

**Thriving in
Change and
Complexity**

Rising to the challenge in
Continuing Education

CAUCE CONFERENCE 2026

HALIFAX | MAY 13-15

CONFERENCE SUMMARY



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

**FACULTY OF OPEN
LEARNING & CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**



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THRIVING IN CHANGE AND COMPLEXITY: RISING TO THE CHALLENGE IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

The future brings rapid transformations and profound shifts in technology, the workforce, and social dynamics, presenting both opportunities and challenges for continuing education. In this ever-evolving landscape, we are—and will continue to be—committed to creating a meaningful and lasting impact in our communities while prioritizing the changing needs of our learners. This steadfast commitment grounds us, enabling us to innovate and adapt while staying true to what truly matters. Rising to this challenge demands a commitment to constant evolution and the ability to anticipate global trends while delivering transformative learning experiences.

As providers of continuing education, we are tasked with designing agile programs that integrate new technologies, foster inclusivity, and align with the demands of a world in perpetual motion. The skills that are indispensable today may transform tomorrow, requiring us to pioneer solutions that prepare learners for the unknown.

The complexity of the changes ahead calls for collaborative approaches, enabling institutions, educators, and communities to work together to overcome access barriers and create meaningful opportunities for all. While our approaches, methodologies, and topics must evolve to remain relevant, accessible, and impactful, our steadfast mission as providers of continuing education remains unchanged.



"I thought the conference was very well organized and the experience felt seamless from start to finish. There were strong opportunities for networking, and I thought the diversity of session content was good."

-CAUCE 2026 delegate

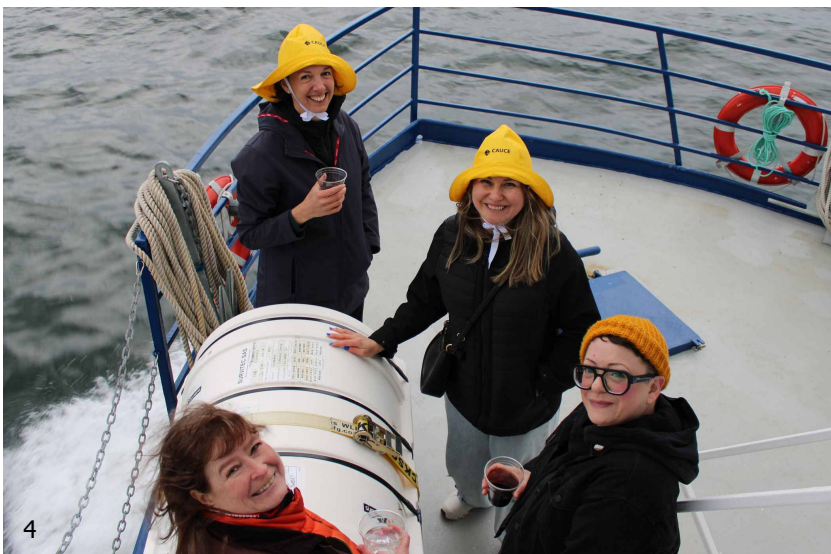
CAUCE 2026: HALIFAX, NS

In 2026, continuing education professionals from across Canada will convene in Halifax, Nova Scotia, for the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education's **72nd Annual Conference**. CAUCE is proud to return to Halifax and Dalhousie University, a longstanding member and five-time conference host, for a conference grounded in collaboration, connection, and forward-looking dialogue.

Held annually since 1954, the CAUCE conference remains a cornerstone of professional exchange for post-secondary continuing education leaders. CAUCE 2026 continues this long-standing tradition by creating space for meaningful learning, knowledge-sharing, and relationship-building at a time of significant transformation in higher education.

Throughout the conference, delegates will engage with pressing themes shaping the future of continuing education, including access, innovation, workforce alignment, and community impact. By bringing together diverse voices and perspectives from across the country, CAUCE 2026 reinforces our shared commitment to advancing lifelong learning and strengthening the role of continuing education within Canada's post-secondary landscape.

