

OTESA 2025 Program

Conference Location: [200 King St E](#), Toronto, ON M5A 3W8

[St James SJA Building/Room Guide](#) | <https://www.georgebrown.ca/>

George Brown College is located on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and other Indigenous peoples who have lived here over time. We are grateful to share this land as treaty people who learn, work and live in the community with each other.

About OTESSA

The Open/Technology in Education, Society, and Scholarship Association (OTESA) is an association that supports and shares new knowledge from both academic and professional research and innovation in practice as it pertains to the application of technology and openness across K12, post-secondary, and other relevant sectors where learning and knowledge sharing are required.

OTESA will be hosted on the St James Campus of George Brown. We will be in [rooms](#) SJA-268D and SJA-358E for concurrent sessions and SJA-560E for the keynote sessions. A quiet, breakout, work, reflection space is available in SJA-358E.

This is a living program, please reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns. Email [Ann](#) or [Michael](#).

Quick Links:

- [Tuesday June 3, 2025 - Day One](#)
- [Wednesday June 4, 2025 - Day Two](#)
- [Thursday June 5, 2025 - Day Three](#)
- [Lunch Options](#)

Tuesday June 3, 2025 - Day One

8:00-9:00	Continental Breakfast Room: SJA-362D	
9:00-9:25	Conference Welcome, Announcements & Land Acknowledgement Room: SJA-362D	
9:30-10:30	Concurrent Sessions 1	
	Room: SJA-268D It takes a community: the creation of an Online Open Educational Resource to support leadership and innovation in Early Childhood (Elizabeth Childs & Kathleen Manion, Royal Roads University) The Influence of "1:1 Technology" Programs on Secondary School Students' Engagement: Nearly a Quarter Century of Implementation (Carolanne Boulanger, Université Laval & Géraldine Heilporn, Université Laval)	Room: SJA-358E Between Innovation and Integrity: Graduate Students' Critical Reflections with Generative AI (Justin Harrison, Maryam Shirdel Pour, Tanya Dixit, Michael Paskevicius, University of Victoria)
10:30-11:00	Break	
11:00-12:00	Concurrent Sessions 2	
	Room: SJA-268D Internationalisation beyond the academy? Enhancing doctoral research through a global, open graduate network (Helen de Waard, Lakehead University) The Role of Podcasts: Enhancing Students' Inclusion Through UDL (Jin-Woo Chung, Yu-Ling Lee, Nina Pak Lui Trinity Western University)	Room: SJA-358E Reframing Technical & Pedagogical Togetherness: Peer Assessment & the Spirit of DIY (Brian Lorraine, Simon Fraser University)
12:00-1:00	Lunch Break (See lunch options)	
1:00-2:00	Room: SJA-560E Keynote: Critical Action Learning: Empowering students with meaning and purpose in 21st century classrooms James Slotta	

2:15-3:15	Concurrent Sessions 3	
	Room: SJA-268D Storytelling, Openness, and Technology in the Voice-in-Exile Project (Nadia Abu-Zahra, University of Ottawa)	Room: SJA-358E Reimagining Learning in Crisis: The Promise and Gaps of Open Pedagogies in Emergency Contexts (Eucharua Uranta-Okonkwo, University of Ottawa)
3:15-3:30	Break	
3:30-4:30	Concurrent Sessions 4 Unconference	
	Room: SJA-268D EdCamp: Discussion on the Impacts of AI on Education	Room: SJA-358E EdCamp: Discussion on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Education in a Challenging Age
5:00	Conference off-site event: Happy Hour at C'est What Let us know if you'd like to attend.	

9:30-10:30 | Concurrent Session 1

It takes a community: the creation of an Online Open Educational Resource to support leadership and innovation in Early Childhood (20 minutes)

Elizabeth Childs & Kathleen Manion, Royal Roads University

Early childhood education in Canada is amidst transformation and professionalization. This presentation will provide a summary of current literature on the competencies required of ECE leaders and an overview of the BCcampus funded ECE Leaders OER project. Leveraging a variety of partnerships, this project brought together 30 thought leaders, practitioners, providers, government, and academics to better understand the key leadership priorities and areas for innovation to lead and manage ECE programs in British Columbia. Discussions on Indigenization, nature-based/place-based learning, ECE pedagogy, climate adaptation, rights-based approaches, and managing and leading staff informed the creation of the ECE Leaders open educational resource (OER) which will be provided to all participants.

