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# Keynote Speakers

**Jackie Pichette, Director, Skills Policy | Royal Bank of Canada**

Opening Keynote Speaker | Wednesday, May 13, 2026 @ 9:15 am AT

## **Modernizing the Continuing Education Model: From testing times to transformative opportunities**

Canadian universities have been and will continue to be pillars of our country’s economic strength. But the university sector is seeing declining public support – both in funding and social license. The sector will need to pivot and chart a new course if it is to be resilient in the years ahead. Luckily, universities have an ace up their sleeves. Continuing education departments across the country have been experimenting with the kinds of innovative programs and partnerships that their institutions need to leverage and scale as part of modernization strategies. In this keynote presentation, Jackie will share RBC Thought Leadership skills research that continuing education leaders can use to inform their work and champion change across their institutions. She’ll share insights gathered from industry and postsecondary leaders across the country about where we’re headed, and how we can rethink our talent and innovation strategies to power Canadian prosperity.



**Celina Caesar-Chavannes, Business consultant, coach, and speaker**  
Closing Keynote Speaker | Friday, May 15, 2026 @ 10:30 am AT

### **Calm in the Storm: Leading with Integrity, Clarity, and Courage in a Complex World**

As continuing education leaders navigate relentless change, evolving expectations, and institutional pressure, the call to rise isn't just organizational—it's personal. This keynote invites participants to ground themselves in their own values, wisdom, and inner clarity in order to lead more effectively through complexity. Blending neuroscience, emotional intelligence, and lived experience, Celina Caesar-Chavannes will offer a reflective, practical, and energizing close to the conference. It will be a session that helps attendees walk away with more than ideas: they leave with a felt sense of possibility.

## **Concurrent Session One | May 13 @ 10:35 – 11:35 am**

### **The Opportunity: Approaches for Expanding Equity, Access, and Inclusion in Continuing Education**

Stream: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) and Indigenous Engagement (IE) in CE

Being an educator requires curiosity, flexibility, empathy, and humility. Bringing these elements together to ask challenging questions is the core of creating quality learning opportunities. Who are our learners? How are we supporting them, and how can we bridge gaps in that support? Are we designing programming with the learner in mind? What even is a quality program? Through the lens of various microcredentials developed at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU), we will address these and other questions and explore simple methods for developing CE programming that is accessible, equitable, and inclusive.

For the first part of the presentation, we will explore strategies and resources for creating informed learner profiles. MSVU's Ready to Lead program for frontline continuing care professionals benefited significantly from understanding the learners. Starting with learner profiles informed by credible data, direct insights, and input from leaders in continuing care offered the CE team a more fulsome picture of who our learners are, what their goals are, and how we can mitigate barriers to access and success.

Next, we will discuss specific considerations in program development to expand access and inclusion. During development of Ready to Lead and MSVU's first Community Engagement microcredential, we were able to apply our understanding of the learners to the development. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) acted as a solid foundation for these developments, but we needed to identify where UDL might not meet all of our learners' needs. We identified sustainable methods for supporting individuals who may have never



engaged in an online learning environment, have limited or no post-secondary education experience, and those who may not use English as their primary language.

By the end of this presentation, attendees will have strategies for better understanding prospective learners, developing supportive accessible programs, and working with partners to accomplish these tasks and more.

## **From Classrooms to Careers: Building AI Literacy Across the Learning Continuum**

*Stream: Next-Gen Education: Harnessing the Power of AI and Other Technologies*

Artificial intelligence is transforming the skills required for success in today's economy. How do we prepare learners—not just in post-secondary, but across the entire education continuum—for an AI-driven future?

This session draws on findings from a national scan of Canadian colleges, universities, and polytechnics and 38 interviews with senior leaders responsible for AI integration. These leaders—vice-presidents, provosts, and AI strategy leads—shared candid insights on the opportunities and barriers to embedding AI literacy across programs.

We will explore:

- How institutions are defining AI literacy and why ambiguity persists
- Innovative approaches such as microcredentials, open educational resources, and faculty-led learning networks
- Governance and policy challenges that slow adoption—and strategies to overcome them
- Equity gaps that risk leaving rural, Indigenous, and under-resourced learners behind
- Attendees will gain:
  - Practical strategies to integrate AI literacy into continuing education programs
  - Examples of institutional models that support equitable access to AI training
  - Insights from senior leaders on aligning lifelong learning with workforce needs in an evolving job market

By connecting classrooms to careers, this session offers actionable ideas for educators and administrators seeking to harness AI for learner success and economic resilience. It equips continuing education leaders to thrive amid technological complexity by turning disruption into opportunity.

## **Thriving Through Barriers: How Real-World Experience Transformed Youth Employment and Education**

*Stream: Pathways to Possibilities: Flexible Learning for Career Growth*



How can Continuing Education programs thrive in the face of complexity while serving youth who experience poverty, systemic barriers and disabilities like chronic illness? This session highlights the Youth Employability Skills and Supports (YESS) program, a collaborative initiative designed and delivered by individuals who have lived experience with barriers themselves.

As a 27-year-old with Crohn's disease, I bring firsthand understanding of the challenges young people face navigating work, education, and health. Through partnerships between Continuing Studies and local organizations, YESS empowers youth by combining classroom learning, practical trades exposure (like drywall and mini trades), health and wellness supports, and personalized follow-up.

Participants of this session will gain insights into the measurable outcomes of the programs such as increased employment rates, re-engagement with education, and improved life stability and explore how emergency funds and flexible delivery have addressed food insecurity and accesses barriers.

The session will also highlight successful program deliveries in Indigenous communities, reflecting culturally responsive and community-driven adaptations that align with self-determined priorities.

Through an interactive format, attendees will engage in a brief quiz and collaborative art activity to reflect empathy, inclusion, and program adaptability. Together, we'll explore how CE institutions can bridge systems of health, education, and community to create life-changing opportunities for youth in continuing education.

## **Building Tomorrow's University Today**

Stream: Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity

Amid enrollment cliffs, budget strain and rapidly evolving learner expectations, professional, continuing and online (PCO) education units are uniquely positioned to help institutions rethink whom they serve, how learning is delivered and what sustainable business models look like. This panel will frame essential conversations senior leaders need to be having now—about ROI-focused program design, stacked credentials, lifelong engagement and entrepreneurial culture—drawing on insights from the landscape of shifting demographics, mounting competition, and growing pressure on conventional business models. We will explore the emergence of PCO units as strategic engines for institutional transformation, tapping their aptitude for innovation, scalability and agility. Participants will engage with questions such as: How do we align our program portfolios with career outcomes and student ROI? How can institution-wide credential pathways maximize return on investment



and learner choice? How do we build an entrepreneurial culture that supports innovation while scaling what works? And how can we treat every learner as a lifelong customer—extending marketing, enrollment and retention across decades rather than just years? By the end of this session, senior leaders will gain a sharper view of actionable strategies to leverage their PCO unit as a catalyst for change, and walk away with a clearer set of questions to lead conversations across academic, administrative and business lines.

