Transcript for When Disaster Strikes: Ensuring Continuity and Care in Post-Secondary Education (Panel)
BCcampus webinar recorded on July 23, 2025
Panelists: Dr. Alisha David, Dr. Bala Nikku, Christy Foote, Dr. Theresa Southam
Host: Helena Prins

HELENA PRINS:
Good morning, everyone. I hope you are having a wonderful summer, and I'm so glad you're here with us as we discuss how we might navigate disasters to ensure continuity and care in post-secondary education. My name is Helena Prins, and I'm an advisor on the Learning and Teaching team of BCcampus. Now for today, we have four very interesting panellists who will share their unique relationship to the topic of disaster. The goal of this panel discussion is just to provide a platform for this important conversation as we explore how the B.C. post-secondary institutions can respond swiftly, compassionately. and effectively in times of disaster. But this is a 90-minute meeting, so I also want to acknowledge that usually our panel discussions are just a start to the bigger conversation. If it strikes a chord of you today, please take the conversation back to your colleagues and into the hallways of your institution. Please allow me to quickly introduce to you the four wonderful panellists we have. First up, we have Dr. Alisha David. Now, I met Alisha a few years ago when I started my doctoral journey, and she came to speak to our cohort about her research. The title of her dissertation was "There's no place like home: Post-secondary students' stories of disaster-induced home loss." I really can't wait for you to hear her story today and to learn from her research. Thank you for being here, Alisha.

ALISHA DAVID:
Thank you, everyone. I look so forward to having this conversation.

HELENA:
And then we will invite Dr. Bala Nikku, associate professor of social work at the Faculty of Education and Social Work at Thompson Rivers University. Today, though, Bala is zooming in from India. Thank you for doing that, Bala. He will share his insights on disaster, how he teaches it, and how he strives to make the classroom a sanctuary for learning. I'm looking forward to that.

BALA NIKKU: Thank you for having me.

HELENA:
Welcome, Bala. And then we have Theresa Southam. She is the department head of the Teaching and Learning Centre at Selkirk and also a published author of "Transforming Trauma through Social Change, A Guide for Educators". And, Dr. Theresa, we are very excited to hear about your insights regarding this topic.

THERESA SOUTHAM:
Thanks for having me.

HELENA:
And our fourth panelist, maybe I have some favouritism here, but she's BCcampus' very own event manager, Christy Foote. With a focus on accessibility, safety, and community connection, Christy always brings both creativity and care to every event she leads. And she'll share about a recent wildfire experience and her decision-making at that time. Thanks for being here, Christy.

CHRISTY: Thanks, Helena.

HELENA:
Looking forward to you sharing later. I am going to invite our first panelist, Alisha. I think it's fitting that we start with your story to set the stage for us. Thank you for sharing with us today.

ALISHA:
Hi, everyone. Thanks, Helena. As Helena mentioned, my name is Dr. Alisha David. My pronouns are she/her and I'm so grateful to be here having this important conversation that is so valuable and meaningful in my own life. As Helena mentioned, I care more about you caring for yourself than I do you listening to anything that I have to say, so I will be talking about my own experiences with disaster-induced home loss today. If at any moment that feels uncomfortable for you or you feel like you need to step away, please do that. Again, there is no learning more valuable than learning how to trust yourself and trust your body, and we'll talk a little bit more about that as well. If you need any help finding supportive resources in your area, please reach out privately in the Zoom chat or via email, which we'll share later and I'd be happy to help you do that. I'd like to start with a personal acknowledgment that I'm coming to you from my home in Edmonton, Alberta, in Treaty 6 Territory, the ancestral and traditional lands of the Cree, the Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Dené, and Nakota Sioux. As well as the people of Métis Region 6. But I also need to acknowledge Treaty 8 territory, a place that is responsible for nearly all of my life and learning to date, and a place that will always have a piece of my heart because it was on those lands in Slave Lake Alberta that I experienced disaster for the first time and what has catalyzed all of my work and why I'm here to talk to you today.

I want to first take you back to a moment with my younger self in my grade four classroom. When my family moved from Alberta to Newfoundland, I was met with these large hills and all of these trees and farmlands and this beautiful wake, lake and it all felt like it welcomed me to start my new life, some 6,000 kilometers from my old one. Unfortunately, that land with all its beauty came with this unknown danger that I didn't recognize until later. One day I was sitting in my grade four classroom staring out the window as embers and ashes fell on the playground outside while our lesson just continued. Everybody was calm. This was completely normal for everybody but me, and I was terrified and everybody could tell. But I was assured that this was

a totally regular occurrence. It'll pass without harm, Alisha. Stop worrying. You know what? It did. It did for years. Wildfire marks the beginning of the spring season as predictably as leaves changing in the fall, and I would grow to normalize those events in the same manner that my classmates and my teacher had in that grade four classroom. Smelling smoke without fear and wiping ashes off my car windshield like snowflakes in the winter became a really common occurrence. But unbeknownst to me, my relationship with all of those behaviours would change drastically one fateful day in May 2011 when a fire just like those that had casually danced along the perimeter of town in all of the years prior invaded the place that I had learned to love, a place I called home. At that same time, I was an undergraduate student, finishing one of my last semesters of my degree and experiencing all of the wonder and confusion and honestly dysfunction that comes with being 20-something. Hopefully, that's not just me. Suddenly, piled on to what admittedly already felt like a life I didn't quite know how to navigate yet, came dealing with an evacuation, debilitating panic, uncertainty, like I had never experienced it, then relief, a sense of community, and the true nightmare that is dealing with insurance. And probably the most damaging piece of it all, complete disassociation and dismissal of all of it because it's just stuff, right? Just things, places that I once thought were lovely, but they'd be rebuilt. It doesn't matter, does it? I pushed it down because I had bigger things to attend to like my mid-term exams that were looming, but my textbook and notes that were gone. This pressure to just get done my degree while being simultaneously told by my professors that there was really nothing they could do for me and that I could drop the course if I wanted. But that was an option that I was unwilling to accept. So I learned that through my discomfort and difficulty, I should stop asking for help because they had no help to offer. I didn't know at the time that I was sinking, but I did really have this intuitive feeling that school was somehow a life jacket of sorts and I just needed to keep clinging to it until I made it ashore. And make it, I did, I guess.

