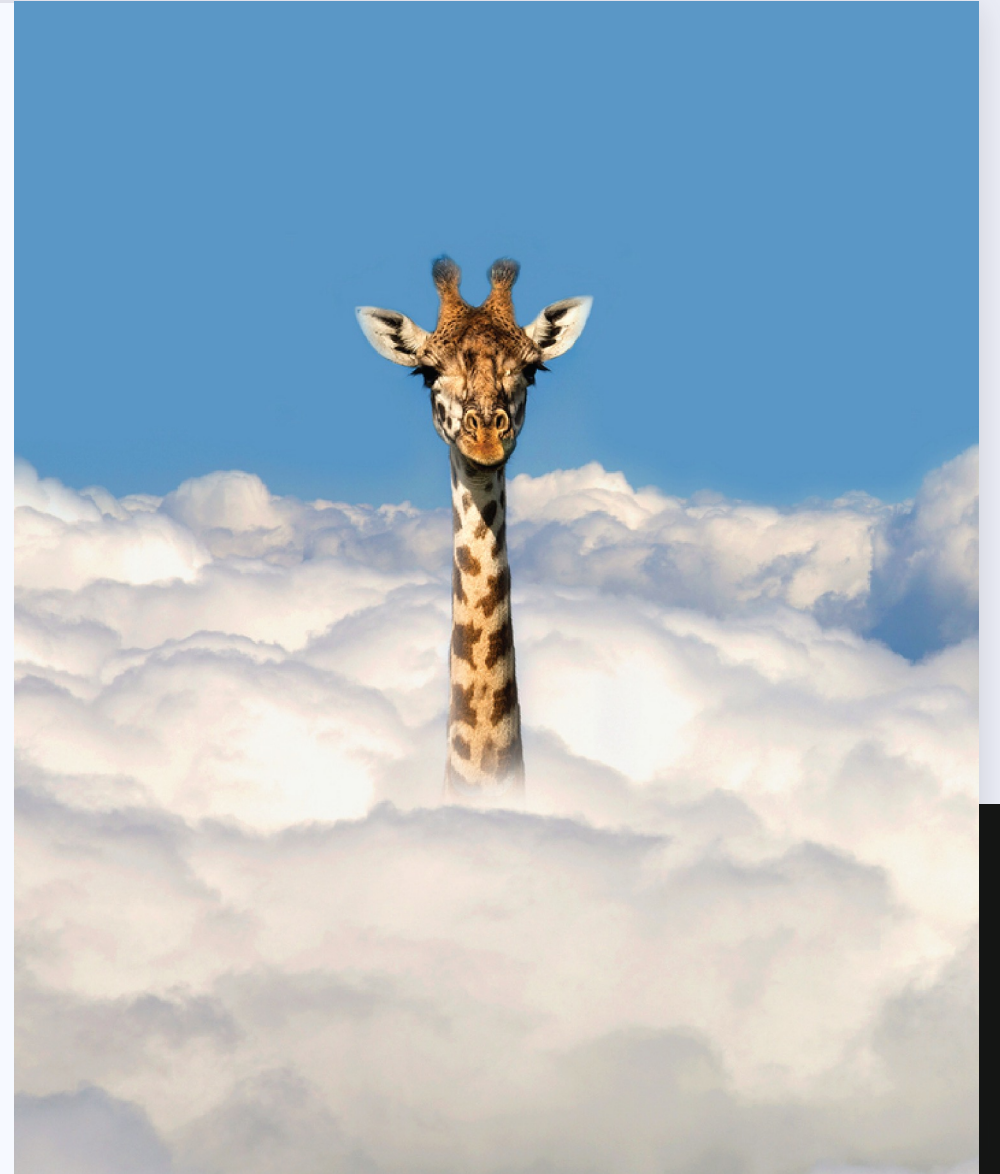


# **MICRO-CREDENTIAL TOOLKIT STORY SPOTLIGHT: EDUCATION PATHWAYS**

SUSAN FORSEILLE

DIRECTOR, PLAR

THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY



# TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- I have the privilege of joining this webinar from Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, where I have had the privilege to live, play, work, and learn.
- I am honoured to have this learning, and am borrowing a phrase, a value, from Secwepemctsin (*language of the Secwepemc*) “Pelkwaílč-kt es knucwentwécw-kt” meaning we come together to help one another



Simpw First Nation canoe journey, North Thompson River  
Photo courtesy of Simpaw First Nation



