Transcript for Award Showcase: Meet the Recipients of the 2025 West Coast Teaching Excellence Awards
BCcampus session on January 29, 2026
Hosts: Melanie Meyers, Heather Fitzgerald, and Ken Jeffery
Speakers: Dr. Anka Lekhi, Dr. Sarah Yercich, and Dr. Lee Beavington

KEN JEFFERY:
Hi, everybody. I'd like to start by acknowledging the traditional lands of the Lekwungen-speaking Peoples. That's the Esquimalt Songhees Nations. That's where I am right now. It's with gratitude I live, work and learn on these lands as an uninvited guest in this region that's colonially known as Victoria, B.C. Thank you, and welcome everyone. My name is Ken Jeffery. I am pleased to be here today. I'm speaking on behalf of both myself and Awneet Sivia who's my co-chair. We are co-chairs of the BC Teaching and Learning Council, BCTLC.

The West Coast Teaching Excellence Awards have been an important part, an important initiative for the BCTLC. This year, we've heard that both the 3M National Teaching Fellowship and the DTL Innovation in Teaching and Learning Awards have both been paused or will not be awarded this year, more than ever, I'm excited to be here today to see this because we feel it's important to recognize teaching excellence and highlight the work of our colleagues who are going above and beyond to promote and enhance student opportunities for success. I'm fairly new myself to the BCTLC, but this award was created in 2021, I believe. The first set of awards came out and was awarded in 2022 to five individuals, one of whom was actually my co-chair, Awneet, who was honoured to receive one of those initial awards. I've heard that Maureen Wideman, who was from the University of Fraser Valley was the first chair of the WCTEA committee. Of course, the focus was to recognize not only excellence in teaching and learning, but teaching that represented EDI and Indigenization approaches as part of the key criteria. And this was the first such provincial award that was intended to lift up inclusive teaching and to name the TRC Calls to Action as one of the criteria. In this way, the award was intended to reflect the uniqueness of our B.C. post-secondary environment and our context while honouring the primacy of teaching as an integral function of all post-secondary institutions. So many thanks, many thanks to the current West Coast Teaching Excellent Awards Committee, and all those folks along the way who have kept this award going since it was started and dreamed of in 2021. Thanks, everyone for being here. And Melanie, I think I'm passing it back to you.

MELANIE MEYERS:
Thank you so much, Ken. We appreciate you welcoming everyone. And yeah, I also wanted to extend huge congratulations to our three recipients this year, who I will introduce before they each speak, but I'll just say quickly, I'm Melanie Meyers. I'm a program director in the Centre for Teaching Learning and Innovation at the Justice Institute of BC, and I also am a BCTLC member and a co-chair with Heather, who I'll pass it to of the West Coast Teaching Excellence Awards Adjudication Committee. Go ahead, Heather.

HEATHER FITZGERALD:
Hi, everyone. I'm so glad you're all here and I'm really excited to have all the award recipients presenting their work. One of the things that I think is such a gift of sitting on the adjudication committee is getting to see the incredible work of B.C. post-secondary educators. And it's always felt sad to me that we don't have a standing way to share some of that excellence. So, I know this event was a long time in the planning, but I really hope it's the beginning of a tradition where we have a showcase to have award recipients, kind of demonstrate to the rest of the community why their teaching is so exemplary. So thank you all for being here. I don't think I said where I'm from. I'm Heather Fitzgerald, and I am a co-chair of the West Coast Teaching Excellence Award. I've served on the committee for the last three years, and I am the interim director of Teaching and Learning at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. Thanks. I'll pass it back to Mel. Okay, great.

MELANIE:
So I'm going to introduce our first presenter. So it's Dr. Anka Lekhi who teaches general chemistry and other science courses at the UBC Vantage One Science Program, as well as direct entry students in general chemistry and aqueous environmental chemistry. So over the past decade, Dr. Lecky has introduced evidence-based instructional strategies that have improved the academic progress of more than 4,000 undergraduate students. So it's not a small number. And Dr. Lecky is recognized for her focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion, and her innovative approaches to student learning. She's created tremendous learning opportunities for students and has played a leading role in the major UBC initiative to enhance higher education opportunities in science for international students who are English language learners. So thank you, Anka, and over to you.

ANKA LEKHI:
Thank you so much. I just want to say thank you to everyone for putting on this event, and also just a welcome to everyone listening. I'm really happy that you're here and I'm happy to be sharing some of my work with you. All right. I'm just going to… Everything good there… I think. Yes. Okay. Need to go into… there you go. You got it. Awesome. Okay, great. All right.

So the title of my presentation today will be My Journey in Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and Histories in Chemistry Courses. I'll start by just acknowledging that my journey has taken place on the traditional ancestral unceded Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil Waututh Territory. I also want to explain that while I do teach chemistry courses to first year and third year students, some of the chemistry courses that I teach are to international students who are English language learners as part of the Vantage Science Program. So within UBC, I belong to two units, chemistry and Vantage.

To give you an overview of myself as an instructor, I would say that my work is definitely anchored in creating inclusive and interdisciplinary classrooms. So while that might mean for my first year chemistry course that is taught to English language learners, I rely on principles of universal design of learning to help those students feel included in the classroom and in

chemistry. I focus on multiple representations of content and multiple means of engagement. In my third year Environmental Chemistry course, I rely on case-based learning to really leverage the academically diverse students who are enrolled in the course because the case studies themselves are inherently interdisciplinary. I've also been leading the chemistry TA training program, and in chemistry, the TAs play a huge role in our undergraduate education, particularly in laboratory teaching. While many students feel anxious or nervous in the laboratory settings, our TAs play a huge role in enhancing that inclusion of those students, so we spend a lot of time in our training program focused on that. My scholarly work has been recently mostly focused on investigations into student experiences of active learning. While the literature has generally shown that active learning is hugely beneficial to student learning, there are some students who may face barriers in engaging in active learning and I want to hear more about their experiences. So this could be students who may feel like they have to hide parts of their identity or students who are English language learners. So I've been working for the past few years to try to really understand some of these experiences. Having said all that, I will not be talking much about any of those things. But if you have questions, I welcome those questions during the Q&A. My focus today will be on my journey in incorporating Indigenous knowledge and history in chemistry courses.

So I'd like to start by just sharing some personal information about myself that is very much relevant to my journey. So I am a settler. I was born in Vancouver and my schooling, meaning my high school and my elementary school was all in British Columbia. My parents are from India. There's a picture of my parents there. I am not Indigenous, so I do lack lived experience in this area, and I really just started learning recently. I am a mom, so there's a picture of my beautiful kids there as well. And my graduate research was in environmental chemistry. So my intentions here today are just that I wanted to share a bit about how I, as a Western trained educator in STEM, have been engaging in what I would describe as an unfamiliar space and a space that I really wasn't sure of why in some ways, why I personally should be starting on this journey. Where should I start and exactly where I was going? I was unsure of what is this going to look like in my own chemistry classes. How does this all fit? By doing that, I'm hoping to spark some conversations.

So here's a timeline of my journey. So you can see, I would say that really my thought process started in about 2020 when UBC launched its Indigenous Strategic Plan. And then you can see in 2023 was when we first started adding content and modifying content into our chemistry courses. But you can also see an arrow from there because I'm not done yet. Who knows where I will go next.

