Transcript for FLO Panel: PLAR in Practice – Conversations from the B.C. Post-Secondary Sector
Recorded on January 20, 2026
Panelists: Amanda Roberts, Justine Arsenault, Lisa Middleton, Luke Kitching, Susan Forseille
Host: Helena Prins

HELENA PRINS:
Well, good morning, everyone. Welcome. My name's Helena Prins, and I'm an advisor on the teaching learning team here at BCcampus. I am your moderator for this panel discussion on PLAR in Practice, and I'm really excited to be here with you and with the panelists that we chose. Let's talk PLAR. PLAR is Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, and we're going to try whenever we use the acronym to put it for you in the chat. One of our panelists couldn't be with us in person. So for the first time, we'll have an asynchronous panelist. We set the questions to her before the time, recorded it, and we'll share a few of those recordings during our discussion today. But for the rest, you've probably seen their official bios when you registered for this event. So I'm just going to invite each panelist today to introduce themselves and to also share why you believe that this conversation right now is important. Let's start with Amanda. Thank you.

AMANDA ROBERTS:
Good morning. I'm Amanda Roberts, and I've been a PLAR practitioner now for 2.5 decades. Being a PLAR practitioner aligns with my life purpose. During this time, I've had the honour to witness how PLAR truly empowers a person's life, aids them to attaining their unique goals, and it's done with such confidence. This happens when we as the creators of these systems within our universities or within our worlds create that opportunity to get that big R in PLAR, which is recognition. PLAR is a solution, and it's critically important in our current times and at all times, and it does. It provides solutions to our economic issues, to post-secondaries who are currently facing challenges right now.

PLAR to me is no longer a nice to have or off the side of our desk. Within advanced and further education, it's a must have. I realized today that we have a lot of people that are within advanced and higher education. However, I'd be remiss if I don't also address how PLAR is also needed and is a must for our employers and our work sectors for creating solutions to our staffing shortages that we have. You know, we're facing teacher, educational assistant, nursing, doctor, skilled worker shortages in agriculture and tourism and many sectors in our province in British Columbia and in Canada. And PLAR is that interconnected piece and one of the many solutions that we can use during these current times and again, all times. Working with, I'm from UFV, University of the Fraser Valley. And I've been here for five years, and this is a really easy place for me to be as UFV's values align with my values and our mission, which is to engage learners, transform lives, and build community. And that's exactly what I'm able to and empowered to do daily as a PLAR practitioner. So thanks again for having me. I'm looking really forward to today and hearing from you.

JUSTINE ARSENAULT:

Hi, good morning, everybody. My name is Justine Arsenault and I'm so pleased to be here with you to have been invited to join fellow panelists, so thank you, BCcampus. Like I mentioned, I'm from the British Columbia Institute of Technology, and I'm really thankful to be on the lands of the, our main campus, which is located on the unceded and traditional territories of the Coast Salish Nations of Musqueam Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh My role at B.C.IT is coordinator of department called Experience Base Placement, and this also includes Legion Military Skills Conversion Program, which supports recognition of military service and supporting career transition. PLAR, I would say is a particularly important topic right now, especially given the landscape of education and how drastically things shift, given economic pressures, financial constraints that I'm sure is shared amongst many of us here today for our organizations as well as for learners. PLAR is such an impactful tool, echoing exactly what Amanda was just saying. And we look at it as a tool as it'll make higher education and employment integration much more accessible for adult learners for those who took a non-traditional path to learning. And those who may be looking to transition into new careers. So pleasure to be here, really looking forward to the conversation.

LISA MIDDLETON:

Hello. My name is Lisa Middleton and I am the interim registrar at the Justice Institute of British Columbia. I've been involved in post-secondary for about 25 years now and I'm seeing an enormous change in the post-secondary landscape. Student mobility has always been a really important aspect of our work in terms of students studying here, being able to get credit and move over to another institution. But I think this is becoming even more important and with the rise of AI, the democratization of the access to information is really going to be a game changer, I think, for all of us. So putting in place some measures to be able to meet students where they're at and to be able to assess what they already know to save time, to save money, and to be respectful of the achievements that they already have. I think we all need to be positioned to be able to assess and grant credit, especially these days.

LUKE KITCHING:

In some ways, I already feel introduced because between Amanda and Lisa we just heard from, and Justine, they're talking about the beneficiaries of PLAR and living proof that it can work and it can be successful. And so, yeah, my name is Luke Kitching, and I went through the full process with great success, and my role day to day is in the energy sector, spanning B.C., Alberta, and Saskatchewan, so I travelled a little bit for work and also for picking an institution that felt like it was a good fit on the PLAR side. I'll hopefully share some of that later. For me, PLAR was important to meet my needs in terms of my professional development and experience and often the roles we fill within the post-secondary space isn't demanding that further education. But it's something that if you can fill your gaps and recognize the opportunity, you can open up a world of new opportunities. So that's a little bit my background. I was trying to be self-serving at a time when I think PLAR was really evolving and it's been really exciting to see it evolve to this point. Being a part of today's discussion was a no brainer and it's a pleasure to be here for

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sure. Yeah, it's giving me an edge. PLAR has definitely helped me towards completing my degree as early as the fall of 2025. I could see where there's a need just in industry in general, where you have an industry more focused on engineers and trades, professionals and technical diplomas. Often these individuals through experience accelerate into positions of higher leadership and managerial demands that come with gaps to look back at post-secondary as a tool to fill those gaps, can be daunting when you're starting from square one starting place, so to speak. And I think PLAR really affords that bridging tool to recognize where they've got professional development and experience. I first-hand see where this could be a tool, and I've definitely spent my time socializing my success story with PLAR and hope to do a bit more of that today.

SUSAN FORSEILLE:
So I am Susan Forseille. I'm the director of PLAR and Strategic Partnerships at Thompson Rivers University. We're very lucky to have dedicated resources for pir PLAR team, and I'll speak a little bit more about that throughout the panel today. I also sit on the B.C. Prior Learning Action Committee called B.C. PLAC affectionately and the Canadian Association of Prior Learning Assessment, as well as PLAIO, which stands for Prior Learning Assessment Inside Out, which is the only peer-reviewed journal on PLAR. And when I finish speaking, I'll put the links for each of those in there because there's a lot more information in each of those organizations. I think Justine and Amanda and Luke have spoken to what I would speak to. So I'm going to go at it from a different angle. I'm going to ask you to think quickly about what has been one of your most profound learning experiences.

And as you're thinking about that, I'm going to share that I asked this in a meeting with deans, the Western Deans Meeting for Arts and Science. And I was brave enough to ask them to put up their hand. And if they wanted to share what their learning most valuable learning experience was. There were about 50 people in the room, one person referenced post-secondary education. The rest was all through lived experience, and that's what draws me to PLAR is that deep understanding that we learn every day all around us by the conversations we have, the people we meet. What we read, how we do self-study, and formal education only looks at such a small part of it, maybe 5%, maybe 10%. So there's so many people out there that have this abundance of knowledge and understanding and wisdom that's going completely unrecognized. And as Luke said, PLAR is an excellent bridge to help surface what people already know and walk it into formal learning so that they don't have to start at the beginning. Yes, they save time and money. But when I speak later, I'll talk about some research we've done on how it impacts career development and decolonization, and I'll get into more details there.