### **Cutting through Complexity: Measuring What Matters in CE Marketing**

Stream: Workforce and Industry Alignment: Upskilling for an Evolving Job Market

Small and Mid-sized continuing education units often face the challenge of marketing with limited staff, fragmented systems, and growing expectations for proof of impact.

This session provides a clear, practical framework for deciding, setting, tracking, and using marketing KPIs that actually matter for a continuing education unit. These topics will be relevant for units that have a decentralized marketing system that manages its marketing internally. This presentation simplifies the complex world of analytics and brings it down to a straightforward, actionable process any CE team can use.

Participants will learn how to:

- Define measurable marketing goals aligned with enrolment.
- Discuss relevant KPIs for each stage of the marketing funnel.
- Track both digital and traditional tactics with simple, low-lift methods.
- Review tools like Google Analytics 4, Meta Pixel, email metrics, and small paid campaigns - without a CRM.
- Discuss reporting and how to communicate it with stakeholders.
- Turn data into insights that guide real-world marketing choices for non-marketers.

Through step-by-step examples and real CE scenarios, this session will help attendees move from feeling overwhelmed by data to feeling confident about what to measure, how to measure it, and how to communicate results in a meaningful way. Whether your marketing is managed by a single person or a small multi-functional team, you'll leave with practical strategies you can implement immediately.

## Concurrent Session Two | May 13 @ 1:45 – 2:45 pm

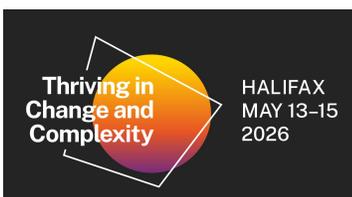
**Doing more with less: providing advice to running a lean continuing education department**  
*Stream: Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity*

Post-secondary education in Canada is at a critical juncture, facing growing financial constraints, changing learner expectations, and shifting institutional priorities. Continuing Education (CE) units sit at the heart of this transformation—expected to drive innovation, generate new revenue, and enhance institutional reputation, all while reducing operational costs and maintaining high-quality offerings. These competing demands require a new kind of leadership: one that embraces a mindset focused on efficiency, adaptability, and continuous improvement.

This session explores streamlining how CE leaders can navigate today’s economic and organizational pressures, beyond merely cutting costs. This session will look at how you can create value by empowering teams, streamline processes, and foster innovation through clarity and collaboration. By focusing on what truly matters to learners, partners, and institutions, CE units can strengthen their impact even in resource-constrained environments.

Drawing on real-world examples from Brock University Professional and Continuing Studies, the presenters will share both successes and lessons learned from initiatives designed to enhance efficiency and sustainability. While these examples are drawn from Brock, the strategies and lessons are adaptable to CE units of various sizes and institutional types.

Initiatives such as streamlining the development and approval process, aligning administrative workflows, and leveraging existing institutional resources have reduced turnaround times, and increased team capacity in new ways. The session encourages open dialogue among participants, inviting them to reflect on their own organizational challenges, share creative approaches, and exchange insights about what works and what doesn’t when leading in complex post-secondary environments. Participants will leave with a renewed perspective on how creative leadership can enable CE units to thrive by focusing on strategic priorities, building cross-functional alignment, and fostering a culture of shared ownership and continuous improvement. Rather than viewing financial pressure as a limitation, this discussion reframes it as an opportunity to rethink, retool, and reinvent how Continuing Education fulfills its mission within the broader university landscape.



## **Measuring the Impact of Continuing Education: Results from the 2025 CAUCE Annual Survey** *Stream: Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity*

In a time of shifting policy environments and funding uncertainty, continuing education (CE) leaders need clear, data to demonstrate and advocate for the impact of their work. The CAUCE Data Collection Committee, in partnership with Academica, continues its national effort to collect data on the volume, breadth, and impact of university continuing education at institutions across Canada.

This session will present results from the 2025 CAUCE short survey, the third in the annual cycle, and will provide longitudinal comparisons with 2023 and 2024 where possible, given that questions and data availability change from year to year. Participants will gain insight into national trends in enrolment, instructional hours and workforce-related programming.

The presentation will also highlight challenges institutions face in collecting data, including decentralized systems, differing definitions, and barriers to reporting equity-deserving group participation. Through open discussion, attendees will help identify ways to increase annual CAUCE survey response rates and strengthen data integrity ahead of the 2026 long survey.

## **Nec̓əmaat kwəns čeʔi | Working Together to Move Forward Indigenous Education**

*Stream: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) and Indigenous Engagement (IE) in CE*

As colonial institutions, universities have played a central role in the colonization of Indigenous Peoples and in many ways, continue upholding the colonial systems policies and processes that perpetuate harm. This includes the reinforcement of colonial ideology within university curriculum which privileges western-centred ideas and perspectives to the exclusion of Indigenous views and practices.

Ensuring a clear pathway moving forward, the University of Victoria (UVic) has been working alongside Elders, knowledge keepers and Indigenous community members to develop culturally relevant and responsive learning opportunities in partnership with Indigenous People and communities. This includes our work in the Division of Continuing Studies (DCS) at UVic through the Certificate in Indigenous Language Revitalization, now celebrating our 20th year, as well as the new Indigenous Language Documentation Micro-certificate.

Guided by First Peoples Principles of Learning and inspired by program alumnae Laura Prosper and Jasmine Ma'sl from the Mi'kmaq Nation in Nova Scotia, participants in this session will have an opportunity to explore the impact of Indigenous-led learning and teaching that moves forward Indigenous educational and community priorities.



## **Employer Demands and Learner Needs – Their Personas: Designing for The GenAI+ Workforce of Tomorrow**

*Stream: Workforce and Industry Alignment: Upskilling for an Evolving Job Market*

This session explores how Continuing Education (CE) units can proactively design programs that meet urgent employer demands for occupation-specific and GenAI+ skills, even before learners know they need them. We will begin by examining real-world employer personas for hiring managers who struggle to find talent with the right GenAI+ capabilities across key industry verticals. Through a brief role-play, participants will experience this situation firsthand, gaining insights into the skills employers are actively seeking and the barriers they face in recruitment.

Next, we will shift focus to learner personas; adults aged 20-50 who are navigating career transitions, seeking higher-salaried roles, or re-entering the workforce. Participants will learn how to build these personas using labour market information (LMI), social listening, and behavioural insights. We will explore how to translate LMI into learner motivations, career goals, and upskilling needs, and how to match these with employer expectations.

This session also addresses how learners discover CE offerings. Drawing from platforms like Reddit, YouTube, TikTok and Discord, we will share strategies for identifying where Gen Z and millennial learners go to find career-relevant credentials. Participants will map out communication channels and compare outreach strategies to better connect with their target audiences.

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Use LMI and employer personas to identify talent gaps and upskilling opportunities.
- Build learner personas that reflect motivations, barriers, and career trajectories.
- Design CE programming that includes AI skills and anticipates emerging industry needs
- Certificate Successes: Machine Learning Practitioner & Full Stack Developer
- Identify effective channels to influence learner decision-making.