So just to begin with the UBC launching the Indigenous Strategic Plan, what is that? So essentially, it's a document that provides guidance for action and a framework for reconciliation in a post-secondary context. I wanted to include this for well, two reasons. One was just an acknowledgment of how leadership can really play a role and essentially how this plan really did influence me as a faculty member. So the role of leadership was very important to my journey. I also wanted to acknowledge that this plan is different from some of the other plans at UBC. So

generally, in my experience, what I've seen when it comes to strategic plans is they tend to be a top-down approach. This was different. So in developing this plan, UBC included multiple stages. They took a long time to develop this plan, and there were multiple stages where they were consulting with the Indigenous communities and hearing from them and so having their voices included as they developed the plan. And that difference was important to me.

Okay. So then in 2021, the Indigenous Strategic Plan sort of provided this kind of anchor for discussions. And first off, the discussion started happening in the Vantage unit, which I belong to. So there were colleagues of mine that were further along the journey than I was. And so I've included some of their images here. And so listening to my colleagues, hearing that they were sort of further along in this journey and their sort of excitement enticed me to just listen. So while I didn't know yet at this point, where I was going. I did not, I don't think yet had a good understanding of why I was engaged in this journey, but I had a place to start. This was a comfortable environment with colleagues who were again further along the journey, but sharing that space with me. And then another turning point, I think in my journey was listening to Janelle Kaspersky, who gave a talk around how the Indigenous strategic plan was developed and how many Indigenous voices were included in that plan. And her talk sort of gave me two things. One was a permission, I think, to engage by just listening at first. And then she was also invited. She gave everyone in that room sort of an invitation. And the invitation was that as she put it, Indigenous people have been speaking. We have written books. We have created videos. We have been using our voices. We're really just inviting you to listen and hear our voices. So that was important to me at that point that I thought, Okay, I know where I'm starting. Where I'm starting is just to listen to some of those voices. I continued on.

In 2022, we also began discussions in chemistry, the other unit that I belong to. In these conversations, now by this point, there were other folks that were using, that had examples of how they incorporated Indigenous ways of knowing histories into their courses. Vincent Ziffle, Stephen McNeil, these were all examples. These were all faculty members that had already done this. While I still at this point, wasn't seeing where I was going. Yes, they had examples in their courses, but how is it going to fit in my course? It was very inspiring and also just hearing about where they started, what their journey had been like was important. Dana-Lynn gave a beautiful talk in chemistry, around histories and how harm is not historical. This was also important to me. Other folks at UBC, Ashley Welsh was an important contributor. She also was further along in the journey and had written about how we can engage, how we can create these learning environments for Indigenous students in science. So while all this is happening and I'm taking it all in, I'm also around the same time as both of these pieces, doing my own reflections. I took Janelle up on her invitation and I went to the X̱wi7x̱wa Library at UBC, which focuses on Indigenous scholars collections, collections from Indigenous scholars. And I simply started reading things. So I started reading, I started watching videos. I watched many videos off of YouTube around truth and reconciliation, listening to my Indigenous neighbours telling their stories about what has happened. Other videos that I've been seeing that were developed by the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, again, just listening to those voices. And what came out from that, I think, was definitely I now could give a clear answer,

I think on why am I doing this? Because now I was able to very clearly link in my own mind my own identity with the historical impact in a way. Let me explain what I mean by that. So I am an educator, and so much of the harms that had occurred were around residential schools and, you know, a real failure of the education system. So as an educator, I had an opportunity there to make a difference. I do value inclusion and traditionally, Indigenous people were excluded from developing chemistry knowledge. And now, as an insider in chemistry, I had an opportunity again to widen, you know, widen chemistry to a broader group. I did my schooling at UBC, so I really did understand that the truths were hidden for a very long time. And so this was now I was committed to truth. My parents were from India, so what that meant was when I listened to the stories and about how much stories of shame, like shaming of culture that was occurring, and I understood at least a little piece of that because I had experienced something a touch, just a touch of what that felt like when I went to school because I was a little bit different from the other students in my class. Then it became really important to me to celebrate a culture that was wrongfully shamed. And of course, being a mom, there was another connection there that I felt, another motivation that I felt. So with that sort of foundation, I was then able to all of a sudden, now it was very clear what the connections were in my courses. I just needed that strong foundation in order to be able to really see it. And so it was actually the easier step to incorporate some of this knowledge and history that I was reading into my courses. When I do this, however, I'm still very much transparent with the students that I am still learning, and I also very much try to incorporate Indigenous voices when I do include content. While that might look like including quotes or a video, I do recognize that that's important.

So now I'll tell you a little bit about what changes that I've made, and I'll focus on two courses. So the Aqueous Environmental Chemistry course, as I mentioned, we were already using case studies in that course, but I made two changes. One was taking an existing case and adding to it. We had already been using the Britannia Mine pollution as study in the course. This is a local example. And really the focus of the case study when it comes to the course is talking about the radox chemistry that occurs that led to the pollution. But now the modification I have made is an acknowledgment of the truth, which is that the mine was built on unceded territory, and it was really only through Indigenous persistence that there was any effort to clean up the Britannia Mine Creek. And now there's an opportunity then in class when we do this case study for students to reflect on the impacts of pollution, who does get impacted, which is not chemistry content, but very obviously related to the study of this. Many of the students in my course are going to go on further and play roles in policy and things like that. This is an opportunity for them to really think about the people that are involved in many of these case studies. In addition to that, I developed a completely new case study, and I did this alongside my colleague Noah Deppner, who helped me make connections with the Tsleil-Waututh Nation who is leading a restoration project in the Burrard Inlet. Now, reading up about all of what is happening there, I'm able to use this case study for students to apply course content to understand the harm that has been done to the Burrard Inlet. What pollution is in the inlet and why? They can use course content to understand that chemistry. But then we're also using the

case to understand some of the approaches that are being used by the Tsleil-Waututh Nation. Students are able to appreciate the priorities and the motivation from these traditional methods alongside, you know, the non-traditional chemistry methods and sort of see the strengths of both and how both are being used to clean up the Burrard Inlet. In my chemistry in my first year chemistry course.

This was a real opportunity for me to celebrate a particular custom in, in, sorry, a particular custom of natural dying. So what we did was there was already a module on colours that was part of the course. But now what we did was we made contact with a Musqueam Knowledge Keeper by the name of Rita Kompst. And she was so generous in her time and in sharing her knowledge. And we were able to make a video of her just showing us how she uses natural dyes, so how she picks particular plants, and then the processes that she goes through. And so the students get to see this, get to see this real life knowledge in action alongside, understanding the molecule and the structure of the molecule that is leading to a particular colour. Again, there's this opportunity for the students to see both pieces and the strengths of both and how that both can be used to understand natural dying.

Now, I've basically focused on my journey, and it's been a lot of me, me, me, me. But I do want to say that my motivation always comes back to the students and, you know, I mean, ultimately, the goal is to widen the field of chemistry and to include more people into the chemistry field. But even so, that's the long-term goal, but even in the short term, I've received a lot of positive feedback from students. So in my aqueous chemistry course, they write reflections about the case studies. In these, I've read what they've written and it does demonstrate a deeper understanding and appreciation of traditional knowledge. So examples of things that they've written is the written about Tsleil-Waututh Nation having a longstanding historical knowledge of the Burrard Inlet that others don't. And another case talked about how the approaches restore cultural traditions and have a positive cascading effect on the ecosystem. And then orally, I don't think in any other situation, I've had more students come up to me personally and tell me about the fact that they appreciated something that was done in class that day. An example of a first year student who says to me, Wow, this example of natural dying is really cool. I can't believe chemistry happens outside the classroom, and it's definitely relevant to what we're learning. Then I've had another student say it's refreshing to see this and they want to see it in more of their science classes. So with that, I just summarize and looking forward to that, you know, I am definitely still on my journey.