So I'll end on saying Tscwinúcw-k, which means good morning in Secwépemc, which is the nation I have the privilege to work, learn, live, and play on. And I'm going to share one more word because it summarizes everything really well. They have a word in their language called [Tsut-kuin]. And what that means is, I see you, I recognize you. I see all of you and all of your learning. And I just think that's an excellent word to start the day with.

HELENA:

So thankful for the introductions. It is very clear that each of you come with a true passion for PLAR. And I'm so glad I mentioned the acronyms because I could hear so many of those things that you live and breathe every day in your work, so thank you for making it easier for the audience to understand them, as well. So, Susan, I'm going to start with you in terms of definitions, context because language is so important. What's PLAR? How is it typically done across B.C. colleges and universities? And what are some core principles that guide quality PLAR practice?

SUSAN:

Yep. This is such an important question, so I'll start with PLAR, and then I'll give a little bit of an overview of how it's done in the provincial institutions in B.C. Do essentially PLAR has I'm going to say over 30 names, prior learning assessment, recognition for prior learning, credit for prior learning. There's French translations, but globally, even in English, there's 20, 25, as many as 30 ways to describe it. So, Western Canada, we tend to use the word PLAR. Others across Canada, it's RPL. But essentially what it is, is it's a process to take that lived learning, so that lived learning might be the soccer team that you coached. It might be the volunteer group that you're chairing. It might be from work experience. It might be the conference you attended. It might be the podcast you listened to yesterday on artificial intelligence and using agentic boots in your work. Where we learn and how we learn, you have the formal learning that you do through post-secondary institutions or K to 12. You have informal, which is all that other learning around us, and then you have the non-formal where maybe you do a PD event or you go to a conference or somebody else is providing some guided learning. And as I said earlier, other than the formal learning, it's really hard to bring in that non-formal and informal learning. So what PLAR is it's a process to help students surface what they already know, reflect on it, share it, and then have it validated or recognized in some way. And I picture it as I'm sure many of you have played with Legos or you have Legos in your house right now. Picture that huge pile of Legos, and you have all those little different pieces of building blocks. And if each of those building blocks is a piece of learning that you've had from your various lived experiences, what we do is we help students organize those Lego blocks into a way. First, we help them find them. Then we help them think about what they have. Then we help them share them or build something back up so that it can be validated in a way. And this answers another question. How do we do this? We want to make sure that we assess that learning in a way that's consistent. That's valid. It's based on understanding what is learning, how the brain learns. It's transparent for not just the students, but also for the people working in PLAR but all the other people in the institutions and employment groups and organizations that need to have confidence that that learning has been demonstrated. And that Lego pile, once you build it back up, that goes back into what Amanda and Justine were sharing about that accessibility and importance of accessibility and flexibility and mobility for students, especially in this world with such unprecedented change. So then the third question was, how is PLAR being done in B.C.? And I'm going to lean on some research that the B.C. Prior Learning Action Network did B.C. Plan. There was a small committee of us. We hired a consultant to help us with this research in 2019, and we published the results in 2020, and I'll share a link as well to where you can find this

information. But we looked at all of the public post-secondary schools in B.C. Who was offering PLAR? What type of PLAR? How are they offering it? And were they doing it centralized or decentralized? And then we updated that data again in 2022, and there's actually a presentation you can watch that shares this. But essentially, in a nutshell, very, very few institutions have anything centralized with prior learning assessment. Most people are doing it off the side of their desks, and there is not any provincial or national framework that can be followed. The types of PLAR, there's diversity and PLAR. One type of PLAR is course-based PLAR where students get the learning objectives from a course. And let's say you've been working at a bank in HR for the last 10 years. You want to come back and get your degree. You've already likely have a lot of the first, maybe even second-year knowledge. You can PLAR HR courses, look at the learning objectives, surface your learning, reflect on it, talk to the learning objectives of the course, and then hopefully you don't have to take the course because it's assessed by a subject matter expert. And so students, that's how they save some time and money there. And that's one of the PLAR paths. Most schools do this, but like I said, it's off the side of people's desks. They don't have a framework or not even they might have a policy, but they might not follow it. They might not even know there's a policy.

The second PLAR path many schools do is advanced entry. So you can use lived experience, and it's never ever about the experience. It's always about the demonstration of the learning through that experience. So we can never give credits based off of a resume. We have to have evidence that learning happened. So advanced entry, I'll go back to a human resource person, 10 years working in a bank in HR, and they want to finish their degree. They still have their second, third and fourth year. The school could give them advanced entry saying, Don't worry about the first and second year. Just jump into the third and fourth year or their fourth year or into graduate studies as many organizations schools do it. They just don't always call it PLAR. We have something called a credit bank which we're trying to make provincial, where we go in and we pre-Assess organizations' training. It might be continuing studies, it might be private organizations. It might be training done at that bank. It might be training done through the Armed Forces, which Justine is going to talk about. We send in subject matter experts. They look at what's taught, how it's taught, who's taught, how is the learning assessed. And if we think that training is worth credit, any student that can demonstrate they've been through that training, they'll automatically get credit. And then us, TRU, KPU and I think that's in the province, also do something called competency-based PLAR, which is predicated on our TRU institutional learning outcomes, those basic soft skills, employability skills, transversal skills, a lot of names there. Intellectual maturity, organizational skills, communication skills. We have eight of them, students develop a portfolio, and that's all for elective credit. So yeah, a lot I just shared in a very short period of time. But if you just remember, PLAR is about assessing that informal and non-formal where most people don't have a path to demonstrate that and to get credit in a formal setting.

HELENA:
Thank you. You did it so well. The Lego metaphor really landed for me as well. Right now, BCcampus is very excited about Legos. But it really made it quite simple for me to follow. Thank

you for all of that. Some principles I heard you reflect on were transparency, accessibility, flexibility, mobility. And I wonder if any of the panelists want to take any of that on and expand a little bit.

LUKE:
Maybe I'll take a stab at it. That makes it. Just from a student perspective, again those Lego pieces before they're recognized and you understand the venue, they're like the Lego pieces you step on and it hits your nervous system pretty quick. I think the potential here is just in highlighting that from a student perspective, if you recognize the venue or the channel or the pathway, as the potential for it, otherwise it's just a pile of Lego, right. Yeah, that's where my mind went, but great analogy and I intend on building off that.

HELENA:
Thank you, Luke. Amanda, specifically, one of the concerns we heard a registrant submitted this question to us as well, especially from institutions that moved away from PLAR, there's this concern around academic integrity. How do governance structures, policies, and assessment practices ensure rigor and quality assurance in PLAR especially given what Susan just explained about lack of frameworks and things like that. How would you respond to that concern?