CAUCE 2026 marks both a return to a familiar host city and a renewed focus on the evolving needs of learners, institutions, and communities.



The CAUCE 2026 conference provided valuable learning opportunities and fostered connections among CE professionals.

- 1. 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.
- 2. Relevant Information:** Delegates found the sessions relevant and applicable to their work, providing insights and innovations in continuing education.
- 3. 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.
- 4. In-Person Networking:** In-person networking was highly regarded, along with the sessions, food, and conference swag.
- 5. Timely Topics:** Sessions covered timely topics related to continuing education (CE) in Canada and the world.



“This was my first time attending the conference and I feel that it was beneficial to attend. There were great opportunities for networking and sharing best practices.”

-CAUCE 2026 delegate

STATEMENT FROM CAUCE PRESIDENT JO-ANNE CLARKE

The recent CAUCE conference in Halifax was an outstanding success, distinguished by a shared sense of purpose, collaboration, and forward-looking optimism across our continuing education community. Our keynote speakers were deeply inspiring, offering compelling insights that challenged us to think boldly about the future of our field and the critical role we play within it.

The conference sessions, led by talented continuing education practitioners from across the country, reflected both the depth of expertise and the spirit of innovation that define our sector. These discussions underscored an important call to action: that continuing education units must be bold and lean into our unique position to lead meaningful change across higher education. We are well positioned to help shape institutional responses to evolving learner needs, particularly in advancing upskilling and reskilling initiatives. This requires us to continue to innovate programmatically, but also to claim our place at leadership tables, where decisions about workforce development and lifelong learning are being made.

Throughout the conference, there was also a clear recognition that we are operating in a time of significant complexity and rapid change. What stood out, however, was our sector's remarkable resilience and capacity for innovation. Continuing education units are not only adapting - we are thriving by embracing complexity, experimenting with new models, and responding with agility to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Equally meaningful were the opportunities to connect beyond the formal program. The networking events, social gatherings, and especially the memorable harbor boat excursion created space for relationship-building and some East Coast fun, complete with lively Nova Scotian music that brought local culture to life through traditional tunes we could all sing along with.

It was lovely to see a growing number of colleagues from colleges, polytechnics, government and industry join our conference this year. Their participation reinforces that partnership is not only valuable, but essential if we are to effectively address the workforce training challenges and opportunities ahead.

I would also like to extend sincere thanks to our sponsors and collaborators who are truly partners, and whose support and engagement were integral to the success of this conference. Your contributions enrich our work and strengthen the impact of our collective efforts.

Finally, we are deeply grateful to the CAUCE secretariat and our hosts at Dalhousie University for their exceptional hospitality and thoughtful organization. Their leadership ensured a seamless and welcoming experience for all attendees.

We leave Halifax energized and inspired - with new ideas, strengthened partnerships, and even an East Coast fishing in hand, ready to weather whatever comes next.



STATEMENT FROM CONFERENCE HOST

JENNIFER HANN

Welcoming colleagues from across the country to Dalhousie University for this year's Canadian Association for University Continuing Education (CAUCE) conference was a privilege and a profound reminder of the strength of our national continuing education community. Bringing together leaders, practitioners, and innovators from institutions across Canada created space for important conversations about the future of learning and the evolving role our work plays within higher education and society more broadly.

This conference reflected the collaborative spirit that defines continuing education. Over the course of the week, delegates shared ideas, challenged assumptions, explored emerging trends, and highlighted the many ways our institutions are responding to changing learner and workforce needs. Whether discussions focused on access, innovation, partnerships, technology, student success, or community impact, a common thread emerged: Continuing Education remains one of the most responsive and forward-looking areas within post-secondary education.

Hosting the conference in Halifax also gave us an opportunity to introduce delegates to the character and energy of our region. From the waterfront and historic downtown to the strong sense of community that defines Atlantic Canada, we were proud to showcase the people, culture, and hospitality that make Nova Scotia unique. We hope visitors leave not only with new professional connections and ideas, but also with lasting memories of their time on the East Coast.

