our shared reflection was a call to see education and training not as transactional, but as a long-lasting engagement, an investment in building not only human capital BUT **human potential**. Credentials may recognize learning, but it is the design of meaningful learning experiences that defines their value. Learning innovation must be our true north. To truly transform our systems, we must focus on creating environments that nurture growth across lifespans, that are human-centered and equity-driven, and that inspire curiosity as much as they confer qualifications.

This conference was not only a celebration of our achievements in practice, research, and innovation, it was also a powerful reminder of the strength of our community. My deepest thanks go to the entire team at Brock University's Professional and Continuing Studies unit (staff and students) for their hospitality and incredible effort. Special thanks as well to the CAUCE Secretariat and the conference planning committee for their dedication and sweat equity. You made this gathering not only possible but exceptional.

Let us carry this momentum forward. Let us continue building a more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable ecosystem for lifelong learning. Let us stay bold, generous, and united, and as always, **let's roll up our sleeves with elbows up**.

STATEMENT FROM CONFERENCE HOST NATHAN CHENEY

It was a tremendous honor to welcome Continuing Education professionals from across the country to Brock University for the 71st annual CAUCE conference. I am deeply grateful to my team, the Conference Planning Committee, and the CAUCE Executive and Secretariat for their energy, dedication, and support in bringing this event to life. Together, we truly embodied this year's theme: "Knowledge Knows No Boundaries: The Power of Lifelong Learning."

This conference was also a wonderful opportunity to showcase the natural beauty and cultural richness of the Niagara Region. From our pre-conference visit to picturesque Niagara-on-the-Lake, to our workshop on Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Being, in which participants explored their understanding of Indigenous histories and pathways to reconciliation.

The spirit of the region continued to shine through our conference outing, where delegates experienced the wonder of Niagara Falls, thanks to our generous partners at Niagara Parks and HOCO Ltd. Throughout the conference, we encouraged delegates to explore Brock's campus, proudly situated within a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. These surroundings offered the perfect setting for reflection, creativity, and inspiration. I hope you left with ideas on how to celebrate the unique beauty and identity of your own institutions at future conferences and gatherings.

This conference also arrives at a pivotal moment for post-secondary education in Canada. We're surrounded by narratives of crisis—housing, funding, enrolment—but CAUCE 2025 was about solutions. It was about remembering why we chose education in the first place. From Robert Dunlop's powerful keynote on happiness to our plenary panel's call for creativity and bold collaboration with new partners, to our concurrent sessions providing insight throughout the conference on various topics of critical importance to our industry, we were reminded of the creativity of our colleagues and the purpose of education. This concluded with Dr. Jessica Riddell's moving closing message that CE providers are different, sharing a new definition for "Hope" and challenging us to lead the charge. Each session was a call to action, a reminder that CE professionals are not only positioned to adapt to change, but that we are meant to lead it.

As we return to our institutions, I encourage all of us to continue the momentum we've built here. Let's carry forward the optimism, innovation, and purpose that defined these past few days. Let's remember Dr. Riddell's insight: systems are designed to return to the norm. Despite the resilience of our systems, we, as CE providers, have never been the norm. We are the boundary breakers. Let's embrace being different. Because when done with intention, being different is transformative for our learners, our communities, our business partners and our universities.

On behalf of Brock University, Professional and Continuing Studies, and the Niagara Region it has been an honor to share this conference experience with you. Thank you, for allowing us to share a little bit of Brock with each of you.

Surgite! Let us push on.



"I have met a lot of nice and open people to share best practices with! Thanks to the organization team, and hope to see all of you next year in Halifax!"

-CAUCE 2025 delegate

STATEMENT FROM CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE CHAIR JO-ANNE CLARKE

As Chair of the Conference Planning Committee, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and recognition to the members of the CAUCE Program Planning Committee, as well as the incredible team from our host institution, Brock University. Your hard work and warm hospitality welcomed over 200 lifelong learning enthusiasts to gather and truly practice what we live and breathe in our work.

The annual CAUCE conference is a unique and cherished time each year when continuing education professionals from across Canada come together to share ideas, network, reflect, laugh, lament—and, of course, learn.

This year's conference, "Knowledge Knows No Boundaries: The Power of Lifelong Learning," began with a moving welcome song by Nicole Joy-Fraser, an Indigenous artist and teaching assistant in Brock's Department of Dramatic Arts. Her performance sent chills right down to my toes and set a powerful tone for the days ahead.

