Transcript for Micro-credential Toolkit Story Spotlight: Education Pathways (November 16, 2023)
BCcampus event hosted November 16, 2023
Facilitator: Susan Forseille
Host: Ross McKerlich

ROSS MCKERLICH:
All right. Welcome. My name is Ross McKerlich. I am a project manager here at BCcampus, and today I'm really excited to start our Micro-credential Toolkit Story Spotlight series. I'll explain about the context in a bit, but if you're here for that particular topic, you're in the right place. It's also just a note that the webinar will be recorded. Also, the resources will be available after the webinar as well. You'll be notified about where and that sort of thing. I just wanted to start in a good way by acknowledging the territory that we're on as BCcampus is an organization. We have offices in Victoria and Vancouver. For thousands of years, the Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish, and the Esquimalt Nations and the Songhees Nation of the Lekwungen Peoples have walked gently on the unceded territories where we now live, work, and play. As both individuals and an organization, we continue to learn and build relationships as we actively respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. I personally am joining you from the syilx/Okanagan Nation. I'm located in Kelowna, British Columbia, in the Interior of our province. I, too, am very thankful to live, work, and play on their land. And I enjoy building relationships in this area, both on the lake, in the summer, on the mountain, in the winter and places in between. I encourage you to use the chat if you wish to mention where you are joining us from.

I wanted to also thank the Ministry as well, Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. In this case, they're very supportive and they're leading the whole micro-credential initiative. Their support and the funding and their leadership if it was without that, then this Micro-credential Toolkit that we're going to be diving into a bit more clearly today would not have been possible. Thank you for the Ministry's support in this.

I was going to talk about the Toolkit. Actually, I just was going to mention that actually for Kaitlyn to add the link just in case. But the Toolkit was released in September of 20, was it two months ago now. September of 2023. It's been accessed a lot, which is great. What we're going to do though just in the next couple of webinars to dive a little bit deeper. One of the things, one of the features of the Toolkit is that it has a number of stories in the Toolkit. Stories from the B.C. post-secondary sector about the different aspects of micro-credentials, the different areas of learning. We wanted to dig deeper into a couple of these stories and therefore we'll learn more about that particular section of the Toolkit. In this case, it's not going to be a regurgitation of the story because indeed we probably read the story already. There's great questions and great learning. But it'll be actually getting more about the background and the backstory, if you will, of the Toolkit story, so we're looking forward to that. That's the reason for these Toolkit story spotlights. There's at least two more coming one in January and one in February. I'll give you that information near the end.

In terms of our Spotlight today. we're diving into the design section. Design is actually one of five sections in the Toolkit. Within the design section, there's three chapters. And we're going to be looking at stories from two of them, educational pathways and recognition of learning. We're going to be talking about how micro-credentials interact and relate and fit into these two things as well. We're very fortunate to have our facilitator today, Susan Forseille from Thompson Rivers University. She's the director of prior learning assessment and recognition. In this case, TRU is a leader in this particular field, but also Susan is a global leader in this field, speaking internationally on these topics. We're really glad to have Susan with us today. She'll be taking us through those stories that she contributed to. Again, a lot of the backstory as well. Susan, welcome.

SUSAN FORSEILLE:
Thank you very much. I'll just share my presentation now. Thank you very much for inviting me today. I remember coming to the first session of this which was Annie's, the brains behind the Toolkit, and thinking, Oh my gosh, this is going to be a tough one to follow. Then Annie sent me a note saying, "Good luck, break a leg." And it's like, oh, you're really a hard act to follow. I'll do my best, and today I'm going to talk about Micro-Credential, the Toolkit Story, specifically on education pathways. I'm going to do things a little bit differently. For those of you who know me, you might not be surprised at that. But I'm going to talk about prior learning assessment and recognition or PLAR, as we affectionately call it. Credit banks and contextualizing it all in a quick history of post-secondary education, the labour market, and why micro-credentials and increasing student pathways are so important to discuss. I'm going to do this by taking us on a bit of a journey. As this image shows, lifting our heads a little bit higher to see what's around us. If you'll bear with me, I hope it all makes sense in the end. I'll start with doing a territorial acknowledgment. I have the privilege of joining this webinar from Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc where I've had the privilege to live, play, work, and learn. In the territories where we have the privilege to live, learn, work, and play, we have Tk'emlúps, the T'exelc, the St'át'imc, the Nlaka'pamux, the Nuxalk, Tŝilhqot'in, Nations. One of the things I'm borrowing for today's presentation is a phrase in the Secwépemc language, more than a phrase. It's really a value phrase that they use calling, "We come together to help one another," and I feel that's what we're doing today. This image here on the screen is a picture from the Simpcw Nation and their canoe journey down the Thompson Rivers. I thought that was good to show all in the same boat rowing the same direction, coming together to help one another.
The agenda today is full, and we are going to get this done in the next 20 minutes or so, adding another 10, 15 minutes for discussions throughout the presentation. But I'm going to start with an overview of the specific contribution to the Toolkit. Then for those of you who don't know me, my first career was in history, and I love looking at big pictures and patterns, and I thought that was really important to share today. Just a couple of quick slides on that. And then some epistemological considerations. Moving into our changing labour market and our changing world. And that's because it really helps contextualize why we've had such significant changes in education and why we need more. Then that's going to lead into new and growing pathways, including discussions about PLAR, the credit bank and micro-credentials. And I'll define what all of those are further in the presentation. I'm going to spend a tiny bit of time talking about PLAR