TRU Indigenous Education

# AGENDA

Overview of contribution to toolkit

Higher education over the years

Epistemological considerations

Our changing labour market

Our changing world

New and growing pathways, PLAR and the credit bank

PLAR at TRU

PLAR in BC

A pilot project to assess MC

New Pathway considerations

# Two Contributions to Toolkit

## TRU's Experience with PLAR

Susan Forseille is director of prior learning and assessment recognition (PLAR) at Thompson Rivers University (TRU). She is also the chair of the board of directors of the [British Columbia's Prior Learning Action Network \(BCPLAN\)](#), a network of organizations that promotes increased access to B.C. post-secondary credentials through informed recognition of adults' past experiences, as well as a member of the board of the [Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment \(CAPLA\)](#). She is currently completing her PhD on the impacts of PLAR on career development. Below, she shares her knowledge about the state of PLAR in B.C. and the process TRU developed to support adult learners.

### Interview

#### How do you define PLAR?

"PLAR stands for prior learning assessment and recognition. It is a process used to evaluate and recognize the knowledge, skills, and abilities that a person has acquired outside of post-secondary education. The PLAR process involves assessing a student's previous learning experiences such as work, volunteer, and/or self-directed study, to determine if they meet the requirements for academic credits or recognition."

#### Why is there renewed interest in PLAR?

"When I first started in PLAR I was told that in the 1990s, institutions received funding to develop PLAR from the provincial government. This funding stimulated innovation and interest in recognizing the prior learning that adults bring to their studies. However, when the funding stopped, institutions turned to other priorities. In the past few years there has been another growth of interest of PLAR."

"I think the revived interest that we are observing comes primarily from two sources. The first is the labour market. The labour market has never changed as rapidly as it is changing right now, nor has it ever been as unpredictable. We are seeing larger changes than during the post World War II era. The profound restructuring of the labour forces is not just a result of the pandemic, it is from the demographic changes we are going through. Currently in Canada there are over a million vacant positions. As our population ages we don't have enough people of working age to fill these positions, and projections are that the continued aging of our population will see increasing struggles to fill positions."

## TRU's Experience with the Credit Bank

Susan Forseille is director of prior learning and assessment recognition (PLAR) at Thompson Rivers University (TRU). In this role, she is responsible for administering the TRU credit bank. Below, she shares how TRU evaluates programs for the credit bank and talks about a pilot provincial credit bank for micro-credentials.

### Interview

#### What is the credit bank?

"The credit bank is a type of PLAR. It is a database of educational programs that are not part of the BCCAT system (often they are non-credit training) that TRU has rigorously evaluated and deemed to be worthy of TRU credit."

#### What programs are part of the credit bank?

"There are many training providers out there. Think, for example, of the training a person would get if they worked as a dental hygienist or massage therapist. Or of the management training they might receive if they worked for an insurance organization. Or, a First Nations group that is offering excellent training in band administration. Or, of the training received by completing the Canadian Association of Medical Radiology Technologist certification. Increasingly we have students asking about training offered through a MOOC on Coursera. These are all worthwhile training and we wanted to find a way to rigorously assess them and determine whether they might be recognized as PLAR credits."

#### How does a program come to be in the credit bank?

"The process typically begins with the organization approaching us. For them, it can be an advantage to promote their program and say that upon successful completion, the program will ladder into a TRU Bachelor of Health, for example."

"Once we agree to review a provider's training program, they pay a fee to cover the expenses of the review. This fee does not guarantee that their program will be awarded PLAR credit. We are upfront and transparent about this, and it is important to maintain the legitimacy and integrity of the process."

#### Which aspects of these programs do you review?

"We have developed a tool, inspired by the [American Council on Education \(ACE\)](#) process."

## TRU'S EXPERIENCE WITH PLAR

How do you define PLAR?

Why is there renewed interest in PLAR?

What are the benefits of devoting resources to PLAR for learners and for the Institution?

What is the current state of PLAR in BC?

Who are the exemplars for PLAR that institutions can look to as they develop their own approaches?

How does TRU conduct a PLAR assessment? What's involved?

How does PLAR work for Indigenous learners?



## TRU'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE CREDIT BANK

What is the credit bank?

What programs are part of the credit bank?

How does a program come to be in the credit bank?

Which aspects of these programs do you review?

Who conducts the review?

Once the SME recommend a program for PLAR credit what happens next?

Are there variations on the theme of how you conduct the credit bank review?

What's the connection between the credit bank and micro-credentials?