I finished my degree on time and I started my career as an educator, which I love. But the whispers of wildfire still lived in my body from the panic and stress that I had never attended to, and it morphed into sweaty palms and an upset stomach and an increased heart rate at the sound of a siren or the smell of smoke and the need to control seemingly every benign little element of my life. But it was all over. I would never have to experience that chaos again as a student, right? Wrong. In 2017, halfway through my master's degree, I lost my second home to fire. This time in the form of a too cute little house that my husband and I had bought just two years before. I arrived at work the day after on time, ready to teach my online class, hair disheveled because I no longer owned the very necessary hair products and wearing my sisters too tight for me pants. I knew that I needed to inform my professors of my loss as I was once again without all of the required learning materials to complete my assessments. But as I sat trying to draft that email, I just felt this intense resistance because ultimately, I thought I knew what they were going to say and I just didn't want to hear it. But thankfully I was wrong for the second time. Much to my surprise, those educators responded with unwavering support and compassion, compassion that I had never even given myself, offering grace and gestures that still clearly today make my eyes well with gratitude. While I felt that I knew practically what to

do to recover from a loss, and I was right. I am immaculate at an insurance list. But my educators granted me the ability to work through all of the emotional implications as well. They offered me this really powerful perspective, a perspective that showed me just how little I had attended to the emotional implications of the Slave Lake wildfire and also how powerful it can be to have your hardship acknowledged and to have people take tangible action to help you through it consistently and over time. They offered learning that was far greater than any curricular objective. They allowed me to recognize my grief as valid and gave me the space and support to navigate all of it meaningfully while still being a student. Despite their really positive influence of their actions and of them as people on my life, as an educator at the same time, that was dealing with an increasing number of students navigating disaster and also subsequently home loss, I wasn't so sure that what was good for me would be good for my students.

I looked to scholarly information about what should guide my practice. I found that there really wasn't much available, which was shocking to me. So with my fingers and toes crossed that it wouldn't result in a third home loss, although there was a global pandemic, so maybe I'm responsible for that, we can't know. I started my doctorate and called upon the experiences of students across Alberta that had simultaneously navigated full-time post-secondary studies and a disaster-induced home loss event, and the results were fascinating. I heard stories from students who questioned whether or not they would live through their evacuations that made decisions between fleeing from fire or potentially drowning. I heard from students who were supported in this beautiful way by their classmates and had educators from past classes reaching out to them to offer textbooks. I also heard from students who said they were offered nothing and from one in a particularly horrible instance, who was offered a two-week leave of absence and when she returned from the two-week leave of absence was met with, Oh, we told you could go for two weeks, but we didn't tell you that we'd give you your credential at the end. That wasn't a part of the deal. And through all of these stories, they talked about how important home was and how much they missed it.

As it turns out, disaster and home loss aren't just big dramatic headline grabbers. They're very real, very messy problems. On a practical level, my participants suddenly didn't have access to basic things like their favourite pair of sweat pants or contact lenses. But it also cut them much deeper because home for us as human beings is much more than walls and furniture. Home matters deeply. In its best form, it's our safe little corner of the world, shielding us from all of the chaos that exists outside and offers us a predictable space to deal with life's other curveballs, whether that's things like exams or stress, or binge watching that questionable reality TV show that gets your heart rate up every time and losing it can be profoundly destabilizing, traumatic even. When we lose home, we lose our anchor. That security. Research shows it's the loss that hits as deeply as losing a beloved family member. Every part of our lives is touched by it in ways that most people don't immediately realize. I didn't and many of my participants didn't either. Here's the kicker. What makes home loss especially complicated is that it's often misunderstood by both outside observers, but also and maybe most significantly,

the people living through it. Because of that, support, yes, isn't offered, but more meaningfully isn't necessarily sought, which is something that we often expect. Now you might be thinking, wait a minute, Alisha, you're totally wrong. I've seen disaster coverage on the news or maybe you've lived through one, and it looks like everyone rallies around disaster victims, and you wouldn't be completely wrong in thinking that. My participants all mentioned how grateful they were for organizations like the Red Cross, for friendly neighbours, for the "We're with you" signs on highways, and those heartfelt social media posts from their educational institutions. And that early response, it is absolutely meaningful. But here's where things get tricky. Disaster recovery weirdly is easiest in the first couple of weeks, and I know that that sounds strange, but it's true. You're really busy just dealing with check boxes. Where am I going to sleep? How do I replace that important ID or find that information that I need? What's next on my to-do list? It's called the honeymoon phase of recovery for a reason. You're just relieved you made it out safe and you're running on adrenaline and gratitude as a result.

Then around week three hits, and suddenly it's not just about logistics. That's when the emotional weight shows up, the fog clears just enough for grief and overwhelm to start creeping its way in. Unfortunately, this is also the same time that most of that external support quietly packs up and leaves. Just when people need it the most, they often find themselves along with the hard work of rebuilding. This creates this nasty little loop. People don't recognize their grief, support dries up and they start thinking, Well, everybody else has moved on. I guess I should be moved on, I need to get over it by now. Cue the guilt, the minimization, and the silence. Now, you might wonder what all of education's role is in this because people go through hard things all the time. Sure, maybe you think that people should rely primarily, if not entirely on their own support systems. To which I say, maybe that's a fair point, except this is where disaster and subsequently home loss makes things even more complicated. Home, as I've mentioned, isn't just a place. It's also about the people inside of it. And when disaster hits, the closest to us are often hit too.

Participants talk to me about family blow ups, relationship breakdowns, and a heartbreaking role reversal, where students suddenly found themselves emotionally caring for their parents, some of them for the first time ever. It wasn't just about losing stuff, it was about losing the stability but also about losing roles that felt familiar. Sure, that grief and family struggle, all of that could happen regardless if you were navigating a disaster and induced home loss, even if you weren't a student. But this is where becoming a post-secondary student and being a post-secondary student in the midst of disaster adds extra layers of complexity. Think about it. Post-secondary students are already navigating a minefield of life changes: new classes, different professors, shifting friend groups, plus the fun little academic quirks that we just like to throw at them, like switching citation styles for sport. Why do we do that? I'm not sure. Many of them are working jobs, managing relationships, and even raising children of their own. Now at a disaster, they're dealing with the chaos of evacuation, scrambling to find temporary housing, managing insurance claims, and that's if they were fortunate enough to have insurance in the first place, reconnecting with loved ones who are equally overwhelmed and rebuilding their

entire sense of home from scratch without any manual about how to do so. All the while there's this terrible fear that they're going to lose something else, their education. My participants talked about that fear eating away at them. Not because they weren't capable, but because they weren't sure their institutions would be flexible or if their professors would understand, or if they'd be penalized for surviving a life-altering event.
As an educator and as a person who has been through this, I find that part the most devastating. Students spend emotional energy that they do not have wondering whether they're going to fail, instead of worrying about focusing on their recovery, because we haven't done enough to assure them that support exists and to embed it clearly into policy. Before I conclude, I just want to circle back to that grade four self. I remember sitting in the class, watching ash fall from the sky, panicking and being told, don't worry about it. It won't happen here, not really. I can't help but think that we're telling a similar story in post-secondary spaces today, pretending that disaster is rare, that it's not increasing in frequency and severity all across our country, that it's easy to navigate without institutional help, and that creating vague inconsistent policy to pacify is enough. We have to do better because our current reality requires it. I'm so excited to talk more about all of the practical ways that we can show up, not just for our students, but for ourselves too. Back to you, Helena.