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at Thompson Rivers University, talking about PLAR in the province, but I'm going to spend a good chunk of time talking about a pilot project that we completed for the provincial government at the exact same time that BCcampus and Annie and others are working on the Toolkit. Then we're going to put our heads together and talk about new pathway considerations.

I'll start by this really simple image of screenshots of the two contributions to the Toolkit. We have TRU's experience with prior learning assessment and recognition, and TRU's experience with the credit bank. Now, don't worry, I'm not going to read this word for word. But I did want you to have a visual because I thought it was important for you to see the hyperlinks and further pages, the questions and key takeaways. It's a really excellent design in how to get specific information very quickly. As Ross shared, I'm going to dive much deeper than what these pages provided.

Just a quick overview of TRU's experience with PLAR. If you haven't read it or if you want to read it, what it talks about or what the contribution includes. How do we define why? Is there renewed interest in PLAR? What are the benefits of devoting resources to PLAR for learners, the institution, but I would say community and society in general? What is the current state of PLAR in B.C., and I have a slide on that. Who are the exemplars for PLAR that institutions look to as they develop their own approaches? I'm just going to skip to the last bullet here. How does PLAR work for Indigenous learners? I'm not going to talk too much about that today because it really requires its own presentation, its own webinar. But I will say that TRU has been immersed in decolonizing and indigenizing PLAR for the last five years. This is some of the most rewarding work I've ever done in my career and also some of the most profound learning I've ever done. What we've learned from indigenizing and decolonizing, we've applied to all of our PLAR processes, and it's made it a much richer program for all students. One day I'll speak in more detail about that.

The second contribution is TRU's experience with the credit bank. I answered questions on what is the credit bank? What programs are part of the credit bank? How does a program come to be in the credit bank? And I'm not going to read this whole list out, but there's some pretty good content in there too. Some basic information on credit bank and micro- credentials because they swirl and live in very similar spaces. That's the Toolkit.

Before I dive deeper into that, I'm going to start with an interesting twist. Not many of us have seen a whale pulling an airplane through the air. But this is important to do because this sets the agenda for the growth in prior learning assessment demand and micro-credentials, and new education, or expanding education pathways.

 So if you'll indulge me for a few slides. A really quick overview of higher education in Canada over the last, well, let's say 500 years. You didn't think you were doing that today.

Canada's very first education institution came way back in 1663. Though this is a picture from, I believe, the 1800s and that was the University of Laval as we call it today, or Laval University. And it started off as a séminaire in Quebec in 1663. Jumping forward to Confederation, there were 17 degree-granting institutions in the founding provinces. The four founding provinces, and I struggle with this wording, four of those were non-denominational. That was Dalhousie, McGill, New Brunswick had a university, and the University of Toronto. The 13 remaining ones were church related and controlled. This actually surprised me. In 1867, there were about 100 students per institution. Just think of how much that's grown in the following years. Today we have 223 public and private universities, 213 public colleges, and just a little bit more, 66% of Canadians have a bachelor's degree for those aged 25 to 34, and those numbers go up once you go over the age of 34. UBC, as most of us, all of us know, was our first provincial university started in 1908. Of course, I cannot do this presentation without talking about TRU. We came together to become Thompson Rivers University in 2005 and that was our joining of the Open Learning Agency, which was operating out of Burnaby and the University College of the Caribou. I put this little code to myself in their mandate. Part of TRU's mandate is to continue the open learning legacy and provide it for the province. But also in our mandate is to provide a provincial credit bank. That gets really important towards the end of this presentation.