That arrow is still there. And again, what's lovely though about being here is now it's so obvious to me about other things that I'm going to pick and choose and put into my classes that are all, you know, authentic connections. And I just want to acknowledge any folks that weren't acknowledged in the slides previously, which include other members of my team in chemistry who helped with developing these materials. The Tsleil-Waututh Nation, in particular, their website, but we also consulted with them about the case study. Of course, all of my students, and that brings me to an end of my presentation. Thank you for listening.

MELANIE:
Thank you so much, Anka. I can't tell you how many times I've had conversations with faculty around, how do we get started with, you know, incorporating Indigenous perspectives and it's just so helpful to hear about your journey because I think that, yeah, it frames so nicely what you've been, and how you've learned from others as well. So thank you. Thank you so much. Just a reminder, if you have questions, please pop them in the chat as we go along. I'm going to move this along so that we have time for everybody. Our next award recipient is Dr. Sarah Yercich who's a faculty member in the Department of Sociology and Criminology and Department of Women's and Gender Studies at CAP U School of Social Science. And she has distinguished herself as a compassionate, innovative and community-engaged educator with a deep commitment to learner success, truth and reconciliation and diversity, equity, and inclusion. And Dr. Yersich is recognized for her innovative approaches to curriculum delivery at Capilano University, including her use of student-led learning, collaborative learning assignments, gamification, and real-world experiential learning opportunities, as well as her investment in community-based projects. So thanks for being with us, Sarah.

SARAH YERCICH:
Thank you so much, Melanie, and everyone for being here. I'm just going to quickly share my screen. And then simply because in all of my meetings this morning I've been, my internet has been spotty. I'm just going to turn on my video on talking so you can still hear me, okay? If it will let me. There we go. Okay. So if at any point you can't hear me, please do just let me know and I will go back. I'm assuming you can see my screen, okay? Everything's great. Perfect. Thank you. All right, well, I want to begin by acknowledging how deeply honoured I am to receive this award and how deeply grateful I am for everyone who played a role in it. That includes the BC Teaching and Learning Council, Capilano University, my colleagues in the School of Social Sciences. I want to give a special shout out, especially to the CT, our Teaching and Learning Excellence Centre, and Brett Paris there, who without this, I wouldn't have been able to do, and also our CT more generally is fabulous. And there also just been so many people who helped nominate me who supported this work. I want to give a special shout out to my partner, Connor McMillan, who I think is also here today, because without his unwavering support, none of my work would be possible. I'm also especially thankful to my students, both past and present, who trusted me with their learning, with their stories, and with their time. I also want to acknowledge that I teach and learn on the unceded or stolen territories of the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, which we now know as North Vancouver, and I live on the stolen territories of the Kwikwetlem First Nation which is now known as Port Coquitlam. This recognition matters not just as a statement, but as an ongoing responsibility that shapes how and why I teach and how and why all of us teach. I am much like Anka, a settler scholar. I'm a white settler scholar and I carry that responsibility with me in what I do, how I teach and what I bring into the classroom. I'll speak a little bit more about that later. In addition to my role at CAPU, I'm also the co-director of the FREDA Centre for Research on Gender-Based Violence, housed at Simon Fraser University and an early career researcher with the Alliance Against Violence and Adversity. But first and foremost, I have been and will always be a teaching scholar. But awards like this are never about one person alone. They reflect communities. They

reflect the learners in my classroom, my mentors, elders, staff, partners, everyone who makes meaningful education possible, which brings me to why I do what I do?

A student once wrote, and you'll see the quote on the screen, Sarah is one of the only instructors who makes everyone in the classroom feel safe, heard, and accepted. That sentence captures what teaching means to me. At its core, my pedagogy is about belonging. I also learned through the context like the pandemic, which I will speak about a little bit later too as an educator, to prioritize things like care and the human experience over content that teaching isn't just learning content or teaching content. I also acknowledge I teach many students who've experienced varying degrees of inequity-based barriers to education. Many who arrive carrying grief, stress, care responsibilities or feel that quiet but unsettling feeling that university maybe wasn't designed for them. I personally know this feeling, and I also share this with my students as part of my positionality. I was a first generation student from a low-income family. I didn't arrive at university feeling like I was fluent in anything I needed to be. I didn't understand the hidden curriculum or the hidden rules. I didn't know how to read academically. I didn't know how to write with confidence. I didn't even really feel comfortable seeking help because I felt like all of my questions were stupid or things that I should be able to answer on my own. That history shapes my everyday teaching. So my approach starts with a simple but a radical question.

What happens when we meet students where they are, rather than where we assume they should be? That means for me teaching both content and skills and also meeting people where they are and understanding the human and lived experiences that shape who people are, what they bring to the classroom, and what they deal with and live outside the classroom as well. It also means scaffolding things like reading, writing, feedback. It means being very explicit about expectations, but also making the expectations accessible through things like infographics, visual design, hands-on learning. It means understanding also that students are not empty vessels, but people whose lived experiences are already forms of knowledge and value that they bring to the classroom.

So what my classroom looks like, and these images will make sense in a second. In my classroom, learning is active. Learning is collaborative and to be honest, a little bit uncomfortable sometimes, but in the best of ways. For me, it's about pushing boundaries and sharing knowledge and learning through things that might not necessarily be traditional. I avoid tests. I avoid very traditional assignments like essays because I think the skills that people can learn through non-traditional avenues are far greater. So I use a wide range of methods. I use some more traditional methods like discussion, debate, gamification, creative and reflective writing assignments. But I also invite students in my courses, and I start this in the first year, although it looks a little bit different for first year students to co-lead the class and run student-led teaching assignments. We also engage in non-traditional ways of knowing and expressing knowledge, which is one of the things you see on the screen and community=based work integrated and experiential learning. Which by the way, is incredibly supported at Cap and I even believe one of our CTE will representatives is here because we do have that built

structurally into how CAP runs, which I deeply appreciate. But this novelty isn't just to be innovative for its own sake. It's about recognizing that students learn in a multitude of different ways and that traditional academic formats have historically excluded and silenced many voices. One of the examples that you see on the screen is the sociology or sociology of self-assignment, which I actually co-developed with my partner, Connor here, and he deserves a ton of credit for it. It is an NSA project that I use in my introduction to sociology classes and it's also something that has been adopted across all of the Introduction to Sociology classes at my university. Instead of writing a traditional paper, students create a sociology of self where they explore their own identities through a minimum of three sociological concepts and express it through a multiple of mediums that cannot be two things. It can't be an academic essay and it cannot be a presentation, although they do share their work in more of a show and tell in the class. I get a wide variety of things, art, film, photography, music, spoken word. Some students have come to class and cooked cultural dishes for the other students while explaining things like the lineage of culture and gender. All these things that emerge, and this is only a small sample on the screen are extraordinary. Through this process, students explore their own identities, relationships of power, class, race, culture, Indigeneity, gender, queerness, religion, spirituality, belonging, among many others, and often for them for the first times and through a form that feels authentic to them. Some try brand new things, but a lot of people use the skills they already participate in like art, like photography, like cooking, like storytelling. And the assignment, the intention of it is, it disrupts the idea that knowledge only counts if it looks like an essay or a test, and it invites students to see themselves as theorists and knowers and creators of knowledge in their own lives.