HELENA:
Oh, Alisha, thank you so much for sharing your stories. And I watched some of the panellists, and we're all nodding as we listen to you. And I really appreciate how you also share that educators allowed you to acknowledge the hardship and how important that was. And, yes, that we will get to some of those practical pieces as we go through. And one such educator is with us today, Dr. Bala Nikku. I'm very eager to learn from you today how you relate to this topic of disaster and how you deal with it in your classroom. Over to you, Bala.

BALA:
Yeah. Thank you, Dr. Alisha. That is powerful. Yeah, there's so much that I can relate with. So in this presentation, I would like to share how I have learned to relate to the disasters as a crisis, chaos, destruction, disease, death, and also a unique opportunity to develop strengths as a social worker. In the last I don't know how many years, I've worked in many countries. As you can see, I'm a relational ed scholar, came to Thomson Rivers University, which is located on unceded lands of First Nations people, great colleagues. I want to thank each one of them as students. Whatever I'm sharing today is perhaps many years of teaching, international social work, disaster social work, doing research with communities, community-resilient features.

I'm going to structure the story that I'm going to tell you in three things. One, how do I use myself? As how do I socialize or how my childhood experiences, socialization with famines, droughts, as an agricultural family member, as a son and a male, you know, patriarchal society in India. Right now, I'm calling from my own place, what it means to disaster, disaster management, disaster dynamics, disaster politics, how my childhood experiences and later, working with disaster survivors and champions in India and Nepal and Sri Lanka and back in

Kamloops, how these experiences led me to think about disasters. How do I teach disaster social work, international social work? What paradigms and earlier scholars' work influences my teaching and learning. How do I facilitate these classes, especially right after the disasters, which Alisha, Dr. Alisha mentioned, the kind of students that their status, the way they deal with the course contents, assignments, deadlines, personal lives, care duties, how do I do that? As a facilitator, how I've handled these things, especially COVID 19 and later. What does this mean to us as educators in higher education and what needs to be done?

Dr. Alisha, you mentioned already more needs to be done. But I think as you mentioned, there are some, I think, good practices that we can learn from each other and take it to our classrooms and take care of ourselves and our students as a community. I'll talk about using self. How do I do? Then how do I teach? What kind of content and curriculum evolution that I have done in the last few years teaching in different countries? Teaching led to research and how that research informs me to teaching back to the classrooms and how do I operate in this practice to theory, theory to practice. Finally, in 2023, 2024, last two, three years, I've been fortunate to receive new Frontiers Research Fund where we are working with disaster survivors, disaster champions, basically communities that are exposed to a different disasters, 2015 earthquakes in Nepal, recurrent and frequent intense wildfires in Kamloops and other places in B.C., basically, 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka and recurrent floods in India and fishing communities. So what are we learning from them? What do we mean by resilient stories? So how do we make classrooms as a theatre, where we perform, classroom as a dynamic place, where we engage. Classroom is a sanctuary where we can take care of each other. So I'll conclude with some of these few thoughts.

So how do I use myself? As I mentioned, I come from an agricultural family. Going to bed without food is not, I think, new to me. I mean, whenever there's a flood, the villages loses the crop and they have to survive to each other, share the grains, grain bank, help each other, kinship care. I mean, I grew up with that, you know, it's the whole community, you know, that has to come together to survive themselves. And that's where the resilience. You know, I came from that, being a son treated well in a patriarchal society, how you access those resources compared to your girl you know, sisters. So with those inequities, when the disaster comes, some people benefit and some people lose. Again, it's the same thing. It's a vulnerable people. Even in the B.C. loses when there is a wildfire, they will be displaced. There, there is no insurance claims, perhaps, there's an intergenerational trauma. So basically, I use my lived experience in my classrooms. Using self is a powerful tool in social work. If you look at that little, you know, visual that came up, that represents my own resilience which came out of a project by the Resilience Institute, Interior B.C., funded by Red Cross. So what is this visual is all about. As you can see, I operate in two liminal spaces, the salmon, and I'm in B.C., swims across, lays the, you know, eggs and breeds and then becomes, you know, red, and it becomes fertilizer. And it is a very, very, very important animal relative in Indigenous cultures. When I'm back to India right now with my family and extended family and colleagues, I brought my turtle. A turtle is a transform of a god, in Indian mythology, very strong, lives under the earth,

grounded, confident, you know, I kind of operate in these two liminal spaces. When I'm here, when I'm there, I work in B.C., but I live in India. I maintain my roots with my family members. I kind of broker, academically, you know, share and teach in classrooms in Nepal, in India and B.C. So I derive my resilience in these liminal spaces.

So I was talking to my colleagues about 2017 fires, you know, as a racialized immigrant, COVID times, I myself, you know, kind of understood how race, colour, also, you know, kind of brings that intersectionality when we talk about disasters pandemic. Basically, disasters do not kill people. It is the mismanagement of the disasters that kill people. I have come to this kind of understanding maybe a few years ago. As a child, I used to believe that disasters are disaster, bad. God is, you know, angry, the Earth is on an elephant, God and he's angry, he moves, there's an earthquake.

Even now when I go to communities, they tell these stories of disasters, why they caused, what causes these disasters. There is an Indigenous signs. So I bring the Indigenous signs, my old childhood experiences, and the Western signs, and after coming to Kamloops, I've learned the two-eyed approach. So I can see that, you know, my knowledge of disaster scholarship, though rooted in my childhood experiences, but scholars and the work that I, you know, do with the communities in different countries is also helping me. So I bring my stories to the classroom. Why? Because it comforts and I'm one of you. I'm not telling these stories just academically or by not experiencing them. That gives comfort. I saw that in my classrooms. This is where I think I can see some critical consciousness. Of course, I can see my work related to Paulo Freire or motivated by Freire's work, conscientization, grassroots animation, where when we share lived experiences about famine, drought, oppression, power, we can actually create those empathetic connections in the classroom. And maybe by doing that, we can actually reclaim our dignities, you know, as a human worth and dignity.