Now with all of these changes in the history of Canada's post- secondary education. I would just say globally, there's been some really important epistemological considerations and asking questions about how we know, what we know, what is knowledge, how do we acquire it, the value of knowledge. Increasingly, as we move into the indigenization, whose knowledge is most valued? How do we move it out of those colonial mindsets and open it up so it's more accessible to a much wider variety of people? That goes down to democracy and accessibility and inclusion. That again, is another presentation, so I won't spend too much time there.

Then when we look at some of the profound history we've been through. Just a few really important considerations as to why we need different and new pathways for post- secondary and where micro-credentials fit with that. Just one image here. I noticed a couple of you from Kamloops, you might remember this from a couple of summers ago, that lightning strike in Juniper, a suburb just outside of town, of the core centre. And one lightning strike and all those little lights you see in the darkness there, that is all individuals' houses. And they had to quickly evacuate to move. Climate change is having a profound impact on so much, including education. We have increasing social polarization. We have an aging population. As we know in Canada, we have more people leaving the labour market than coming into it. That's causing some significant challenges right now with recruiting. That doesn't even take into account the difference in work that we have.

This one illustration here. Some would say we're in the fifth Industrial Revolution. Others would say we're actually ending the fifth Industrial Revolution. Starting the six, but just another quick history. Mechanization is the first Industrial Revolution started in the 1850s. That was the birth of industrialization. Moving to mass production, the use of electricity, assembly lines, that was in the early 1900s. And then we have the rise of automation here in the third phase of it. Again,

we have electronic technologies to create computer- based systems, robotic production lines, automation. And you can see each phase is getting smaller and smaller, this in the 1960s, but more profound in the '70s and '80s. Then in the next level, we have digitization, which started in the early 2000s. And that was the need to increase productivity and efficiency. The beginning of artificial intelligence with machine learning and the internet of things. Where we are today or where we're joining into the sixth is the humans and machines working together. That's that personalization, customization, equalization. Again, you're looking a little bit more at that machine learning but also the artificial intelligence and how much that's progressed. And sentinel, that's big argument. Will computers ever be able to think like people? Nanotechnology, biotechnology, quantum control, interplanetary resource gathering and manufacturing. As I said, the pace for each of these phases in the industrialization is getting quicker and quicker. This is having significant impacts on our labour market. It's not even changes in the labour market. Again, putting on my historical hat and the research I've done, we're actually in the middle of living through structural changes in the labour market. As I said, this is going to have profound impacts and is having profound impacts on societies and what they need from post-secondary education in terms of when they access it, the variety of what they can access, and how often they access it. Just another level people sometimes forget about. We also have significant changes in how we progress and develop through careers. This image here, we have the really traditional ladder where you'd start your career with one organization and go up that corporate ladder. They owed you a living. My parents, my grandparents, this was the world that they lived in. Yes, there were some career changes, but very different than the lattice that we have today where there's not just varied pathways, but there's more room for growth and development. And also required with that significant career shifts. The children that are born today might have 20 to 30 career shifts. They may never work in an office like we are today. Just some important things there.

Drilling down to what this all means for education, there has been some really good research done on this. The provincial government has done an economic plan that lays out some of their vision for the future and the labour market and what we need. Zooming further out, the World Economic Forum produced this excellent report in 2020 on jobs in the future of jobs. I noted it here that there's an increasing need to provide short time frame opportunities for re-skilling and upskilling. And career resiliency that will not diminish and will actually continue to expand as we move forward. And to solidify this, that image on the bottom there. 50% of employees will require some re-skilling or upskilling in the next three to five years. You think about some of the job titles that we have today that we didn't have before. Ethical technology advisor, metaverse research scientist, AI ethicist, machine learning engineer, bioprinting engineer, digital implant designer, ethical hacker. I don't even know what an ethical hacker is. Those two words don't seem to go together well. Gamification designer. I remember a time if you told me, hey, you're going to need to hire a social media manager in the next two years, I wouldn't have known what they were talking about, and that wasn't that long ago. This is the bridge of the connection to micro-credentials and educational pathways. Micro credentials have been proposed as a strategy to enable the ongoing development of knowledge and skills across the workforce.

And when you think about the B.C. economy, and this is a stat you've all heard over the last few years that in the next million years [laughs]. In the next few years, over one million job openings are going to be created. And that's through both the demographics with more people retiring than entering the labour market. But also significant shifts in the type of work and jobs that are opening up and the skills needed to do those jobs. Now, almost 80% of these new positions or these job openings will require post-secondary education and training. As the 2022 Economic Plan, from the Labour Market Outlook shows, those types of work jobs that are going to be opening are in health care, scientific and technical services, transportation and warehousing, Education, construction, and even some retail trade positions all require that post- secondary education. That last bullet here is probably the most important. The demand for this re-skilling and upskilling and building that career resiliency, growing our economy will not happen without meaningful steps to reduce barriers that will keep people out of the labour market. And that comes right down to that circle of post- secondary education.