This is something that emerged out of a Social 100 class, but is currently an art installation across all of Capilano University. I worked with a student, Chris, who was an artist, who engaged in art-based learning in Soc 100 and then approached me with the idea of doing an exploration for a community-led learning independent study, which was the first of its kind in the department to use art to explore nature versus industrialization through a sociological lens. All the ones you see on the top, those are done on metal and they're housed outside the university in nature to contrast that this might be an industrialized space, but nature is where they sit as contrast. Then all the beautiful and they were painted on metal so that they can naturally deteriorate. It was very intentional. Then on the bottom of the screen, what you see is nature. But this nature is brought inside and it's done on campus and intended to last for a very long time. These are actually held up with sticks and tree branches that Chris found out in nature.

I'm going to switch to this, although it's not quite exactly representative of what I'm going to talk about. But another cornerstone of my teaching is community-based and work-integrated learning, and some of what you see here is only a small sampling of that. In Gender Crime and Justice, which is one of the classes that I teach, students design and lead community projects responding to real issues. And they've done things like support shelters through donations of clothing and goods and educational supplies. They've addressed period poverty and focused on menstrual equity, both up north in Indigenous communities and also through free community

pantries and donations to shelters here in the Lower Mainland. Some of them also gathered funds and goods for cultural programming for Indigenous women at the Downtown Eastside Women Shelter, among many projects that have come out of this. One student reflected, and this is only a small bit of the information, I changed my world view. Another said it was the first time they felt they could actually do something about injustice rather than just study. Another example is in Intro to Criminology. Students have partnered with the North Vancouver RCMP and the Integrated First Nations Unit. These were very Indigenous-oriented projects, and they aligned with the principles of OCAP around things like ownership and control of work with Indigenous communities, by Indigenous communities. And they redesigned with the collaboration with these two agencies, the mental health uniforms on the North Shore, which you'll see on the right, so that while mental health is very much a health issue, it is unfortunately currently responded to by law enforcement. And so they redesigned these uniforms to reduce stigma. Of folks who get calls and get visits by these officers. They also advocated for and conducted research on the use of an inclusive or rainbow pride patch, which is now a staple in the North Vancouver RCMP every June. And what they've done shapes institutional change. And I do want to kind of tout especially these outfits here because this is the first time an RCMP detachment has been able to advocate for and get federal approval for unique uniforms by their officers to reduce stigma. And in Soc250, which is our research methods class, for example, students helped co-design Indigenous-informed community gardens and many other things. These projects matter not because they look good on a CV or a resumé, although they really quite do and have led to internships, grad school acceptances, educational funding, and even jobs right outside of university. But these projects allow students to see that their ideas and their work can alter systems. They learn that knowledge is not passive. They learn it's something you do. And they see in a world where there's a lot of frustration and a lot of harm that even small actions by an individual or a small group of people can make a large and real world difference.

So shifting to then what I call the why I do it beneath the how I do it. Equity, decolonization, and care for me, are not add-ons to my pedagogy. They are the foundation. Decolonizing education for me, means moving beyond performative gestures. It means foregrounding Indigenous, Black, and other non-Western ways of knowing. It means inviting lived experience into the classroom as legitimate and valued knowledge. It means constantly asking who holds the power, who benefits from it, who is harmed by it, and how can that be dismantled or shared? I also situate myself openly with my students, not only with my first generation background or my background growing up in relative poverty, but as a white settler scholar, as someone shaped by privilege and also constraint, and as someone who is still learning. That transparency matters. It models accountability for my students, and it invites them to reflect on their own positionality and how that informs what they know, how they know it, and how they see the world. Alongside this, I practise what I call and what I will find in the book, and I'll put it in the chat when I'm done, but what an amazing text calls "the pedagogy of kindness." The pandemic first made visible for me what has always been true. Students are whole people. Learning does not happen in isolation from grief, anxiety, caregiving, or joy. Kindness, flexibility, and compassion are not the opposite of rigour. They are what makes rigour possible. As one

student wrote, and you see on the screen, “She valued me as a person more than my academic achievements. That made me want to go to class. To me, that is teaching excellence." I want to conclude by describing briefly just a few things.

This is all about returning to the students because everything I've described exists because of them. Their courage to speak, their willingness to try something unfamiliar, and their trust. There is one thing I hope people take away from my teaching, and it's this.

Education should expand students' sense of possibility about the world and about themselves. This award for me affirms and I hope it affirms for everyone here, including those who plan to go for it in the future, that teaching is grounded in care and community and seeking justice. I mean equitable justice, not performative justice. I accepted this award and over the last year, I've revisited this with myself with deep gratitude, humility, and responsibility to keep learning, to keep listening, and to keep building classrooms where students feel like they belong.

I will just put this up on the screen and I'm happy to also put it in the chat. But one of the things I love is talking about teaching. If you ever want to grab a coffee and sit down, please do reach out.

MELANIE:
Thank you so much, Sarah. I'm sure some folks will take you up on that and I really appreciate you sharing those examples of authentic assessment and work integrated learning that are just so creative and inspirational, thanks again. Alright, so we're going to move along to our final presenter and award recipient. So I'd like to welcome Kwantlen Polytechnic University instructor, Dr. Lee Bevington, who holds a PhD in Philosophy of Education and is an award-winning author, tech speaker and founder of KPU Wild Spaces, an interdisciplinary teaching and learning hub that focuses on ecological place-based education in post-secondary. And as a recipient of KPU's Distinguished Teaching Award, Dr. Bevington has taught numerous courses and has worked in five faculties at KPU—it's quite a few, including being a faculty leader of the Amazon field school. And he also serves on the Climate and Challenge team at KPU with a focus on climate justice. So welcome.

LEE BEAVINGTON:
All right. Let me share the correct screen there. Thank you so much, Melanie, for the intro. Let me just find my correct PowerPoint. That's funny. It worked in our previous one, but now it wants to share. There we go. Alright, we're good. Yeah. Alright. So I want to start in a good way. I am joining you here from the unceded traditional lands of the Coast Salish on an island known as SḴŦAḴ. SḴŦAḴ is the name, as it's spoken in the SENĆOŦEN language by the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples. I myself am a third-generation colonial settler, scholar with European ancestry. You can see my teaching philosophy on the right there, and I actually included that as part of my application as a way to try to showcase things other than through words as well. A little more about me. So I'm neurodivergent. My pronouns are he/him I have taught in six faculties, if you count as a few. So I've been an instructor in all sorts of different places, but mostly in biology at

KPU. I'm also a learning strategist with the learning centres. Last year, I made a music video for Peter Gabriel. I'm also a river walker, very connected with rivers, and they'll come up a couple of times more as I go along. For those who might want to engage with some of my papers or other presentations, I will post my Linktree in the chat if you want to check that out. And you can also find me on LinkedIn if you want to stay connected afterward.

