Transcript for FLO Friday: Towards Trauma-Aware Teaching
BCcampus webinar hosted on September 20, 2024
Facilitator: Dr. Ki Wight
Host: Helena Prins

HELENA PRINS:
Good morning, everyone. Welcome to our FLO Friday. I'll give it another few seconds here. Okay. Good morning, everyone. My name is Helena Prins, and I want to welcome you to this FLO Friday on trauma-aware teaching practices. I'm really thankful that you prioritize this time on this Friday for such an important topic. I'm Zooming in today from the unceded traditional territories of the Lekwungen People, which includes the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. And our FLO facilitator Dr. Ki Wight will do a territorial acknowledgment for us today. I do want to remind you that this session will be recorded. If you do not wish to appear on camera, you can just keep your camera turned off. If you would like to change your name to FLO Participant, that's okay with us too. We will have one optional breakout room session and the breakout room sessions do not get recorded. Don't worry about that when you go into the breakout room. I also just want to ask as we go into the session. It's sometimes difficult talking about trauma strategies, and I just want us to be kind to ourselves, do what we need to do to take care of ourselves, but also be kind to each other. This is really to me one of the most important conversations we should have right now. I'm so thankful that Dr. Ki Wight said, yes, to facilitating this session. I'm also thankful to my colleague Paula Gaube who's here to help us behind the scenes. But without further ado, Ki, I'm going to hand this over to you. Thank you.

KI WIGHT:
Thanks, Helena. Thank you, Paula, for your help today. I just want to say before we get started that this workshop was created by Dr. Brit Paris at Capilano University and I, we presented this in person last April. We were inspired by the work of Matty Hillman at Selkirk College, who maybe you met in yesterday's session. And one of the things that I know Matty has coming up is a workshop on educational boundaries and developing educational boundaries. I think that section connects quite nicely to this conversation about trauma-awareness or trauma-informed approaches. Before I do the land acknowledgment, I want to set up today a little bit. My name is Ki Wight. My pronouns are she and her. I'm an educational developer and a researcher at Emily Carr University. I study the ways that social injustice relates to the creative industries and particularly creative industries practices. I have a PhD from Simon Fraser in their Equity Studies, Equity Studies of Education Program. So this workshop is titled Trauma-Aware Teaching Approaches rather than trauma-informed practices. The reason for this distinction has got to do with accessibility and the ability for all of us who think about engaged learning and think about our students in a very community-oriented way. No matter if we have formal trauma-informed education, chances are we are practising some elements of trauma-awareness. This was intended as an invite for all of us, whether we are experienced or not experienced to come together. I think it also centres awareness, because I think trauma-informed approaches are all about being aware that trauma is systemic, but it is also individual, and that is part of the challenge of navigating trauma is that we have to navigate both. I need to say, we had some

questions come in in advance of today's session that were about some fairly specific instances of particularly sexual violence and gender-based violence. And we're not going to get into very specific strategies that have to do with more severe incidents, I suppose. And I think I need to say, please know that all of our campuses have sexual violence prevention strategies and policies now. Usually there's somebody on campus who is responsible for managing those policies. So maybe it's somebody in your accessibility office, maybe it's somebody in another student services sector. There are those times that are more severe that require us to connect to outside social services, perhaps to even ask students to stop talking because there's something happening that is violent. There's a lot of different things that can happen in the classroom and sometimes or outside of the classroom, we become aware of it. I think we just need to be aware of what policies are there to support us or what kind of structures are there to support us and lean on those in more extreme times. All right. So I know I'm doing this a little bit incorrectly in terms of jumping in before I do a land acknowledgment. So Paula, next. Thank you.

While I'm making this land acknowledgment, please consider writing your own in the Zoom chat. With respect, I'm presenting today on the unceded, or what we might consider, stolen land of the Musqueam, the Squamish, and the Tsleil-Waututh Nations. I'm a queer settler from Treaty 6 Cree Territory in Northern Alberta. I have Ukrainian and English heritage. I recognize that this land acknowledgment is both correct protocol and potentially incorrect or performative because I'm ultimately not here in service to the land back. I do hope though that the ways that we use this workshop and the ways that this workshop considers our students deeply and holistically can support unlearning and dismantling unjust social hierarchies and perhaps service some decolonization. So Paula, next, thank you.