Just a couple more slides before we start discussing things. Just two more slides. We also know the average age of students is increasing. For example, at TRU In the open learning side of things, the average age of a student is 38. If you look at the on- campus students, where some people still think of traditional students between the ages of 20, 24, the average age of a student is 26, 27 right now. The average age is increasing. And with these students, they're working full time. They're not in school full time necessarily, as most of them used to be. They're working, they have caregiving responsibilities, and they have to fit their studies around life. Many of the mature learners, if not all of them, have really profound learning and lived experience that has led to learning that is non-formal and informal. Then with the changing learners, we also have changing competition. I didn't know Coursera had over 124 million registered learners, and that was as of March. So who knows what that is today. That's a stat from the World Economic Forum. They have Coursera, they have other types of learning online. Then we also have the organizations that are providing online education and micro-credentials and badging. IBM has their SkillsBuild. 30 million users is the projection by 2030, and the modelling shows that they'll meet that and exceed that. That's a global thing. Essentially, they felt that there weren't enough people that they could hire coming through post-secondary with the skills they needed, so they were going to provide the skills. and this is free. Google's Career Certificate, which they run through Coursera. $49 a month, give or take, depending if you're in Canada or the United States, that's all the Coursera courses that you can take. Saylor Academy, a smaller not as well-known organization, somebody just after they retired wanted to take the bulk of their bank account and they've invested it into the Saylor Academy where you can take over 100 free courses, your pace, your schedule. Even yesterday, I was on a webinar with the Canadian Association of Prior Learning, and one of the presenters, Stella from the International Development Bank, talked about their badging and the micro-credential and what they're doing to teach their employees. Andy, I can't read the chat, but what did they say? They had over 300 badges, micro-credentials, and I think it was over 24,000 users. Andy, if I have those numbers wrong, and if you remember them, if you could just throw that in the chat. But it's just to go and show this slide is that the need for education that is accessible, flexible, current, and

mobile is increasingly important. That's so important to consider when we look at education pathways and not just micro-credentials, but other pathways from other areas to learn from.

Just this last image before I turn off my screen for a moment and want to hear your thoughts on what's been shared so far.

The need for lifelong learning is changing and it's increasing. This top image here shows what a more traditional learning path would have been for my parents' generation and their parents, if they even went to post- secondary or finished at grade 12. Towards the end of your adolescence and the beginning of your adult life was a significant chunk of learning, whether that was up to grade 12 or college or university. Then you worked, then you retired. When I first saw this image at a conference in the United States a couple of years ago, you can tell it stuck with me because I'm sharing it today. But shows the different teeth and the need to go back into education, whether it's formal, informal, non-formal. How we have to keep going there to re-skill, upskill, again for that career resiliency. Even when we retire. My husband retired last September, so a year and a bit ago, he was young and really was bored within a couple of months and he decided to go back to work, because he calls it semi-retirement, working three days a week, doing something he loves that keeps him quite satisfied and keeps his need to contribute to society fulfilled.

I went through a lot of slides very quickly, but I wanted to really plant that seed or remind us about the significant changes we're going through. How is this affecting or how should this be affecting our education systems? I'm going to stop sharing for a moment and come to a discussion question. I'd like you to turn on your cameras. Put your hands up if you'd like to contribute to the conversation. What other changes are greatly affecting our education system that you think are profound and that we also need to be considering? Or is there any one slide that we went through that you want to take a little bit of time to go back to? Okay, I'm back. I can see the chat. What are your thoughts on that? On what other changes are greatly affecting our education system? Feel free to put up your hand if you'd like to contribute or throw something in the chat. Thanks Andy. He confirmed, oh, I was way off on this. 800 badges, 2,300 badges awarded. Thank you for that. Annie put in the chat, "Public, and by implication, governments want more accountability with their offerings." Yeah, Annie, thank you for including that. Did you want to turn on your mic and share anything about that?

ANNIE:
You're doing a great job so far. I'm loving it. Thank you. Yeah. It's just, I mean, this is not just happening in B.C. and not even just in Canada. It's happening worldwide. That more and more, especially for publicly funded institutions, there's a sense that if we're going to give you money, we want to see return on our investment. And we want you to do kind of what we want, right? And so it used to be like academic freedom and institutions can do and teach whatever they want, and now it's like no, actually we want you to teach what we want to learn. So there's more and more of a shift towards that and the governments in response are asking for more accountability.