AMANDA:
I would say that one of our principles, so I can really see that we are building upon each other even right now like Lego. So I can imagine I can't wait to see what we create at the end of this. As Susan was speaking, one of the principles to having a prior learning assessment and a recognition process within, again, I keep thinking I'm speaking to mostly post-secondaries, advanced education. I realize there's going to be others in the room today as well. So prior learning assessment and recognition must be rigorous. It must also be a transparent process. How do we get there? Those are really great and easy terms to throw, but they're not easy and it takes a significant amount of time to build rigorous assessment and make the processes transparent. So one of the first things at University of the Fraser Valley that was critical for me and hearing exactly what Susan said, and I think we're going to talk a lot today about off-the-side-of-our-desk PLAR. It's happening within our post-secondaries, but just happens in pockets. So one of the first things on boarding was to for myself, do an assessment of the entire university and see the truth of where the University of the Fraser Valley is at and let's work from there. Then starting by, I was named the proponent of updating the policy, the PLAR policy here for UFV and through that process and through the cross-campus interviews, asking people to do the self-reflections in their areas, looking at the truth of the numbers that we were reporting we were doing versus how many PLARs we were actually doing at the end of the year. It was like intake versus complete. It's humbling and it can be very, very like, Oh, boy, we have a lot of work and it seems like an absolute mountain ahead of us. Again, it feels like you're stepping on the Lego, and where do I even start? For myself, what was really key here again at UFV was starting by strengthening our policy. So further defining what a rigorous PLAR assessment can look like, What does transparency look like in the PLAR process? Are we there? No. Do I think any and every institution will ever be there? No. Later on, I'm going to speak a bit

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about AI, and that is one prime example of why I'll never be there, and that's okay. And for somebody like myself-who's been unlearning perfectionism my whole adult life, that's really hard to know that you're building a policy and procedure for what was cross-campus consultations for almost 18 months, and then the implementation of the new policy in 2022. And here in 2026, it's almost at the end of its five-year cycle, and I'm restarting that whole process again and doing another iteration of what it is going to look like for the University of the Fraser Valley now and in the next five years from now. So having though that policy is what has helped the areas here that we're interested in PLAR, scared of doing it. I don't want to mess this up. I don't want to harm students. How do we really do this? It's helped them fail forward and try to do and create PLAR assessments. And it's also helped the other areas that we're doing it so significantly, create momentum and then help other areas within the university. Try alternative forms of assessment and recognizing our adult learners. Thank you, Amanda. I really heard the importance there of strengthening our policy and picking up on your comment on just momentum, I wonder, Justine through your work with B.C. Plan, and thanks to Taruna Goel, who's put the link to B.C. Plan already in the chat, what are you seeing across the province in terms of momentum, alignment, some shared challenges, perhaps? Why does collaboration matter right now?

JUSTINE:
Thanks, and I love this question, but I'll start just with what BCPLAN is B.C.'s Prior Learning Action Network, as Susan already mentioned. And who we are is essentially a community of institutions, organizations, and professionals who all collectively aim to increase access to post-secondary credentials and skilled employment through informed PLAR practices. It's actually a very timely topic because we're in the process of planning our symposium. It's very top of mind and I welcome everybody else who's here today, share some things that you're hearing, things that you want to know more about. I can share just some things that have been popping up for us. AI has been mentioned. That's not going to be a surprise. I think that there's uncertainty, but I think that there's a lot of excitement around the potential AI has where it comes to potentially supporting the PLAR process for both the assessor and the learner who's going through the process and how that could potentially be streamlined and supporting them along the way, making it more accessible again. I think we're going to hear that word a lot today, access and creating more access. Something else I would say is from our perspective, we're putting more weight on how can we better serve our domestic learners? Just given the transition and restrictions on student visas and immigration policies, we're needing to frame our practices around supporting learners and being able to meet those learners where they're at. How can we recognize their many years, going back to the other question when you think of it from the perspective of a student and who we are asking them to demonstrate and show us and prove to us and provide us evidence of your learning and how that meets our outcomes in our institute. That's often been many years, maybe even decades of learning that they've acquired. It's no easy feat for students to be able to go through that process. Yeah, I see PLAR as being viewed more as a recruitment, retention, and an access strategy rather than just being used as an assessment tool. One Amanda said earlier, it's not a, it's more a matter of it needs to be implemented in the institution. I don't think it's something that's really a question anymore.

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I think we need to think about it a little bit differently and meet those students where they're at and help them progress in their career and potentially change careers and help where the labour market is shifting. So in terms of some of the shared challenges, I'm sure, again, this is no surprise. I think we're all facing some financial constraints. And I mean, I'm not holding my breath for any major investments coming anytime soon in this area. But also interestingly, I don't really see this as slowing momentum. I think when we consider collaboration and why collaboration matters in a climate where resources are so constrained due to financial matters, that collaboration and working together in this space is a resource of its own. So we're, I think, leaning a little bit more on each other, our experiences, learning about what works, what doesn't work. We don't need to be siloed and in our own challenges on our own. If you're facing challenges, it's almost guaranteed that some others in the same space are facing the same challenges. So we can work together collectively and yeah, work together to help move PLAR along.

HELENA:
Thank you, Justine. I'm so glad you did mention the financial constraints that we all are aware of in the sector right now. Maybe there is a business case to be made to invest more in PLAR because that's definitely what I'm hearing and we are going to move into a discussion about the benefits of PLAR and maybe it's on us also to make that a little bit more visible for those who are making decisions because it does not sound like it's sustainable just off the side of the desk. I'm going to ask Luke as someone who is Benefited from this PLAR process, can you walk us through your experience? What worked well? What was perhaps challenging? And how did PLAR impact your confidence, your direction, or your professional growth?

LUKE:
Sure. I'll maybe just start with the end in mind. I'll try to break it into two things, people and the process and then frame my experience around that because it really felt like they fit in two different buckets. We've talked about, Amanda has talked about robust goalposts, not her words, but how I took that having the framework in place and that's so important and then there's obviously the people side. What I didn't prepare to speak about today was the AI side, but I'll let you guys fit that into either bucket whenever it fits. I'll also just say that with the methods that Susan mentioned, the different PLAR methods being competency based and course based. I have gone through both instances and they vary for sure and the experience varies, but in general, I tried to surface what highlighted to me. So I guess starting where I first learned about PLAR, it was during my program selectioning period, and, you know, different universities and colleges and post-secondary institutions advertise it differently. And so I can try to explain it in this way when you first hear of this four letter acronym, whatever your understanding of it is and whatever you cement in your mind sort of becomes you evolved until someone proves you differently, your definition of it. And what that can do later is provide a jaded kind of view of what PLAR can do for you, and sometimes you miss that opportunity. So from a timeline perspective, what that meant for me was I started looking for a post-secondary degree as a mature student, and I started out in 2018. I learned about PLAR in around that same time frame more seriously in 2019. And then in 2025, was the first time that I ever

