

CAUCE 2025

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Knowledge Knows No Boundaries



CAUCE

Canadian Association for
University Continuing Education



Empowering Diverse Voices

A Collaborative
Approach to Curriculum
Development



Presenters:



Sama Ghnaim is a Palestinian Curriculum Developer for Lifelong Learning at SFU, where she partners with subject matter experts to amplify their voices and ensure authentic representation in curriculum. Sama is deeply committed to creating learning spaces that encourage learners to be more mindful of their own influence, power, and privilege in practice and in their communities.



Elizabeth Bunney is a Métis marketing and communications strategist who combines creativity with a deep respect for her Indigenous culture and community. Passionate about elevating Indigenous voices and challenging the status quo, Elizabeth helps to create campaigns that are authentic AND transformative.



The Public Relations Program

The Career and Professional Programs (CPP) team at SFU Continuing Studies visioned and proposed a full renewal of the PRP certificate that is open enrolment, asynchronous, with a micro-certificate format to:

- Provide comprehensive, flexible, and relevant education to early- to mid-career working professionals in the public relations (PR) and communications (CM) industries,
- Align with the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) industry standard,
- Prioritizes the PR practitioner's capacity to engage with diverse communities by focusing on inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) and observing Truth and Reconciliation principles.

The Public Relations Program- Courses

Certificate (162 hrs)	
Micro-certificates (54 hrs/each)	Courses (18 hrs/each)
Foundations of Public Relations	PRP115 Introduction to Public Relations
	PRP120 Content Creation and Storytelling in PR
	PRP130 Cultural, Social and Environmental Responsibility in PR
External Communication	PRP260 External Relations and Community Engagement
	PRP265 Media Relations
	PRP270 Reputation Management
Strategic Public Relations	PRP280 Research and Evaluation in PR
	PRP285 Strategic Communication
	PRP290 Change Management and Organizational Communication

Remember Storytelling is never one-dimensional. Every time we tell a story, we carry with it our own biases and assumptions—whether we realize it or not. By intentionally incorporating diverse voices and perspectives, we not only tell more complete stories, but we also create space for more people to see themselves reflected in the narrative. Stories that reflect the diversity of human experience are more likely to resonate deeply and authentically with a wider audience.

Our Stories

Sama and Elizabeth's Journey

Designing a Learning Experience with Intentionality: What it Looked Like

- Language with intent
- Emotional connection
- Balanced sources

Case Study: The "Words and Culture" Podcast

Familiarize yourself with the "Words and Culture" podcast.

Required listening: [Words and Culture](#) (CRFC/FCRC)

Kickstand Connect Campaign

SCENE 1:
HONEST FOUNDATIONS
(FOUR-WAY TEST)



The slogan *Feeling Off Balance?* uses clear, direct language to make mental health support accessible without stigma. Prioritizing honesty, the campaign's message is to provide reliable, non-judgmental resources that address youth mental health needs. By creating a supportive and open narrative, the campaign builds goodwill, establishing a safe, welcoming environment that benefits both individual well-being and the broader community by normalizing open discussions around mental health.

SCENE 2:
AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION
(4 CS OF ETHICAL STORYTELLING)



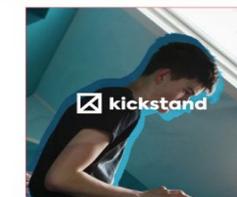
Young people scrolling the campaign materials see diverse faces and relatable stories, representing a range of mental health experiences without exaggeration. The campaign acknowledges the reality of youth struggles and emphasizes inclusivity, portraying Kickstand Connect as a bridge to overcoming stigma and accessibility barriers. By presenting mental health services in a supportive, realistic way, the campaign's messaging becomes both impactful and empowering, addressing the core concerns youth face.

SCENE 3:
ENGAGING YOUTH ON THEIR TERMS
(CULTURAL SENSITIVITY MODEL)



The campaign's language and imagery are carefully crafted through focus group feedback, ensuring each element resonates authentically with the youth demographic. Avoiding clichés, the messaging uses testimonials and inclusive language that reflect real experiences. This respectful approach enhances authenticity, positioning Kickstand Connect as a trustworthy community resource where young people feel represented and heard, creating and building trust and engagement.