The Influence of "1:1 Technology" Programs on Secondary School Students' Engagement: Nearly a Quarter Century of Implementation (20 minutes)

Carolanne Boulanger, Université Laval & Géraldine Heilporn, Université Laval

In this research, we examine the influence of "1:1 technology" programs on secondary school students' engagement after nearly 25 years of implementation. These programs, which began in the early 2000s, were initially seen as an innovative response to improve students' academic success (Holcomb, 2009). One of the first digital influences identified in literature is the impact of computer use on student engagement in the classroom (Karsenti & Collin, 2013). While these initiatives were initially viewed as innovative, they are increasingly seen as a standard part of the educational landscape. It is, therefore, important to reconsider what truly fosters student engagement in this now less innovative context.

"1:1 technology" programs are often linked to benefits in behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, as well as social and agentic engagement, since digital tools facilitate better interaction and collaboration (Fredricks et al., 2016; Joshi et al., 2022). However, after a quarter century of deployment, few studies have examined their long-term impact, particularly in the secondary school context (Norris et al., 2012). As part of a partnership between a secondary education program team and the faculty of education at University Laval, students from an enriched program at a public school in Quebec answered a questionnaire containing open-ended questions about the factors of engagement or disengagement. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and an inductive general analysis of the responses to this questionnaire, we addressed the following question: After 25 years of implementation, what is the influence of "1:1 technology" programs on student engagement in secondary education?

Between Innovation and Integrity: Graduate Students' Critical Reflections with Generative AI (50 minute session)

Justin Harrison, Maryam Shirdel Pour, Tanya Dixit, Michael Paskevicius, University of Victoria

As we have watched AI grow quickly in influence and application throughout the academic core areas of learning, teaching, and research (Chiu et al., 2023), we find ourselves asking how best to respond as educators and graduate students to the concerning developments we are seeing alongside new ways of researching and knowing. What are we losing in this shift towards seemingly intuitive tools that serve as search engines, information libraries, and content creators, often all at the same time (Munoz, 2024)? This panel discussion will surface areas of concern for the academic community, drawing upon the reflections of emerging scholars. The speakers will highlight challenges relating to, variously, the ways AI's algorithms and outputs serve to impede the decolonization of learning and teaching practice (Makki & Jawad, 2023), the perplexing

challenges of interrogating reality and truth in genAI (Gerlich, 2025; Cruz-Silva, 2024), the ongoing tensions of “Big AI” versus Little AI”, the general lack of institutional direction for these tools, and issues raised by the stated values and actions of those creators in whose hands many of these tools are held (McDonald & Pan, 2020; Zajko, 2023). The panel’s discussions may surface expectations around the use of generative AI for academic exploration (Bhaduri et al., 2024), ideation, and publication, and the need for institutional policies relating to the use of AI in the academy.

10:30-11:00 | Break

11:00-12:00 | Concurrent Sessions 2

Internationalisation beyond the academy? Enhancing doctoral research through a global, open graduate network (20 minute)

Helen de Waard (Lakehead University)

Current open educational practices from a global perspective can support the informal learning within a community of practice around a specific topic or field of study. This research presentation shares research results from a collaborative team of researchers who are also members of the Global OER Graduate Network (GO-GN) and juxtaposes this research against current conceptualizations of internationalisation-at-a-distance research and practices. GO-GN practices challenge the isolation and disconnectedness that doctoral students face when studying to become researchers, particularly when focused on open education topics. This presentation will share a collaborative autoethnographic research project exploring aspects of internationalisation-at-a-distance (IaD) within the case of GO-GN. This research contributes to explorations of differing aspects informing IaD, such as open networking, collaboration, and informal learning within a community of practice. This presentation will draw attention to the role of informal learning, that which occurs outside of structured formal higher educational contexts, within a network of peers as an opportunity for internationalising the doctoral journey.