participated in the process. So six years, I don't want to say lost, but where PLAR didn't feel accessible, it didn't feel realistic, didn't feel attainable, maybe it felt like something reserved for those that were eligible for honorary degrees almost, right? And part of that is the process side, not understanding it, maybe not having it defined in different various institutions. And of course, the other piece is the people side. So I kind of wanted to frame that. The burning question behind any student's mind, aside from picking the program and institution is with PLAR, why invest into possible gains when I can kind of invest into a sure thing, right? So I could petition for these credits and maybe I land on kind of half award or full award, but it's still a gamble. You feel that way when you don't understand the process, and it feels like you're taking a risk and the institution isn't kind of sort of meeting you part. And then you default too. Well, maybe I'll just put in the time. We joke, but nothing good from a quick investment and there's no quick returns, right? You got to put the time in, you got to do the work. In a sense, PLAR feels a little bit like, well, what shortcut are we taking here? And of course, we know it's not and there's a robust framework and it's evolving to assess students. But that's the impression students get when they first hear about it. And in the end, my PLAR story was successful because it was people driven because people took the time to explain it. And although there was great literature in handbooks, I mean, totally denoting the process to even get to the FAQ section to be interested, you had to get past the interest part. Is this thing real? Will I realize those credits. So I want to recognize that and yeah, it's intimidating.

I'm a part of a couple of different social groups on Facebook for post-secondary institutions, and there's questions coming up daily on PLAR, right? Is this real? Am I going to result in getting credits from this? How long does it take? Again, it's all in the handbook and there's well-defined processes. But if you suspect it, you're not going to ever realize those. So that's kind of a bit about the background on my timeline. Again, I was successful in both the competency-and course-based part. And in general, once I was in the program, I had a great time and had good support. But I just want to highlight the people dependency for my personal experience. It was really having a phone line to the part team, being able to pick up the phone and call and ask questions, email as well, but just having that line, if it was just to be left to an online portal to sort of self-assess, I think it was a pretty daunting feeling, for sure. And again, just wanted to highlight that until, you know, there was multiple times 2019-2025 that it was solicited for PLAR. program advisors would throw cheeky little email, one liner, you'd be a great candidate. You should consider this. But it wasn't enough to really go after it and take the bait. And it wasn't until one really explained over the phone, said, you know, you've been in the industry for X amount of time. You recognize some of these real life experiences, why don't you petition for PLAR? And then they kind of took the air, they demystified PLAR more for me. To when I went, you know what? I'll take a chance on this. That's what it felt like. It felt like a chance. Again, just emphasizing that people dependency and at least the marketability of PLAR, right?

Once I was in, one of the challenges that I faced, and this is just, again, from my student perspective, and others may or may not, depending on their career duration and where they've traveled to may or may not have the same hurdle, but a lot of these experiences you're drawing from different resources, employment history, and mentors. And some of my mentors had

passed. Some of my supervisors had, you know, retired or passed away, deceased. And so, you know, some of those were difficult to draw from, but through the process side, there were other ways to demonstrate that experience, right? And it wasn't like you felt confined to one set of ways to demonstrate a learning, right? So I commend the PLAR framework that allowed me to explore areas where I felt like I hit a dead-end road where a reference letter would really just speak to some key accomplishments. First, I have industry sort of milestones and sometimes you have proof and you can share it and sometimes it's proprietary and you can't. Yeah, I just want to say that within that challenge of trying to prove the framework does allow for creative ways to demonstrate. Aside from that challenge, I guess, there really weren't any worth mentioning.

One of the… the tail end of the question there, Helena, was just to do with a positive impact and confidence. So huge. I mean, it served as almost a SWOT analysis on my own career. I mean, where my strengths are, I could double down on those and where I had gaps and weaknesses, I could go look after, you know, closing those gaps up. And so, it wasn't just realizing a cost savings and time savings. There's that obvious benefit that we all recognize. But yeah, even from tailoring your education to go, how is this really going to materialize for me? I came from a unique background where getting a degree after 10 years of managerial experience didn't open a pile of new doors or a suite of them, I should say. No doubt in the opportunities that it does open, but it wasn't an obvious win for me. This was a self-propelled lifelong learning journey. And so that really brought that in my reflection of what am I getting out of this? What am I learning other than tackling these courses? And PLAR did it for me. I mean, it was a great experience to dig. I mean, it was almost like watching your slide show on your wedding day or your graduation, right? I mean, you're unearthing some deep experiences that you've bottled up and put away. But through that, again, you're able to do that self-assessment and the obvious benefit and outcome is getting credits for it and getting closer to your milestone goals for education. But beyond that, beyond the surface level of those awards, there is a deeper sort of realization, and I think that's what on the surface, when you hear of PLAR for the first time as a student, you don't recognize that. You maybe hear at first I have to prove my experience, so I have to, you know, defend my learnings and I'll have to advocate for my accomplishments. That's what we hear. But I think so going back to what Amanda is saying, having the right amount of framework so that dispels some of those questions or concerns is appropriate so that there's that enticing, most marketability for students. Because if you don't get past the Lego blocks on the floor, you're never going to pick up the pieces and put them together. Well, there's no instructional manual, it's build your own Lego set. It's just a bin of Lego. Yeah, I think that there's the people side, which advocate and guide and mentor and solicit you to dig deeper and try and draw that out. That's what my success story was a PLAR. Then there's the process side where they had the right framework to follow through. I'll hand it back over to you, Helena.

HELENA:
Thank you for all of that, Luke, and there's a few comments about the people part. I think what Taruna says in the chat is so true. The role of the PLAR advisor is underrated but critical for the

process. Then there's also a question, maybe more process-related in the chat. How were you identified as a good PLAR candidate by your institution? Do you know?

LUKE:
Yep. Yeah, absolutely. I'll just acknowledge that first comment. I couldn't agree more and that's, I guess, my bias and perspective. But again, that's what got me exhilarated. That's what kept me going. That's what the momentum was. I can't emphasize enough that from 2018 until 2025, I was aware of PLAR, but I didn't intend on capitalizing on it, that enticement wasn't there to pursue it. So I definitely agree with that comment wholeheartedly. As far as being identified as a good candidate, there's no doubt that in seven years of time, I gained more professional experience. I'd been part of more committees and been more involved in my community. So looking back at my own accomplishments in 2018, I would have been less of a strong candidate than, say in 2025. And those are those things you accumulate in those years of working experience. But ultimately, it was through discussions on where my degree planning is. I was working full time. I was kind of shooting for a course or two a year, and my advisor was aware of that. And when they started looking deeper at my program plan and personally looking at my experience, they were asking me questions prompting me to see if I had that experience that would be suitable for PLAR. Then there was the more formal submission of resumé and whatnot. But initially, it was that, have you considered this? And why have you shut the door on it, and trying to unearth that. I'll be honest, I had walls built up about this fake educational pathway that I didn't understand, far from it. It's a great, awesome tool. But until you get those walls broken down. So just to reframe the answer, it was from that kind of persistence in drawing out my own experience. How long have I been a professional? How long have I been working? Do I have direct reports? Some of those questions that unearth well, maybe you have these supervisory experience or organizational behavior skills that you could petition for. So the two things I guess I'd like to highlight is recognizing my plan and what I had left to accomplish and then trying to draw my experience and how they fit together like Lego. That theme keeps coming up.