I want to acknowledge a number of mentors now at this point. I can't list them all because it would take more than the time I have, but I do want to highlight some. And a shoutout to the Teaching and Learning and Commons, I believe Nishan and maybe others from the Learning Commons are here right now. The Teaching and Learning Commons at KPU have been hugely supportive of the work and teaching I do. So super grateful for everything they've offered me over the years and continue to offer in the collaborations we have ongoing. I want to acknowledge my parents. My mom and dad, I believe at least one of them is here right now, and they used to and continue to do community building. They hold space for people together to share deeply and intentionally, and that community building aspect has deeply informed my teaching. I also want to acknowledge a teacher of mine. So Ross Laird, who used to teach at KPU, I took a course of his. This was after I'd done my undergrad in biology at UBC, and I was taking other undergrad courses while already teaching in biology at KPU. And so I wandered into this course. I think it was a mythology, and the tables were in a circle. And there were no lectures or PowerPoint, and there were no tests. And the second half of the semester was students in groups facilitating experiential activities for the class. And my mind was sort of like, what? What is this? I haven't experienced this before. And so it opened my mind to the possibilities of what education can look like because it's very easy to simply teach the way you were taught. So I wanted to find an image to go with this slide. And so I went over to Pixels and typed in university students' classrooms sitting in circle.

And this was one of the best ones I found. And so it goes to show the default thinking around where and how learning happens, especially in higher education.

Now, for me, I'm more interested in something like this. This is a picture from one of our wild spaces events. I'll speak more to wild spaces later on. And I want to give a shoutout to my wife now, who I believe also is here, listening, Jen. I met her around the time, 2009, around the time that I was doing a sort of transition between my older teacher self and the newer one. And it was a sort of big time of transformation for me. And I was teaching in a biology lab, so I'd go to this idea class with Ross Laird, and then right after I'd walk down to the biology lab to teach. And so I'd be all inspired and I'd want to do things differently. But I wasn't quite sure how to translate that. So thank you to Jen for allowing me to pick her brain many times and give me tangible ideas of things I could do with my students that were inclusive community building activities. And then I want to acknowledge the river.

So rivers have been a huge source of inspiration, respite, and sanctuary over the years. This picture I actually took in the Koksilah River on Vancouver Island during the heat dome. In 2021, my wife and I happened to be there, and I sort of lived in the river in the days because it was so

hot. It was a mountain river, but it was actually warm. That's how hot it was. So thank you to the river for letting me be in your waters during that really difficult time. So a little more about me and how I do things.

So this is a slide I'll use sometimes in my teaching, sometimes in workshops I give. So I just copied it over here to share with you to give you some things that I do with my learners or participants. I'll emphasize that we're a diverse group of folks from varied backgrounds. And I feel important here to add that I feel super privileged and honoured to be in a country and work at an institution in a team that not only values diversity and difference, but also actively celebrates that. So that feels important to say right now. I'll explain that folks are welcome to be a listener and everything is by invitation. They can take breaks as they need. This might be for online course, maybe they need to turn off video and that we're going to create accountable space together. Accountable space is one where we engage in active listening, avoiding interrupting, we're mindful of how much we're talking, using I statements, giving credit and speaking of giving credit, I'll put into the chat. The article that someone shared with me years ago, this article by Elise Hencra about accountable spaces that has informed how I try to approach teaching and learning. So the link there is in the chat. Oh, thank you, Heather, for the comment about the photo. Yes, I'm a nature photographer, and I have many more food photos like that that I've taken over the years, as well. All right. So there were so many things I could talk about, but I thought, Okay.

The thread I'm going to follow here is my biology journey because that's the one I've had most experience in and my PhD was to a large extent about science or biology education. So I thought, Okay, let's follow a thread, although it's really meandering rather than linear, a thread of my biology teaching over the years. I started in 2002 at KPU and my favourite course was ecology because we got to go outside, so I got to be involved with the field trips. So this was exciting. And so a couple of ecology field trips involved what I heard referred to as walk and talks. We went to the forest or the bog, and students had worksheets, and the instructor was there, and we walked along, and the instructor told them the answers to the questions on the worksheets and the students wrote things down. Now, it took me a surprising number of years to realize, maybe we can do something a little bit different here?

Because it felt a little bit like the lecture would just be taken outside. We still got the worksheets, we're still writing things down. And yet we're surrounded by the amazing temperate rainforest. So a few years later, I brought in a plant ID challenge.

Here's my students here, engaged in a Delta nature reserve next to Burns Bog. And I was noticing that the students were having trouble identifying plants, and a number of field trips required them to identify quite a few species of plants. And they were using Pojar McKinnon's “Coastal Plants of B.C,” which is the plant bible, but it has thousands of plants. And so I made this guidebook of 50 common plants with lots of pictures. In fact, she's using it right in the photo there, which was both helpful for me because my undergrad was in animal biology, not botany. So I got to learn them better, and then I got to pass it on to them as well as an easier

way to engage with the plants and maybe hopefully less stressful. And so they had the reward of chocolate at the end of it. It's the first pair to identify the 10 or so plants, right? And they were running around and they were working with the plants and they're asking curious questions. And so I felt this was hands-on learning, but I'm not calling it experiential or active yet because there wasn't really much reflection. And I was noticing that at the end of the semester in the lab exam, often we'd ask them to name 20 plants, common or Latin names. But there wasn't really much relationship there with those plants or places. It was still an external motivation that was really driving them. So then I got more and more interested in inquiry based learning. And I created another project for these ecology students. This one was called the Flora and Fauna Project. I'd love to add fungi, though, to recognize the fungi and their importance. But this was the Flora and Fauna Project. And briefly, students would, they researched a plant animal of their choice, a local species that lives in the forest where we were going to go. And they found out some ecology things about them, maybe some traditional ecological knowledge they could find about them. And then they submitted that and did that work prior to going on the field trip. So when we got in the forest, then I had them right on cue cards like black bear or sword fern, or, you know, earthworm or black cat chickadee. And then they wandered around until they bumped into someone else, and then they tried to figure out what kind of interaction those two organisms would have. Because in ecology, we have these different kinds of interactions. You got, you know, predation, so one eats the other, which led to some hilarity. I got parasitism, commensalism, mutualism, et cetera. And then I had them build a pyramid of energy. And then I think the image on the screen here is actually a food web. You have the bald eagle, which would be as supposed to quaternary consumer, in this case. So we were doing this in the forest. They had a chance to choose to plant an animal that they were doing. They're embodying it. And I was like, Alright, we're getting somewhere good. I'm getting somewhere. And then the pandemic I was like, Ah, darn. So there's a whole other story about how I taught remote play-based learning with a fine arts instructor, something called Ecology and Colour in 1 Metre Squared. I don't have time to speak to it now, but there's a link to that article in cultural studies of science education in my Linktree that I shared earlier. But just to say that it is possible to teach experiential play-based learning remotely. You just got to be a bit creative. Alright. Fast forward then to a year ago.

So there was a new course developed at KPU Biology/INDG that's Indigenous Studies. So Biology/ INDG 1492. Indigenous Perspectives in Biology, developed by Mika Maconan and Allison Hotty grateful to them for developing it. I co-taught it with Anthony Fernandez from Indigenous Studies. I was brought on somewhat last minute as the biology instructor. But this was sort of a dream course to teach because we were told to reimagine what university education looks like, and that's what I love to do. So we could go outside every class. We had check-ins, every class, and back to the plants. So I created a trim project called the Plant Folk Project. And what students did is they built a relationship with a specific plant. Maybe it was in their yard, on the campus grounds, in a local park. They did research on that plant. Less so the scientific stats and facts, more so relational things or things they'd learned from traditional Knowledge Keepers when we had invited someone to talk about plant medicine with plants right on the campus. They also reflected on that orally, through video, through writing, and

then they had a creative expression. They could decide how they wanted to show their experience to show their learning. So some did drawings, some did poetry, some made a video.