**A DEEPER DIVE WITH AN INTERESTING TWIST...**

**... SET THE STAGE FOR FOR THE GROWTH IN  
PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT DEMAND, MC,  
AND EDUCATION PATHWAYS**



# HIGHER EDUCATION OVER THE YEARS



CANADA'S FIRST EDUCATIONAL  
INSTITUTION, 1663, SÉMINAIRE DE  
QUEBEC (NOW LAVAL UNIVERSITY)



UBC, BC'S FIRST PROVINCIAL  
UNIVERSITY, 1908



TRU, 2005 (MANDATE)



# EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- How we know what we know
- What is knowledge
- How we acquire it
- The value of knowledge
- Whose knowledge is most valued



# OUR CHANGING WORLD



CLIMATE CHANGE

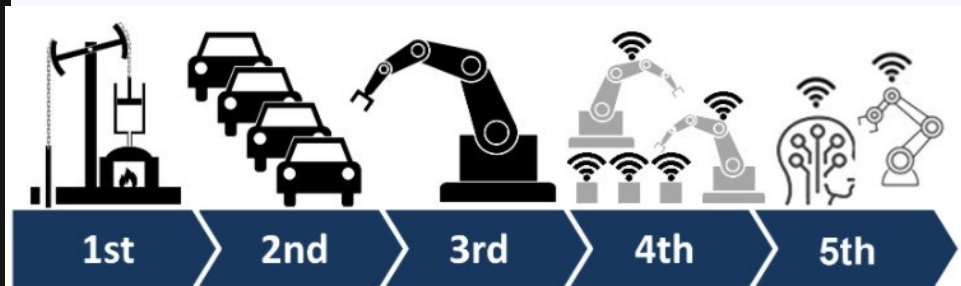


SOCIAL POLARIZATION

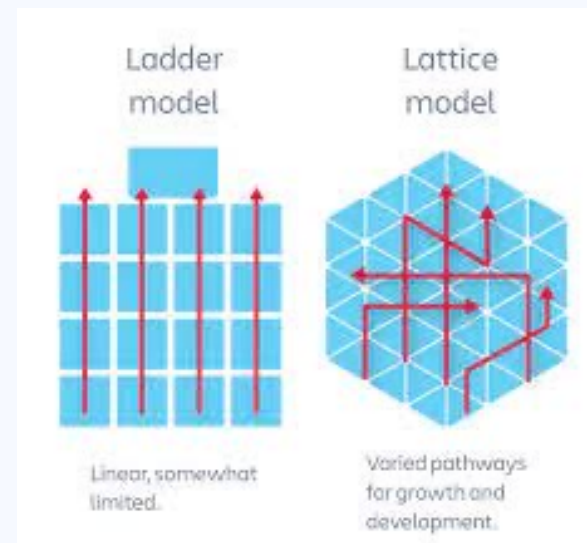


AGING POPULATION

# Our Changing World Continued



## 5<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution



## Changes in Career Progression and Development

B.C.'s Economic Plan:

A plan for today,  
a vision for  
tomorrow



## Our Changing Labour Market:

- As the *World Economic Forum Jobs 2020* report (2020) noted, there is an increasing need to provide short-timeframe opportunities for re-skilling and upskilling that will not diminish as we move forward
- Micro-credentials have been proposed as a strategy to enable the ongoing development of knowledge and skills across the workforce

Reskilling needs



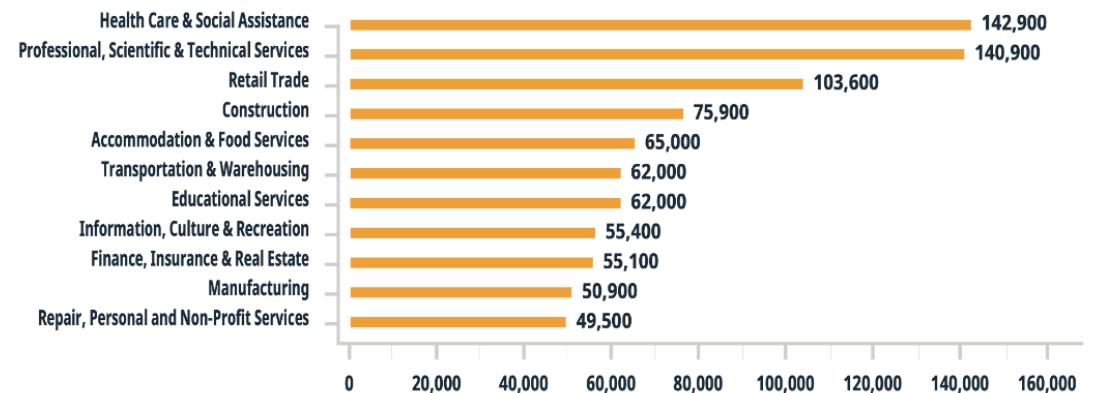


# THE FUTURE OF JOBS IN BC

## Of the more than one million job openings in B.C. over the next 10 years:

- Almost 80 percent will require post secondary training and education
- The highest demand jobs will be in the caring economy and scientific and technical services sectors
- The demand will not be met without meaningful steps to reduce barriers that will keep people out of the labour market