What stood out most throughout the conference was the willingness of colleagues to think boldly about the future. At a time when higher education institutions are navigating significant pressures and rapid change, continuing education professionals continue to demonstrate creativity, resilience, and a deep commitment to learners. The sessions and conversations throughout the conference reinforced the importance of remaining adaptable, building meaningful partnerships, and continuing to create learning opportunities that are relevant, accessible, and impactful.

Events like CAUCE remind us that the work we do extends far beyond classrooms and campuses. Continuing education helps individuals advance careers, explore new interests, strengthen communities, and respond to changing social and economic realities. That responsibility — and opportunity — has never been more important.

On behalf of the Faculty of Open Learning and Career Development at Dalhousie University, thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of this year's conference — including our delegates, presenters, sponsors, volunteers, planning committee members, and CAUCE leadership. Your generosity, insight, and engagement made this gathering meaningful and memorable.

We are grateful to have hosted you in Halifax and look forward to continuing the conversations and collaborations at next year's conference in Victoria.



“The number of participants felt just right. It was large enough to bring together a strong range of perspectives, but small enough to create a real opportunity to meet people and have meaningful conversations.”

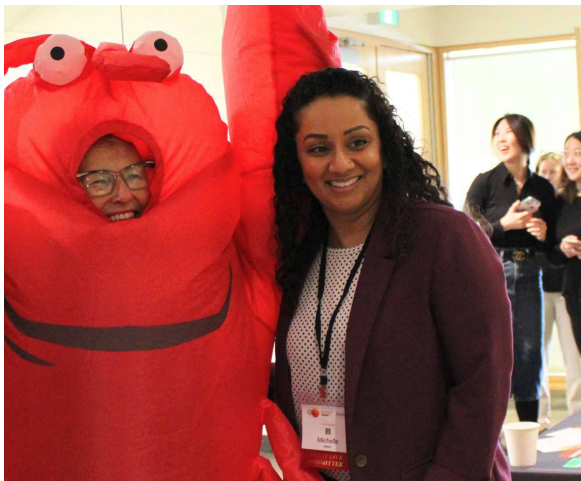
-CAUCE 2026 delegate

STATEMENT FROM CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE CHAIR MICHELLE AARONS

As Chair of the Conference Planning Committee, I am delighted to reflect on CAUCE 2026 in Halifax and extend my sincere thanks to everyone who helped make this year's conference meaningful and energizing. Guided by our theme, "Thriving in Change and Complexity: Rising to the Challenge in Continuing Education," the conference felt especially timely. Across our institutions, we face rapid change and evolving learner expectations, yet it is clear that continuing education is not only responding—we are actively shaping how institutions adapt and thrive.

A special thank you to Dalhousie University for their outstanding partnership and hospitality, creating a welcoming and memorable experience. I also extend appreciation to our keynote speakers, Jackie Pichette and Celina Ceasar-Chavannes, whose insights on leadership, resilience, and innovation sparked important conversations. Thank you to all presenters, sponsors, exhibitors, award recipients, and the many volunteers, committee members, and CAUCE board members whose dedication made this conference possible.

As we conclude CAUCE 2026, we are reminded that thriving in complexity is a shared effort. The ideas and connections formed in Halifax will continue to strengthen our work moving forward. Thank you for being part of this community, and I hope you leave with renewed perspective and inspiration as we continue to lead through change together.



"Each session that I attended was equally valuable, as they were all relevant and timely in our current environment."

"Thank you for all your hard work. An incredible and joyful couple of days."

-CAUCE 2026 delegates

CAUCE 2026 Snapshot



"This was my first CAUCE Conference, and I really hope I am fortunate enough to be able to attend again next year."

-CAUCE 2026 delegate



OPENING KEYNOTE: JACKIE PICHETTE

Modernizing the Continuing Education Model: From Testing Times to Transformative Opportunities

In response to the 2025 RBC report Testing Times: Fending off a crisis in Canadian Postsecondary Education, an unnamed Canadian Professional and Continuing studies leader (is that you, Sheila LeBlanc?) served the report's author, Jackie Pichette, a classic feedback sandwich:

Top slice of bread: I'm glad to see you have joined the RBC team. You've written about topics relevant to the CS realm.