HELENA:
Thank you. And there's some follow-up questions that I think we can integrate into your question when we ask you a little bit more about your process and the implementation. I do want to give Susan a moment to respond to the benefits of PLAR for career development because you spent a lot of time doing research on this specific topic.

SUAN:
Yes, finishing my PhD on this topic, and, geez, I'm just doing my I've already defended. I'm just making a few minor changes, and it's done. So PhD, I looked at over 50 variables that impact career development, and I compared it with both PLAR students and students that hadn't gone through the PLAR path. So I looked at everything from age, program of study, labour market, self-awareness, self-confidence, over 50 variables. So that in itself-was a lot. And then over 300 sources for the PhD, three surveys. One of them had almost 2,000 responses, plus 29 interviews. And the interviews all had career maps in them, where the participant drew what

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their career transition story was, and then they narrated it. So it's an excellent way to access the left brain and the right brain and to dive deeper into memories. So what the findings came out, and this isn't going to surprise anybody who's worked with PLAR, and Luke actually illuminated quite a bit of it already. We all know the benefits of PLAR is it saves students time and money. And there's some really good research. I'm just going to throw something in the chat right now. It's a link through research that's been done in the United States; 72 institutions did research on this, and it also demonstrates that PLAR impacts completion rates, GPA, of course, time to completion. But it talks a little bit about this next part that I think is probably the most important. And again, Luke was talking about this. So whenever I go to meetings and try to advance PLAR, of course, I'll speak to the time and the money and the GPA and completion rates and recruitment. That's all important. But it's really that transformational impact that it has on the participants that I think is the most important thing to discuss. So it increases that self-awareness. It increases their agency. It increases their sense of belonging. And that's that belonging with post-secondaries, this group. I started my degree and haven't finished it. I don't even think it's in my ability, and that happens with so many people because they lived too far away to go to school. They didn't have the resources. People like me started a family when I was really young. You know, there's reasons why you can't continue school or start it, so that belonging is a really important one. They feel like they belong. They have the knowledge, and that, of course, wraps up with the confidence in the agency and the self-awareness increases both their self-worth, professional self-worth and personal self-worth. And when it comes to career, there's three things that it impacts substantially. And it's really important that I had to unpack a little bit of that. But for career, it also impacts their career knowledge. It's their self-reflection. What have I done? How have I done it? Why have I done it? They're thinking about their career and what they've learned in different ways, so they're looking at it from different angles. Also increases the career confidence quite a bit, and that's no surprise either because research we've been doing on PLAR persistence, as one person said, reading all that evidence, a lot of it was reference letters that other people wrote. They hadn't processed what others thought of them, so their confidence goes up and you get all those Lego pieces together and you don't even know what you have until they're together and it's like, wow, that's a lot. And then of course, the career decision making goes up exponentially, as well. So for the career piece, it impacts career development quite substantially, but it impacts so much else. And if I talk about decolonization, I'll share some of that.

HELENA:
Thank you, Susan. And someone is echoing what you said in the chat by saying PLAR credits not only save time and money, having your prior learning validated can be motivating, and it confirms that your experience has real academic value. So I really appreciate that. So we are going to talk a little bit about implementation practices because the title of the panel is PLAR in Practice. We want to be as practical as possible. And we've invited Lisa. And my question to Lisa was, since you spearheaded the implementation of the professional training transfer credit pathway at JIBC, could she tell us about this pathway and a few highlights of how she got there? So here's what Lisa had to say.

LISA:

The professional training transfer credit pathway at JIBC was something that I saw the need for very early on. Because JIBC is quite a niche institution in terms of the curriculum that we offer, many of the courses that we offer are not offered at other post-secondary institutions. So the opportunity for students to be able to bring their previous training or education into our programs was severely limited because it was not transfer credit, and if it was, forgive me, PLA, it was going to be very expensive. And it just struck me that this did not seem right or fair because a lot of this training was coming from licensed accredited bodies. So a good example would be ICS 100, which is Incident Command System 100. It's a course that's embedded in many, many of our programs, and it is taught by ICS Canada. It's taught by a lot of other very recognized organizations. So in order to be able to recognize, we needed a way to be able to recognize this and for it to feather really nicely into our programs. When I did an initial assessment of how many of our grads have transfer credit or PLA as part of their graduation, it's about 20%, so this is a significant amount of activity that you know, we really needed to honour, and provide a transparent and repeatable and fair way to allow this credit to come to us and publish it so that it is really obvious for students coming in that it's not dependent on them asking the right person or, you know, the email getting to the right office. We needed it to be public facing, kind of like a mini BCCAT, if you will, for the professional courses that we will accept directly into our program at no cost as well.

HELENA:

And then, thank you, Lisa. And then I also followed up just to ask her if there's anything she knows now that she wishes she knew before, and here is what she said.

LISA:

So when I had this idea, it seemed like a fairly straightforward thing to put out to the internal community. And it turns out that it wasn't so much that this actually required fairly extensive conversation internally around, you know, what this might mean. It also involved an opening up of policy. It involved technical aspects of how this would be recorded in the system, so the creation of new vowel codes. It also really put in place a different pathway that students would be coming through. And so having to build the business processes around all of that so that it could be very seamless. We've been a bit of victims of our own success, because what we've seen is that the requests are definitely going up, and we're having to now think, Okay, well, how are we going to staff this work so that it can happen quickly in good time? The other piece I wish I had known is, the complexity of trying to understand military records and trying to get some insight into that veil those relationships. I think when we talk about PLA and the assessing of PLA, we need those subject matter experts to be able to interpret the kinds of things that are coming towards us. And this opened up a new realm that we just really didn't have the knowledge or expertise to be able to really interpret what we're receiving. So I'm in the process of really trying to build out that network of, you know, just to understand and be very fair and consistent about how we're looking at the type of training that's coming our way. I see a lot of military coming to us, and that makes perfect sense, really when you think about the types of people that go into the military and the things that they would learn and then coming to the

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Justice Institute, where, you know, they're the kinds of people that are interested in public safety. So it's really important that we honour what people are bringing and not get in their way and really help to build and send them out faster so that they can do what they want to do and get on with the good work that they would like to give us.

HELENA:
It's nice to hear Lisa's voice, even though she can't be with us in this very moment. Justine, I'm sure there's a lot of what Lisa said that maybe sounds familiar to you or resonates. So is there anything you'd like to respond to an ad about implementing PLAR?