### Job openings by Major Industry over the next decade



Courtesy: Labour Market Outlook 2021

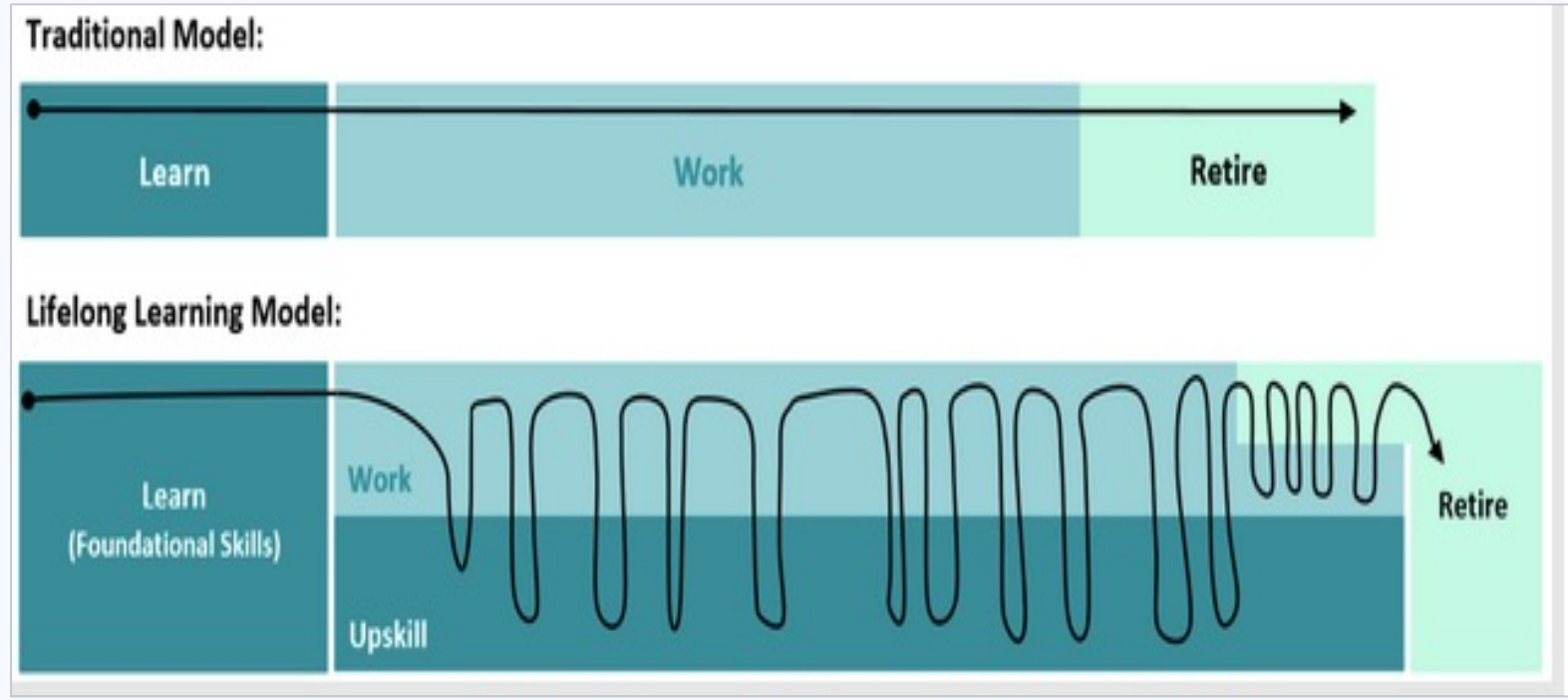
- Average age of student is increasing
- Many students are working full-time, have care-giving responsibilities, have to fit studies around life
- Mature learners have lived learning/experience
- More competition
  - Coursera: 124 million registered learners as of March 31, 2023 (World Economic Forum)
  - IBM Skills Build, 30 million users by 2030
  - Google's career certificates: \$49 per month, (delivered through Coursera)
  - Saylor Academy: nearly 100 courses, your pace, your schedule, free
- Need Education that is accessibility, flexible, current, mobile

## Our Changing Learners



Image source: <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/teaching-adult-students-considerable-professional-expertise/>