And just to give one example, as a student Yvonne, this is part of her final plant for the project. And she was doing Pacific Yew. And there was a moment where she realized during the project, and you shared this during our well, I called a final exam, but it was actually a storytelling circle, led by Anthony. But she shared that she realized that her namesake, Yvonne, came from Pacific U. And it's one of those moments you can't predict, but you create space for and you give opportunity and autonomy and hope these kinds of things happen. But it was one of those sort of shiver-down-the-spine moments. So thank you to Yvonne for that. So I wanted to do more of this stuff, right?

This inquiry based learning, relational connection with the natural world, the idea of nature as co-teacher. So not just the natural world, not just being a backdrop, but actually active participant that we learn from and about and with, so about five years ago, I co-founded with an amazing group of folks, something called KPU Wild Spaces, which focuses on place-based or ecological place-based education. That's intentional outdoor teaching and learning. We've hosted 47 events to date, most of them outside on or near the campuses, which has resulted in some great community building. It's a very informal way for students, staff, and faculty to gather, often also external community members, such as the Cougar Creek Stream Keepers near Cape. Allows for nature connection. And two of our particular mandates are accessibility and decolonization. In fact, my colleague Shauna, who did the 12:00 Accessibility Bites on UDL just at 12:00 today, just before this presentation, we're co-writing stopping right now on nature-based education and UDL or universal design for learning. You can get a sense of the interdisciplinary nature of our team here.

This is our current team for Wild Space again, student staff and faculty inclusive. And so you get these interesting conversations between students and faculty sometimes on these walks, where they have a more informal place to interact and talk. And there's also the thing I want to speak about, you know, if you build it, they will come when I made this after or co-founded this with many others and then coordinated it. It brought in people who were passionate about inclusive pedagogy and play-based learning and climate justice. And so it brought people from these different disciplines, which often in academia can be quite lonely in your one silo, but this was a way to break down some of those barriers.

This lovely image was made by Sophia Jan Slafler for Wild Spaces. And I just want to point out here that learning can happen in many different ways in many different places. There isn't necessarily a wrong place. They just offer different things. So on the left side, you see here inside a classroom or lab, that's a much more controlled environment. To use technology there, but you might not hear the natural world so much in there. Go all the way to the right side. You got someone standing in the river, probably me. And you have a different experience. One, you're probably going to remember. It's going to be very sensory-based, but it also brings its own set of barriers and potential obstacles as well to be mindful of.

Alright, I'm going to end with the river here with an assignment example. And I included this assignment example, I think in my application as well for the award. I was teaching Art 750: Intro to the Climate Crisis not too long ago, and it was a dance course. And so I had to make things pretty fast. And I had a funny moment when I received the announcement that I was going to be a recipient of this award, and there were some comments made about, you know, different things I was, I guess, good at. And they mentioned place-based learning, you know, and that is sort of my big passion. But they particularly highlighted that, Oh, he's good, you know, innovative at assignment and assessment design, and I'm like, What? Man, on the priority things like to work on, that's like, down here. But it got me thinking. I was like, Okay, that's interesting. And I realize, all these things I'm trying to be better at relationship building, neuroinclusivity, reflected meaningful learning. These are things I've been learning as much as possible over the years and I'm still very much on a learning journey, but I'm getting better and better at these things, and these inform my assignments. These inform my assessment design. It's likely my neurodivergence set when I make assignments or rubrics. I have to limit things. I don't like limiting things, but it's just part of the process. Back to this assignment, it was called Find the River Arts 1150. The students found a river close to where they lived. They spent time with the river. They took photos or videos or maybe did some drawing. They again had a creative component of how they want to express that experience or reflection. And they tied in a reading we had done and also a connection to a guest lecture we had had on daylighting streams. So they tied these things together. And again, you would see sort of the impact that this would have for students who got to actually be out in the world and connecting with this river and connecting it to the course themes as well.

Alright. The last thing I'm going to say is, I was reading an article on the top 10 most important studies in education in 2025. And this statement was in there. I was like, Oh, yeah, that makes sense. Relationship before rigour. So relationship building for me is sort of priority one as an educator. And rigour was... a mentor of mine, Carl Leger, used to say, sort of, rigour is part of rigor mortis. Be aware of that because if we start with the rigour, that can be external motivations that might be driving the students to, you got to do these things to get an A. But if you build the relationship first, give them some autonomy and inspiration to follow things that are meaningful for them, then the motivation is coming from the student, from the learner. And then often you get something even a greater response or engagement because they are passionate to pursue their learning or that project. Thanks very much for listening.

MELANIE:
Thank you so much, Lee, and a warm welcome to your family for joining today as well. And yeah, I was just so struck that we talk about innovative teaching, and like, what is that? Well, you've given us really great examples of what it looks like to be innovative in your teaching and your approach to assessment as well. So thank you so much. I'm going to hand it over to Heather to launch us into the Q&A. All right.

HEATHER:
Thank you, everyone, and thank you, especially to these presenters. This is so inspiring. I feel even though I've had the privilege of seeing nomination packages that outlined so many of these teaching practices, it was still such a joy to see them visualized and represented. And in this way. So I see there's a few questions that have come up in the chat, but I thought maybe as a warm up for the questions because I know there are a few people in the room who are contemplating applying for this or putting their names forward for this award or supporting people who are going forward to the award. I thought I might ask each of the panelists, a little bit about your experience of preparing the nomination package for this award and maybe one tip that you might offer, so I can let you think about that. I can see Sarah and Lee have their cameras on. Anybody want to jump in?

SARAH:
I would be happy to. So actually, and this is the insight I can offer that might be a little bit different. This is actually my second time applying for the award. I first went up for it in 2023. And so it's applying for this award, and I want to say this is not a one-off thing, that what actually really helped me was putting forward the application that I and the folks I worked with thought was the best application and then hearing from the committee how it was assessed, what was needed. I would say, don't look at what we presented here today and assume that we're just like, Here's a great package and we got this. I don't know about Anka. I don't know about Lee, but it was actually my second time going up for it that I received the award. And what distinguished the two packages, I think it was the most important part of the feedback from the committee was that they have some way that you can demonstrate outcomes. And bring in students' voices, and doing those two things set the new package up in a very different way. But preparing for this, I actually had a lot of fun. There's a very handy checklist online that you really should just follow to hit all the points because I imagine, although I haven't seen it, there's probably some kind of assessment rubric that covers each and every one of those. And so it's important to do that, but also put your own spin on it. I didn't stay bound to those things. So I don't know what everyone else's packages looked like, but I had a mix of statements from students. I had pictures of their work, just a few of which you saw today, letters from community members and all these different things that assessed impact not in, Oh, X amount of students passed the class or got jobs to it, like, Look at the real tangible impacts of these works because not everything I do can be measured on a very traditional metric. And it was really valuable experience for me, too, because I looked at the package, especially the second time around, I'm like, you know, if I don't get it, I still feel really good about this because you can sit there and assess your work and what you've done and what you've contributed in this tiny little tight package. And today, I still look at it sometimes and I'm like, Am I bad at my job? I'd say it's a very introspective experience. Have a good team of people with you. I didn't do it alone. Britt Paris from the CTE was great. Our VPA Tracy Penny Light, who was formerly my dean, was great. My partner went over it a number of times. And Tanya she's with the CTE, too. I haven't had the pleasure of meeting her, but they are, you don't do it alone and don't try is all I'm saying. But I'm happy also if anyone wants to reach out to sit down and show you my package. I don't mind that either if you want to see it.

HEATHER:
Thanks so much, Sarah. That's fantastic. Lee, I saw you nodding your head a lot during Sarah's.