JUSTINE:
Where do you begin? I guess, there's no one size fits all that this approach works for one institute, therefore, it's going to work for you or your organization or your institute. But I think that there's definitely some transferability there. Susan, I noticed that you just added to the chat about the Provincial Credit Bank, which is something that I think would be of great value to share some of that knowledge and assessment practices and what's being recognized in one area maybe transferable to another regarding implementing PLAR, definitely making sure that it's grounded with policy, making sure you assign rules. You have your subject matter experts who are responsible ultimately for assigning recognition and credit, making sure that that's documented and that academic rigor piece is embedded in the process and everything is consistent and transparent, and that's all built into the policies. Also identifying all the different ways that you can implement PLAR. It was talked about a little bit earlier where you can implement PLAR for course-based learning, where you are assessing learning for course outcomes. There's the competency-based PLAR that may be unassigned credit or recognition or electives. It can also be used for access to programs or creating pathways. That's something that we've really focused on at our institute where we look at more of an advanced placement approach to recognizing prior learning. Assessing prior learning as we would almost equivalent to a post-secondary credential. How can we fit those individuals into our pathways and create quicker pathways to credentials and integrate those adult learners into the workforce. Different methods of assessment might work better for different institutes, but there's a lot of work that's been done. There's a lot of different approaches that are being practiced all across B.C., in Canada, and internationally as well. A few other things. One thing where it was advice that I was given when I was working on PLAR, and how did you, especially conversations with some others who are really advanced in PLAR and how do you get by? And I know that that's a big challenge for a lot of post-secondaries. I think it's still a challenge, even when we do have some more advanced programs in PLAR, making sure that you're tying PLAR into the strategic initiatives of the organization of the institute and how it can support and align with your strategic goals. And getting champions. Champions can start from the outside too. All of us here, I think, can probably consider ourselves to be PLAR champions. We're taking the time in our day to learn more. I mean, for some reason, a panelist here, but I'm here as an audience member. I love hearing Luke's experience going through the process because that strengthens what we aim to do and our policies and our approaches to recognizing prior learning. So, just keep collaborating, learning from others. What works. Yeah, hopefully that answers something.

But yeah, it's an exciting thing to be implementing PLAR and there's a lot of research and information out there.

HELENA:
There's a lot of fluids of thought in there. Thank you, Justine. And you started off by saying there's no one-size-fits-all approach. But yeah, so many other good reminders and the buy in, how do we get by aligning of the strategic goals from the institution. So yeah, I bet if people listen to recording again, they'll get even more out of that. Before we hand it back to Luke because Luke, you've probably seen in the chat, there's lots of questions related to your experience, and I agree with Justine, it's so valuable to hear about your experience. I just want to bring forward one comment in the chat so it's captured in the recording as well. Susan wrote in response to a question. TRU is working on developing a provincial credit bank, starting with micro-credentials that can be accessible to all public post-secondary institutions through BCCAT. They can see what micro-credentials have been assessed, how and who assessed it, and recommended credit stacking and laddering, and they hope to launch this after March. So yes, that's an exciting update. Thank you. Now, Luke, from the student experience, what recommendations do you have for institutions who are still working towards implementing PLAR? And you've seen the questions around your process, so if you can link those recommendations to your process, that'd be awesome.

LUKE:
For sure, yeah. I didn't take this task lightly. I mean, I'm among moguls and pioneers in the PLAR process. And even being here today, you could see the evolution and the desire. So I could get into a bit of a deep dive and tried to think what would make it more successful? Would I be proud to share with my friends and family about PLAR, what would solicit more students and make them successful? I'll just maybe start with Alex's question and maybe I'll get into it further on. But with a course-based portfolio, my experience with PLAR has been speaking to the learning outcomes of that course. If it's a management course, there's a theoretical portion where you're speaking to your understanding of that learning outcome. And then there's a portion where you've applied that learning, how you've applied it. On the course pace, hopefully, Susan, you feel free to jump in at any time if I've oversimplified that process. But in general, if you've got a course syllabus and there are specific learning outcomes, you'd be responding to those in A and B part. A would be your theoretical understanding to anchor your theoretical knowledge of that concept or that learning or that outcome. Then there's the applied portion, where in your life I used it, how I've used it, wherever you leveraged it elsewhere. The competency-based portfolio really relies more on the core competencies of your program of potentially the institution you're responding to how your learnings have complemented and been demonstrated in those core competencies. Numeracy or leadership or public speaking, different core competencies that you're speaking to.

I guess I'll just dive into a couple of notes that I wanted to highlight. It's a tall order to ask a student to recommend things to an institution and institutions coast to coast, I think today. But I'll try my darndest to do it justice here and not just put my student hat on, but just think

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bigger. Susan talked about marginalized groups, right? And she talked about access and there's obviously social economic pressures. And I sit on a committee here at the college locally that targets adding support for these marginalized groups. And just one quick example is there's lots of funding and support available for a lot of these programs for post-secondary students, but often you can get students at a high school to recognize the benefit for those programs that are overly funded, right? So our need locally was to go, what do we do with this bridge? Having a bridge grade nine to graduation to get them access to all of these well-funded programs. And that feels like a marketability thing. It feels like if we can get more students to succeed at this level, we can get them to access this higher level of education and learning and obviously opportunity in the job market, be contributors to society and so on. I just want to acknowledge Susan's point on that because it ties into one of my recommendations on marketability. With the PLAR, I've already highlighted it, but I did participate in the course and the competency based portfolios and both were very once I got past. The belief that this wasn't real or it wasn't accessible to me, or it was reserved for honorary degree recipients, it was a great process. The framework itself was well laid out. There was very little guesswork. That's the process. I am going back to the people side, I still relied on that phone call, that email, check in with the advisor, specifically the PLAR advisor to guide me to give me preliminary feedback, you know, on the eight competencies that you start filling out and speaking to and petitioning for. You get two competencies in before you get feedback from your advisor. So you submit it with two competencies, and that really provides a good runway for you to say, Okay, I'm on the right track or I've got to reframe my portfolio. So that was key to that relationship. It didn't feel like, okay, you've paid your fee, you're in PLAR and good luck. We'll see you on the other side. You know, I really felt like the advisor was alongside me and wasn't leaving out to dry. That was a huge takeaway. Going back to more specific recommendations. I've got three that I've narrowed it down to. The first one is prop up the people, it's an odd category, but I didn't know how else to summarize it. But I guess recognize the people that make PLAR a reality for students, A on the marketability side, B on the support, C on the realizing the success in it, if they're in it, but they're not, maybe the framework is clear, but it's not accessible.