To connect my land acknowledgment to what we're doing today, I'm going to ask you to consider which words or ideas stand out to you from this quote from Anishinaabe-kwe scholar Dr. Shirley Cote-Meek. I think Dr. Cote-Meek's scholarship is really important. This is the book because it shows how educators can manage and start dismantling aspects of colonial trauma. This is a very practical and excellent book. But I am going to read this out. This is not necessarily excellent online pedagogy, but I think it's important sometimes to spend a little bit of time with these kinds of words. As you are listening to me read this, if you wouldn't mind writing in the chat, something that comes from you, something that stands out from this quote.

> "Professors who are teaching difficult material must engage in holistic pedagogical approaches that give attention to the emotive aspects of a student's being. I acknowledge the fine line between the political and therapeutic in this regard. However, in this context, it is impossible to separate as the degree of trauma demands a pedagogical response that is holistic. The mind, body, and spirit are typically disconnected in most post-secondary classrooms. To further expect that students only focus on one aspect of their being, the mind, in the classroom is to perpetuate that the body and spirit are of no matter. To perpetuate

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that disconnection runs the high risk of perpetuating ongoing colonial violence, and in my view is pedagogically unethical. As well, to focus only on the emotional aspects without engaging in critical analysis, risks perpetuating a victim identity and further racialization."

So I'm going to give you, I think maybe, let's give us all a minute. Think about one word or one aspect or one concept that stands out for you. And if you wouldn't mind sharing that in the chat, that would be appreciated. All right. So I'm gathering from the chat, a lot of people are focusing in on holism, this idea of mind and body and spirit, perhaps altogether, that sense of connectedness between those aspects, and to perpetuate that verb "to perpetuate." So I think that we will be thinking about those two things very much in our workshop today. Paula, next, please.

These are our learning outcomes for the session. By the end of today, we're going to recognize a variety of trauma-aware practices and compile some teaching strategies and practices that we can use and share.

We're going to do this quite simply with a methodology and a resource guide developed by some researchers at McMaster University. It's called the Do It Anyway approach. We are going to use this to, they've actually developed four modules in this approach to almost crowd source some teaching strategies within the four different concepts that they propose to us.

Here's just a couple of definitions of trauma-informed pedagogy. Ultimately, trauma-informed pedagogy recognizes that trauma is or will be experienced by students, and it or has been experienced by students, and it offers us educational strategies for reducing trauma and empowering students and students' success. That trauma is all kinds of trauma, it's incidents, it's intergenerational, it's systemic. I would like to know from you on a scale of 1 to 5, 1, with very little familiarity to 5, a lot of familiarity. I'd like to know how familiar are you with trauma-informed pedagogy and practices. If you wouldn't mind using the chat to share that with everyone. I like the 3.5. Good. All right. All right. So we have somebody who's from a social work and a clinical counseling background. Thanks for sharing that. I should actually say that as I work as an educational developer and my background is in equity studies, I am not a trauma-informed pedagogy specialist. I do recognize there's a lot of intersections between something like social justice education, equity studies, universal design learning, and trauma-informed pedagogy. So some of you, so I'm making this workshop, I guess, as somebody who's actively learning about this alongside you. Um, let's move on to the workshop. Thanks, Paula.

All right. These are the four themes of trauma-informed educational practice from the McMaster University format or platform that they've offered us. These are the four themes: predictability, flexibility, connection, and empowerment. What I'm going to do is I'm going to explain each of these four approaches from McMaster. While I'm going through these notes because I'm going to just talk for a couple of minutes. If you wouldn't mind grabbing a piece of paper or having a document open on your phone or your laptop, and making notes on

approaches. Strategies in your teaching, maybe strategies in your institutional work, because obviously a lot of trauma-informed work is not just in the classroom, but it's looking at different structures and programs in our university. I can think of something, such a big difference that happened, for example, at Capilano University, when students were able to determine what name was on the class list that the instructor saw so that an instructor on that first day wasn't reading out a name that the student did not use, like how much impact that made, like positive impact. That's a more, almost a systemic issue or an institutional issue. But anyways. While I'm explaining each of these four ones, if you wouldn't mind making notes of ideas that pop into your head. Then once I'm done explaining these four, you're going to have two options. One is to work on your own and go into this Google document, and Paula has already shared that Google document in the chat. But go into the Google document and under each of the categories, predictability, connection, empowerment, you can write some ideas or strategies. For those of you that prefer a conversation, we'll offer some breakout rooms that you can choose to go into and you can talk about ideas and somebody can note-take those in the Google Doc. I hope I explained that well. That is always my struggle is how to give instruction properly. Okay.