LEE:
Yeah, a lot of that resonated with that. I really want to thank also Sarah and Anka to hear about your learning journey. So much resonated and also so many things like, Oh, I want to learn more about that. So I'm looking forward to connecting more afterwards. So what can I say? It also was a second year for me. And the feedback was really helpful. I think one thing the feedback from the first time I applied, I guess 2023 was that maybe less letters. And more of the other things. In fact, I noticed the criteria, I think, changed. Maybe it was my thing that inspired that. There was one little additional line saying, you know, be mindful of not including too many letters instead of these other things that we want to focus on. So what I did was really careful that there wasn't much redundancy amongst the letters. And then I made sure I included the Find the River assignment. I just made it into one page. So, you know, took excerpts or whatnot. I included a couple first pages, of course syllabi, or a couple of pages, again, sort of condensing them so they would fit on one or two pages. And I think even a rubric, just so they could clearly say, Oh, okay, here's a syllabi or part of one. Here's a rubric. Here's an assignment. This is how we actually do this stuff. I had to get past, you know, my annoyance with assignments and rubrics because I have a resistance to them, even though they have an important place. I think it's really important to also be authentic to who you are. You know, not try to make it work, just like this is who I am and either you know, it's going to fit or not. And so being authentic to who you are, leaving lots of time because there's a bunch of things, and some of them as Sarah said, this is a team effort. So you got to reach out to many other folks and parts of the university to gather things. And so, you know, leave lots of time for that. And then the last thing, I actually made a slide on this in case this question came up. So I'm going to share my screen again if you want.

So I love novelty. I like to teach always the new things, something different, something new. I had a lot of things I could potentially bring into my application. I imagine my first time I applied, I probably spread it out more. I was like, what's my through line? I got to come up with a clear narrative or through line that I wrap things around that. Because decolonization, I would say over the last several years, has been my main focus at the university in a number of different ways, events and building resources and amplifying Indigenous voices, et cetera. I was like, Okay, that would be my through line, but all of the things I do, being interdisciplinary, working in climate justice, inquiry based, reflective, creative process, let's tie those back into the decolonization thread because they all have connecting points, often very clear connecting points. So it actually helped me quite a bit to articulate how are these things connected. And also where are my gaps? Where are the things I still actually I need to learn? So anyways, hopefully that some of those bits and pieces are helpful for folks who are planning to apply.

HEATHER:
Thanks so much, Lee. Yeah, I totally agree that someone who reads these packages, having that through line or thinking about what your spine is really, really helpful. Even for yourself, and I think maybe this is what Sarah is talking about in terms of, you know, what's the narrative of your pedagogy in a way, is such an interesting process to kind of come up with. Anka.

ANKA:
I echo everything that's been said by Sarah and Lee, also echo that I'd love to connect. So just to put that out there. The only thing that I will add is one thing that I really had to learn how to do was to unpack knowing when to unpack and knowing when not to, I guess. And this was done with my team. So as Sarah mentioned, having other people read your package. So for example, something like I went from writing I developed case studies, one sentence, and it just sounds like, Well, that must have been really easy because you wrote it in one sentence, but it's like, oh, wait, let me describe to you, how I did that and why it was you know. What were the underlying principles of developing these case studies and what they were trying to show and the interdisciplinary aspect of them and this and that sometimes I think that in my writing, I thought things were more obvious than they really were. And just recognizing, yes, the criteria is important. Of course, the narrative is such a great piece of advice, but also thinking about your audience. What does your audience really need to know? And do they need to know more about this or less about this?

HEATHER:
Fantastic. Thanks, Aka. Yes. As one of the members of that audience, I say, Yes, please. I mean, what I've realized through this, it's been such an amazing learning experience. And I think all of us who have served on this committee know how very different our institutional contexts are. So, a chemistry instructor in one institution is working in a very different field in some ways than a chemistry instructor at another institution. And those sometimes it's, you know, it's like the fish swimming in the water. You have to make your contexts visible even to yourself to sort of remind yourself that you're working in that space that may not be familiar to other people. There's a few questions in the chat. Natasha, I'm going to answer your question myself. I'll do that in the chat. But there was a question for Sarah, from Ki who says, Hi, Sara. I actually think maybe I'll ask Sarah to answer, but given that Anka and Lee also do what I would call non-traditional assignments, maybe you'd like to speak to it as well. Do you ever encounter student resistance or fear about these creative or non-traditional expressions of their learning? And if so, how do you manage making those assessments more accessible?

SARAH:
Thanks for the question, Ki and good to see you. For context, Ki was at Cap U before Emily Carr saw how amazing she was and stole her from us. So it's good to see you, Ki. Yeah, for me, it takes having them exist in the discomfort to get to the place where they're comfortable. I do it not to overuse the word scaffolding because I know I talk about that when I talk about pedagogy, but to do it in a scaffolded kind of way. So week one, we talk about the assignment. I do not give them the guidelines until like week three or week four. Week two, we revisit the

assignment, especially these term long things like, work integrated learning, and I show them examples of past projects. Here's how this came to life and here's how this person articulated and explained how this showed the sociology of them or this is how this work integrating or community engaged learning initiative happened, and this is the process for it, the outcomes for it, and how they showed those outcomes, the start to finish piece. Then week three, after we've done that little tiptoeing, I get them into groups. I usually let them pick their groups for the larger assignments. Or at least put in requests because sometimes, if it's a very rambunctious friend group, I will break them up. But I get them to put in requests and get them with people who I think would have a conducive working environment with them. And also, where they all bring a different set of skills. I have them do a skill inventory and submit it to me like, This is what I'm good at, this is what I struggle with. And so I'm able to pull them all together through what they identify as their own skills and their own interests. So we're not doubling up with a whole bunch of people who, like, soliciting donations and doing the active stuff, and not a lot of people who feel good about analyzing the outcomes, those sorts of things. And then once all those steps happen, I pull them in, I give them the guidelines, and we work through those in class, and I parallel them with examples with permission, students assignments, example outcome projects, and show them. This is really how it's done. And throughout the term, I promise you, I get students in my office being like, Can't I just take a multiple choice test? And I'm like, I understand we want to do the familiar. I get it. But no, let me tell you why. And so it requires a lot more of the educator doing it to really be present and stay a part of it. It's not something you'd be like, Here you go. I'll see you in 13 weeks. Like, it's something we do on an ongoing basis throughout and build too. And that's also something I promised them at the very beginning. It seems foreign right now by week four or week five, when you're diving in, we're going to do this together. And I also, again, not to scaffold, but I also have them do it in very small steps. They do a proposal. They do a project check-in. They do what I like to call a compulsory draft where I don't care what they send me, but at least three weeks before the final thing, they send it to me. And then from there, they get to the final project. When we're working with partners, for example, they become a part of our class. They come at least three or four times and they join us for the class, they sit with the students, it's a very involved process, and there's definitely a lot of fear. But I think it's all those little and big things you do along the way where it becomes part of the infrastructure of the class and it becomes the norm of the class and then they feel good about it. I hope that answers your question. Ki.

HEATHER: Thanks so much, Sarah. Lee, do you want to jump in?