SCENE 4:
LONG-TERM CONNECTION
(CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE MODEL)



Designed to fit within digital spaces frequented by young people, the campaign creates a safe and empathetic experience that promotes mental health dialogue. It integrates familiar online environments, making mental health support accessible and relatable. This connection fosters a sense of belonging and trust within Kickstand Connect's community, enhancing accessibility and ensuring that youth feel encouraged and supported in reaching out for help.



"Change Your Colours" Campaign: Applying Visual Storytelling Techniques

Emotional Impact and Contextual Relevance



The "Change Your Colours" campaign's bold imagery, such as the First Nations dancer in full regalia, wasn't just about aesthetics—it evoked a deep sense of cultural pride, connection, and empowerment. The vibrant colours and words like *love* and *resilience* elicited feelings of hope, pride, and unity within First Nations communities and beyond. By tapping into universal themes of belonging and identity, the visuals created an emotional resonance that invited viewers to empathize with the youth in the community and feel inspired by their resilience.

Each element, including the choice of colours, was intentional. We stayed away from colours associated with gangs and instead chose bright, bold colours that would attract youth and draw their attention. These colours reframed the narrative, moving it from violence to love and healing. When used effectively, visuals can be as powerful as words. The right imagery can evoke a deep emotional connection, bypassing the need for verbal explanation. In this campaign, visuals did more than accompany the message—they were the message.

Designing a Learning Experience with Intentionality: What it Looked Like

- Behind The Scenes



Elizabeth's Story

Behind the Scenes

In my work, I'm always seeking ways to ensure that the representation of Indigenous Peoples in media truly reflects who we are. When Indigenous People can see themselves accurately portrayed, not through stereotypes but through genuine representation, it contributes to feelings of pride and strength in Community. Ensuring that our voices are heard and amplified, especially in spaces where we've often been misrepresented (media), is at the heart of what I do. I want people to see how incredible, diverse, and beautiful our people are and to challenge any preconceived ideas they may hold about us. This work is not only about shifting perceptions but about creating a future of balance for Indigenous Peoples. There are so many positive things happening in our communities right now, making it an exciting time to be part of this work-sharing Indigenous excellence and joy is exciting and important work. I have the privilege of making sure our stories are shared as they're meant to be, with imagery and narratives as varied and beautiful as we are.

As public relations professionals, our role is to drive meaningful conversations on important issues. Through storytelling and strategic media engagement, we can inspire audiences to take action. Ethical storytelling not only informs but empowers people, and in the next section, we'll examine real-world campaigns that exemplify this approach.



Elizabeth's Story

As a young person, I often got lost in stories and books. My family could usually find me with my nose buried in a book—mostly fiction—excited about what worlds awaited me in the words written on the pages. Words that painted images so vividly in my head. I was always amazed at how word choices could make me feel happy or sad, could help me to be put in the character's shoes, or how I could feel and smell the surroundings built through words. How amazing it would be to have that power over the reader. I shelved the idea of writing for a living in my teens and into my twenties but came back to it when I started my career in communications and PR.

Storytelling has always been central to my life and my life's purpose. Because my relationships are central to who I am as a person, meaningful connections forged through storytelling are my jam. Through stories, I can connect ideas and people and share perspectives that lead to change. First Peoples have always been storytellers. Elders and knowledge-keepers share knowledge with community members through oral storytelling, which is, in my opinion, the single best way to share generational wisdom. Wisdom and culture are passed along through our stories, and it is here that I reconnect to my culture and my ancestors and in turn, I can connect to my children, grandchildren and future generations.

Through storytelling, I am combining my passion, my heritage, and my profession—what an incredible gift!