This session blends data analysis, human-AI centered upskilling, and strategic foresight to help CE leaders create programs that are not only relevant today but resilient for tomorrow.

## Concurrent Session Three | May 13 @ 3:00 – 4:00 pm

### **Building Operational Agility in Continuing Education: A Hands-On Workshop Using Real Workflows from Modern Campus + Flywire + Brock University**

*Stream: Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity*

Continuing Education (CE) teams operate in environments marked by constant change - shifts in learner demographics, evolving technology ecosystems, and growing expectations for seamless registration and payment experiences. This interactive workshop explores how CE units can build operational agility by streamlining workflows across registration, enrollment, and financial processes.

Using real-world examples from Brock University, participants will walk through CE workflows supported by the Modern Campus + Flywire integration. The session emphasizes practical steps, tactical models, and lessons learned that reduce administrative complexity and improve the learner experience.

Attendees will collaborate in small groups to identify shared challenges, co-design workflow improvements, and provide input on potential future enhancements. Participants will leave with concrete, transferable strategies that can be applied immediately in their own CE operations.

### **Sustaining Community Education Programs in Times of Financial Precarity**

*Stream: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) and Indigenous Engagement (IE) in CE*

In times of financial precarity, universities often prioritize revenue-generating activities over equity-focused community education programs, undermining our public responsibility to advance social justice and reducing opportunities for already-vulnerable people and communities to access higher education. The absence of sustained community-based pathways contributes to a lack of equitable access to education that has profound implications for health equity and a range of other social determinants of health, and is antithetical to the notion of the university as a bastion of public good. Considering this, strategies are needed to ensure that non-revenue-generating community education programs for equity-denied learners can be sustained even in times of fiscal constraint.

Over the past 20+ years, Lifelong Learning at Simon Fraser University (SFU) has offered an evolving suite of these programs and projects. The flagship program in our community-engaged education portfolio is called the Community Capacity Building Certificate. Developed for and with community leaders who have been excluded from or harmed by



mainstream education, the program's curriculum is focused on planning, implementing and evaluating a community project that addresses something learners feel passionately about. The program grew out of a desire to accredit the rich knowledge and learning that is present in community contexts but is so rarely given the recognition it deserves.

In 2024 SFU, like much of the Canadian higher education sector, experienced a financial crisis. The CCB program was suspended, and funds were redirected to cover deficits. However, our social contract with and commitment to the communities for whom this program and others like it were developed remains intact. So where do we go from here?

During this interactive workshop we'll share some tactics and strategies that we've used over two decades to sustain community programming in a cost-recovery environment. We'll also practice an interactive activity from the CCB program, and mutually share insights related to partnership-building and program development in these difficult financial times. We'll explore some of the successes and challenges we've had, and brainstorm with you, our colleagues, about what's working, what's challenging, and what we'd all like to be doing more of.

### **Beyond NQFs: Exploring Small Language Models for Global Skills Recognition**

Stream: Next-Gen Education: Harnessing the Power of AI and Other Technologies

Since 2024, I have been part of an international research consortium examining how large and, increasingly, small language models can be applied to the persistent challenge of global skills recognition. This presentation will focus on a concrete use case: the development of an API-based prototype that uses language models to analyse and compare learning outcomes across diverse qualifications and frameworks.

I will begin by outlining the core problem the consortium set out to address: fragmented national and regional qualification frameworks, inconsistent and evolving terminology around "skills" and "competence," and labour-intensive manual processes for leveling and recognition. Against this backdrop, I will introduce our prototype, Ascendra, and describe how we are exploring task-specific, domain-focused language models to support more consistent, transparent comparisons across frameworks, while maintaining human authority over final decisions.

The presentation will then examine the challenges encountered in this work. These include technical issues (such as noisy and heterogeneous source data, semantic drift, and model alignment), as well as ethical and governance concerns related to bias, explainability, and data stewardship. I will describe how the team has approached these constraints through curated training data, human-in-the-loop review processes, and the use of controlled

“sandbox” environments. This work is being advanced with a view to pilot deployment in partnership with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), with careful attention to regulatory and policy contexts. In the final portion of the session, I will consider how this emerging use case may be relevant to the Canadian university continuing education sector. Particular attention will be given to potential applications in recognition of prior learning for internationally educated learners, the positioning and leveling of micro-credentials, and dialogue with employers and regulators about levels and competencies. Overall, the presentation will offer a critical and practice-oriented exploration of how small language models might be used responsibly within future-ready systems of skills and qualification recognition, rather than a promotional account of AI solutions.

### **From Uncertainty to Action: Co-Creating AI Strategies in Higher Education**

Stream: Next-Gen Education: Harnessing the Power of AI and Other Technologies

AI is transforming teaching, but many educators feel unprepared to navigate its use responsibly. The Teaching with AI micro-credential was developed in response to these challenges, with input from Ontario Universities, Colleges and Indigenous Institutes. This bilingual program focuses on practical strategies for integrating AI ethically and transparently.

This workshop shares the story behind the program. Through consultations and a pilot cohort, we turned real educator challenges into a three-module learning journey: AI Explorer, AI Evaluator, AI Experimenter.

Participants then engage in a 40-minute hands-on activity inspired by one of the micro-credential’s modules. Working in small groups, they navigate a realistic scenario where a student’s work involves AI beyond permitted guidelines. Groups co-draft a restorative conversational script, exploring how to integrate AI contributions, where guidance may be needed, and ways to support learning. The variety of perspectives across institutions naturally sparks discussion, reflection, and negotiation, mirroring the collaborative dynamics of the pilot experience.

Finally, we share insights from the pilot: what educators valued, surprises, challenges, refinements. Participants leave with practical outputs: restorative scripts and a clear path to adapt the approach in their own context.

This session blends storytelling and collaborative problem-solving, giving educators and administrators actionable strategies for teaching with AI responsibly, while experiencing the micro-credential’s participant-centered approach firsthand.

## **From Course Projects to Career Pathways: Connecting Learners, Alumni, and Industry**

*Stream: Workforce and Industry Alignment: Upskilling for an Evolving Job Market*

Course projects are often the final stage of a learner's studies and serve as a key milestone in their educational journey. They represent not only the knowledge and skills learners have acquired but also their ability to apply learning to real-world challenges. This presentation explores how course projects can be leveraged as powerful platforms to connect learners with alumni and industry, creating meaningful pathways from academic work to professional opportunities.

The model presented in this session engages alumni and industry professionals at two key stages of the learner journey. First, at the project kick-off, alumni who previously completed similar projects join the classroom alongside to share their experiences, career trajectories, and practical guidance. This early engagement provides learners with mentorship, inspiration, and insight into how their projects can be relevant to industry challenges. Learners gain a clearer understanding of workforce expectations, practical applications of their work, and potential career directions.

Second, at the project completion stage, learners present their applied projects to the alumni and industry guests. These presentations serve multiple purposes: learners receive feedback on their work, practice professional communication skills, and create networking opportunities that can lead to internships, job placements, or collaborations. Alumni and industry guests, in turn, gain access to innovative ideas, emerging talent, and potential future hires, while also contributing to the development of relevant, real-world project topics.