SUSAN:

Mm hmm. Yeah, absolutely. Such a good point. I've noticed with our provincial government, and I see there's a couple of people on the webinar from the provincial government. And I'll share this from my perspective. They're wanting the post- secondary institutions to come together more collaboratively. To look at ways that we can share resources and provide stronger education systems with more on-ramps and off-ramps and more accessibility and more equality so that not every institution has to recreate the wheel. If it already exists, let's do this together. As a taxpayer, I really support that. I think just building on yours. And then, of course, that accountability. Such an important consideration. Judy, you put in AI, are you comfortable turning on your mic and sharing what your thoughts were with artificial intelligence or were you talking about academic integrity?

JUDY:

Well, actually I think they're probably pretty closely related. But yeah, the thing that I'm really interested in, and have all kinds of questions about, is how is artificial intelligence going to affect education and students at all stages of their learning journey.

SUSAN:

Anybody want to dive into that? I was just listening to a podcast on consciousness and some work Elon Musk is doing to dive into the brain. That's AI in a very different sphere that I haven't given much thought to. But as soon as you imagine it and how fast everything's changing, I know we'll be talking about it much more extensively in the coming weeks, months, and years about AI in general. Yeah. Annie, did I see you put up your hand?

ANNIE:

You're asking how is AI going to change things? I think right now the institutions have been focusing a lot on policies and with a lens towards plagiarism. But I think it's going to be much... Just my perspective, but it's going to be much more broader with it than if you look at it, it gives a chance to customize learning for students. Instructors are rethinking what is important to teach as a result of it. And I think it's going to be fundamentally changing everything we do. The interactions we have with our learners, as well as the kinds of tasks and goals that we want to achieve in our programs.

SUSAN:

And how we assess it. Following some of the social media channels about how some of that innovation out there, there's some really creative ways that I think are much richer for assessing. Jenz, I see that you've raised your hand.

JENZ:

Yeah, I just wanted to contribute one quote that I heard and one recent presentation about AI and how it impacts that quote kind of resonated with me. And it said, "You're going to lose your

job because of AI, but you're going to lose your job because of the people who use AI, if you're not." Right. And I think that's very impactful. I think the use of AI, and AI will pretty much touch on a lot of areas of work, virtually all of them. And what are the jobs it's going to create? You know, another dimension of this or another complexity to consider. Yeah, it sometimes hurts the brain thinking about all of this. Don put in the chat 70, 2010 approach to workplace learning, a matrix that Australia is referencing. Don, without clicking on that link, Is that a reference to 70% of our learning is through non-formal and informal means or is it something different?

DON:
Yeah, basically 10% formal; 90% unstructured, which 20% is social working with others and 70% is just working in general, often by yourself. And the public service just talks about ways of developing people. They have this learning at the point of need and distance from the workplace when you learn. I was just put onto it yesterday.

SUSAN:
Thank you. I was at a conference last year and somebody made a statement with those exact numbers and I could never source it. There it is. It's right there. Thank you. I can't wait to dive into that.

SUSAN:
Thanks. And for this discussion, Paula, the last question comes to you or comment comes to you. I think your mic's off.

PAULA:
Yeah, it is. I'm so used to being muted because I always have a lot to say, and I have to calm myself. Particularly for this discussion, I'd just like to bring up the Open Skills Network Community of Practice. And they are working on a compendium of incredible strength and depth for us to be able to cross fertilize competencies. And one of the reasons that I went to it last week was to see if they had some AI competencies for education started yet. I didn't find any there, but I found some through UNESCO. UNESCO is doing some work with AI competency. I think if all of us just keep plugged into those two things, that'll help us be able to talk about what's important about this. One of the things I believe is important about this is to keep it humanized. But that's another story altogether. The other thing I wanted to talk about is all of the work that's going on with UNESCO. They're in the comment stage right now. If you go to that site, you can give your comments, and it'll be very helpful for everyone going down the road. Thank you.

SUSAN:
I just wrote down on the piece of paper in front of me, "The collective wisdom of groups is so profound and so strong." It's such a brain trust. When we were first talking about how we were going to do this session, we wanted to add discussion questions in it because we didn't want a talking head at the front of your screen. We wanted to collect your insights. I think we should

maybe do another session with just exploring some of these and putting our brains together. But I'm going to go back to my screen share and hopefully I might have to click forward yet. I'm just going to click forward quickly. What we've been talking about is... just go forward one more.