The people are what makes PLAR successful today. Maybe that pendulum will swing and the balance will change to where it's more process-driven and there's tools to allow that. But currently, I feel from my limited perspective, that it is people driven. And I'll back up that statement by saying, when I was choosing what institution to go to for post-secondary, I got a different taste of PLAR at every institution I contacted and over half a dozen institutions, right? So just from that sort of sample survey, if you will, I felt that PLAR wasn't clearly defined, and some were in the province of B.C., some Saskatchewan, some in Alberta, but all recognized institutions. So that's part of that overwhelming feeling. Well, over here, it feels like you need to, you know, really pass interviews and build portfolios, and that's not good enough. You also need to present. And over here, you feel like you're just submitting a dear diary journal. Am I going to get credits for that? And so, yeah, that really, to me, highlighted the people piece to make that marketable. I guess, before I proceed, any questions on that first recommendation or comments before if there are in the chat, I'll hopefully answer them. Second one being the PLAR marketability. So Susan talked about marginalized groups. Not every student is afforded

the same start. I was much like Susan. I moved out when I was young. I had finished my high school, went right into trade school, right into post-secondary licensing and industry licenses, and I had accumulated a lot of management and supervisor experience, but I didn't have that traditional career pathway. And I recognized the obvious opportunity and the doors that it would open. But I didn't know what that meant. Did it mean quitting my full-time job? Did it mean, you know, finding a bridging program that recognized some of my prior education in piecemeal? And so again, improving the marketability, when you look at who's reaching out to post-secondary institutions, it's my opinion that there are students out there that would gladly, re-register for programs or consider completing a degree if they felt like this pathway existed. If they felt like there was an opportunity not to start from square one.

So a couple thoughts on that, sampling my own personal circle that number of people that have completed degrees in the last 10 years. When I told them my PLAR success story, they thought I was, you know, full of it. They're like, What institution did you get your PLAR credits from? Are they a recognized institution? You know, I was like, I was a fraud, basically. And this is recent. This is in 2025. So it tells me there's still some hair on PLAR and a lack of general understanding of what it's about, its robustness, its credibility. And I can share that sentiment that until I experienced it or got involved, I had that same reservation. So just elevating the idea that until sort of the process is largely socialized, it goes back to that first recommendation on supporting and recognizing the role that people have to play being the PLAR advisors to make that framework that Amanda has talked about recognized. And I noticed in different institutions, they use words like evolving framework or evolving, you know, and I think that's key because here's what we know today, but here's what we've recognized, you know, from looking back as well. The last recommendation, I guess, we talked about sustainability for post-secondary institutions as well. In some ways, this feels like a different dot-com race or era, right? And I'll just go, keeping in line with the marketability.

We're in an age where degrees are more accessible and diplomas are more accessible, and there's online learning and the race to online isn't totally over, but it's accessible. Students have more power than ever to choose between institutions. And I think strongly, I really feel passionately about if PLAR was a defined pathway, more students would go to your institutions and they would feel more inclined, from a cost-savings perspective, maybe it's selfishly just that, and it's a time savings, but to come to realize that there's more to it after that initial misconception, we'll say is removed. The third recommendation kind of follows suit with the first two, but it's on participation in canvassing, and this is where I'm sticking my neck out as a student and trying to find a different way to catch more students or identify more proponents in the stream. I've got here to determine a way to gain more PLAR candidates in the stream by identifying mature or idle students with low course activity, working professionals, learning part time, I said, this can happen up front, whether it's during program planning or submission or a degree application where you're registering for the degree. Maybe it gets identified initially, you're a mature student, you've got 10 years in industry experience, or it happens in my instance, I started in 2019, graduated in 2025, and I'd accumulated all those years through. And it wasn't until later into the stream of my learning that someone said, Hey, you would be a lot

closer to the finish line if you applied your professional experience to learning. Have you considered PLAR? Have I ever! Six years ago, that's in the past. But again, it's that net that catches you again in the same stream. I guess what I'm trying to impose or promote as an idea would be not people driven. In this case, it'd be more process driven and find some way to identify eligible students. Maybe it's by submitting a resume up front during their program application or the duration of the program, but find some way to highlight those potential candidates and reach out to them and socialize the PLAR process. Overall, it felt cheap coming up with any recommendations because I had such a positive experience with PLAR and I didn't expect it would be, you know, I'd have a chance to petition for it in a panel like this and share my learnings. But there were no real negatives. It's just, how can we get this more accessible, more marketable, and just celebrate the wins and the people that are propping it up right now in absence of some of those other pieces. That's what I've come up with, and I think it's again, speaking a little cheaply. I do think the process works and it can work, and I'm percipient of that success. I think that the institution that I took my PLAR at was through Thompson Rivers and shout out to them for taking a stab at this and trying to pave the way in some way to define the framework because it's evolved. And I would wager to say it's from 2018 when I first heard of it when I participated, it evolved quite some time. That's my I guess two cents on what could potentially be entertained for improving what you guys already have built and adding a few more Lego blocks.

HELENA:
Oh, thank you, Luke. You know, in the show notes, when I sent the questions out, I said, Luke, this is your moment, and I think you totally seized the moment. Thank you for putting so much thinking into your response, and you can look at the chat for some comments there too, but I do want to get with the limited time that we have left, I do want to get to you Amanda on a very important question that we got from the audience around assessment. So let's talk about assessment practices. That's so much part of this implementation process. Beyond portfolios, challenge exams, skills demonstrations, are you using or experimenting with any other assessment approaches in PLAR?

AMANDA:
Yes, let me say that I realize that we are running short on time and if I could just validate and lift up everything that Luke has said and as practitioners, day to day, oh my gosh, the takeaways are so also key that we can probably have a 2.0 session on just those takeaways that Luke has shared with us as practitioners daily and be able to improve ourselves and our processes and how we frame prior learning assessment and take away those blinders or those the myths and our own self-judgment. Well, I'm not even going to talk about it. Because I don't know where I'm scared, and I have to shout out, though, for one second, as Luke was saying, that front-line engagement is so critical if you are at a post-secondary institution, we at UFV have a team of the most incredible advisors when you join. And so that team of advisors all have a depth and breadth of PLAR knowledge, and I find it so interesting when I meet with them and try to say, what are themes or what issues you hear? What are common questions that I can help empower them on in answering questions? They all feel like Luke did, like Oh, gosh, I don't

know if I'm ready to start this. Do I know enough about prior learning to even start that conversation with a student when they do? I think we need to at some point maybe take a moment and appreciate how much self-confidence, both as a student as a practitioner and as an institution needs to collectively walk hand in hand in our self-confidence, our knowledge of prior learning and again, just trying. Beyond answering the question of assessment, yes, beyond what we traditionally do, and I think most of us do, we can confidently say we do portfolios or challenge examinations or demonstrations really well. Please keep doing these because they're part of our PLAR toolkit that we already know or maybe our faculty members who are new to your institutions. They would know how to create a really good, maybe it's examinations or alternative assessments.