# THE NEED FOR LIFELONG LEARNING IS INCREASING...



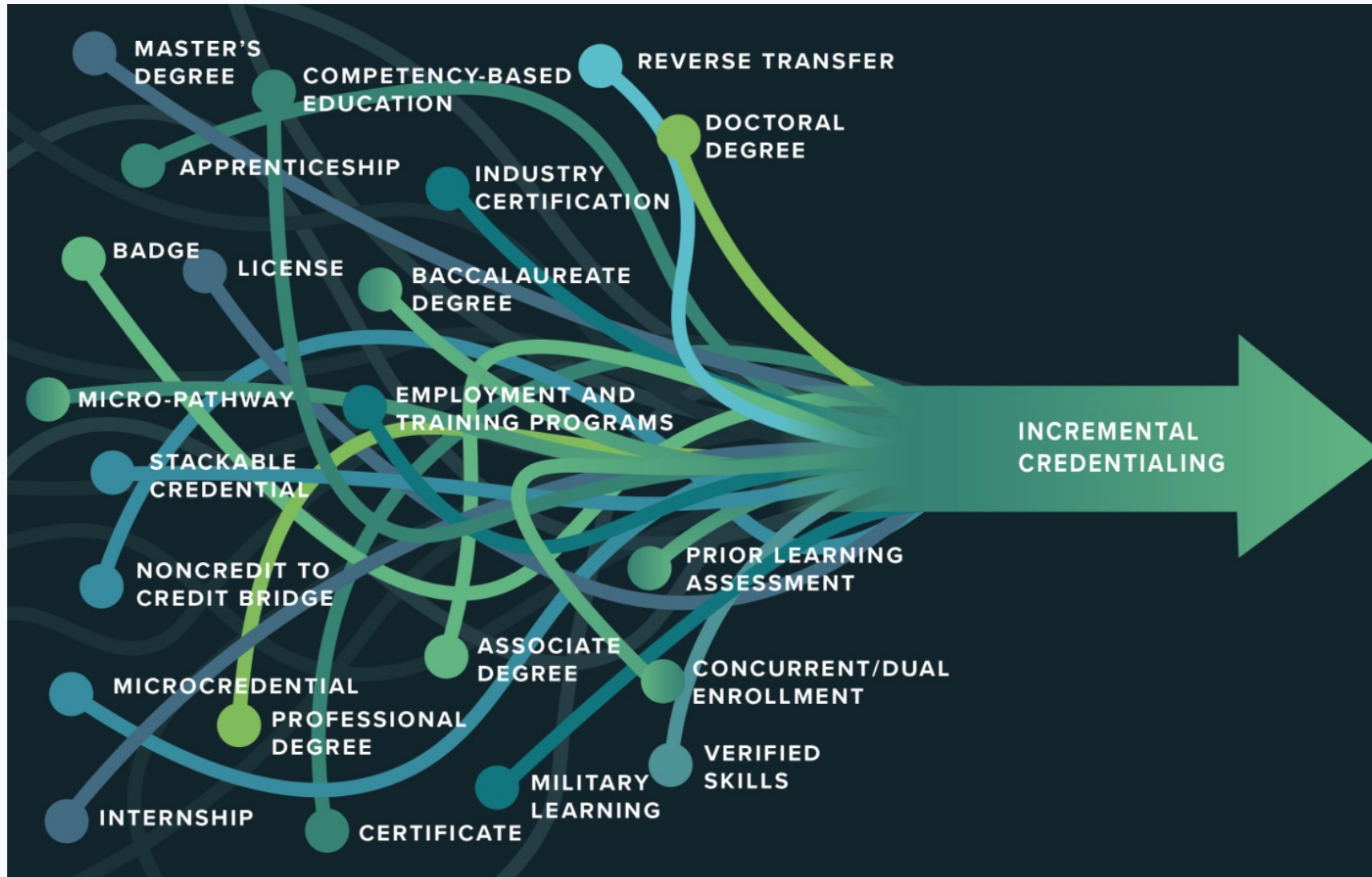
**DISCUSSION  
QUESTION:**

What other changes are greatly affecting our education systems?