What we know, how we learn. How prior learning is validated. That was the point I was trying to take us to with those previous slides. To share that new pathways are needed because of that conversation we just had around AI competencies, who else is doing what work? How do we get in that rowboat and work with each other to learn this and to share this?

I shared this image yesterday at the Kaplan presentation. I borrowed it from an organization in the states that's developing an initiative called Credential As You Go. It's such a strong slide. it just shows all of the different pathways, all the different learning and the incremental credentialing. Instead of getting just that one certificate, diploma, degree, how do we take these different bits and pieces of learning? How do we assess them? How do we validate them? How do we put them into a format that is mobile? And some of the words here that really stood out for me is "reverse transfer," "competency-based education." How can we validate apprenticeship? What is the role of badging and licensing? What are micro-pathways? How do we stack this? What about non-credit to credit bridges, which we're talking about. Of course, micro-credentials are here, a variety and prior learning assessment, I can't forget about that. But even in the United States, they do military training and credentialing in a much more fluid way than what we've been struggling with. I think about this image as something really helpful in terms of if we want to do incremental credentialing, if we want to increase the education pathways. The United States is already doing this, as are other places around the world. I think of the European Union, I think of Australia, I think of New Zealand. I'm going to stop sharing again, but I want to use the brain trust we have here and take a few minutes to talk about how do we get there? Just looking at time, I'm going to suggest we not use mics for this, but put in the chat, how do we get there? What are some of the new pathways that you've seen that we can assess some of that non-formal and informal learning so that people don't have to recreate learning for what they already have? Or that it can be more flexible. It can be more accessible to what the students need when they need it. What have you been doing? What have you heard others have been doing? What do you hope to do? What strategies are you working on? Go ahead and fill up the chat. I just turned off my thing again to see if there's any chats. Any additions to the chat? No proven practices that's jumping out at you? "Work integrated learning." Really good one Ash. "Prior to coming to this role in prior learning, I did a lot of work with experiential learning and work- integrated learning, and it fits." Judy, thank you. "More collaboration." It was shared earlier today... "More value for self- directed learning." I love that one too. "More partnerships with industry, organizations, government." Bring in the learners into those conversations. What do they want and need? Because this is going to continue to change. Just when we think we've got it right, we're going to need to shift and pivot again. Keep those ideas coming. I just have Paula's comment. "Internationally standard competency development that is easily aligned across sectors, cultures, and geography." That is fantastic.

"Scalable ways to authentically assess." I'm going to go back to my presentation. Thank you. Keep those coming. Just a few more slides.

I wanted to go into some of the new pathways that TRU has been working with the provincial government and new and growing pathways.

First, I'm going to talk really quickly about what is prior learning assessment and recognition. I know that term is thrown out a lot, but different people have different concepts of it. In a really simple way, PLAR is a process to assess informal and non- formal learning. TRU has one of the largest PLAR programs in Canada. And awards approximately 70, 80% of the PLAR credit in the province. Now, we did a research project with BCcampus a couple of years ago and we updated it just a year ago. There are multiple PLAR paths, including advanced entry, course-based PLAR, competency-based PLAR, challenge exams throughout the province. The research we did with B.C. Prior Learning Action Network with BCcampus as well is we looked at what was the state of PLAR in the province. Who was doing it? How were they doing it? And what were some of the commonalities and differences? This Lego presentation really reflects this well. The PLAR, if you strip it right down to deconstruct it, it's a big pile of Legos. And each of those blocks represents different types of learning. PLAR is about deconstructing those experiences, reflecting on the learning, codifying it for academic purposes so that it can be accessible and assessed and validated. And then the bottom corner here, the credit bank is quite different. The credit bank is pre-assessment of community-based programs, online courses through Coursera or other providers, private trainers, private schools, organizational training like we talked about with IBM or the International Development Bank. And of course, micro-credentials are a growing piece of that.

I think this slide should have been a little bit earlier. I'll just go back to the research that we did B.C. Prior Learning Action Network and I have a link in this presentation. Once you get it, you can click right on it. But it shows the full report of the research that we did including the updated information. Just two really quick images here. Most of the 25 post- secondary institutions in the province do course-based PLAR. Some do advanced placement or advanced entry, some do what we call program-based. I don't know that we need to say what type of PLAR it is, as long as you have the big picture. Flexible assessment. And this really, really small blue one here, that's the credit bank. Very few schools do anything like the credit bank. That's why I think we did a research project with the provincial government earlier this year. That was with the Post- Secondary Education and Future Skills, TRU. Then we worked with David Porter, who many of you will know, to look at can we use a PLAR process to assess micro-credentials for possible post- secondary credit?