Why Centering Indigenous Case Studies Matters:

- **Community benefit:** Sharing real-world Indigenous success stories amplifies our voices and honours the people behind them, strengthens cultural pride in Community.
- **Learner benefit:** Future professionals become more aware of Indigenous audiences, not as checkboxes, but as dynamic communities with unique stories, values, and strengths. This awareness lays the groundwork for more respectful, effective, and culturally aligned communication moving forward.
- **Cycle-breaking power:** Featuring Indigenous stories is a way to break the cycle of invisibility, of exclusion, of always having to adapt to someone else's framework. It shifts the narrative from tokenism to representation.

Sharing these case studies not only educated others; it was also a personal act of reclaiming space and normalizing Indigenous presence in post-secondary education.

The Impact On Us

How did this journey impact the collaborators:

- Sama
- Elizabeth

The Impact On Learners: Feedback

“Very knowledgeable and experienced. Used her work and experience to teach. Positive and kind. Indigenous perspective and willingness to help non-Indigenous folks develop their skills to be more culturally relevant, diverse, ethical content. Created a very safe space for learning.”

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“The instructor brought a lot of passion and experience to the content. The examples she used were from her own work and showed how we could use our lived experience to bring meaning into PR work.”

“Professional experience and lived experience.”

“Thank you for your guidance throughout this course. I enjoyed learning more about the work you've done with Indigenous communities through the modules. “

The Impact On Learners: Feedback

"I learned so much, and found it challenging, but in a productive, "I'm learning valuable things" way. It was refreshing to have an instructor use their own content and professional experiences for the case studies--I really appreciate you for sharing your experiences with us. Thank you as well for the opportunity to expand our capacity for sensitive, culturally relevant content creation through your instruction and assignments. I found the assignments interesting and will definitely be referring back to the content in the modules for reference in my day-to-day work!"

The Impact On Learners: Feedback

“In PR, you’re not just serving your company or organization, but rather you are shaping perceptions, even shaping the world. So, the program emphasizes that you need to make positive contributions to your society. I did not expect that, but I really appreciated it. I feel like we’re being trained to make the world a better place.”

“It shows that public relations matters. Being able to bring people’s stories forward and being able to talk about these issues in an authentic way—it matters.”

“I learned how to craft a PR campaign for Indigenous audiences, which was eye opening. In Canada, there is a very strong emphasis on Indigenous relations, and that was new for me. But I’m very grateful to learn it. No other PR course would teach you that.”