The Role of Podcasts: Enhancing Students’ Inclusion Through UDL (20 minute)

Jin-Woo Chung, Yu-Ling Lee, Nina Pak Lui Trinity Western University

Contemporary classrooms comprise diverse students including individuals with neurodiverse conditions; each student has different individual needs, learning abilities, and preferences. Traditional one-size-fits-all teaching strategies may fail to accommodate these differences, leaving students disengaged and even isolated in schools. Providing inclusive teaching practices is crucial to addressing these challenges and creating a class environment with equity. A potential approach to establishing an inclusive classroom is implementing podcasts within the educational framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). When aligned with the core principles of UDL—multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression—a podcast can be an effective tool to promote the learning and inclusion of students. Although the benefits of podcasts and UDL are proven through research, there is a lack of studies identifying practical strategies to utilize podcasts in alignment with the UDL principles. This presentation discusses the benefits of podcasts and explores theoretical and practical methods for implementing podcasts in teaching practices adhering to the UDL guidelines. Specifically, we will demonstrate how podcasting can support individual needs to enhance accessibility, participation, and learning of students, which are all important factors of inclusion.

Reframing Technical & Pedagogical Togetherness: Peer Assessment & the Spirit of DIY (50 minutes)

Brian Lorraine, Simon Fraser University

Facing increasing workloads and decreasing support due to budget shortfalls in postsecondary settings, it is more important than ever that learning designers and course instructors work together to address the challenges of significantly larger class sizes. In collaboration with internal developers, when possible, one strategy is to explore developing cost-effective learning technology tools in-house to help enhance student learning at scale. How might this be done? Over the past few semesters, a collaboration between faculty members and the Centre for Educational Excellence at Simon Fraser University, led to the development of CEE Peer, a fit-for-purpose custom LTI integration that supports peer assessment. With a lean user-interface design and superior functionality to the peer review tool within the institutional LMS, the early returns on CEE Peer are promising in better serving the pedagogical purpose of online peer assessment and certain course administration logistics. This session invites participants to discuss details of both the process and product that will be shared, in order to explore alternative paths forward in our current reality of rapidly changing educational contexts.

12:00-1:00 | Lunch Break (See [lunch options](#))

1:00-2:00 | Keynote

Critical Action Learning: Empowering students with meaning and purpose in 21st century classrooms

James Slotta, OISE University of Toronto

Room: SJA-560E

This presentation will review my previous work in pedagogies for learning communities, including the use of "smart classroom" technologies to support collective inquiry and scaffold students and teachers. It will then introduce Critical Action Learning, as an international professional learning community of teachers. I will present the CALE design framework, pedagogical approaches, and present several examples of teacher enactments. I will also discuss new roles for physical classroom space and technology environments.

2:15-3:15 | Concurrent Sessions 3

Storytelling, Openness, and Technology in the Voice-in-Exile Project (50 minute workshop)

Nadia Abu-Zahra, University of Ottawa

The Voices in Exile (ViE) project shines a light on a unique group of individuals – Activists-in-Exile, who have left their countries due to their commitment to and activities affecting social and political change. These Activists-in-Exile (AiEs) are not simply victims, but powerful agents of change. AiEs are an embodiment of knowledge, storytellers, and agents of change. Through the use of accessible digital tools and open practices, the ViE project fosters spaces where the activists can co-create and share narratives that challenge dominant discourses, reclaim agency, and inspire collective learning. This presentation explores how storytelling, openness, and technology intersect in the ViE project to support advocacy, activism, healing, and learning. From open-access dialogue series to digital storytelling platforms and collaborative learning and community building, the project exemplifies how open technologies can bridge geographies and power asymmetries. The project also reflects critically on the challenges of transnational activism and ethical complexities of digital safety. By centering participatory methods, ViE offers a compelling model for building inclusive and transformative educational practices in times of crisis. This session invites educators, researchers, and practitioners to reflect on how open technologies can support social justice-oriented storytelling in global learning spaces.