LEE:
Sure, although Sarah articulated it so well, it's like, I can't do better than that. That's great. So just add a couple of things. You know, you know, one area I've taught is idea, so interdisciplinary expressive arts. That's a very different classroom than say assigned classroom, right? And when you have an assignment, the only criteria is that it's meaningful for you, there'll be a few students who will be like, Yeah, I know exactly what I'm doing, right? I'm doing, you know, car racing or horses. But as Sarah mentioned, there's a number of them that's like,

What do you mean? Like, where's the structure? Like, what you got to tell me what to do. I have to decide. So you got to build it up really slowly. And you need to model, I think, authenticity and, you know, stretching and trying things new and making mistakes. Like if they see you doing that as the instructor, then they're like, Oh, okay, maybe it's okay for me to do that, as well. So in the first, well, really all the classes, but the students are given a chance to share in some form or another, low or no stakes. Some kind of sharings, we build that comfort, we're building that circle of trust, and it could be super simple things to start like name or one word to describe you, like, super easy things. So by the time you get to the third or fourth or fifth class, you see this drastic change. And that can be one of the tricky things that I notice is I'll try things like I did an endocrine system or hormone system speed dating with intra biology course one time or dancing the nine animal groups in a biology lab. Now, if I did that in the first class, it would crash and burn, right? You got to have to sort of build-up to these things so students feel comfortable to lean in. And so I think initially, what I did is I did those things too early or without enough scaffolding or trust building. And so it felt like it didn't work. And so I maybe gave up too early, but then I got stubborn and it would be sometimes where I wouldn't see the results or the community building until the third or fourth or fifth week where the lab will be super noisy and people are engaging and chatting. I'm like, Yes, they came in here terrified, not speaking a word, and now they're just boisterous, chat and asking good questions. So I think you have to be mindful of it. You might not see the result right away, but you have to trust that if you keep focusing on building the community and relationship building and getting students to share and inviting them to share, then that is going to make a big difference in the long run.

HEATHER: Yeah, go ahead, Anka.

ANKA:
Okay. Yeah, I'll just jump in. I definitely like the scaffolding and the community building. I'll give an example where I get a lot of resistance actually from my English language learners who are also international students in two different areas. One is, when I asked them to do some group work where they're tackling some chemistry problems as a group, and then another where similarly to what Lee was saying, they have to do a project and basically it's their project. I'm not really guiding them. I mean, they get guidance, but they have to come up with a research question. They have to do a lot of the work. So when I get resistance in the second one, you know, in both cases, I'm going, I have to try to, I think, understand where the resistance is coming from and then address it accordingly. So in the case where they're doing a project and it's really about them coming up with the question, I think a lot of the resistance just comes from a lack of confidence and a lack of experience doing that kind of work. So that's where scaffolding, as Sarah mentioned, comes in, helping them with their confidence. In the first scenario that I described where I'm getting resistance when I'm getting them to do groups, what I noticed was that I would make the groups and I'm making the groups because I want them to, you know, have diverse groups, and I get a lot of resistance with even things like the girls don't want to talk to the boys, things like that. And now you have marks associated with it, so it just is spiraling a little bit. In that scenario, I actually just met my students where they were

at and I said, you pick your groups, we're not changing the activity, but you pick your groups, I'm not going to do it. Honestly, that made a world of difference. I got a lot more buy in and I think they enjoyed the activity a bit more.

HEATHER:
Fantastic. I see the time and we're coming up right against the end, but I didn't want to. I wanted to point out Gwen's question in the chat because I think it is such an important one. I know some people will have to leave right at 2:00, but maybe I'll just put this question into the room and I myself have to run out right at 2:00. But if anybody wants to stay and chat about it, maybe Mel can hold the space a little longer. But the question is in a time of uncertainty across the post-secondary sector where we have job transitions, limited funding, shifting roles, overwhelming capacity, what is one piece of advice you might offer educators to continue their commitment, curiosity, and passion for teaching and learning? Maybe that's a question for all of us in the room. If we don't have time to discuss it fully, maybe this is BCcampus folks on the call. Maybe this would be a great topic for conversation in the future. But I'll take that moment. I'm going to drop that question into the room, and I'm going to say thank you to the presenters myself before I have to jump out, and I will hand things over to Mel now. Or anyone who wants to answer Heather.

MELANIE:
Yeah. Thanks, Heather. Yes. So thanks again. And Sarah, Anka, or Lee, feel free to jump in with that question. I can give a quick response.

LEE:
I think it's a really important question. So one of the teams I work with at KPU is the learning centres. And every Tuesday, we have a team meeting, and every team meeting, we have a check-in. It also alternates who's chairing the meeting, so we're sharing that. But so it means every week we have a chance to check in with our team. And it's really lovely. It ensures that we know how folks are doing, and we learn more about them as well, often through these check-ins as well. So I think that kind of community building, we need to make time for that, even though it can be very hard in higher education.

MELANIE: Thank you. And Sarah, Anka?

SARAH:
I can quickly jump in and I don't. I wouldn't say I have a good answer, but I have what works for me and maybe that's all I can offer is it's a scary time. Jobs are being cut. There's that province-wide report that's coming out in originally March but now May and there's a whole bunch of uncertainty, even if will we have jobs? How is this going to look? Then how our colleagues are losing work? Because a lot of my colleagues at CapU have been what we call put on reduction or just there aren't enough classes to fulfill their commitment levels. It's a hard time seeing people you care so deeply for and people you've collaborated for so many years with struggling. And I sit in a very lucky position that my discipline hasn't had to cut a lot, and so my department

itself is very healthy, and we have a couple of healthy departments like psychology, but across the social sciences, other than that, we're losing a lot of colleagues, either temporarily or permanently, and I don't know. I know that's happening at a lot of universities and it's hard to prioritize your work and give all the passion, care to an institution when the faculty who bring it to life aren't necessarily secure in their jobs and it's heartbreaking. But what actually keeps it alive for me is being back in that classroom still. It's where the world can't really touch me when things are bad and finding the passion for it with my students. And yes, we've lost funding. We've lost funding for co-instructors with lived experience. We've lost funding for off-campus activities. We've lost the ability to give honorariums. So it's limited my ability to bring in lived experience speakers because I'm not asking for free labour. But I think there's a place where you just start to troubleshoot it, I think, and work your best. So bring your passion to the classroom, stay passionate about it, work closely with your students and know that even if the institution feels like it's crumbling around you, like your work still very much matters. And if you give up on yourself and your students, then that's the end of it all, if that makes sense. So just keep going even when it's hard and have your little rituals. Like, I jokingly say, like, is my emotional support cake or sometimes after work when it's really hard, I'll go grab a slice of cake and sit in my car and eat it and take deep breaths and then go home and be okay. But you just have to find those little things that soothe you at the end of the day.

MELANIE: Thank you. You said you didn't have a good answer, but that was. Thanks.

SARAH: It felt like a half answer.

ANKA: Yeah, I will only just add, yes, it's about the students, find your inspiration from them, and also be kind to yourself. As Sarah mentioned, sometimes that does mean you change expectations of yourself. And that has certainly happened to me in my career. There were definitely different expectations I had of myself, for example, before I had kids to now after having kids. I think that's okay.

MELANIE: Absolutely. Well, I want to say thank you so much to all three of you and a huge congratulations again. And yeah, thank you for inspiring us. But most of all, actually, thank you for the amazing work you do with your students. I think each of you spoke about the importance of connecting with your students. And yeah, thank you. That's what we're here for, right? So I appreciate you all. Thanks to all those who attended and have a good rest of your day.

SARAH: Our pleasure. Thank you so much also for everything you all do. It's not possible without all of this huge community, so thank you.

ANKA: Thank you. Bye.

LEE: Thanks, Melanie. Bye for now. Thanks.