This dual-stage engagement model demonstrates a practical approach for programs seeking to strengthen the connection between learning and career outcomes.

Participants in this session will learn how to structure project-based experiences that maximize learner visibility, enhance employability skills, and support long-term alumni and industry engagement.

By framing course projects as career pathways, programs can create a dynamic ecosystem that aligns learning with workforce needs, encourages mentorship and networking, and delivers measurable impact on learner success. Attendees will leave with concrete strategies for integrating alumni and industry engagement throughout project-based courses, ensuring learners gain both the skills and connections necessary to transition successfully from coursework to careers.

## Concurrent Session Four | May 14 @ 9:00 – 9:45 am

### **From Program Renewal to Program ReSet**

Stream: Workforce and Industry Alignment: Upskilling for an Evolving Job Market

The program reset model is a quality assurance initiative built for institutions that need to evaluate programs amid competing pressures, ambiguous data, and evolving workforce trends. It helps CE teams avoid reactive, piecemeal adjustments and instead make strategic choices grounded in a coherent understanding of learner needs, market demand, and program intent.

### **Designing a Modern Lifelong Learning Ecosystem for Institutional Agility and Growth**

*Stream: Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity*

Higher education is in the midst of a fundamental market shift. Declining traditional student populations, rapidly evolving workforce needs, and increasing demand for flexible learning have pushed adult and continuing education from the margins to the center of institutional strategy. Yet many universities continue to operate with structures, processes, and assumptions built for a different era—creating friction for learners and limiting institutional responsiveness.

This session will explore a practical, future-focused approach to building a lifelong learning ecosystem that is agile, learner-centered, and strategically aligned. Drawing on the University of Alberta's transformation within Online & Continuing Education, presenters will walk through how their team modernized programming, strengthened employer partnerships, and reimagined learner pathways in order to meet shifting market expectations.

Participants will learn how to:

- Understand and respond to adult learner motivations, including career mobility, affordability, stackability, and flexible pacing.
- Build market-responsive programming using employer co-design, labor-market insights, and iterative development.
- Create seamless learner journeys that reduce friction—from discovery and registration to completion and re-engagement.
- Reposition continuing education as a growth engine that supports both institutional mission and regional workforce impact.

## **Reigniting a Fire Leadership Program: People-centered Approach**

Stream: Pathways to Possibilities: Flexible Learning for Career Growth

Dalhousie University Fire Service Leadership has been a well-known certificate program for decades. The program equips fire and emergency leaders with the accredited skills and knowledge demanded in their roles.

In 2022, after in-depth internal and external audits, Dal Fire was dealt a mediocre grade. The program was deemed out-of-date, out-of-touch, and out-of-order. There was a categorical need for major updates.

Drawing on inputs from fire & emergency professionals across Canada and Dalhousie University FOLCD, a full revamp of the 20-course program was initiated. Now complete after two years of updating, success has shown itself in high enrollment numbers, positive student feedback, and instructor satisfaction. Reflecting on these successes, it has become clear that putting people at the heart of program design brings the results Dal Fire aims for.

This session reflects on the human-centered design aspects of this major revamp and the paths taken to get there. Specific topics covered will include how live sessions were integrated into the courses; how new content was introduced using EDIA and Indigenous lenses; the restructuring of certificate pathways; and the modification of assessments.

## **Mobilizing a Nation: Continuing Education as Canada’s Engine for Readiness and Resilience**

Stream: *Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity*

Canada faces rising geopolitical and domestic risks, from climate-related disasters to foreign interference. Recent interest from government, NGOs, community groups, and the military in national service and “willingness to fight” highlights a widening gap between the country’s security needs and Canadians’ sense of belonging and responsibility. Policy thinkers and military leaders are converging on a simple idea: Canada needs more people, at all ages and stages, prepared and equipped to “do something” in support of national resilience.

These efforts span security service, civil defence, community protection, youth development, and other forms of public service. Yet conventional university programming is often slow to pivot or reluctant to create short, mission-oriented learning that can prepare citizens quickly for meaningful contribution. Continuing education (CE) units are well positioned to fill this gap.

This session makes two arguments. First, CE can translate national service concepts into practical, flexible learning pathways that support community and national resilience.

Drawing on a detailed national service framework and a proposed collaboration between the Canadian Armed Forces and Royal Roads University, we demonstrate how CE units can:

- translate resilience and service concepts into targeted micro-credentials and certificates;
- link youth, community, and professional learning into stackable pathways; and
- open these pathways to non-traditional learners, including reservists, public servants, youth, newcomers, and community volunteers.

Second, we offer concrete program designs and partnership models that CE units can adapt to their own institutional and regional contexts. Rather than competing for learners, we propose a watershed approach - intentionally recruiting and training to the needs of the local area - so CE units can contribute to a distributed, community-based system of readiness. This regionalized model enables more rapid, responsive, and robust training outcomes across Canada's diverse social and physical landscapes.

**Accelerating Workforce Readiness in Canada: Lessons from WatSPEED, University of Waterloo's Online Continuing Education Division, and the Soldiers in Tech Program**  
*Stream: Workforce and Industry Alignment: Upskilling for an Evolving Job Market & Pathways to Possibilities: Flexible Learning for Career Growth*

Presented by [ed2go](#), our Diamond Sponsor



Colleges and universities are being called on to respond rapidly to shifting workforce demands and an increasing need for job-ready skills. In this session, the WatSPEED team and Ed2go share a practical, real-world example of how academic institutions can leverage online career training to reach new learner populations, strengthen regional partnerships, and activate sustainable revenue streams—without adding internal development burden.

The presentation highlights WatSPEED's collaboration with the Roland Gossage Foundation through the Soldiers in Tech initiative—an Ontario-based, fully funded program supporting Canadian Armed Forces veterans, reservists, and their spouses as they transition into high-demand technology careers. Launched in late 2025, the program integrated Ed2go's cybersecurity and information technology (IT) career training courses directly into its funding model. Today, more than twenty learners are enrolled, with ongoing upskilling and reskilling efforts supporting Canada's growing IT and cybersecurity workforce needs.

WatSPEED and Ed2go will also explore how institutions can quickly expand their workforce-focused offerings using Ed2go's **Advanced Career Training (ACT)** catalog, including a growing suite of localized programs and courses aligned to domestic labor market needs. Many ACT



courses include industry-recognized credentials that strengthen job readiness and provide meaningful proof of employability for learners.

Together, we will show how thoughtful academic–industry partnerships can accelerate workforce development, empower learners, and build a more resilient and career-ready workforce.