Reimagining Learning in Crisis: The Promise and Gaps of Open Pedagogies in Emergency Contexts

(50 Minute workshop)

Eucharia Uranta-Okonkwo, University of Ottawa

Open pedagogy – a system of learning that is established on co-creation, collaboration, and putting the agency of the learner at the centre of the learning process is gradually getting accepted as a possible transformative way of achieving inclusive and resilient education. Guided by Hegarty’s framework for open pedagogies, this study explores the potential and practice of open pedagogical innovations in emergency settings, drawing on a critical review of existing research in contexts shaped by forced displacement, conflict, and infrastructural instability. Our review highlights current innovations such as co-designed digital learning activities and open-access modular curricula by the Community Mobilization in Crisis (CMIC), implemented in post-disaster settings that empower marginalized learners and challenge hierarchical models of knowledge production. Yet, significant gaps remain. Underutilized approaches like open peer assessment and learner-led content creation are yet to see actual deployment in crisis contexts. This presentation critically examines why such practices remain peripheral, offering insight into institutional, technological, and socio-political barriers. It concludes with recommendations for how educators, policy makers, and open education practitioners can adapt these promising models to serve learners such as refugees navigating educational disruption.

3:15-3:30 | Break

3:30-4:30 | Concurrent Sessions 4: OTESSA Unconference

Informal Leads: Discussion on the Impacts of AI on Education

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly reshaping the educational landscape—from personalized learning to assessment automation and academic integrity. This open session invites educators, technologists, students, and administrators to share experiences, concerns, and hopes about AI's expanding role in teaching and learning. There's no set agenda—just a collaborative space to explore both the promises and pitfalls of AI in education as a collective.

Informal Leads: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Education in a Challenging Age

In an era marked by political polarization, social transformation, and systemic challenges, how do we sustain and advance equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in education? This unconference session provides a space for honest conversation and shared learning about what EDI looks like in today's classrooms and institutions, and how to maintain support for this important consideration. Participants are encouraged to bring real-world experiences, raise tough questions, and collaborate on strategies for meaningful, resilient change.

5:00 | Conference off-site event



Happy Hour at C'est What

C'est What? is a renowned craft beer pub and restaurant situated in the historic St. Lawrence Market area of Toronto, Ontario. Established in 1988, it was among the first establishments in the city to exclusively offer local craft beers and Ontario VQA wines, pioneering the local craft beer movement. <https://cestwhat.com/>

[Let us know if you'd like to attend.](#)

Address: [67 Front St E](#), Toronto, ON M5E 1B5

Wednesday June 4, 2025 - Day Two

8:00-9:00	Continental Breakfast Room: SJA-362D	
9:15-9:25	Daily Welcome, Announcements & Land Acknowledgement Room: SJA-362D	
9:30-10:30	Concurrent Sessions 5	
	Room: SJA-268D Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Paradigm Shifting and Policy Lagging (Michael Paskevicius University of Victoria & Sanjaya Mishra Commonwealth of Learning) Can Togetherness Happen Online? The Role of Perusall in Building A Sense of Belonging in an Alternative Delivery Course (Sharon Lauricella, Danielle Petrovsk, Benjamin Steele, Julia DiSomma, & Mohamed Yusuf Ontario Tech University)	Room: SJA-358E OER-Enabled Pedagogy and Social Justice: Applying Anishinaabe Teachings in Open Pedagogies (Jessica O'Reilly, Cambrian College)
10:30-11:00	Break	
11:00-12:00	Concurrent Sessions 6	
	Room: SJA-268D Does Immersion Matter? Exploring Low and High-Immersive Virtual Reality Learning Experiences (Anastassiya Yudintseva, McMaster University) Exploring the Opportunities and Limitations of Immersive Technologies in Education (Jangchu Tenzin, University of New Brunswick)	Room: SJA-358E Educational Developers As Nodes In Creating Accessible OER Communities (Ann Gagne, Kosar Dakhilalian, Brock University) Beyond Library Grants: OER Partnership Grant to Increase Institutional Capacity for OER Support (Ann Ludbrook, Toronto Metropolitan University)
12:00-1:00	Lunch Break (See lunch options)	
1:00-2:00	Room: SJA-560E Keynote: From Prompt to Propaganda: How Generative AI	

	Fuels Disinformation and Misinformation and What We Must Do Speaker: Anatoliy Gruzd	
2:15-3:15	Concurrent Sessions 7 Invited Speakers	
	Room: SJA-268D Reframing Togetherness: Advances in artificial intelligence and the intersection of open learning Invited Speaker: Steven Downes, National Research Council Canada	Room: SJA-358E Reframing Togetherness: Opening by Degrees Invited Speaker: Helen de Waard, Lakehead University
3:15-3:30	Break	
3:30-4:30	Concurrent Sessions 8	
	Room: SJA-268D Convergent Discussions in the Fediverse (Stephen Downes, National Research Council Canada)	Room: SJA-358E Bridging Theory and Practice: A Scoping Review on the Instructional Design and Implementation (Tracy Byers Reid & WanQi (Belinda) Jin, University of Calgary)
6:30	Conference off-site event: Dinner at the Hothouse Restaurant Let us know if you'd like to attend.	