Again, each one of us, whether you're a single woman, person with disabilities, elder, Indigenous person, displaced people, we all have dignity and we need to reclaim. So I bring these, you know, lived experiences to the classroom and Freire's work also helps me to bring that conscientization. I also use, again, I've learned this, during my academic career, learning experience, you know, again, you know, in TRU, the Centre of Excellence and Teaching. I learned that, you know, we can actually learn as an experience. We can bring these concrete experiences, our own and friends and communities in the literature, in the media, social media. I mean, there's a lot of, you know, experiences being shared. How do you make sense of that? How can we use that as a data, as a knowledge, which is virtually constructed? So we bring these experiences. For example, I share my own experience or I share the elders' experience in Nepal facing the 2015 earthquake. These elders also have faced, you know, another earthquake in the past where the king was in the ruling. So they have actually experienced two different, you know, earthquakes. One is in the king's regime. The other one is, you know, in the Democratic Nepal Republic, which is, you know, democratic country. And they share, you know,

the differences, how they were treated, what kind of rescue and relief mechanisms, what kind of, you know, spiritual, you know, connections, what they mean by Gumba's temples.

So I bring these real experiences into the classroom, which is concrete experience, which […] talks about. But I also bring Freire's power dynamics, which makes a reflective dialogue. So by doing that, we can help our students who have actually gone through the disasters themselves. They might be disaster survivors, disaster champions. Disaster social workers, whatever role they play, actually we can help them to create that abstract conceptualization. What does this experience mean to me? What happened there? What went well? You know? If I were in the situation, what would I would have done? You know? So that abstract conceptualization helps to link our experiences to the theoretical scholarship that is already existing. By doing that, again, we can use, you know. Basically, what I'm trying to say that as academics, I think there is a need, and there is also, I think, we should mobilize scholars' work and bring our own work to create that empathetic connections in the classroom. I think this is what I felt teaching international social community social work, disaster social work at Thompson Rivers University.

This is what I wrote in my tenure application. I use open resources. I'm flexible. I recognize, you know, individual learning styles of students. I've learned how to design curriculum outcomes by aligning institutional vision. So this is what I felt, I think we grow as academics, while working with students in general, but also, disasters. Also, you know, a crisis, you know, also gives us this unique opportunity to reflect and help them to reflect. All that leads to active experimentation. Now students, you know, are comfortable especially social work students have the chance to go to the practicum where they can actually see and apply these notions, whether rescue relief or resilience. It's not just bouncing back, bouncing forward, bouncing sideways, but it is grounding yourself and finding your own resilient spot.

Again, my co-panellists are talking about that. Each one is unique and resilience, I think, I believe, is not just a task, but also a process. It takes time. So they can actually experiment or translate these ideas while working with other survivors or their own families, their own communities. So in a way, there are many ideas and scholarship that is available, again, Narrative Identity Theory, for example, by Berner by meaning making. One of the Nepali knowledge keeper talked about I'm not worried about disaster. I came onto the Earth for two days. The day I was born, the day I was dead, you know, all the drama is in between. So that's okay. I know that these disasters are real. They're there, I have to face them, I have to take it. I see the way these knowledge keepers, elders, look at disasters as natural or part of life. Of course, again, there are these notions, people talk about natural disasters in the policy, you know, they're not natural perhaps. They became disasters because we were not able to stop the hazards in the first place. And people talk about natural disaster. The word, natural, make it so natural as if it is so natural. It's not the failure of the policies. By talking about resilient, resilient people, resilient communities, I would argue that policymakers is actually putting the onus on, you know,, being resilient on the people rather than themselves. There's a lot of politics to unpack. I take my own experiences, scholarship that is existing, media, new thinking

into the classroom. So this is one way that I work with my students and we create that space where we can actually understand what happens.

Now what research? In a few minutes. I'm fortunate to get some research funding. We are working in these four different communities, four different communities, different governance systems, different cultures, different human development index, but the outcomes are the same. The displacement, evacuation, generational trauma, violence. Why is this? This is the question that I ask. Then I started understanding maybe in our higher education, you know, as an institution with resources and I mean, the knowledge to answer the community questions. So we go to the community and ask the questions instead we go with, you know, questionnaires and the questions that we would like to answer. We started doing community science projects. So that is what I've written in this paper where higher education or academics and schools, teachers, perhaps, can be a practitioners. We can also a therapeutic guide, a Socratic learning, care for the carers, we can be facilitators, we can be the brokers. There are multiple roles for us to play. Can we really do that? Is our institutions already create those spaces for us to play that multiple roles so that, you know, those students who are actually going through multiple issues, feel comfortable and succeed if that is what the higher education goal is all about. I've contemplated how I taught disaster social work back in Nepal.

For example, 2015, we have used consortia books. We have used Photo Voice stories. We have used art based, we have used the culture. Different things we have done in 2015 and the whole college, I mean, all Nepalese students and faculty were survivors and at the same time champions. They survived in the first place. They went to communities as social workers. They actually learned on the job skills, for example, sometimes, how to do a psychological facade. They have learned in the classroom, they went to the communities and practise. Disasters do create some of these opportunities that we can make use of to create those learning moments and learning opportunities for students. I'd like to cheer you again. I did the same thing, but also included some conceptual maps, mind maps, and then narratives, auto ethnography. Students can choose what they want to write and what kind of assignments they want to come up with in alignment with the course outlines and the time and the flexibility and other duties that they have. It really worked well, you know, because I or each student and their abilities, I think that itself already created a kind connection. This guy is good to work with. And he listens to us. He's available out of the class. He's quick on the emails. I did some of these simple human interactions perhaps or whatever you call them, it really worked in my case. In TRU I've tried some of those tools which worked.

And finally, now we are working with resilient stories, working with fishing communities and Andra, as you can see them. What I mean by resilient stories.

We go to the people, listen to those stories, curate them. Ask whether they're valid, whether they agree to put their pictures, whether they can give those visuals, what resilience to them. This has been two years that we've been working with. In this long journey, we came up with

four stages. Initially, we go there. We introduce the theme, disaster resilience, community resilience futures, what it means, who I am, where I come from, what kind of resources do I have, what kind of expectations they have. Then participatory learning journey. Then we understand what kind of nets, what kind of boats, what kind of technology, how they survive when they lose home. They ask what happens when there are wildfires in Canada. There's a lot of participatory action that goes in. Then visual learning journey, the visuals, use of visuals, giving a visual to the story. And finally, literal learning journey. We disseminate, we share, we print books, so it is working. This is something that I'm working on right now.

And finally, how do I conclude? How do we really take disasters as constructed, disasters are socially contested. Disaster is a space where we can see there's a lot of actors. How do we create this co-constructed meaning in our classrooms so that, you know, it's not an isolated experience, isolated learning, but it is a collective experience for all of us, the learners and the facilitator.