All right. So predictability. First and foremost, this is about educational design that is transparent. Having clear instructions, clear workflows in classes, clear policies, consistent engagement. So those are basically the features of predictability. So I'll just actually perhaps wait 1 minute while you take notes on some ways that you think about your teaching that promotes predictability. Okay. Why don't we move on? And actually, while I'm doing this, if you wanted to just start making notes in that Google Doc and, that's the way you want to make your notes, that's also fine. Yeah, that would also be fine.

And I've got a question here. Okay. Actually, perhaps I'll answer this question in the chat right away. Can you explain a bit more about the statement, "the start and the end each class in a similar way"? I guess it's just a matter of do the students know clearly when the class is starting? What are those cues to say to round, to bring everybody in? What are those cues to say, okay, now the learning is over and now we're moving on or now you're moving on to your day. It's like the old classroom bell. We don't really have those sorts of things, but there's a way of almost managing it in a community-oriented way where if we know that if the students know, for example, that there's always 10 minutes for reflection time for that metacognition for a chance for them to really think about whether or not they have questions, maybe connect to each other or the material in a different way. If they know that they can rely on that practice, it probably creates some comfort in the learning zone, even if the learning has been discomforting. Even if it's been challenging knowledge, they know that they'll have that space perhaps to ask a question or to just take time to reflect. Building in a little bit of that type of pacing, I suppose in your classes. Which I know is hard. I should say, we come up with these teaching tips and we talk about best practices, and then at the end of the day, we're a bunch of humans in a room with a lot of content to teach as well. And there's always that struggle of how do we balance all of those things. But I think a little sense of predictable flow is important.

*Okay. Flexibility. Hopefully, Sue, I answered that. Thanks. This is about being flexible about those predictable plans that you've made. Perhaps this is about working with students to find ways, even unconventional ways to help them meet the class learning goals and perhaps the student's own learning goals. Do some students need a different space or a pace at times? Are there assignments that can come in in different formats for completion? What ways can you create just a little more variability for different types of learners or learners who are experiencing different types of—not experiencing different types of trauma, but having different experiences of the educational system, see if there's different ways of helping them through it. So I'll just give you a second to digest that. All right. I have to say about this flexibility. We did have a question come in about when students have competing needs. You know, some students rely heavily on scheduling, for example, they need a lot of structure and some students prefer less structure, for example. I think that how do you deal with those conflicting things? I think that this is where being transparent as an educator, being clear about the options. If you need more structure, then we are going to do this. If you need less structure, you can do this other approach. It's just like today, you can go into a breakout room if you like conversations or you can choose to work on your own. It gives a little bit of options. If somebody in the chat, say requested a third option, we might be able to roll with that. I guess this is where staying on our toes knowing our own limits and boundaries, it's okay to say no sometimes. It's okay to say I just can't do that today, but I can talk to you in my office hours or something to figure something out. You don't always have to have the answers, but perhaps you need to model the willingness to be flexible.

Connection is really about finding ways for students to build relationships with you, with their peers, with their campus community, or even people off campus in their families or in their communities. In essence, this is to connect learning to others, connect learning to society. How might this look in assignments or classroom exercises? How might this also perhaps connect students to actually using student services that may help them? Again, I'll give you a second to make some notes. Okay. Before we move on, I was reminded when I was looking at this slide and I thought, I can share this with you. One of the things that is so simple that I love doing with students, whenever there's a holiday or a reading break in the term and I know that they have an assignment or they're working out a concept, is I love assigning them short community interviews. I usually try to make it intergenerational. Somebody at least 10 years older or at least 10 years younger, and I get them to develop a question that they have to ask about what they're learning. They have to ask somebody out there in the world about their ideas or their thoughts on this topic. It's a way for them to bridge what they're learning sometimes to their relationships with the outside world, or with people that are just a little bit different than they are. They have a lot of really interesting insights about themselves, about the program that they're studying, about the topic that we're studying, and it's relieving for them perhaps to not be sitting alone at their computers doing homework. Anyway, that's just an example from my own that I love. I love marking that one or reading them. Anyways. Paula, next, please.

All right. This is our last of the four, empowerment. This is really about thinking through how your course materials, your teaching, and your institutional activities, maybe like hiring

committees, might offer students the chance to be empowered. Is there something that the students can own and lead? Are there ways to centre student voices, identities, or interests? Are there student services or community events that you can connect to that would help the students see themselves more in the learning, integrate that learning more in their life? So I will let you write about this for 1 minute. Okay. I just had a quick look at the Google document, and there's already some excellent crowd-sourced ideas happening in there. So this is where we will have a, why don't we say a 15-minute break because then that leaves us 15 minutes to have conversations and questions at the end.