9:30-10:30 | Concurrent Session 5

Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Paradigm Shifting and Policy Lagging (20 minute)

Michael Paskevicius (University of Victoria) & Sanjaya Mishra (Commonwealth of Learning)

To address the rapid evolution and advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education, the present study seeks to understand the state of policy and practice of AI in the context of teaching and learning throughout the Commonwealth group of countries. Based on the results of a survey conducted with AI stakeholders at educational institutions in the Commonwealth (n=93), the presentation will share the findings related to AI in the context of teaching and learning. This includes feedback related to the existence of policies related to AI, the perceived areas of the application of AI for teaching and learning, the main challenges and benefits of AI, and expectations about the future of AI in education. The survey findings indicate a clear need for policy development and ongoing training to guide the acceptable and ethical use of AI among faculty, staff, and learners.

Can Togetherness Happen Online? The Role of Perusall in Building A Sense of Belonging in an Alternative Delivery Course (20 minutes)

Sharon Lauricella (Ontario Tech University), Danielle Petrovski (Ontario Tech University), Benjamin Steele (Ontario Tech University), Julia DiSomma, & Mohamed Yusuf (Ontario Tech University)

This session addresses how the online social learning platform Perusall contributed to students' sense of belonging in an undergraduate alternative delivery course. Results indicate that the ability to learn about classmates' experiences and responses to class materials (including course readings, podcasts, videos, websites, and peer review assignments) via Perusall contributed to a shared sense of community in the course and belonging at the university. Students described that interactivity by way of sharing in the platform cultivated both understanding and connection. While a sense of belonging and togetherness emerged via this platform, students described that using the platform required a learning curve and that the interface sometimes lacked intuitiveness. Overall, students described that Perusall contributed to a sense of belonging by allowing them to not only share their own responses to the course material but also to learn about others' experiences. This session has implications for instructors and course designers seeking to increase a sense of belonging and togetherness in the undergraduate experience.

OER-Enabled Pedagogy and Social Justice: Applying Anishinaabe Teachings in Open Pedagogies (50 Minutes)

Jessica O'Reilly, Cambrian College

This session will share findings from a recently completed doctoral dissertation study which explored learners' experiences with Open Educational Resource-Enabled Pedagogy (OER-EP) in an asynchronous online Truth and Reconciliation course delivered at the post-secondary level. The study leveraged an Etuaptmuk (Two-Eyed Seeing) epistemological framing that integrated Anishinaabe and Western perspectives into the analysis of learners' perceptions of engaging in OER-EP through the creation of renewable assignments.

Attendees will learn how OER-EP can empower students to engage meaningfully in the learning process, enhance social justice aims, and contribute to open knowledge creation. The session will include practical strategies for designing and supporting OER-EP initiatives that prioritize learner empowerment, decolonization, reconciliation, and broader social justice goals. Drawing on Anishinaabe teachings such as those of maang (loon), participants will leave the session with actionable insights for applying OER-EP in diverse educational contexts.

10:30-11:00 | Break

11:00-12:00 | Concurrent Sessions 6

Does Immersion Matter? Exploring Low and High-Immersive Virtual Reality Learning Experiences (20 minutes)

Anastassiya Yuditseva, McMaster University

Virtual reality (VR) is one of the most promising technologies for enhancing learning. A growing body of research provides empirical evidence of its effectiveness in various academic subjects and disciplines, such as English as a second language, medicine, science, computer science, and engineering. VR creates a unique environment that supports affective-cognitive, social, and embodied aspects of learning, making the experience more authentic for students. This session will discuss mixed-method research findings on the effects of low- and high-immersive VR modalities on students' willingness to communicate in English as a second language. We will explore the technological, individual, and affective-cognitive factors that shape students' perceptions of VR modalities in relation to their willingness to communicate in the classroom. We will emphasize the importance of employing appropriate instructional methods, such as an action-oriented approach, when designing VR learning environments. Additionally, the session will address the implications of this research and suggest potential directions for future studies. This session will be valuable for educators, educational developers, and others involved in the design and delivery of technology-enhanced instructions for second-language students.