This is where I came across Goffman's work. Basically, he talks about a classroom as a theatre, you know, a teacher as a facilitator, as a director, and students as performers, and each one of us performed the best self. Some students I have seen though they're struggling, they don't want to tell us. They don't want to seek help. They don't come forward. And there are, of course, student services and other things and I also reach out sometimes when I feel there's something happening, you know? So we all perform our best selves. You know, classroom is a theatre. Disaster is theatrical performance. We see many actors. So I kind of started learning, you know, Erving Goffman's work and see how the theatrical performance, social rules, social norms operate and contested and surviving I mean, and protecting that dignity. So again, Goffman talks about five things perhaps in his theory. He also talks about backstage performance, frontstage performance. In front stage, we're all resilient. We're all, you know, bravery, we go into the wash. We can withstand the cyclones. We can withstand the wildfires. Firefighters, adrenalin is running. We save the homes. Backstage, we wonder, you know what happened to my own home? What happened to my own community? What happened to my family? You know, this is what I should be doing, you know? So we question. So like that, we also frame different narratives. I can see that in the classroom also, some students are very active, very passionate, very outgoing, but also, you know, some students, you know, seeking help, you know, identities. So there is this framing that happens. I'm beginning to understand even in the spaces that, you know, in the community. Some people talk about disasters are natural, some people talking about disasters are human made, human induced. It's the failure of policies, it's the politics, it's the corruption, it's the building codes that are not working. That's why, you know, buildings are collapsing and people are dying. It's a different way of looking at it. It's oppressed and oppressor. Again, Friere's work. There is sigma and there is recovery. Our children as passive beneficiaries, sometimes we portray them.

So using Goffman's work, I think I'm beginning to understand classroom as a theatrical performance. We all perform our best selves. But as a director, as a facilitator, I have to reach

to the last mile. I have to reach out to the last student who needs that help. This is where I think the art of social work, the science of social work, or, you know, perhaps there's a human touch there. I started seeing, you know, some kind of resilience, some kind of awareness, some kind of connection, some kind of managing that emotional labour, time management, decision-making, priorities, seeking help, and I call it, you know, democratic classroom experience. So this is how I, as a childhood, you know, believing, you know, disasters are karma, god is angry. I still believe that. But I also now believe disasters are theatrical performance, we perform, we learn, we present ourselves, we manage our identities, and within those intersections, is where that resilience comes from. So I try to unpack that and that value and recognize. And I'm really honoured and grateful for these opportunities that I have and I could share. I hope I make these classrooms a little better place to explore one's own resilience and also help others.

HELENA:
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much for sharing. There were so many nuggets in there that I want to get back at. Like, using ourselves is a very interesting idea and how you spoke about the management. It's the mismanagement that actually kills people through disaster, not necessarily disaster itself. There were a few things around the classroom as a sanctuary, that's also a new idea to me. So I will definitely want to look into it deeper and further. Thank you for sharing so passionately with us. Now we also have Theresa with us and Theresa who recently published a book on the trauma-informed way that we could potentially respond to disasters. And I'm wondering how your research informs also your role as director of a Teaching and Learning Centre, Theresa, so we are excited to hear from you.

THERESA:
Yeah, thank you, Helena. I kind of feel like I'm finding my peeps. It's such a beautiful thing. I did publish a book last fall called "Transforming Trauma through Social Change, A Guide for Educators," and the link to the book website is in the chat. I'm reflecting right now though on the first half of my career, and I spent 15 years in wetland conservation. I turned the bottom half of my house into an office where I had youth interns and I raised over half a million dollars a year. Every year we would move to a different community and look at least six to seven wetland conservation projects that we could do. It was an incredible education model and it worked because I can travel around the province with my children and I can say those thousands of hectares of wetlands are there because of the work that we did. And when you think about disasters that are striking us now, 90% of Kelowna was a wetland at one time, and now it's at around 10% of Kelowna, British Columbia. And when you think about Abbotsford and University of Fraser Valley and the 2020 floods that they faced there, it was Sumas Lake before the floods occurred and is no longer a Sumas Lake. It's been drained and filled. So when you think about the long history of these disasters, that kind of environmental work as Bala you were commenting on just before we got started on this panel is very linked to what I'll be talking about. But let's move on to the part about education.

I did switch halfway through into a community college and became a department head of teaching and learning. The reason I wouldn't make that switch besides the fact that my family was in tatters with all of this work. I had no work life balance raising all this funding, having all these interns in my basements, and we needed to regain more balance as a family. Besides that reason, I saw community college as a bridge, a place where it wasn't the environment that was the problem. The environment would be fine. It was the people and the way they were acting. I thought that if I could work in a community college where people who were trying to better critical thinking skills, more knowledge that they could actually become better people and maybe not do some of the things that they're doing right now that are leading us to these disasters in the first place. I still think that's true. I've been there now for over 20 years at the college and I still believe that about community colleges. But one thing I want to remind us of just before I get going on some of the concepts in the book is that, trauma, community trauma is both episodic and systemic. I live and have lived for 40 years in the Kootenay region, and that is the home of the Sinixt, the Syilx and, and the Ktunaxa peoples. The traumas, which I speak about in my book, that they have experienced separation from the land. The Sinixt people were declared extinct by the federal government many decades ago and they have recently been declared not extinct any longer. Can you imagine what that feels like? But the main trauma there was separation from the land.

Many Sinixt people live in Colville in Washington and state, and they were not able to cross the border and to harvest roots and animals here in this area because they were declared extinct and so they had no rights to that. It was actually a systemic trauma over many decades. We have these episodic traumas, like the fires and the floods, and then we have the systemic traumas and I think we don't want it. Those are disasters too. They just are much more incremental and I don't want to be not remembering those because they're super important to remember. So as an instructor, I could see that one of the things that could help with these disasters that we're experiencing is getting students involved in community work, service work, social change. And somebody who wrote a book on trauma many, many years ago, Harvard educator Judith Herman talks about this. She talks about, yes, there is the experience, and Alisha, you talked a little bit about this too the first two weeks, right? And as individuals, we need to have that kind of support that individual one-on-one support. But she argued, for instance, a woman experiencing, say, sexual violence, if she comes back into a community where there is no sense that the community is going to change, that the culture is going to change around here, that there's a feminist movement, a women's movement, then she can't completely recover. I would say it was the same with a disaster.

If you have the floods they did at the University of Fraser Valley and then you don't look at the root causes of these disasters like the fact that the Sumas Lake existed not long ago, and it was 80% of the food source for the Sto:lo People in the Lower Mainland. There were freshwater mussels and the salmon that are so beautiful in your illustration there, Bala. So if we don't look at those root causes and don't have social change happen, then we can't really respond and heal from these disasters and these traumas in a very wholesome and full recovery kind of way.

So I hope that I'm standing on the shoulders of Judith Herman because she continues to do this amazing work. Ironically, right after she published her book back in the 90s, at the same time her contemporaries did like Gabor Maté and Bessel Van Corp, she suffered an injury. She fell off a stage and had this debilitating accident and then actually had to become well, she didn't have to, but she became addicted to pain medications and spent the rest of her life until very recently when there was a life changing operation that she got and she was able to get away from the pain and to kick the addictions. And yeah, and have full recovery. That all has to do with social change about how we think about, for instance, prescription drugs these days. People are re-examining that. So Yeah.