Upon joining UFV, I introduced to UFV the concept that I was taught of holistic learning, which was shared with me at one of my very first Canadian Association for Private Learning Assessment, CAPLA events that I ever attended. I'm just proud that I remembered to say the full name and not the acronym. When we look at our students as already coming to us as whole, humans through that lens of wholeness, we as the people in the institutions get to create those rigorous platforms for alternative assessment types such as storytelling, oral demonstration, we can build out those rigorous self-assessment tool or build out what becomes a rigorous self-assessment and self-reflection tool or a tool kit and give those to students, whether it's course specific or whether it's a bigger for our adult education, it could bit bigger, more broad, it could be even touching on competency based. But it's what we might think are simple tools is so incredibly worth it to invest in as practitioners and even using AI to aid our students and encouraging our students to use AI in discovering what they've learned and what has occurred so far. I want to again validate and not lose what Luke just said about that vulnerability. You skimmed over that so quickly. There is such a vulnerability in the self-assessment process. That's probably also why it takes not just yourself, Luke, but most students upwards of years from dipping their toe into a PLAR inquiry to actually doing PLAR, the self-assessment and what comes up. In that self-assessment to get you to the recognition is incredibly a vulnerable process, and it's critical that our students have people that are here that have the time. Here within our institutions that we have time to listen to what our PLAR students are going through and provide them with the right timely supports because that can go in multiple directions, their supports in meeting them where they're at.

So again, when I first onboarded with UFV and then doing that policy review here, we actually at UFV took a really bold approach and added the term holistic approaches to our PLAR policy. We didn't even know in 2022, what that even fully meant, but we knew that there is going to be something else that's going to come up as an assessment type. We didn't want to narrow our focus to challenge the examination portfolio, just very traditional. We added holistic assessment, not even realizing fast forward to 2024 when AI broke our minds and our possibilities, being able to utilize and encourage our students to utilize and our incredible faculty members are also encouraged to utilize AI in their teaching practices. We get to now imply inherit that as a tool for both assessment. And Susan touched on it, and again, this is why we could do a 2.0. But we could even do it as there's some work being done in Australia right

now on PLAR assessors who've been utilizing AI and if it took them upwards of three days. And that's long days of creating assessments is now down to a day or 12 hours of creating assessments. There's ways that we, as well as practitioners can be just as nimble as what we're requiring for our students. Um, I'm going to actually stop there because I'm realizing time, but I will touch back on some points before we end and we can keep moving forward.

HELENA:
Thanks, Amanda. Yes, we are fully aware of the time, and I've heard the call for two points already. So yeah, I think we will have a follow-up conversation. I do want to ask the last pre-planned question then to you, Susan, around PLAR recognizing Indigenous knowledges and ways that uphold accountability and community voice. Hate to squeeze it in, but if there's something that you feel you can add to that in the next few minutes, that'd be wonderful.

SUSAN:
Yeah, yes. We've been doing decolonizing of PLAR since I started in this role in 2018, and we've been very fortunate to receive $800,000. The funding ends in March, so we're almost at the end of it. But what we've been doing is working with community members that we've been working with the Elders and Knowledge Keepers, the educators. How do we co-create PLAR together? And so some of what was just shared by Amanda around really radically open pedagogy, what is the best way for you to share this prior learning, to have it to reflect on it, to have it validated. And have students finish now and over 100 on the wait list. And what we've been doing is it's oral, it's observational. It's other skill sharing, sharing their skills because of the humility so many Indigenous people have. It's definitely holistic. It's braided with TRU requirements. That was a hard one. And in the end, because I know there's questions, I just want to say one thing, and again, I'll put a link in the chat.

Dr. Lana Ray and Anita Valancourt did a discussion paper on Indigenizing PLAR and one of the things that they shared is, that sense of belonging in post-secondary in such a colonized system, trying to decolonize it. But they said, decolonizing Indigenizing PLAR is an important step between self-determination and reclaiming identity. And I couldn't say it any better. So yeah, there's so much to unpack with this, but essentially, it's that radically open pedagogy. We're not doing it for them, we're doing it with them, and we had the first person cross the stage. He got his entire second and third year of his Bachelor of General Studies degree filled through PLAR and when he crossed the stage for convocation, there was a thunderous applause and a really loud, long standing ovation.

HELENA:
Wow, that sounds like a wonderful celebration to be part of. Thank you for all the work you do, Susan, and how you responded to that question, too. So, Amanda, I'm going to throw a question back to you immediately that's in the chat. Based on the work that you did at UFV was assessing where the institution was in terms of PLAR and the feedback you received from your survey across board, what are your recommendations for a PLAR advisor to set them up for success? What kind of support did PLAR candidates indicate they needed?

AMANDA:

Thank you. I was furiously typing, so this will be much better. That is an excellent question, I'm going to come at this from a really non-traditional way. I say that because I am a PLAR practitioner and I was also a PLAR student at one point. What I'm going to say is, how can you set yourself up for success as a PLAR advisor? Try because we're all in post-secondary. We all have access to either a free seat or we're all lifelong learners. If we somehow come across this pathway in our current job description or off the side of our desks, we at some point have needed to either compete for a promotion or we want to go back to school and re-credential, ladder side, however that looks. I actually challenge you to go through a PLR process yourself. And whether that's within your own institution or whether it's at another institution where you are career laddering, signing, however that looks for you, allow yourself-to be vulnerable and go through that self-assessment process because I think there's no better way than going through it that's going to unsurface all of the confidence that we each need in ourselves and our confidence then as hired qualified advisors who are dealing with our students every single day. I think really remembering that we are already meeting and Susan said, and I wish we could spend so much more time on decolonizing and Indigenizing prior learning assessment because that's where some real truth in unpacking our systems of post-secondary really come to the forefront.

So if we were able to allow ourselves to go through that vulnerable process, it is going to show us that we do have the confidence to meet our students and know that they again are a whole human being that's coming to us, no different from us. They're just looking to get whatever it is, and we have that honour to walk with them on their journey. What an exciting career to be in. If you're not already in, try being a PLAR practitioner and see the rewards and the stresses that you get to go home with at the end of the day. I hope I answered that. What kind of support did the PLAR candidates indicate they needed? And I would go back to first starting here. That is a question that my advising team had asked me too was, is there a manual? Are you going to create a manual? Is there a how- to? Tell me one, two, three, four, five, and I need it to be black and white, just like we're reading a screen. Let me get you very comfortable with being uncomfortable. PLAR is in the gray. We are not a learning outcome. We are not teaching you the following one to ten outcomes when you leave us, you are in the gray zone, so get really comfortable with being uncomfortable and if it is a five by five of bullet points of key points that you can speak to a student, those things we can do and create for you as an advisor, but just be very uncomfortable and be uncomfortable. Thank you.

HELENA:

Thank you so much. And, you know, I was hoping we could give all the panelists a last bit of wisdom to share, but we are out of time. So if the panelists do want to put something in the chat, please feel free to do so. But I want to say thank you to each of you for being here as panelists, for our audience, for the engagement in the chat. We really appreciate that. We will share the survey link again. You can maybe follow up in the survey if you have more questions. If you want to be part of the next conversation as a panelist, put that in the survey for us as

well, because it really sounds like a follow up question is required. And I want to close perhaps with the words that Amanda said when she introduced herself, when you said that "PLAR is not a nice to have, it's a must have." And I really appreciate that. And for that reason, we should prioritize more conversations. Thank you, everyone, for being here, and I wish you a wonderful Tuesday afternoon.