Exploring the Opportunities and Limitations of Immersive Technologies in Education (20 minutes)

Jangchu Tenzin, University of New Brunswick

The rapid advancement of immersive technologies, including virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR), has transformed educational practices by enhancing engagement, providing interactive learning environments, and enabling the visualization of complex concepts. This presentation examines the opportunities and limitations of these technologies through the lens of media ecology, exploring their effects on pedagogical practices and meaning-making processes. While immersive technologies offer new possibilities for personalized and experiential learning, they also introduce challenges such as cognitive overload, accessibility barriers, and pedagogical biases. Drawing on a comprehensive literature review, this study highlights the dual

nature of immersive media as both extensions of human capabilities and potential constraints on traditional learning processes. The findings underscore the need for carefully designed pedagogical frameworks that maximize the benefits of immersive technologies while mitigating their drawbacks. By critically analyzing the role of these tools in education, this presentation contributes to a deeper understanding of how immersive technologies mediate human experience and reshape learning environments. This presentation hopes to engage educators, researchers, and practitioners in critical discussions on the implications of immersive learning technologies, aligning with OTESSA's focus on openness, technology, and education. It emphasizes the importance of evidence-based approaches to integrating these tools in ways that foster equitable, engaging, and pedagogically sound learning experiences.

Educational Developers As Nodes In Creating Accessible OER Communities (20 Minutes)

Ann Gagne, Kosar Dakhilalian, Brock University

This presentation provides information through a case example of a funded project where two educational developers worked together with faculty members from across disciplines, and a team of research assistants to support the creation of a pressbook on Accessible Open Educational Resources Adoption Considerations. By providing the context of this time and resource bound project, we emphasize the specific types of support provided by the educational developers for Open Educational Resource (OER) creation and adoption and how they worked as nodes in an academic and research ecosystem to bring this project to life. The presentation will provide insight into the kind of support and resourcing education developers bring to the accessibility and inclusion of OER and OEP (Open Educational Pedagogy) projects. We also explore future opportunities for community building in relation to pedagogy and research for OERs in an accessible way, by highlighting opportunities for more accessible peer review and inclusion audits being put in the process of creation and adoption.

Beyond Library Grants: OER Partnership Grant to Increase Institutional Capacity for OER Support

Ann Ludbrook, Toronto Metropolitan University

This presentation will discuss the expansion of the Toronto Metropolitan University Library grant program (which has run since 2018) to include partnership grants. Partnership grants are grants with other TMU Faculties or TMU departments to co-share costs to be able to provide larger Faculty specific OER grants that are suitable for supporting OER's geared towards large enrolment classes. TMU has had two partnership grants with the Ted Rogers School of Management since 2020. These two grants supported two 100 level

business courses with high enrolments, so far, and have saved students at TMU over \$1, 000, 000 since the first project was launched in 2022. We look at partnership grants as a more sustainable way to increase capacity at the institutional level, and are launching a Centre for Teaching and Learning and Library Partnership grant in 2025.

12:00-1:00 | Lunch Break (See [lunch options](#))

1:00-2:00 | Keynote

Room: SJA-560E

From Prompt to Propaganda: How Generative AI Fuels Disinformation and Misinformation and What We Must Do

Speaker: Anatoliy Gruzd, Director Social Media Lab, Toronto Metropolitan University

Social platforms now algorithmically remix news, memes, and AI-generated content, blurring the line between fact and fiction, and obscuring traditional credibility cues (e.g., source reputation, visual authenticity, consensus). According to a new report, [The State of Generative AI Use in Canada 2025](#), from the Social Media Lab at Toronto Metropolitan University, 59 percent of Canadians distrust political news online because it may be fake or manipulated, with two-thirds fearing that generative AI could sway elections. Yet paradoxically, students and faculty are embracing these same generative AI tools for study and research support. This apparent disconnect between public concerns and uptake of these tools demands closer scrutiny. The keynote will examine the features that enable the rapid adoption of generative AI tools by the public on the one hand, and how those same features allow bad actors to create and disseminate dis- and misinformation at scale on the other. The talk will conclude with a call for actionable research and policy focused on strengthening “epistemic resilience” among students, researchers, and the broader public through critical digital literacy, robust verification practices, and institutional safeguards that ensure the safe and ethical use of generative AI.