Okay, great, Paula's got the breakout rooms ready to launch. You can choose to go in. You can choose to stay here and just mute yourself and work independently if you want to just sit here and talk, that's also fine. Any of those. We'll give you a 1 minute warning before we want to bring you back from the breakout room. Again, all we're doing is building out these lists. Maybe we're reading through in the Google document what other people have written, and maybe that'll create more ideas. The goal here really is for us together to see the wealth of knowledge and practice that we probably already are integrating a lot of principles of power of trauma-informed pedagogy and to create a resource that we can all share together and use together. Paula, if you wouldn't mind starting the breakout rooms, and if anyone has any questions, I'm going to be here.

All right. So I see everybody has come back from the breakout rooms. Thanks, Paula, for your help managing that. So I was just going through and loving the examples that everybody's put in the Google Drive. Yeah, I'm curious if anybody wants to share a key takeaway or share a question that was raised or discussed and see if we can have a little bit of discussion about what we saw happening in the breakout rooms or maybe perhaps insights you had on your own. If anybody wants to share a question or an insight, that would be great. Perhaps a better way of thinking about it is there an approach that you hadn't thought about yet or that you saw articulated perhaps in a different way than you had thought about it in the past? Human to human.

PARTICIPANT: I'll unmute.

KI: Thank you.

PARTICIPANT:
Sometimes stepping out of the role of, well, I'm the teacher. These are my students, and therefore, this is what the relationship should look like, which creates this expectation. Just recognizing first, this is a human. I'm a human. What can we do at just that level first? And one of our group members had a wonderful example of teaching up north in a small community and just knocking on doors and introducing themselves. That's what neighbours do. That's what fellow learners do, and that's what teacher and student can do. In some settings, in others, it might look different, but making those types of connections. I will stop there.

KI:

That's a great example actually of community building and building. Yes, really building connection, I suppose to students and giving a sense that the instructor is just part of the community. I know when we had the questions come in about, you know, teaching to learners that you are aware have experienced particular types of violence or had, had certain experiences of violence, certainly that building of connection is going to support that learner. Then also them knowing that you're there to be responsible and responsive to trauma in the classroom. It's like this always this balancing act, where we've built the connection, and then we sometimes have to also say, Hey, let's put a pause on this conversation, say. Perhaps this is getting away from us. Let's figure out a different way or a different tone. Maybe we need a break. Maybe we need to stop for today and come back to it. This is modeling this like both responsiveness to what's happening in the room and balancing that with a more casual community-based informal approach. I saw lots of notes about things like food. I think that's always great. It is always fun when there is food in a class and there's always a sense of that sort of relief of eating together or sharing some Halloween candy or whatever the sharing is. That certainly brings people together quite easily.

PARTICIPANT: I would like to just quote a friend, colleague, physics instructor who says, I celebrate in this class, we celebrate any occasion that has food attached. And they always bring food to get started with and then invite the students to play along if they like, and it makes a big change, I think, in their class.

KI:

Yes. Yes. Thank you for that. As I am listening to you, sharing this, we also had a comment that said that "Food can be a source of trauma." It certainly can. I think when we see something like this, food is an opportunity for sharing, but food is also a reality, a thing for us that some of us have very complicated relationships with, for example, or traumatic experiences with. I'm curious if you're bringing food in, what ways can we bring it in so that we are respecting that folks don't or may not want to participate or may want to participate in different ways or have it be different. Yes, predictability can help with that. That's a good idea. Jennifer. Thank you. One of the things that I often do with food too is I'll have some options, perhaps. If it's Halloween time, I usually also bring in bags of apples. It's surprising that the apples often go first because I think food insecurity is a reality for our students and sugar that's refined isn't necessarily the thing that students are actually craving if they're not going to the grocery store regularly. And so that kind of thing, perhaps sometimes having leftovers that can be taken once folks have gone, leaving things in the room for folks to take. Some sort of sense that might be available. The allowance for people to opt out. I think it's always there. One of the things I like to say to students is, "For whatever reason, if today is not the day for you to be here in class, I can always do class with you during office hours. There's no reason why you have to have a perfect attendance record every single time." That's what office hours are for. They're for learning in a different way. That can be Zoom, that can be in person, that kind of thing. I see Dereck has his hand up. Oh, sorry. Thanks, Derick.