If I could have somebody just put the link to my substack because I write about a lot of this in the substack and there is a podcast that I recently did with facilitating for purpose that talks about all of these thoughts because we only have a few minutes here and I can't go too far into the detail. But if you want to sense of the book and you want to get an idea of some of the ideas I raised there and some of the exercises you'll find in the book, the podcast is great. The Substack is a good way to learn more about that. But yeah, the premise of the book is that social change in these times where we are experiencing these repeated disasters is an outlet for processing despair and that's exactly the way that we make a classroom a sanctuary is that we work with our students to find hope at the college and across Canada, there have been recent studies and we're finding that ecological despair is so prevalent in students. In fact, about over 60% of our students said that they don't intend to have children because they can't bring them into a world like this. That's just incredibly grounding.

How do we work with students that are feeling that they don't want to bring children into a world like this? What do we do? I truly believe social change is the key. In the book, I have five case studies, one for every chapter, and you're going to find these people who are just everyday people, but they are rising up against these systemic issues and joining movements like the land back movement for Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people, for the environmental movement, the women's movement, the countercultural movement, and movements against ageism. There are so many social change movements that you can involve your students in. I know we want to have time for questions, but I guess the last thing I'd like to leave you with is that there is a resource, and I'll put it into the chat that if we have educators on the call that you might really want to take a look at. It's a book called It's a classic. It's been around for a while, 2013. It's called "When a Community Weeps: Case Studies and Group Survivorship." It really looks at how it isn't written for educators, but there's a framework in it. The framework is also in my book. It gets us to think about these disasters, yes, in the moment, but also before they might happen. For instance, at the University of Fraser Valley, they know there will be more floods. That is certainly going to happen. Now, knowing that, how can they work with their students to create greater resilience in those communities? So in Zenner and Williams we call that the pre-trauma work. How can we work on resilience before these disasters strike? You'll find tables in my book that have case studies that show how an educator could work in that pre-trauma phase. There is, of course, the actual time when things are

happening and what post-secondaries can do. Then there's also the post-trauma, and you look at if there is a response that is working at the time. You can inspire other communities, other countries, other post-secondaries in this great work. There's also this post-trauma sharing and there are, like I said, examples of that. It's called The Community Framework for Full Recovery and you'll find it in that Zinner and Williams book and you'll find it in my book as well, adapted for educators. I would leave that with you as a resource because I think it could be very helpful.

So social connection and relationship are just really important to me. I know when I worked on the Osoyoos Indian Band for six years, I know the first year I felt we were faced with so many systemic disasters and trauma and the way we all got through that together. The students and myself was through community work, by creating storytelling events, by planting out native plants, by working in the community to give us all hope when we were faced with so many challenges in that community. And our connections, one-on-one in group, in class, in classes as sanctuary, become deep and spacious that's what gives us the ability to be more prepared for these disasters, to share learnings after the disaster. That's something that I think all of us could be absolutely doing more of. I feel like a few decades ago, service work, community work as part of education was more common, for some reason, and I hear the reasons at my own post-secondary. Oh, well, we need permissions to get out of the classroom or we might be advocating for one group over another group, so we can't be biased and all of these reasons that seem to be stopping us from doing what we really do need to do during these times. I guess the last thing I'll leave you with is a keynote speaker that I got to hear this spring. We'll be taking a big focus at the college on this particular work. It's called the "Pedagogy of Kindness." And if you haven't heard about it yet, the author has fabulous name. Her name is Kate Denial, and she works out of the US. Pick it up if you haven't had a look or see her website. She's doing a lot of the things that Alisha talked about being flexible. It's not an airy fairy approach of pedagogy of kindness. It's an approach that we need in these times, being flexible and compassionate and present. And there are so many ways that we can do that as institutions and educators. Thanks so much for this opportunity and thanks for letting me find some more of my peeps, and I can't wait to hear what Christy has to share.

Resources recommended by Theresa
Zinner, E. S., & Williams, M. B. (2013). When a community weeps: Case studies in group survivorship. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203778012
https://www.southam.space/
https://socialchangeeducation.substack.com/p/holding-accountable-spaces
https://bcblearning.com/trauma-learning-and-social-change-episode-53/

HELENA:
Yes, thank you, Theresa. And, oh my goodness, my list of to-dos after this panel is growing because I want to look into pre-trauma work, and this book, "Pedagogy of Kindness" has come across my desk so many times as a recommendation. So you all know what I'll be doing next week. I'll be reading, for sure. Now, over to our final panelist Christy, and Christy prepares so

well for all our events. But inevitably, there might be still some surprises and things that we couldn't anticipate. So recently, we went on a Roadshow, and we had to press the pause button, and Christy was fortunately there to guide us through it. So, Christy, would you give everyone here a bit of a sneak peek of what happened and your decision-making? Because I think there's some real practical takeaways for the audience.

CHRISTY:
Right. Thanks. Thanks, Helena. So as Helena mentioned, we were on a Roadshow event, which is an event where we load up Suburbans with event supplies and travel to small communities. This year, we headed to Prince George, Dawson Creek, and Fort St. John. It was at our first stop in Prince George when we knew of two fires that potentially could affect us. One was in Tumbler Ridge and Dawson on the way to Dawson Creek and one in Fort St. John. So our initial responses were to connect with our contact in Dawson Creek and Fort St. John to get first-hand information. And the second was to bring our emergency response team together. So recently in preparing for events, we started to do what are called tabletop exercises, and this is where we gather our event team, brainstorm all the potential threats that we may encounter from power outages to active shooters, to weather events. And then we choose the top three threats and do a deep dive creating detailed action steps to respond to them. This process also includes assigning roles to each specific team member, so everyone knows what they need to do step by step. These are then detailed out into put together and detailed out in a package, and then that's shared out before the event. Also in preparing for events, we set up comms channels, and we have dedicated channels for chat, emergencies, and check-ins. The check-in one is for people who are traveling, whether driving or flying, and that kind of looks like Christy Vancouver airport boarding, arrived in Prince George, and that just helps us keep track of where all our team members are. On those channels, too, we also include what we call our mothership, and that is management and colleague support teams that aren't on the road with us.

Oh, I wanted to add, for this Roadshow, as it was April, we briefly talked about forest fires, but we were more concerned about the threat of snow. You know, we had concerns about being early in the season, some of the mountain passes we need to cross, and did our vehicles have snow tires? So we weren't even thinking about forest fires at that time. However, we had an emergency response team in place, so we called a meeting at the hotel and we did another tabletop. For this meeting, we did bring in management and our support team virtually. So we were all on the same page, limiting side conversations, and also addressing everybody's concerns at one time. So the first thing we did at the meeting was a team check-in, and then we started a risk and safety assessment. And that included checking the B.C. wildfire site.