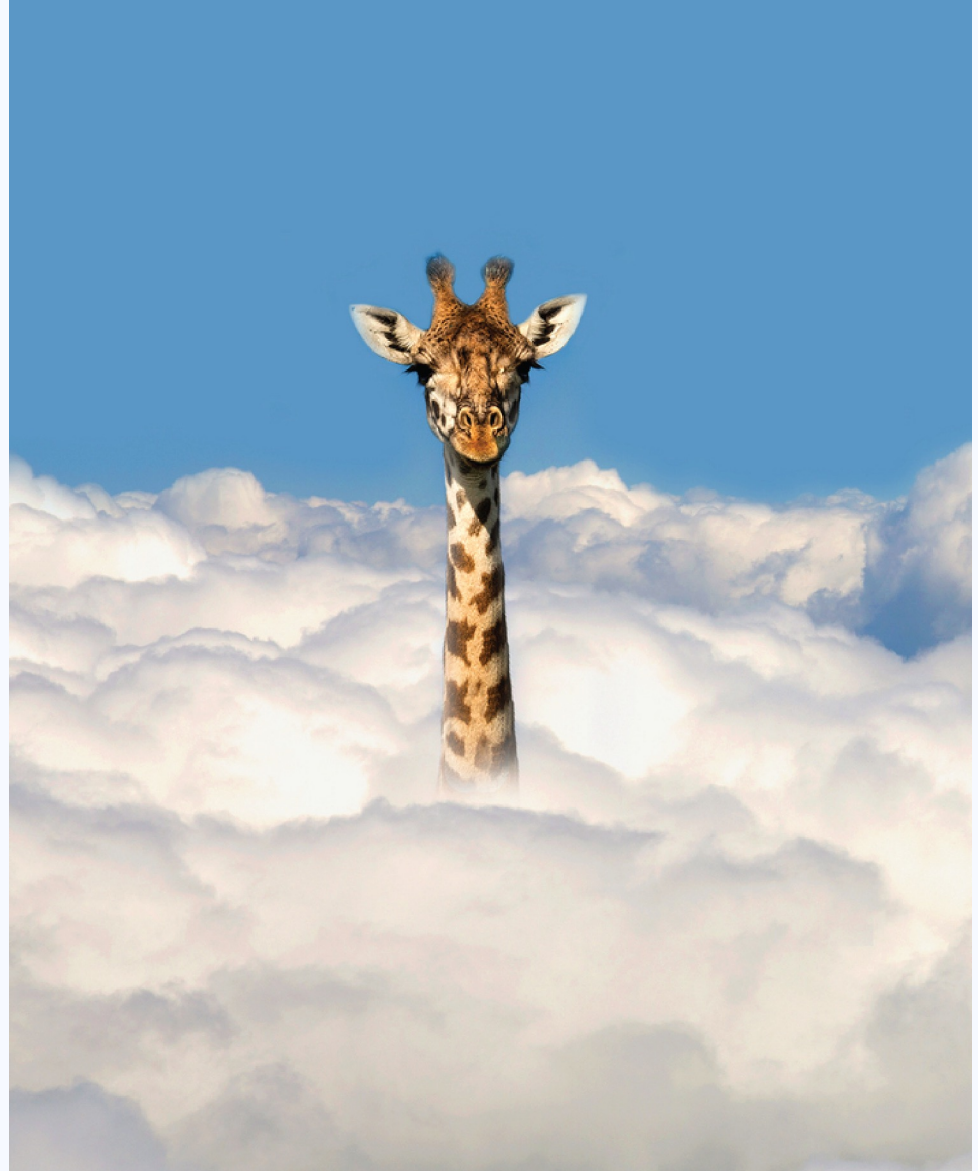
**WHAT WE KNOW, HOW WE  
LEARN, HOW PRIOR  
LEARNING IS VALIDATED**

**NEW PATHWAYS ARE NEEDED**



Excellent  
Image  
From  
American  
Initiative,  
Credential  
as You Go

**HOW DO WE GET THERE?**





# NEW AND GROWING PATHWAYS WITH PLAR AND THE CREDIT BANK





# Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR)

PLAR is a process to assess informal and non-formal learning

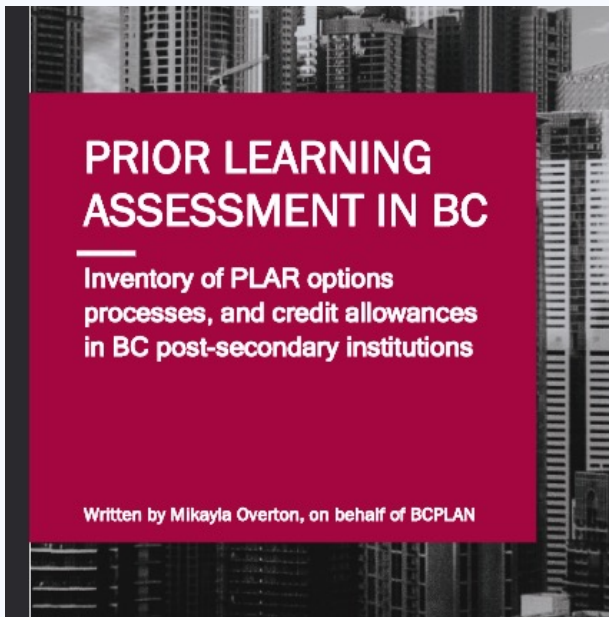
TRU has one of the largest PLAR programs in Canada and awards over 70% of PLAR credit in BC

There are multiple PLAR paths, including advanced entry, course-based, competency-based, challenge exams, and the...