The conference was bookended by two positively inspiring keynote speakers. Robert Dunlop opened the conference with a heartfelt talk on happiness at work. Through honest, vulnerable, and humorous storytelling, he invited us to consider how we can find or rekindle joy in our professional lives—an uplifting start to three days of learning and connection.

Dr. Jessica Riddell of Bishop's University closed the conference and concluded her Canadian book tour for *Hope Circuits: Rewiring Universities and Other Organizations for Human Flourishing* (2024). Jessica shared her compelling belief that we are on the cusp of a new paradigm in higher education within the next three to five years. As "hope warriors," she challenged us with the question: "What would it look like to build systems that foster human and ecological flourishing?" Her answer? It would look a lot like continuing education.

The rest of the agenda featured a rich array of workshops led by peers and practitioners in the field, as well as product demos from some of our most valued vendor partners. Between sessions, attendees had numerous opportunities to network and build connections.

We also celebrated excellence with our newly revised awards program. We recognized our peers for program and marketing innovation, and honoured the contributions of Christie Schultz (Research Award), Jennie Atkins (Outstanding Leadership Award), Michelle Fach (Honourary Membership Award) and Lorraine Carter (Honourary Membership Award).

From the jazz trio at the opening reception to the breathtaking fireworks over Niagara Falls, and the bagpiper's welcome to Dalhousie next year, this conference was a memorable and meaningful experience for all.

To our speakers, presenters, musicians, and participants: thank you for making CAUCE 2025 so special. Behind every successful event lies an incredible amount of effort. A special thank-you goes out to the Brock University team, our dedicated planning committee, and the many volunteers who made it all possible.

"Between the brain-boosting sessions, the top-tier networking, and food that deserves its own keynote—this conference has everything. I came for the insights, stayed for the snacks, and left with some new friends!"

-CAUCE 2025 delegate



OPENING KEYNOTE: ROBERT DUNLOP

Strive for Happiness in Education

Opening keynote speaker Robert Dunlop encouraged CAUCE conference attendees to “STRIVE for Happiness in Education.” In a presentation that was not only uplifting but also both humorous and moving, Rob took us through his “happiness timeline,” sharing examples of his own peaks and valleys.

Realizing that he “didn’t want [his] legacy to be the size of some guy’s biceps,” Rob left behind his motivational work as a personal trainer to begin learning about happiness, a quest that led him to write a book released just as the COVID-19 lockdown began. Rather than abandon hope for the book’s success, Rob and his daughter collaborated to offer curbside pick-up, eventually moving to daddy/daughter deliveries. This ability to look at a difficult situation and find the positive reality is a key point that helped him to understand the difference between toxic positivity and rational optimism, which he defines as a “realistic assessment of the present while maintaining belief that our behaviour will eventually create a better reality.”

Towards the end of his presentation, Rob defined the elements of the STRIVE acronym:

Students: are our meaning

Team: good relationships keep us happier and healthier

Routines: are essential to happiness

Innovate: progress leads to happiness

Viability: never forget that there are peaks for every valley

When he got to “E” for “extraordinary,” he shared with us, of all things, a Kleenex commercial telling the story of an exemplary teacher’s students coming together to surprise her. “Strive to be extraordinary,” he said. “Your students deserve it, and you deserve it.” At this point, attendees were powerfully reminded of two things: 1) education and educators have an incredible impact on learners; and 2) tissues are an essential item that should be kept on one’s person at all times.

-Julia Denholm, Dean, Lifelong Learning, Simon Fraser University



“The sub sessions have been super informative. I also really loved the opening keynote on strive to happiness.”

-CAUCE 2025 delegate

PANEL DISCUSSION:

Accelerating & Expanding Institutional Capacity for Engagement in Credential Innovation

Moderated by UPCEA's **Amy Heitzman**, the mid-conference plenary session featured a conversation that ranged from the imperative ("we have to sell stuff, y'all") to the aspirational ("we have to be awesome at what we do and talk about why learning in the workplace matters and why it should be more engaging than employers think it should be").

While consistently focusing on the mission of creating access to PSE, panellists described how challenging it can be to develop skills-based programming that is both accessible/affordable and revenue-generating, a tension that is further complicated by the desire for PCE units to take on the role of bringing the excellence of the university to a professional audience. And, of course, the challenges of doing this work in times of financial hardship.