## Concurrent Session Five | May 14 @ 10:00 – 10:45 am

### From Exploration to Framework: A Community-Based Model for Integrating Generative AI into Curriculum Design

*Stream: Next-Gen Education: Harnessing the Power of AI and Other Technologies*

Continuing education is entering a period of profound complexity as technological change, shifting workforce expectations, and financial pressures converge. In response, we launched a CAUCE-wide webinar series in 2025 to cultivate a shared space for inquiry rather than prescription around generative AI. Through structured dialogue and cross-institutional participation, we engaged members of the CAUCE community in examining how generative AI might meaningfully support the design and development of curriculum, reshape the administrative work that underpins our programs, and inform the AI-related competencies we seek to foster through workforce development. While it is too early to claim a finished framework, these sessions have already surfaced the foundations and key underpinnings of an emerging use-case framework for AI integration tailored to the realities of university continuing education.

Our proposed CAUCE 2026 conference session will share this evolving work, outlining the collaborative methodology that supports it and highlighting the early contours of this community-informed framework. We will describe how the themes that emerged from the webinar series, ethical considerations, representation and bias, creativity and intellectual work, pedagogical paradoxes, operational impacts, and workforce relevance, have been used to structure a practical, yet philosophically grounded, approach to AI adoption. Rather than presenting a final answer, the session will invite participants into the next phase of this collective effort: testing, critiquing, and extending the framework in their own institutional contexts. By situating AI within the broader historical pattern of modernity, where every technological advance carries both promise and consequence, we aim to help CE practitioners navigate AI adoption with clarity, balance, and purpose. This session directly aligns with the conference theme Thriving in Change and Complexity, and speaks strongly to the streams of Next-Gen Education, Leadership and Operations Reimagined, and Workforce and Industry Alignment. Participants will leave with conceptual grounding, concrete examples from the webinar series, and a shared starting point for incorporating AI in ways



that extend creative, intellectual, and operational capacity while upholding the human-centered values at the heart of continuing education.

## **Embracing Complexity: How Indigenous-Led Continuing Education is Building Skills to Support Meaningful Community-based Partnerships**

*Stream: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) and Indigenous Engagement (IE) in CE*

In response to high demand for practice skills in Indigenous consultation and research methods, the Faculty of Native Studies has created a new, online continuing education course called Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Development.

Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Development is designed to equip learners to engage in successful and respectful collaborations with Indigenous communities, nations, and organizations. It starts from scratch, assuming no prior knowledge, and provides comprehensive instruction in approaches to relationship building, Indigenous research methodologies, Indigenous governance, and historical relationships. Emphasizing decolonial perspectives, the goal of the course is not only to impart fundamental background knowledge but also to foster the development of core competencies for effective engagement within Indigenous community contexts.

This new course comes on the heels of many other highly successful training topics that the Faculty of Native Studies has created (such as the well-known course, Indigenous Canada) to upskill professionals and the Canadian public on Indigenous histories and contemporary realities. Supporting truth and reconciliation efforts, Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Development is a course that will enable learners to build upon their foundational learning and be more deeply equipped to actively work with Indigenous peoples in a wide range of settings.

This course features the work of 15 scholars from many disciplines and 10 Elders and knowledgeable community contributors—designed to offer comprehensive, expansive and engaging material to learners in the online environment. As such, the presentation will describe the course development process to highlight how both the curriculum and the creative process followed an ethos of community engagement, partnership development, shared data ownership processes, and meaningful consent. We will showcase some of the course media and share select resources to highlight some of the work coming out of the Faculty of Native Studies, the only faculty of its kind in North America.

This presentation aims to network together leaders in university continuing education who share an ongoing commitment to equipping their institutions and learners to be partners in



decolonizing education within Canada. By upholding Indigenous leadership in continuing education, the truth and reconciliation commission's calls are being addressed to train the public in many different sectors.

### **Artificial Intelligence in Education: Ownership, Ethics, and the Future of Knowledge**

*Stream: Next-Gen Education: Harnessing the Power of AI and Other Technologies*

This presentation explores the complex issues and challenges posed by generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in education, focusing on copyright, authorship, and ethical responsibility. Key topics include the legal status of AI-generated content as public domain for open access., The author debates the question of ownership between users, programmers, and GenAI systems, as well as regional perspectives from the US, Europe, and China. The discussion highlights concern about bias, cultural homogenization, and the oligarchic control of GenAI technologies, emphasizing the need for transparency, fairness, and open access. Ethical dilemmas such as plagiarism, fraud, and the erosion of human connection are examined, alongside calls for copyright reform and equitable revenue distribution. The presentation concludes with reflections on the future role of GenAI in education and creativity, advocating for policies that balance human oversight with GenAI innovation while safeguarding against misuse and monopolization. Ultimately, the author underscores the importance of personal accountability and critical engagement with GenAI tools in scholarly work.

### **Bridging the Gap: Employer Partnerships that Help Continuing Education Thrive Through Change**

*Stream: Workforce and Industry Alignment: Upskilling for an Evolving Job Market*

The world of work is shifting faster than most institutions can retool, and Continuing Education sits right at the crossroads. In a landscape defined by volatility, new technology, evolving learner expectations, and pressure for measurable outcomes, Continuing Education units have a unique opportunity to lead. This session will focus on how institutions can not only keep pace with that complexity - but thrive in it - by working directly with industry to co-design learning experiences that are responsive, practical, and clearly tied to workforce needs.



## Empowering Strategic Change: Conversation Focused

Stream: Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity

In today's complex, fast-moving organizations, leadership is no longer just about strategy and execution – it's about conversation. This session, drawn from the forthcoming book *Empowering Strategic Change: Conversation-Focused Project Leadership*, introduces a fresh approach that puts dialogue, storytelling, and reflective practice at the center of project and change leadership.

At its core is the Dual-Lens Framework, a practical model that helps leaders view conversations from two angles: how they are experienced (Lens 1) and what they are designed to accomplish (Lens 2). This session explores how leaders can shift from transactional communication, updates, reports, checklists, to transformational leadership that builds meaning, trust, and alignment.

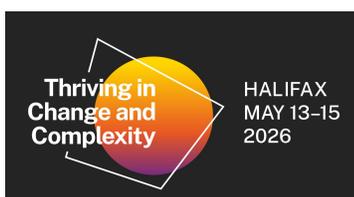
Participants will engage with real-world case studies, simple tools, and reflection prompts that reveal how the words we choose, the questions we ask, and the stories we tell shape others' experience of change. When conversations create clarity, connection, and commitment, strategies come to life. When they don't, even the best plans can stall.

**Why Now:** Organizations are navigating digital transformation, workforce renewal, and social change, pressures that are as human as they are technical. Traditional models of project and change leadership focus on control and compliance, leaving leaders underprepared to facilitate meaning in times of uncertainty.

This session offers a new lens: leadership as a relational act, not just a functional one. You'll discover how to align inner awareness with outer purpose, invite your teams into possibility, and use conversation to move from plan to practice.

Whether you are a project manager, change agent, educator, or executive, this session will equip you to lead with greater purpose and connection. It's also for anyone who has ever left a meeting wondering, "Did we actually move forward?" or faced resistance and asked, "What conversation aren't we having?"

Leadership, after all, is not just a role, it's a series of moments where we create space for alignment, reframe assumptions, and inspire change.