...credit bank: pre-assessment of community-based programs, online course(s), private trainers, organizational training, and micro-credentials

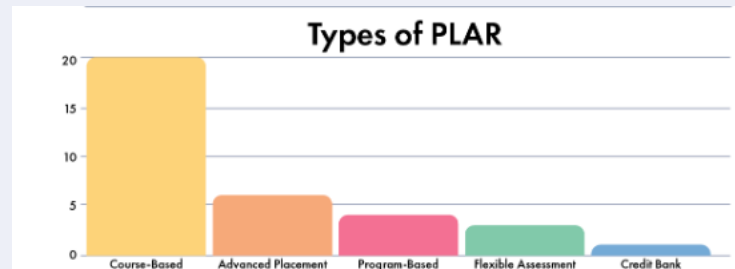


# PLAR IN BC

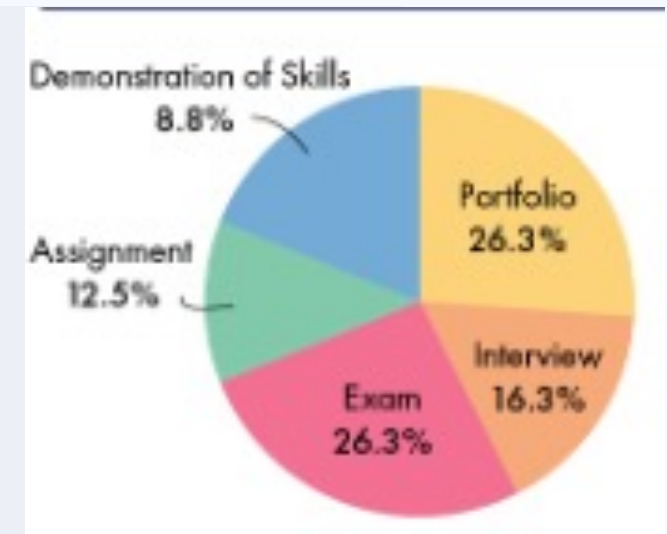


## PLAR IN BC REPORT

[HTTPS://BCPLAN.CA/RESOURCES/DOCUMENT S/REPORT%203-BCPLAN%20WEBSITE.PDF](https://bcplan.ca/resources/document/s/report%203-bcplan%20website.pdf)



## TYPES OF PLAR



## ASSESSMENT METHODS

**In January  
2023, a  
partnership  
began...**



**Can PLAR processes be used to  
assess MC for PS credit?**

- Prototype, test, and document a repeatable process for assessing micro-credentials to assign academic credit
- Test existing processes, such as the TRU Credit Bank process for assessing prior learning, as potential tools for micro-credential assessment
- Explore how assessed credit might be applied to a BC PSI's certificate, diploma, or undergraduate degree programs
- Report findings and share recommendations with the Ministry, provincial education agencies, and post-secondary institutions



**How can we extend our thinking about PLAR to include micro-credentials**

# 12 PILOT PROJECT STEPS



**1. RESEARCH**



**2. ASSESSOR COMMITTEE**



**3. SELECTED MC TO ASSESS**



## 4. Vital Step: Developed a prototype data collection form (what and how to assess)

INSTITUTION OR PROVIDER INFORMATION REQUIRED			
1. Institution	• Assessor's comments	2. Institution Department	• Assessor's comments
3. Institution leads and position	• Assessor's comments	4. AEST MC Funding Phase	• Assessor's comments
MICRO-CREDENTIAL INFORMATION			
5. Title of micro-credential	• Assessor's comments	6. Pre-requisites (if any)	• Assessor's comments
7. Content description	• Assessor's comments	8. Learning outcomes	• Assessor's comments
9. Delivery mode: pace and structure	• Assessor's comments	10. Assessment methods	• Assessor's comments
11. Course syllabus/lesson plans and inherent requirements	• Assessor's comments	12. Learner effort, volume of learning and contact hours	• Assessor's comments
13. Existing credit recognition status if any	• Assessor's comments	14. Pathways associated with MC: stacking or laddering	• Assessor's comments
15. Quality assurance process or statement	• Assessor's comments	16. Additional comments (Possibly: depth of learning, linkage to an industry competency framework)	• Assessor's comments
MICRO-CREDENTIAL INSTRUCTOR/ASSESSOR INFORMATION			
17. Instructor qualifications and/or organizational policy on instructor hiring	• Assessor's comments	18. Assessor(s)	• Assessor's comments
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION			
19. Award recording, transcription, or method of recording of the micro-credential at institution offering the course	• Assessor's comments	20. Endorsements by industry or employer groups	• Assessor's comments
ASSESSMENT SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION			
21. Assessment summary	Assessor's summary		
22. Assessment recommendation	Assessor's recommendation		