2:15-3:15 | Concurrent Session 7 | Invited Speakers

Reframing Togetherness: Opening by Degrees

Helen Dewaard

Drawing on the multiple meanings of the term 'opening by degrees', and framed by the OTESSA acronym, this invited talk will encourage participants to explore the conference theme of reframing togetherness. Grounded by the presenter's experiences in open education and open practices, participants will be guided to consider meaningful associations and degrees of relationship to open, technology, education, society, and scholarship. While contemplating the extent or amount or level to which attributes, actions, conditions, and relations are present or happening in the open, session participants may shift how they consider orientations, continuums, and degrees of openness. The presenter will draw on disparate meanings, metaphors, and authors to provoke thinking about how 'opening by degree' can support a reframing of what being together means in open ecologies through/with technology, in education, within society, and via scholarship. Participants may reorient their degrees of openness and togetherness with inspiration from Brené Brown's conception of 'BRAVING' to reframe togetherness in the open.

Reframing Togetherness: Advances in artificial intelligence and the intersection of open learning

Steven Downes

Abstract: Since the introduction of ChatGPT in the fall of 2022 the world has been excited - and perhaps a bit worried about - generative artificial intelligence (GAI). Since that time GAI models have only grown more capable, and the technology landscape more complex. It's hard to keep up! In this talk NRC Senior Researcher Stephen Downes will outline some recent advances in artificial intelligence, highlighting in particular their potential to impact open education, both positively and negatively. This means far more than online instruction and adaptive learning. It means more than open content and automated assessment. In particular, Downes will focus on how AI is shaping and will transform how we understand ourselves as interactive, purpose-based and open learning communities. But what needs to be done to realize such a vision? The technology itself offers no guarantee, and critics have already pointed out the many ways AI-based learning technology can undermine, rather than extend, the needs and interests of many people and group. Downes will offer a framework based on agency and care to work with the new technology to support genuinely emancipatory open learning for everyone.

3:15-3:30 | Break

3:30-4:30 | Concurrent Sessions 8

Convergent Discussions in the Fediverse (50 minute workshop)

Stephen Downes, National Research Council Canada

This is a workshop that will introduce new open source technology developed by the author that supports 'convergent' discussions in the fediverse. The session will include segments on:

- Description of the fediverse and introduction to major fediverse services such as Mastodon, Bluesky, Peertube, etc.
- Discussion of the dynamics on online discussion including especially the characteristics of 'divergent', 'linear' and convergent discussions
- Demonstration of convergent fediverse discussion software
- Interactive practice using the software among participants to conduct an online convergent discussion
- Consideration of learning potential for convergent discussions in the fediverse

Participants will not be required to download or install software, nor will they be required to create accounts on services where they don't already have accounts, unless they are in the position of having no fediverse accounts whatsoever.

Bridging Theory and Practice: A Scoping Review on the Instructional Design and Implementation (50 minutes)

Tracy Byers Reid (University of Calgary) & WanQi (Belinda) Jin (University of Calgary)

The last ten years have brought significant and rapid changes to postsecondary education. Learning Management Systems (LMS) and video conferencing software have made online learning more accessible, with many institutions offering courses through online, blended, or in-person options. Although technological advances provide new opportunities, they also present new complexities to longstanding challenges. Student engagement in postsecondary classrooms often defaults to lecture-based instruction followed by students completing assessments outside class time which may limit the active learning that occurs in the classroom. Research has shown that flipped classroom, a type of blended learning where students engage with course materials, such as readings, online before class and participate in hands-on activities during in-person sessions, is a strategy that may increase deeper engagement and promote active learning. Effective flipped

classrooms foster integrated connections between online and in-person components with clear instructions and supportive materials which scaffold learning by aligning assessments across modalities. This scoping review investigates the relationship between different instructional strategies in flipped classrooms and how they impact student engagement in both online and in-person settings to inform future research and implementation.