## Concurrent Session Six | May 14 @ 2:00 – 3:00 pm

### **The Last Day Matters: Building Resilient Teams Through Purposeful Transition**

*Stream: Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity*

Leadership transitions are inevitable, but how they're managed determines whether an organization thrives or stalls. This session explores a responsive and structured approach to succession planning and change management through a live case study: the planned handover of operations from a long-serving CE leader to a successor preparing to step into the role.

Together, the presenters—one outgoing, one incoming—will share complementary perspectives on continuity, culture, and adaptive leadership. Participants will engage in reflection, peer discussion, and applied exercises to identify the conditions and practices that foster sustainable succession and institutional resilience.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify key elements of effective succession and continuity planning within CE environments.
2. Apply strategies for capturing and transferring institutional knowledge before and after retirement or role transition.
3. Design engagement approaches that sustain morale and buy-in among remaining staff.
4. Develop a practical framework for building resilience in future leadership transitions.

### **Designing AI-Aware Assessments: Practical Strategies for Academic Integrity and Innovative AI Use**

*Stream: Next-Gen Education: Harnessing the Power of AI and Other Technologies*

The rapid spread of AI-use and incidences of AI-related academic integrity concerns are the trending topic in higher education. Many higher education institutions are challenged to address the concerns of AI-misuse and the opportunity for innovative AI-use to advance digital literacy. We, the Division of Continuing Studies at the University of Victoria, are no exception. Over the last year, in addition to attempting to prevent AI-misuse while designing online courses, we piloted an AI-awareness training program to help instructors understand academic integrity and redesign assessments. In this workshop session, we would like to discuss the challenges and opportunities identified from our AI awareness training. And we would also like to engage in activities to collaborate on designing assessment strategies that balance ethics and integrity with innovation.



## **Fostering Student Engagement: Leveraging the Community of Inquiry Framework in Online Discussions**

*Stream: Next-Gen Education: Harnessing the Power of AI and Other Technologies*

Online discussion forums are essential components of online and blended learning, providing space for student collaboration and for instructors to monitor learning processes. However, fostering meaningful student engagement within these spaces remains challenging. Instructors often struggle to design and facilitate discussions that encourage active participation, collaborative learning, and deeper understanding. Additionally, many instructors are frustrated by students using generative AI to complete discussion tasks. This session addresses these challenges by leveraging the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework to provide practical strategies for creating more engaging and effective online discussions.

The CoI framework, developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2001), emphasizes three essential elements of effective online learning: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Each element uniquely supports engagement and meaningful interaction. This session will explore the question: What strategies can instructors implement for each element of the CoI framework to enhance students' engagement in online discussions?

Drawing on a comprehensive literature review and doctoral-level research, this session will demonstrate how CoI elements can effectively guide discussion design. It will share evidence-based strategies for building social connections, prompting higher-order thinking, and strengthening instructor presence. Specific focus will be placed on designing effective discussion prompts, structuring interactions that support collaboration, and creating conditions that encourage sustained dialogue and deeper learning.

The session is designed for instructors, instructional designers, and continuing education professionals interested in advancing online teaching practices. By enhancing social, cognitive, and teaching presence, participants will leave with practical strategies to improve student engagement and create richer, more inclusive learning experiences in online and blended environments.

## **From Uncertainty to Opportunity: Transformative Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Models for an Evolving Labour Market**

*Stream: Workforce and Industry Alignment: Upskilling for an Evolving Job Market*

Technological disruption and economic volatility are redefining the labour market, creating uncertainty for learners and institutions alike. This session explores how Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) can transform Continuing Education by equipping adult learners with a

holistic skills- and experience-based toolkit, cultivating the resilience and adaptability needed to thrive in this complex environment.

Drawing on our work convening Ontario colleges, universities, and Indigenous Institutes, we will showcase innovative WIL models that embed real-world challenges into upskilling and reskilling programs, bridging the gap between education and workforce needs. These models emphasize experiential learning, skills articulation and validation, and employer partnerships – critical strategies for preparing learners for today’s jobs and those yet to emerge. We will also explore the emerging intersection of WIL and micro-credentials as a strategy for creating flexible and visible lifelong learning pathways while addressing immediate workforce demands. By making tacit skill development explicit, these approaches help learners communicate competencies to employers, strengthen career readiness, and enhance institutional agility in responding to labour market shifts.

This session will highlight equity-focused WIL initiatives, including strategies that support francophone and underrepresented communities. Participants will gain insights into aligning WIL and micro-credentialing with regional priorities, fostering collaboration between institutions and industry, and responding to evolving economic and technological trends to create inclusive pathways to opportunities.

Through interactive discussion, attendees will leave with actionable strategies to incorporate WIL into their Continuing Education programs, build institutional capacity for innovation, and design learner-centered experiences that anticipate future workforce needs. Together, we will explore how WIL can position Continuing Education to rise to the challenge of change and complexity, transforming uncertainty into opportunity.

## Concurrent Session Seven | May 14 @ 3:15 – 4:00 pm

### **Advancing Workforce AI Fluency: Bridging Gaps Beyond Chatbots and Prompts**

Stream: Workforce and Industry Alignment: Upskilling for an Evolving Job Market

Between March and June 2025, the University of Calgary Continuing Education partnered with Microsoft to deliver a large-scale, instructor-led AI Fluency initiative, reaching over 8,500 learners from diverse backgrounds. The program was designed to keep pace with rapid technological change, with content continuously updated to reflect the latest advancements in AI.

The initiative consisted of over 30 course sections, delivered in a online hybrid format led by experienced instructors, accommodating up to 300 participants per section. We offered three distinct training courses, each tailored to different learner profiles and professional



needs. Sessions included live demonstrations of AI, including advanced AI agents and enterprise applications, with practical use cases for business professionals, software developers, and data analysts.

Interaction was facilitated through chat-based Q&A using Microsoft Teams, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, while asynchronous materials and session recordings supported flexible learning. The instructor-led online hybrid model enabled real-time engagement and guidance, while also providing resources for self-paced study.

The initiative addressed several workforce challenges: although most participants had used AI tools like ChatGPT, many did not know how to write AI prompts effectively, few possessed in-depth knowledge of agentic AI, and even fewer understood the complexities of enterprise adoption, including ethical considerations. Access barriers were significant—enterprise users faced restrictions in trying Copilot or Azure AI services due to licensing and IT admin controls, despite Microsoft’s free trials for personal accounts. Many participants had never seen AI agents write code or perform real-time analytics; our approach included live demonstrations, for example we demonstrated how AI agents analyzed and visualized survey data instantly, making advanced concepts tangible.

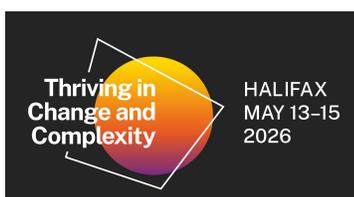
Feedback highlighted a desire for more sessions and easier access to AI tools, but budget constraints and ambitious training targets required prioritizing breadth and exposure. By presenting real-world examples and diverse use cases, we aimed to demystify AI’s disruptive impact across industries, moving beyond headlines to actionable insights.