Our contract or proposal stated that we were going to prototype, test, and document a repeatable process for assessing micro-credentials to assign academic credit. We were going to use tools that were already in existence, such as the TRU Credit Bank process to begin with. But we were going to look at other tools from around Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, United States, and we did that. Then we explored how assessed credit might

be applied to different certificates, diplomas and degrees, and then to disseminate the findings. What we were doing was we were extending our thinking about PLAR to include micro-credentials. We looked at only micro-credentials that had been funded by the provincial government through post-secondary institutions.

The project had 12 steps. I mentioned that we did research around proven practices in different countries. Next step, number two. We brought together an assessor committee with different thought leaders in the province. We had BC CAT, BCIT, Vancouver Community College, Royal Roads, KPU, and UBC Okanagan. Then we put our minds to how are we going to select and assess micro-credentials? We selected 10 micro-credentials to assess, and they were very diverse. Everything from mass timber construction to climate adaptation fundamentals to metabolomics, which is a chemistry, to hospitality, and digital literacy. All this time, we were also developing a tool or a resource on how can we rigorously, transparently, systematically assess micro-credentials for possible credit.

We developed a form, which we've come to call the Critical Information Form. There's 22 fields, and I know this is very hard to read in such a small font, but we looked at really key components of micro-credentials. Prerequisites, content description, learning outcomes, delivery mode. It was synchronous, asynchronous, face-to-face, virtual paste. How was it being assessed? Who assessed it? What was the learner effort? What was the volume of learning? Contact hours? Did the institutions have any existing credit recognition pathways? Was it stackable? Was it ladderable? What was the quality assurance process? What were the instructor qualifications? Was it endorsed by industry or employer groups? This form. It looks so simple when I put it on the screen, but this took us months and months to work and to refine, and to keep coming back to.

Next, we had a handful of schools do a self-study process using that critical information summary to look at the micro-credentials that they had created and complete these forms. Then we asked for some feedback. We collated it, analyzed, summarized, and updated the form.

Then coming just into steps 9 through 12, we developed criteria for external assessors. Then to take those critical information forms, to review it for possible credit. We had people that weren't associated at all with the building of those micro-credentials and looked at the same information. And two to three subject matter experts per micro-credential, and right now. Well, all of that assessment work has been done, 8 of the 10 were recommended credit, one of them was only recommended one credit, right up, and first-year credit right up to the metabolomics which was recommended graduate-level study credits. And we're just moving those through the TRU Credit Bank process. Then, of course, we surveyed the participants for feedback so that we could refine it, improve things. And then reproduced a summary report of the findings. That took us a few months.

I'm almost done the presentation. I'm going to ignore this discussion question because of the time. And move us right into this one.

When we look at micro-credentials, when we look at informal and non-formal learning. When we look at alternatives to learning. I wanted to share this image again. I wanted to share, ask a couple of conversation starters in the next 10 minutes. I'll turn off my screen in a moment. But how can we better validate prior learning? What can come next? How do we scale this up? How do we expand PLAR provincially or something similar? We've been having discussions with the province about the development of a provincial credit bank, so that not each school has to do this work, but instead they can have access to a repository where they can see what's been assessed, how it's been assessed, and whether they want to give credit to that assessment. And what program and what weight to the credit. Then what about a provincial centre for PLAR excellence? Maybe too many... Well, of course, it's too many questions for us to talk about, but I'll just go back now.

I'm going to give the floor over to you. What questions and comments do you have? Where do you want to go next with this? Yeah, I have so many questions. I want to use the brain trust that's here to help talk this through a little ways with the time we have left. Thank you, Chad, for sharing the Critical Information Summary. Yeah, that's chapter six of the Toolkit and you can go right into that detail there. Jenz, is that a legacy hand or was that a new question? JENZ: It's a new hand.

SUSAN:
Excellent, good. Let's get started with that then. I come from the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science, and I was wondering if this notion of regulation, accreditation, has played into the assessment of the micro-credentials at all?