We also spent time understanding the ratings. What was the size of the fire? What the weather forecast was? What was expected for wind and rain? We also looked at air quality, we also checked for road closures, airport closures, and if there were any evacuations in place. Something else we did too was we looked at maps for alternative routes or alternative travel

routes. So to stay informed and current, we checked that status three times a day and posted that information to our emergency channel. The other thing we put priority on was communication, and that was, you know, keeping communicating internally and also communicating with the venues. We stayed informed of their operational status, and we were also getting real time information from people at those locations. We did also prepare attendee communication in case we had to change our event plans. In the end, everything worked out. We made it to Dawson Creek and Fort St. John, and we had a successful Roadshow. And it was so much fun, too. So we were very thankful for some of that pre-planning and the opportunity to really think things through ahead of time. So when the moment comes that you're not caught totally unprepared.

HELENA:
I do wonder, Christy a follow-up question for you from this experience, what would you recommend to leaders, coordinators, educators who are in decision making roles? How do you prioritize care over, for example, cost and logistical consequences like cancelling a venue and losing the deposit last minute?

CHRISTY:
Yeah, so I think the first thing is to prepare for the unexpected. You know, we always think it's not going to happen to us. Meeting ahead of time and doing tabletop exercises is so valuable because everybody knows their role and exactly what they need to do. Another recommendation is having a clear set of roles and responsibilities. So you have to have a couple of people who have the confidence and power to lead your team, and, you know, it needs to be clear who has a show stop authority. In a crisis, your team and attendees are going to look to you for direction, so it's good to have all your leads prepared. Another thing that came up for us that was interesting was the importance of having current and accurate information. And that's from getting that information from people that are actually in those areas. So we struggled at times with information that was hitting the news, when it was hitting the news, and what the reality on the ground was, as they were different. Also, I want to note when we first looked at the BC Wildfire website, it was a bit alarming with all of those red “out of control” dots, but, you know, really diving in and seeing what that “out of control” actually means. For care and consequences, we really put everybody's safety first. So there was under no circumstance we were going to take any chances. And so for us, that meant staying informed and being adaptable. In this case, we did have contingency plans in place for the event and our travel. And it also meant we needed to be prepared to make tough calls early and also lead with empathy and responsibility as everyone had different levels of comfort.

HELENA:
Thank you so much for sharing all your experience with us. I appreciate that. And hopefully, there were a few pointers that audience members could also take away. I do see a comment in the chat that I want to amplify. So Christina says that at BCIT they've started an initiative that brings together work and sustainability, reconciliation, and Indigeneity, respect, diversity,

inclusion, and student well-being. They're still figuring out what that looks like, but they refer to it as an ethic of care and accountability. Thank you so much for sharing that comment with us. I want to get back to Alisha because one of our questions that we received anonymously and I shared the question in the chat, how can university housing support students or evacuees during crisis? So maybe I know you have a few other practical pointers for support as well, and you can maybe weave that answer in there as you attend to those.

ALISHA:
Yeah. So a couple of things. One, I work for Northern Lakes College, and they were quite helpful during the Slave Lake 2011 fires because they opened that housing for students, as well as people who were working for the institution in various capacities who had lost their homes and continued that operation through the summer where maybe we wouldn't otherwise have students or many students living in that housing, and they consistently do that. And so making the housing available, but there's actually a really important mechanism at play that is happening with student housing that we often forget. Students make home in various places. You can have home in multiple places at the same time.

Many of my participants highlighted how important it was for them to be students in student housing because they had some maybe familiar items with them even when losing their family homes and their very most sentimental possessions. There was still a space for them to do a lot of that ontological work, that inner sorting out of all of the chaos that was happening around them. You really provide an incredibly valuable place of stability and safety for the students that are already living in housing. But if you can open it to others, if there's space and your institution is willing and I hope they are to bring others into that space, it allows people to make home in a small way before having to go through the tremendous emotional and also practical labour of rebuilding their tangible home. I think that there's a really important mechanism at play that's often forgotten. Also, academic institutions as a whole become this familiar space for students to walk around familiar hallways and to see familiar people, that is incredibly valuable in a way that we often minimize or don't understand fully. But it's important for students and all of my participants said it was very important for them to stay in their role as student because it allowed them that piece of grounding that they were really missing. So yeah, thanks.

HELENA:
Thank you for sharing that. And I want to invite the audience at this time. If there's any additional questions, you could place that in the chat. That's probably the preferred method. If you do not want to type in the chat or for any reason, have difficulty accessing the chat, then you can also raise your hand to ask a question or perhaps you have an insight to share. I do want to hand over to Theresa and Bala and invite you as well to add to what Alisha said. I know when we had this conversation about housing before the time that you both acknowledge that that is something you have experienced with as well.

THERESA:
Well, I could just say that we do open up our housing if it's that time of the year when we have space, otherwise, it's always fully booked. It's making me think as Alisha was talking about our international students, where everything is so new and then on top of it all, are these fires and there are these floods, and I'm just wondering especially about them. I'm wondering about Christina, she could tell us a little bit. It sounds very proactive. It sounds very pre-trauma work that they might be doing at BCIT I wonder if she'd be willing to unmute and tell us just a little bit more about it. Putting you on the spot, Christina.

CHRISTINA: Just getting my...

THERESA: Sorry about that.

CHRISTINA:
No, I Yeah. Yeah, we started it, I guess in the last year or maybe a year ago at the idea we call it IDEAS. It's an acronym with a couple of the letters have two words representing it. But that acronym and that sort of collection of concepts and sort of domains of care, I guess, originally came out of our Indigenous Initiatives Group. And then, yeah, we got together and, you know, a lot of the work we do, we're in small departments or, you know, two people teams, and we're all sort of competing for the attention of everybody, you know, faculty and employees and students. And it's confusing. It's confusing for people. So we all have our own strategies and visions. So we thought, well, we don't want people to be having to choose or do I focus on sustainability or reconciliation? When they're all linked, we're dealing with problems that all have the same foundation, colonialism, extractive capitalism, you name it, right? So it's all the same stuff. And then we're having people that deal with students were coming to us and saying, you know, they're naming climate grief and climate anxiety, and, you know, they're dealing with housing crisis and the typical things that, you know, students deal with and everyone's dealing with these days, but they're actually naming climate anxiety on top of it all. So they're like, What do we do? What do we tell them? So we thought, you know what? We just have to bring all this together for everybody's sake, you know, and we're all under budget constraints, especially post-secondary. So yeah, we're just trying to be efficient with doing our work and show people, you know, the connections between all these things. So we're still in the early stages, but it's been really well received at BCIT. I think, you know, it's kind of naming some things that everyone knows are happening and to see an institution acknowledge that I think is very validating for a lot of our employees. So a lot of the employees have just kind of run with this, which is great because, you know, we're just a working group trying to form, shape, some resources around this, you know, you know, make it really tangible. And meanwhile, faculty and staff are just creating. So we had one group, creating sort of a guiding document for their group, and now they're, you know, making it a little more general so others can use it and we've got our policy team, you know, we're trying to embed it in policy going forward. It's in our new strategic plan. So everyone's kind of, you know, trying to see how this

applies to their work. So it's really yeah, kind of exciting time right now. But yeah, we're still sort of feeling our way through it.