5. Collected data on micro-credentials using a self-study process



6. Collated, analyzed, and summarized data



7. Surveyed participants for feedback on the data collection process



8. Redesigned data collection form

9. DEVELOPED CRITERIA FOR ASSESSORS;  
RECRUITED AND TRAINED ASSESSORS
10. CONDUCTED SECOND ASSESSMENTS  
WITH 2-3 SME PER MICRO-CREDENTIAL  
FOR TRU CREDIT BANK
11. SURVEYED PARTICIPANTS FOR  
FEEDBACK ON THE PROCESS
12. PRODUCED A SUMMARY REPORT OF  
FINDINGS



**MICRO-CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT  
HANDBOOK - PILOT PROJECT V1.0**

DRAFT ONLY

*Handbook draft for use with institutions' self-study of micro-credentials for assessment*

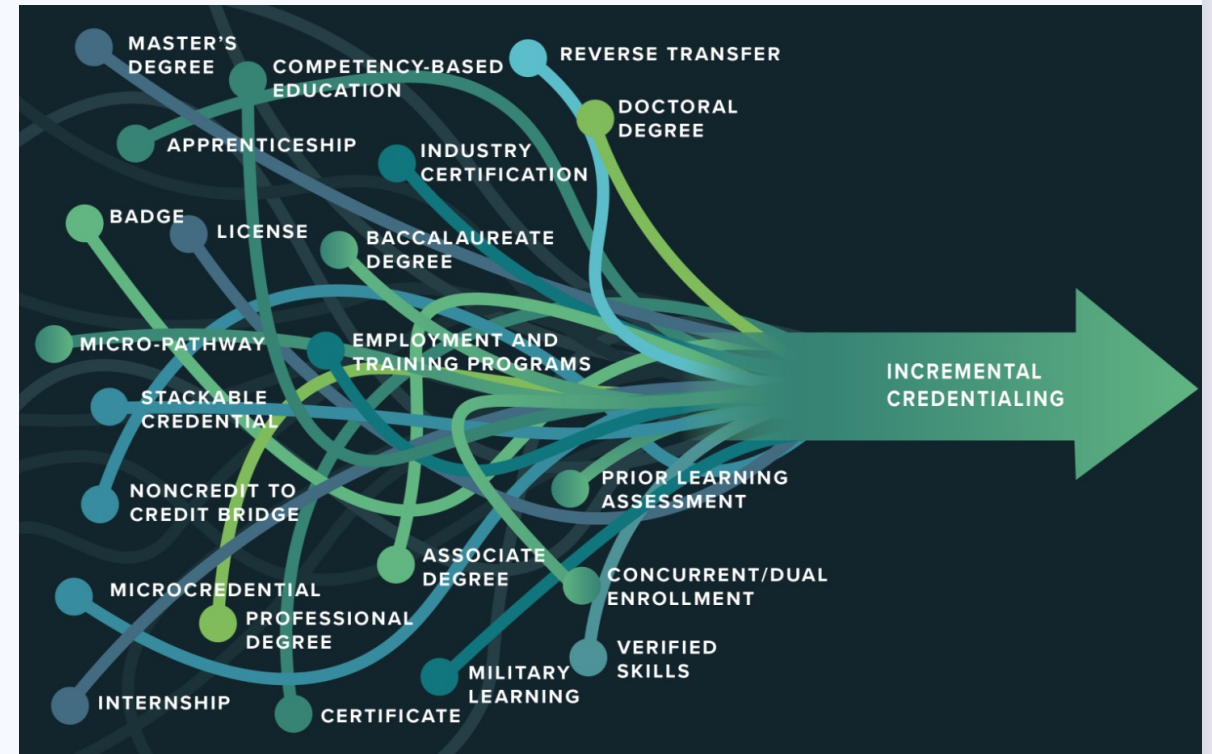
# **DISCUSSION QUESTION:**

Thoughts on this pilot  
project?



# NEW PATHWAYS CONSIDERATIONS

1. How can we better validate prior learning?
2. What can come next?
3. How do we scale up?
4. How do we expand PLAR provincially?
5. Thoughts on a Provincial Credit Bank?
6. What about a provincial centre for PLAR excellence?



# Questions & Comments