The Impact On Learners: Feedback

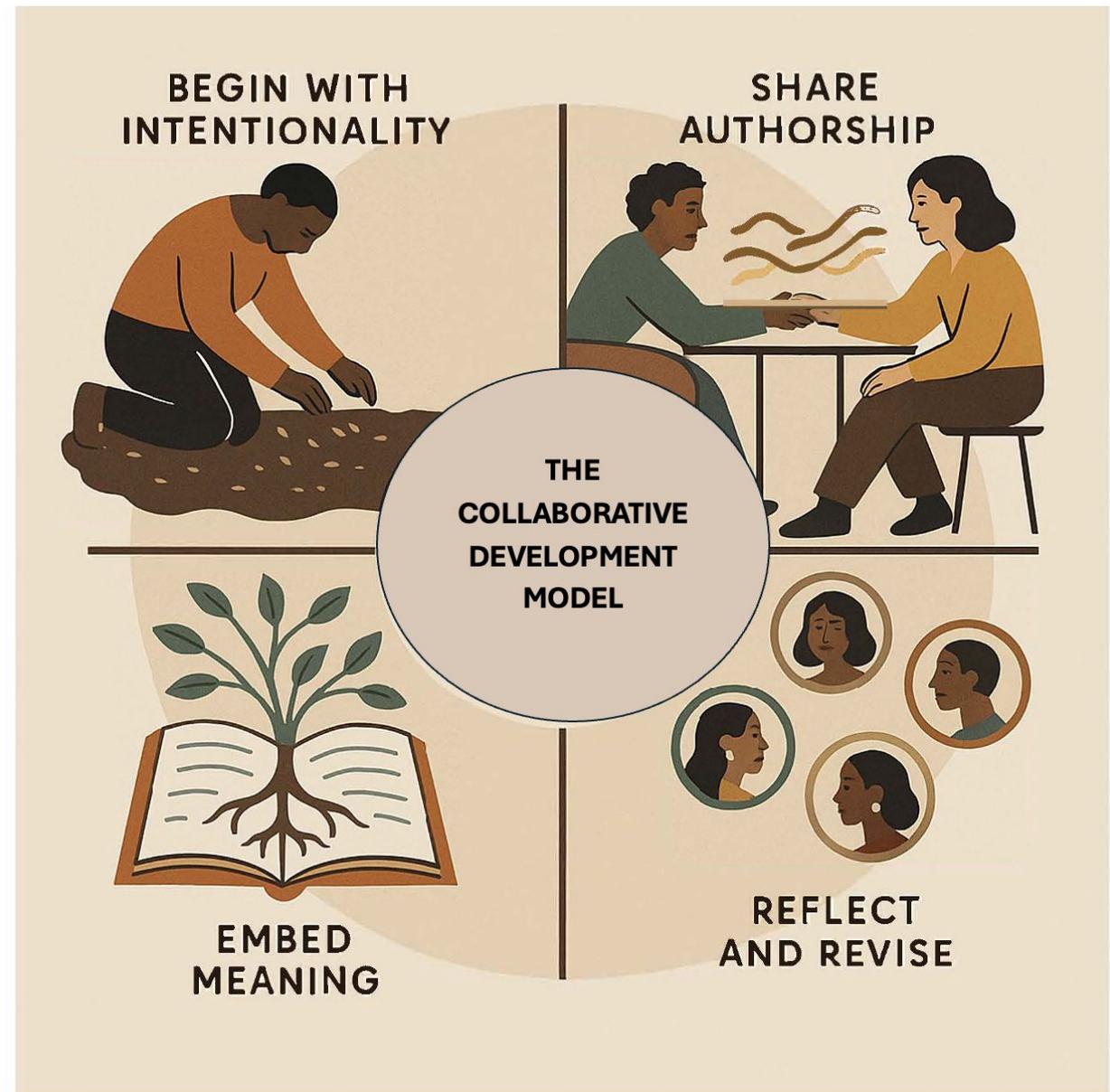
“I felt I learned what I expected to, as well as a whole range of additional skill about producing content that is culturally relevant, appropriate, diverse, and ethical, that will support me in my career as a Canadian professional in this field and help me to contribute to moving the national conversation forward in my small way.”

Story as Foundation: *Our Collaborative Model*

- Our entire presentation today is a story, our story of collaboration.
- We started with lived experiences, not just concepts, to show how stories can shape curriculum.
- This story-driven approach applies to any curriculum, including PR.
- It's about making content relational, not just procedural

Story as Foundation:

Our Collaborative Model



Takeaways

When we ask,

‘How can Continuing Studies develop curricula that authentically reflect marginalized perspectives while aligning with professional competencies?’

Our answer is: through relationships, through shared authorship, and through recognizing that lived experience is professional expertise.”

This is the power of authentic collaboration. It doesn't just change the course content; it changes the people creating it and the people engaging with it. And I am forever changed.’

Boundaries live in the words we choose, in how people are represented, and in the processes that decide whose knowledge is included. ***But “knowledge knows no boundaries”.***

When we co-create with intention, humility, and care, we challenge exclusion and let experience, relationship, and respect lead the way. Curriculum developers and subject matter experts have the power to shape what gets taught, how it's taught, and who is truly seen.”

Call to Action:

*Ask yourself, “Whose voice is missing?”
then bring them in and keep listening.*

Think about this: As you craft your public relations story, consider whose voice might be missing. These questions can help you determine which perspectives should be included.



- Who is directly impacted by the story or issue?
- Whose perspective is traditionally underrepresented or marginalized in similar stories or experiences?
- What diverse viewpoints might add more depth to the story?
- Is the story inclusive of diverse cultures, identities, and backgrounds?

Questions?

Thank you Connect with us.

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