This presentation will share our strategies, challenges, and lessons learned in designing scalable, inclusive, instructor-led AI upskilling programs, offering a replicable model for CE units seeking to align with evolving workforce needs and industry demands.

## **From Engagement to Enrolment: Outbound Campaigns That Work**

Stream: Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity

Continuing Education providers face increasing complexity in reaching prospects in a digital-first, high-choice environment. As learner expectations shift and competition rises, institutions need agile, data-informed outreach strategies that support individuals throughout the decision-making process. This session is designed for marketing and recruitment professionals, student services staff, and anyone responsible for prospect engagement and enrolment strategies, sharing how our unit implemented and refined targeted outbound campaigns to strengthen engagement and increase enrolment in high-interest programs.



Over two years, Marketing and Student Services collaborated to create targeted campaigns with segmented invitation lists, optimized email communications, User-friendly booking tool, and personalized consultations. Through ongoing testing of messaging, timing, pre-screening, and follow-up, we identified the strategies that most effectively guided prospects toward enrolment. These strategies led to increased appointment bookings, a 27% conversion rate from all scheduled appointments, and a 43% conversion rate among prospects who attended their meetings. Beyond enrolment outcomes, the campaign also contributed to a more positive student experience, with learners reporting greater clarity, reassurance, and satisfaction throughout the decision-making process.

We will outline our full process, including segmentation criteria, communication flow design, incorporation of prospect feedback, and quality assurance practices that ensure supportive, responsive interactions. Participants will gain insight into balancing personalization with operational efficiency, integrating student services expertise into marketing workflows, and refining campaigns using real-time engagement data.

In this session, we will share actual case examples, practical tools, and working communication samples that attendees can adapt for their own institutions. Ultimately, the presentation highlights innovative and collaborative approaches to strengthening connections with prospects, increasing conversions, improving the prospect experience, and reducing barriers to enrolment—advancing equity and access within Continuing Education.

### **Career-focused Training for Inuit Learners: A Collaborative Approach to Capacity Building in Nunavut**

*Stream: Pathways to Possibilities: Flexible Learning for Career Growth*

Our presentation describes an innovative partnership aimed at creating career pathways for Inuit learners in Nunavut. On April 1, 2027, Canada will transfer responsibilities over lands, waters, and resource management for a territory approximately one-fifth of Canada to the Government of Nunavut (GN). Building a representative and skilled workforce to manage and steward lands, waters, and resources is a cornerstone of the Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement. This historic process is not without challenges. Although many Inuit and non-Inuit federal civil servants will transfer employment to the GN, public service vacancy rates in Nunavut are high - up to forty percent. A commitment to increase Inuit employment in the public service to representative levels (Inuit are approximately eighty-five percent of the population) is far from realization. High school completion in Nunavut is approximately fifty percent, and the percentage of Inuit graduates with the prerequisites and grades to enter most post-secondary programs is significantly lower.

To help address these challenges, the Government of Canada (GoC), GN, and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), partnered with Royal Roads University (RRU) on a unique on-the-job training program for Nunavut Inuit interested in Devolution-related employment. The Nammiqisurniq Professional Project Administrator Program (NPPA) provides 12 Nunavut Inuit with full-time, indeterminate employment, which includes paid training, and housing benefits with the GoC with roles transferring to the GN at Devolution. Inuit have been stewards of these lands since time immemorial, and this program supplements lived and professional experience and knowledge with technical skills and learning related to the administrative responsibilities for lands, waters and resource management in Nunavut.

We will share insights into a project that involves fostering genuine partnerships, embedding co-creation at the heart of our transformative learning, and building an effective framework for client-driven capacity development. Recognizing the essential role of Inuit leadership in shaping Nunavut's future, our approach is rooted in collaboration for the creation of relevant and applied learning. We will showcase how we work with partners to design and deliver a learning experience that resonates with cultural values, local knowledge, and practical needs in support of devolution in Canada's largest territory.

## **Plain Language as a Strategy: Embedding Accessible Communication in Continuing Education for Stronger Industry Alignment**

*Stream: Workforce and Industry Alignment: Upskilling for an Evolving Job Market*

Clear communication is no longer just a compliance or equity requirement—it's a strategic workforce tool. While government directives such as the Government of Canada's Directive on the Management of Communications set baseline expectations for clarity, an increasing number of industries are now adopting plain language as an operational necessity or even a formal requirement. For example, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety's Spell It Out toolkit promotes accessible communication to support safer, more inclusive workplaces.

In this session, I will show how continuing education (CE) programs can leverage plain-language principles to strengthen industry alignment and improve learner outcomes. Although plain language has traditionally focused on clarity and usability, its scope now extends to ethical, inclusive, and equitable communication that supports diverse learners.

Drawing on lessons from Simon Fraser University's Continuing Studies Plain Language Certificate and related communication programs, we will explore approaches for integrating plain language principles into curriculum design, learner supports, and industry partnerships. How can we transform complex information into communication that enhances comprehension, trust, engagement, and employability?



Using examples from SFU's Plain Language Certificate, along with guidance from the International Plain Language Federation's ISO 24495-1/2 standards and Canada's CAN/ASC-3.1:2025 Plain Language Standard, this session will offer practical methods and tools participants can apply immediately within their own contexts.

Accessible communication is a shared responsibility: it fosters inclusion, builds trust, and strengthens connections between education, workplaces, and communities—one clear sentence at a time.

### **The Real Price of Programs: A Framework That Reveals What CE Leaders Miss**

*Stream: Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity*

In an era defined by complexity, shifting learner expectations, and tightening resources, Continuing Education units must adopt more adaptive and resilient operational practices. Yet many institutional decisions are still made using incomplete financial views, often limited to instructional or marketing costs. This leaves leaders without a full understanding of program viability or strategic risk.

This session introduces a practical, institution-wide “all-in” costing framework built to strengthen decision-making, enhance operational resilience, and align CE portfolios with evolving external conditions. Developed at Western Continuing Studies, this model captures the true cost of programming by integrating direct, indirect, and shared service expenses across Professional Development, Corporate Partnerships, and Faculty-partnered programs.

By applying this framework, WCS improved strategic clarity and achieved a 16% year-over-year revenue increase in 2024–25, during a period when many CE units experienced declines. More importantly, the model enabled more transparent conversations with faculty, finance, and leadership, reducing organizational friction and supporting sustainable transformation.

Participants will learn how to:

- Use data-informed costing practices to adapt to market changes and guide strategic planning.
- Collaborate across units to surface operational pressures and hidden cost drivers.
- Build institutional resilience by aligning program portfolios with realistic financial, technological, and staffing requirements.
- Strengthen cross-sector partnerships through transparent pricing and sustainable service models.

## Concurrent Session Eight | May 15 @ 9:00 – 10:00 am

### **The Hidden Accelerator – CE as a Catalyst for Growth and Sustainability**

*Stream: Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity*

Continuing Education (CE) has long been viewed as an auxiliary service in post-secondary institutions, often positioned on the periphery of academic programming. Yet, in today's landscape of shrinking government funding, growing demands for workforce upskilling, and urgent institutional pressures to diversify revenue streams, CE holds the potential to become a powerful accelerator of both growth and sustainability.