SUSAN:
It will, perhaps not at the micro-credential level because many of those organizations are still grappling with how do they change what they already have and put them in micro-credentials. But I'll say from the credit bank perspective, it's that philosophy that students should never have to repeat learning that they already have. If we could go into an engineering program that is not through a formal education system and students aren't already getting credits for. If we could go in and pre-assess it very much using that information from the Critical Information Summary, then any student that can tell us that, "Hey, I did this engineering program for wherever they did it," we can see did we already assess that? And if yes, then they automatically would get the credits through the TRU Credit Bank. For TRU students, I shouldn't over speak. Other institutions will decide what they accept. But we want to make a path that's much more accessible and much easier, so that not each school has to do these assessments. But that they can say, okay, this assessment has already been done. Maybe it's UBC, how are we going to accept this? Or maybe it's Vancouver Community College. What does this mean for us? If we can pre-assess, for example, we are just beginning conversations with the B.C. Wildfire Services. They offer over 100 in- house training programs. We're going to begin

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assessing those, any of those employees that have taken that training, and it doesn't even have to be employees for some of it. They don't have to redo that training. It will already be assessed and in that bank so to speak. Does that answer your question?

JENZ: It does. Thank you.

SUSAN:
Okay, thanks. Yeah, leading through the chat. "Is there a B.C. CAT-like system for micro-credentials?" We're hoping to build that. We're imagining what that could look like. and micro-credentials will be included in a provincial credit bank. That is the hope, and I hope that... there's a lot of hopes here, that we can share this information in the coming months. Yeah, Thanks, Annie.

ANNIE:
I have a question about how the credit bank works in the sense that when it's at one institution, it's pretty clear because you're doing evaluation of the incoming education. You need to decide what transfers into your own institution, right, because it's not always open. Sometimes it's for specific things that you can use it. How does that work on a provincial level where you don't really necessarily control what's going to go on, what it transfers into multiple institutions.

SUSAN:
So that's the questions we're working with right now as we build a proposal for the development of a provincial credit bank. I said that with the TRU Credit Bank, we've been doing this well before TRU was even an institution. So the open learning agency had this in place already. Just when TRU became an institution. We had the time and the resources, the budget to build this and the staff. And when you look further afield and say, I'll go back to VCC because my first introduction to them was, "We don't have the time or the resources. Can we just use TRU's Credit Bank? Show us what you assessed, how you assessed it. We trust the rigor. We trust the audit trail. We would like to then use this credit bank." Now, those were just very preliminary conversations, but what we're envisioning for the province is that we have this list of things of learnings that has been assessed. They'll be an open repository that any institution can access, and they'll have that information from the critical information summary so they can see what was assessed, how was it assessed, who was assessing that learning? What was that volume of learning? And then some recommendations as to what programs or courses that might best fit into their school. That they don't have to do this work on their own. That there's already this foundation, this bank that they can access. I will say the United States has this already. They have it through ACE, the American, what is it? American Council for Education It used to be called? Just credit and now it's evaluation of learning. Any institution in the United States can go into that. I think over they have hundreds, if not thousands, of pre-assessed programs that aren't in the traditional credit transfer. Ross just gave us the heads up that we're running out of time. Ross, what would you like to contribute at this point?

ROSS:

Just that it's been a great conversation and lots of big questions. And it definitely achieved its goal of having the backstory behind these stories in the Toolkit too. In this case though, it's great to have that perspective and that input from our community of learners. Thank you very much for the contributions and everything like that. Again, these are big questions, but we're getting there, which is exciting. The really exciting time is ahead, and indeed, so much changes in our world as well. I'm just going to actually share, and thank you so much, Susan.

SUSAN:
You're welcome. I'm just going to share my screen briefly and then we'll just wrap up here. Excellent, thank you. Here's my chat. You should probably had that.

In this case, we do have some more webinars coming, very similar to this one. The next one is coming up in January where Adrian Lipsett is going to be talking about collaboration. He has contributed quite a bit to the Toolkit stories and VCC, Vancouver Community College, has definitely collaborated with many of the institutions across the province. So we're just going to get into that topic a little bit deeper. In February, we have Zoe from Royal Roads University, and we'll be digging into design again, talking about the design of micro-credentials using existing material, and also connecting micro-credentials to a competency framework. That's also going to be a lot of fun. That's in February, Not an exact date yet, but I'll be finding that information out. So just to keep an eye open for that in the newsletters and that sort of thing. Finally, we would like to hear from you. And in this case, how was this workshop, how was this Toolkit Spotlight series? And what ideas do you have to make it even better then? Also in terms of topics of learning needs and that sort of thing, what areas would you like to learn more about in terms of the Toolkit sections? I want you to just take a screenshot of that. Then we'll do it right away. It'll be great. Otherwise, thank you very much for attending. We will see you at the next workshop, next webinar in January. Have a great day for everyone. Bye everyone.