HELENA:
Thank you so much, Christina, thanks, Theresa for putting her on the spot. That was a valuable contribution to the panel. And if you want to connect with Christina, afterwards, Christina, feel free if you want to share your contact information. I do have a question for the audience because I said we want to tap into your wisdom as well, and I've placed it in the chat. What does meaningful flexibility look like in a time of crisis? So I'll give you time to just respond and it can be like a waterfall as we go through final checkouts with each of our panellists. Take your time to answer that. But I do want to give each of the panellists a final moment to share a takeaway, a resource, a recommendation. There was a question in the chat for resources, and I know Theresa has shared some in the chat already. So, Bala, shall we start with you and then go over to Christy, Alisha, and Theresa.

BALA:
Yeah, what does meaningful flexibility look like in a time of crisis? We can also think about institutions, now that we are talking about institutions, what they do, higher education institutions should be community engaged. I think that's where they derive their relevance. Maybe they should come up with flexibility or they should come up with enough resource allocation that brings meaningful flexibility to the operations. For example, opening up the domes and other classrooms and other spaces. 2017, Wildfire TRU, did that, staff students, the university community opened up. served as volunteers and welcomed all the evacuees that came to Kamloops. Per faculty, I mean, this is what kind of meaningful flexibility that I would bring in, as I mentioned in my presentation, adjusting teaching styles, curriculum, deadlines, matching, you know, the type of learning, and the scale, the time and other competing demands.

So how do we align so that still students succeed, and we also meet the learning outcomes. So we need to be flexible, but also careful or maybe smart and making sure that we meet the course outcomes and students succeed. At the end of the day, students who are the performers also need to be flexible, maybe prioritize the time speak, you know, um, support systems do not hesitate, decision-making, care for the carers, self-care. As social workers, again, you know, we can be a role model by taking care of yourself and also, you know, to practice self-care and the resilient models for others. So I'm not sure. I mean, when we say that flexibility, to me, those are making options and right choices.

HELENA:
Well, thank you, Bala. And I do see that Bala shared your resource in the chat from the Resilience Institute. So thank you for sharing that with us. Alisha, any final? Is it Alisha next? Any final or Christy? Alisha. Alisha. Any final comment or resource or recommendation. And then Christy.

ALISHA:
Okay. Actually, what I'm going to say is a reference to something that Christy said, so that worked out really lovely. She talked about how confusing communication is in times of crisis and you're getting all these different kinds of information. Something that I find really interesting is people have a tendency to not necessarily believe students or they feel like students have deceived them in some way by giving them one piece of information and then that information has changed. That's really normal, so my recommendation would be one, to have a designated person at your institution or within your department that students that are navigating a disaster or subsequently a home loss can speak with directly, and then that person is responsible for disseminating that information outward. Be getting a million emails, even if they're very well intended, those people are already dealing with a lot of information and a lot of practical to do that they're navigating. Then the second big piece of that is, we expect often institutionally for students to come to us, you will come to student services if you need our support. But especially as it pertains to disaster, students often, as I said in my presentation, don't recognize that they are navigating grief and dysfunction and difficulty so making continued call outs, reach out to them, bring them in and not in the first three weeks, but in the three weeks, three months, even as far as a year goes, the most meaningful thing for me was I had a professor who then followed me through the rest of my masters. She would check in on me, it was the most lovely act of care and not that we can expect all of our faculty to do that, but institutionally, there are ways that we can support students in a way that is that meaningful. Alleviate that emotional and practical burden from them as much as possible. Over to you, Christy.

HELENA:
Thank you, Alisha. Christy has her cat on her lap.

CHRISTY:
Sorry, my assistant. Actually, he's been really good, so that was just two passes in an hour and a half. So I'm going to share AlertMedia. There's a free resource on doing Tabletops. They also have a lot of really good information on how to run them. That would help you prepare if you do any safety planning or event planning. And the other piece, I'm part of the Event Safety Alliance Committee of Canada, and so I would recommend if anybody is in the safety part of it with your institution that you join a group like that because, you know, we meet quite frequently, and just all the voices that come to the table. I found it invaluable.

HELENA: That's very practical. Theresa, how about you?

THERESA:
I'm looking at meaningful flexibility. I was teaching a class in a master's class in leadership for social justice, and we were doing teamwork, which not all students love, as I see Bala shaking his head. And we were doing teamwork and some of the students were complaining about

another student and that student I knew was running, as far as I know, the only not-for-profit queer organization in Alberta. She had been experiencing threats they had been experiencing threats to their life, vandalism, all of these things. There were all of these complaints. I think that meaningful flexibility meant speaking to the other students that were complaining about them, that everybody is different because in the end, although that student maybe didn't do some of the ground work that was required to get the presentations up for the group in the end and so on, maybe didn't do as many hours, what they had to teach that group about what it means to live in community, about what it means to do the social justice was so impactful. In the course evaluations, many of the other students talked about that was where the majority of their learning came from was from that particular student. So yes, maybe they couldn't put the hours in to some of the teamwork and yet the insights that they had to share, the leadership that they were demonstrating in the get go. So maybe a bit confusing, but what is meaningful flexibility? I was as flexible as an instructor as I possibly could be to make sure that yes, all of the students were meeting the outcomes, but there was flexibility for this student. There was care. There were more check-ins for the student because of what they were experiencing in their lives. And that's the kind of thing, and just not every student is the same. They're offering different things. As long as Bala says they're meeting the outcomes, that's what we really have to, and we need to nurture that so that that diversity can come in. Otherwise, we lose those students and the diversity that we so want isn't in the classroom because we are self-selecting these students out of our systems because we're not having that flexibility. Then the other students suffer too because they don't have the diversity in the classroom. There's only one type of student that remains. I guess that's what I'm driven to share and thank you for this opportunity.

HELENA:
Thank you. I think we saw through that urgent pivot during the COVID pandemic that we can be flexible. And I think we've gone back to maybe not being as flexible, back to old ways. And if we can take back some of that flexibility, I think that would benefit all of our students. If you want follow up with us, please let us know. And I do wish our panellists a big thank you, but also a wonderful rest over the summer. wonderful summer ahead. Thank you, everyone.