DERECK:
Yeah. All good. Thanks, Helena. And Ki, I think it's not necessarily a specific strategy, but one of the threads that seemed to go through a lot of these things was around open and, like, multi-directional lines of communication, so that it's not all about like us trying to convey to students, but allowing that to come back the other way, whether that's about food or um, all of the other things, but it seemed to connect to predictability, and, like, I know that I can ask questions, or I know that my input is valued. I know that I have choices, which, of course, is connected to flexibility and connection and those sorts of things. And the other thing that in the conversation I was having with um, three very wonderful folks in the breakout room was around clarity. That clarity can be, if you're trying to be clear and say everything all at once, that can actually be less clear. So the timeliness of the information is an important aspect of, okay, well, predictability is, well, what do I need to know now? As opposed to, you know, what do I need to know three months from now? Which maybe we can get to in three months from now.

KI:
Yeah. And so that's really about clear learning outcomes, clear you know, clear scaffolding, circling, I saw somebody say circling back, sort of always circling back. And I think when you said, Derek, about the learning going in both directions. I also saw quite a bit of, I saw quite a bit of notes about students, developing rubrics, students developing curricular guidelines, students articulating cultural protocols. Students also perhaps having a job or a role in the class. And so that then there's also a shared responsibility and connection through the learning with the instructor. I wonder if that's also part of it. Dereck says, "Co-constructing the learning experience with students." Thanks, Derek. You're always very articulate. I really like that. Is there anyone else?

HELENA:
Okay, I am curious about, seeing that Derek spoke about team-based learning approaches. Some of the difficult experiences happen very often in group settings and in our group, we just lightly touch on that, but how important it is to prepare students and support students for group experiences. I am wondering if there's strategies. I haven't looked at the Google Doc yet, but if there's strategies how we can help students navigate more peacefully and clearly and all of these things with each other.

KI:
Mm hmm. Well, Yes. Well, maybe I'll open that up to everybody. What are some strategies to help students with team-based learning environments? Dereck says the team-based learning is important. The latter has a lot of built-in tools that address the four themes. Predictability, flexibility, building, and connection. Yes.

DERECK:
Well, I think we have a lot of times where the groups are just, Okay, now we're going to get into groups, which can be really challenging for students for a variety of reasons. But thinking about the team-based learning approach specifically, so the Michaelson, Sibley, all of those folks with

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team building and being in the same team throughout the entire semester, right, and developing relationship within your team, so that if the classroom is a community, your team is your family. And so you have that family connection, but then to the rest of the community and classroom, that safe space from which to engage with the more challenging things you might be doing. So I think yeah, group work and team-based learning as different things I think is important.

KI:
Thank you. Yeah, that's great. You're right. I think we often just put people in groups and think about the course content, but not think about what is dynamic. What is the actual learning? What's the point of having folks in groups and then centring that as the exercise rather than necessarily a content-based competency, right? It's like I am learning to think about a process from a different perspective, perhaps. Then being very intentional about what that group is doing. And Georgia has a great idea. Perhaps a FLO Friday could be about team-based learning or group work. Thank you for sharing that resource, Alice. I wonder, Paula, if we can include that in the resources for today that we share out. Yes, and Marianne says, "Group work can be stressful because it can be unpredictable." Yes. I think this is where not just breaking into groups, but also having clear guidelines and a task and a purpose to see through and perhaps as Dereck said continued, continued working relationships. Yes. So we're at that time, or are there any final questions about coming from today? It's been really nice to see you online and meet some of you today, and I look forward to meeting you more, maybe at the Digital Symposium in November. That's it.

HELENA:
Thank you so much, Ki. I look forward to sharing this Google Coc with the community afterwards. We'll send out the recording, we'll send out the Google Doc with all of you. I do want to just highlight some exciting FLO Fridays and micro-courses coming up. We have one on neurodiversity supporting students. That's October 4. We have a FLO panel that I'm really excited about talking about faculty while being an excellent panel. Please sign up for that and join us for that conversation. We have Trefor Bassett from UVic, who is well-known on YouTube for his math videos, and he's going to do a FLO micro-course on video design and creation, and I think it's going to be tremendously fun, but also practical. Then we have a FLO micro-course on embracing emotional intelligence in AI for inclusive education, and that's also three amazing facilitators that will guide us through that week. I thank you always for showing up on a Friday. I love my FLO people, and please fill out the survey. We share the feedback with Ki, so it's good for her, but it's also good for us. One of our questions there is, what are the topics that you're interested in? We really do read those feedback forms and we plan our next year based on the feedback that we get. Please send us your thoughts and have a wonderful weekend, everyone.