This presentation draws from my final MBA Project in Organizational Learning and Development, which examines how CE departments can be strategically restructured to move beyond a “service-provider” model and into the role of a profit-generating, mission-aligned partner within the institution. By integrating internal staff and faculty development, entrepreneurial programming, and external community engagement, CE can serve as a catalyst for innovation and institutional resilience.

Participants will be introduced to a practical framework for reimagining CE as an institutional accelerator. Using research, case examples, and applied organizational development strategies, the session will explore:

- How restructuring CE departments unlocks untapped revenue potential.
- Ways CE can support organizational learning through internal training and professional development.
- Approaches to balancing profitability with the educational mission.
- Tools for aligning CE with institutional strategy to drive long-term sustainability.

The session will be interactive, inviting participants to reflect on the hidden potential within their own CE units and to identify actionable strategies they can take back to their institutions.

### **Culturally Responsive Interventions: Increasing the Completion Rate of Indigenous Students in the Academic Preparation Program**

*Stream: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) and Indigenous Engagement (IE) in CE*

This presentation explores how proactive, culturally responsive interventions can meaningfully improve outcomes for diverse learner populations, using a case study of Indigenous students in the University of Calgary's Academic Preparation Program (APP). Cultural responsiveness in program management and academic advising means designing



services, processes and student support in ways that respect and reflect the different backgrounds, experiences, and needs of learners. It involves adjusting communication, advising approaches, program policies, and learning pathways so students from all cultures feel understood, included and supported (Kazanjian, 2019).

In this presentation, we will share a case study on how the Pre-pathways to Education for Indigenous Students (PEISSA) Program increased completion rates for Indigenous students and created pathways into degree programs through a three-pronged holistic support strategy focused on:

- Direct Student Supports: Personalized advising and administrative guidance throughout the learner journey.
- Course Development: Ongoing evaluation of content and delivery to ensure integration of Indigenous voices and perspectives in the learning experience.
- Instructor training: Professional development inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy, and relational teaching approaches.

These interconnected strategies directly uplift Indigenous learners, remove structural and cultural barriers, and create a pathway into credit programs. This case study demonstrates how culturally responsive interventions within a Continuing Education Academic Preparation Program can strengthen program effectiveness and transform learner outcomes.

By the end of the session, participants will understand how to build proactive, culturally responsive interventions tailored to the needs of diverse learners. They will gain strategies for engaging key partners, aligning supports with organizational goals, and strengthening learner relationships, confidence, and completion rates.

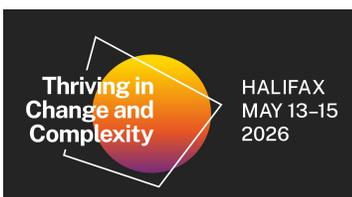
Kazanjian, C. J. (2019) Culturally responsive secondary education: exploring cultural differences through existential pedagogy, *Multicultural Education Review*, 11:1, 27, DOI: 10.1080/2005615X.2019.1567094

### **EdTech & Agentic AI: Bridging the Gap - Let's Be AI Ready, Together.**

Stream: Next-Gen Education: Harnessing the Power of AI and Other Technologies

Move past standard EdTech to HighTech with real-time insights on innovative edtech that are advancing CE to redefine how learning is designed, developed and delivered. This interactive session will - in real time - delve into technological advancements in AI to showcase emerging trends, ethical considerations and practical applications for learning.

Learn the tools, ethical considerations alongside the opportunities these new technologies bring to elevate personalized learning. We will explore AI resources to enrich content



creation and instructional design that enhances digital and AI literacy among learners and educators. A live demonstration will build confidence and awareness of what is emerging and already here

Your takeaways? Each participant will leave the session with practical tools to pilot and practice their learning and confidence of existing AI tools for our learning ecosystem. Plus, learn and build the key questions each educator will benefit from having as we moved to next generation learning to effectively assess, strategize and implement learning experience decisions. These tools, demos and resources will aid CE units for consideration at multiple stages of decision making for learning experiences that engage and support learners.

### **From Audit to Action: Redesigning a Continuing Education Website for Clarity, Connection, and Conversion**

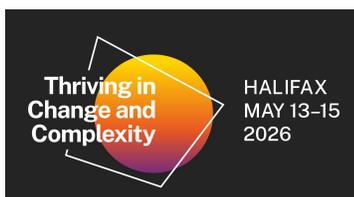
*Stream: Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity*

In 2024, the Faculty of Open Learning and Career Development at Dalhousie University embarked on a comprehensive website renewal as part of Dalhousie's institutional web transformation initiative. This presentation shares how we approached the challenge of redesigning a high-traffic continuing education site—[dal.ca/openlearning](https://dal.ca/openlearning)—to better reflect who we are, what we offer, and how our learners find and engage with us.

We will walk through each stage of the web renewal process, from auditing thousands of pieces of content and mapping user journeys to testing and validating new structures with real users. Emphasis will be placed on how audience research, empathy mapping, and data-driven decision-making shaped the site's new organization and design.

The presentation highlights how our Faculty adapted a complex, university-wide process to our unique context as a self-funded, outward-facing academic unit. We'll share how we reconciled institutional requirements with our faculty's marketing and learner engagement goals, navigated decision fatigue among stakeholders, and made strategic choices grounded in evidence rather than assumption.

By documenting our decisions, testing our sitemap with real users, and iterating based on evidence, we not only launched a more intuitive website—we also created a repeatable model for managing large-scale change in continuing education environment.



## What the Next-Generation LMS Must Make Possible: Saint Mary's University with D2L *Stream: Next-Gen Education: Harnessing the Power of AI and Other Technologies*

Presented by [D2L](#), our Platinum Sponsor

Continuing Education (CE) units are operating in an environment defined by rapid technological change, shifting workforce needs, and increasing expectations for flexible, personalized learning.



Traditional learning management systems were designed primarily for content delivery and course administration. Today, however, the next-generation LMS has the opportunity to move beyond being a content repository and become a more adaptive partner in learning.

Emerging technologies—including AI-supported tutoring, dynamic assessments, and flexible learning pathways—are enabling institutions to better meet learners where they are. For continuing education audiences in particular, learning platforms must support busy professionals through multiple learning modalities, just-in-time resources, and accessible learning experiences that fit within complex work and life schedules.

This session introduces a practical framework for understanding what the next-generation LMS must make possible to support modern continuing education.

Through perspectives from Saint Mary's University and D2L, we will explore how learning platforms can enable educators to design meaningful learning experiences, surface insights that support learner success, and integrate emerging technologies responsibly.

Drawing on examples using D2L Brightspace, the session will illustrate how modern LMS capabilities can support deep learning design, personalization, and workforce-aligned learning experiences while maintaining ethical and responsible use of technologies such as AI.

Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of how CE institutions can leverage next-generation learning platforms to create more flexible, accessible, and future-ready learning environments.