Feedback: However, how is it possible that you wrote the whole report without mentioning Continuing Education?

Bottom slice of bread: I loved the report; would you like to present at CAUCE 2026?

So that's how we found ourselves at the CAUCE 2026 opening keynote session listening to Jackie Pichette, Director Skills Policy, Royal Bank of Canada.

Pichette observed that while industry is calling for modernization and responsiveness to deliver skills and innovation for competitiveness, and government is requiring large-scale changes to demonstrate labour market alignment and relevance to Canadians, post-secondary is crying out for funding and sharing supporting examples of their modernization and relevance. However, PSIs are unable to hide the fact that they are old, grounded in tradition, and both slow and resistant to change.

After moving from post-secondary to the Royal Bank of Canada, Pichette said she really felt the contrast between the staid-ness of PSIs and the (to her surprising) cutting-edge-ness of RBC, calling the key players in RBC's history and growth "people who mastered the art of cautionary boldness." Her point: CE units are assets in the transformation that the sector needs to make.

The question becomes: how can CE help postsecondary move from the periphery to the centre? How can we be the playmakers?

Suggestion one: Be bold. Rise to the challenge.

Suggestion two: Gather data.

Suggestion three: Pull people along.

At the conclusion of her presentation, Pichette said that if she could go back and rewrite the report, she would highlight what should have been said about CE's role in transformation. The innovative work that CS units are doing should be recognized and celebrated at institutions across the country, and we as CE leaders need to employ "cautionary boldness" to achieve this recognition.

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

"I wish I could attend every year!
So inspiring and fun."

-CAUCE 2026 delegate



CLOSING KEYNOTE: CELINA CAESAR-CHAVANNES

Rising to the Challenge: Calm, Clarity, and Courage in Continuing Education

Celina Caesar-Chavannes invites, no, encourages, no demands that we as educators and continuing studies practitioners engage and activate our power and privilege as “strong middle powers” (to use Mark Carney’s provocative term). “This is the time to flex,” she tells us, and to do that we have to reconcile the complicated demands of a VUCA world. When everything around us is mired in volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity we are, bluntly, VUC’D.

But how can we flex, she asks, when the responsibility and burden of leadership feel heavier than ever? We need to talk about how we live, even thrive, in a VUCA world. Because disruption is not going anywhere, we need to learn to live within it, ideally by committing to our values. Our world has changed, uncertainty is increasing, there is need for rapid decision-making and demands to carry a greater load. Leadership feels heavier because it is.

Caesar-Chavannes reminds us that in uncertain times, the brain prioritizes safety over sense-making. When we are in “fill the gaps with story” mode, we aren’t thinking, we are in the place where speed replaces discernment and where we react before we think. To counter this, she suggests taking time to acknowledge our physical responses to circumstances, to ask “what did I just feel, and why”? Taking a moment to pause and name before acting helps us to be compassionate with ourselves and, by extension, with each other. Remember, she says, that it’s ok to say, “I’m here to help you but I don’t know how.” Finding the way to calm leadership “is the only way to survive in our VUCA world,” Caesar-Chavannes concludes. “You can’t lead with calm out there unless it exists in here.”

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



“Both keynotes were great. The opening keynote was valuable in contextualizing the current state of CE and how it is seen by industry via Jackie Pichette’s research. The closing keynote by Celina Caesar-Chavannes was inspiring, blunt (which was appreciated), and it was a joy to listen to her.”

-CAUCE 2026 delegate

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Thank you to all the presenters who shared their knowledge and expertise. There were 63 individuals who presented 40 concurrent sessions, organized within five streams

- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) and Indigenous Engagement (IE) in CE
- Leadership and Operations Reimagined: Adapting to Complexity
- Next-Gen Education: Harnessing the Power of New Educational
- Pathways to Possibilities: Flexible Learning for Career Growth
- Workforce and Industry Alignment: Upskilling for an Evolving Job Market

Thank you to those who attended CAUCE 2026 and thank you to all our volunteers and sponsors!

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