We were reminded of the importance of relationship-building, not only with employers but also with the university community, in part to extend our reach but also to answer existential questions such as "why are we here" and "why does university continuing education matter at all/now."

The conversation concluded with a reminder that credentials themselves are not the outcome; they are the means to an outcome, and a call for a national lifelong learning strategy to ensure that learners are able to access and afford programming that will enable them to advance, achieve, and flourish.

-Julia Denholm, Dean, Lifelong Learning, Simon Fraser University

Panelists:

- **Amrit Ahluwalia**, Executive Director, Western Continuing Studies, Western University
- **Juan Mavo-Navarro**, Assistant Dean, Lifelong Learning & Innovation, University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies
- **Rod Lastra**, Interim President CAUCE; Digital Innovation & Engagement, Division of Extended Education, University of Manitoba
- **Lena Patterson**, Assistant Dean, Programs, The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, Toronto Metropolitan University
- **Christie Schultz**, Dean of the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE), University of Regina



CLOSING KEYNOTE: JESSICA RIDDELL

Hope Circuits: Lifelong Learning as a Pathway to Purpose and Collective Flourishing

Just as the CAUCE 2025 conference opened with remarks about hope as something we need to hold dearly, the theme of the final keynote delivered by Dr. Jessica Riddell from Bishop's University (Hope Circuits: Lifelong Learning as a Pathway to Purpose and Collective Flourishing Rewiring Universities for Human Flourishing) also focused on hope albeit from a different perspective. Dr. Riddell's remarks focused on how systems in universities are designed to sustain the status quo and how this is problematic as they often roadblock or defeat necessary change. Regrettably, such realities often lead to a sense of defeat and even despair.

Where does hope fit into the above?

Dr. Riddell's insights into the intersection of systems and hope when hope is understood as an expansive reality including elements as diverse as joy, wonderment, rage, bewilderment, grief and confusion are based on hundreds of interviews and workshops. Through this work, Dr. Riddell created ten conceptual tools which she encourages those dealing with systemic barriers and problems embrace. They include but are not limited to slowing down and pausing, practicing divergent thinking, living in the questions, and re-imagining authority and expertise.

A further part of Dr. Riddell's thesis is that lifelong learning and continuing education units can be pockets of possibility for renewal and flourishing because they work with different learner groups and generally do things a little differently than the main university. In other words, as a place of service and support for learners navigating uniquely complex lives, the continuing education environment can serve as a heterotopia in relation to the larger university. Based on work by French philosopher Michel Foucault, a heterotopia is a space or community that lives in juxtaposition with a larger institution (or institutions) and generally embraces values and ways of doing that are different and possibly transformational.

At this time of change in Canada's universities, Dr. Riddell's insights provide us much to think about including whether the differentness of lifelong learning and continuing education will be an important element in the go-forward of universities. Further, will lifelong learning and continuing education truly be a hope circuit?

-Lorraine Carter, Retired Director, McMaster Continuing Education and Honourary CAUCE Member (2025)



CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Thank you to all the presenters who shared their knowledge and expertise. There were 76 individuals who presented and 42 concurrent sessions organized within five streams:

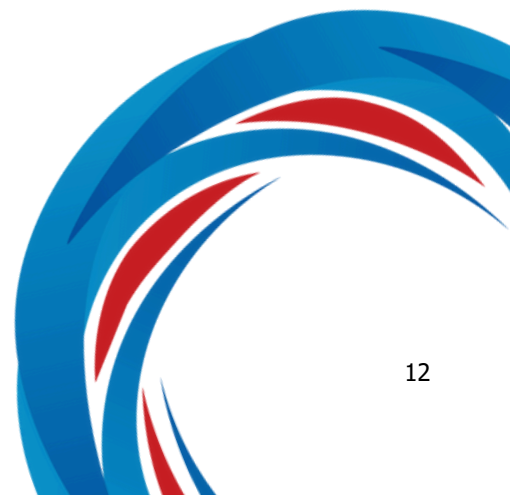
- Measuring impact and success: Telling the CE story
- Community impact: How CE supports local communities
- Improving access to education: Services, programs, and partnerships
- The future of work: How CE helps learners prepare for employment outcomes and success
- Breaking down barriers: Institutionally and internationally

Thank you to those who attended CAUCE 2025 and thank you to all our volunteers and sponsors!

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