6:30 | Conference off-site event



Hothouse Restaurant

The Hot House Restaurant & Bar has been a staple of the city's dining scene since 1994. Renowned for its eclectic international menu, the restaurant offers a diverse array of dishes, including gourmet pizzas, pastas, steaks, and seafood, catering to a wide range of palates and dietary preferences, with ample vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options. (<https://www.hothouserestaurant.com/>)

[Let us know if you'd like to attend.](#)

Address: [35 Church St](#), Toronto, ON M5E 1X1

Please respond to the Get-together survey if you would like to attend so we can confirm reservation numbers.

Thursday June 5, 2025 - Day Three

9:00 -10:00	St. Lawrence Market Breakfast Walk Let us know if you'd like to attend. Please meet us outside the market at the main entrance on Front Street.	
10:00-10:45	On site Continental Breakfast Room: SJA-362D	
10:45-10:55	Daily Welcome, Announcements & Land Acknowledgement Room: SJA-362D	
11:00-12:00	Concurrent Sessions 9	
	Room: SJA-268D Gap The Mind: Bridging Creative Students to Future-Ready AI Literacy Skill (Claudia Soares Gordilho, Toronto Metropolitan University) Anxious Intelligence: Reclaiming Higher Education Student AI Anxiety as Valid Critique (Rana Haidar-University of Toronto, Megan Boler, & Yoon-Ji Kweon)	Room: SJA-358E Shifting the Conversation: A Scoping Review of Backchannel Use in Postsecondary Education (Tracy Byers Reid, University of Calgary) Celebrating a Decade of GO-GN: Advancing Open Research Through Collaboration, Equity, and Innovation (Robert Farrow, Beck Pitt, & Carina Bossu, The Open University UK)
12:00-1:00	Lunch Break (See lunch options)	
1:00-2:00	Room: SJA-362D Keynote: Digital Bundles Jennifer Wemigwans, University of Toronto	
2:15-3:15	Concurrent Sessions 10	
	Room: SJA-268D Supported Open Learning as a Path to Decolonisation: Reflections on Educational Technology Initiatives in the Global South (20 minutes)	Room: SJA-358E Techno-Colonialism in the Age of AI: The Rollback of DEI and the Fight for Inclusive Representation (Tanya Dixit and Michael Paskevicius, University of Victoria)

	Robert Farrow, Beck Pitt, Tim Coughlan, & Fereshte Goshtasbpour, The Open University UK) Indigenization of the Academy: Resistance and Rethinking colonial practices (Emma Posca, York University)	Unlocking the Power of AI: Inspiring Mathematical Engagement and Data Literacy through Artificial Intelligence Exploration (Sojourner San Vicente, Jean-Jacques Rousseau) [Cancelled]
3:15-3:30	Break	
3:30-4:30	Concurrent Sessions 11 Invited Speakers	
	Room: SJA-268D Opportunities for Affordable and Accessible Higher Education in Canada Higher education is at a crossroads Invited Speaker: Robert Luke, eCampusOntario	Room: SJA-358E Indigenous Allyship in the Academy: What I've Learned Along the Way Invited Speaker: Jess O'Reilly
5:30	Conference off-site event: Happy Hour: Ces't What, 67 Front St E. Let us know if you'd like to attend.	

9:00-10:00 | Morning Social



St. Lawrence Market Breakfast Walk

The St. Lawrence Market in Toronto is a historic and vibrant public market located in the city's Old Town district. Established in the early 19th century, it has long served as a central hub for commerce, culture, and community life. Celebrated for its rich history and culinary offerings, the market is frequently cited as one of the best food markets in the world (National Geographic, 2012).

[Let us know if you'd like to attend.](#)

11:00-12:00 | Concurrent Sessions 9

Gap The Mind: Bridging Creative Students to Future-Ready AI Literacy Skill (20 minutes)

Claudia Soares Gordilho (Toronto Metropolitan University)

As technology reshapes industries, the need for AI literacy among creative school students becomes critical, especially to prepare them for an AI-driven job market. This research seeks to identify a significant gap in existing AI literacy curricula, where AI Literacy courses lack in addressing the unique needs of creative school students while incorporating future-readiness as a core focus. To bridge this gap, this study develops a specialized curriculum that integrates creativity, technology, and critical thinking within a future-oriented framework, enabling students to co-create with AI tools responsibly and innovatively. The literature review highlights that existing AI literacy efforts often prioritize either technical, critical and ethical considerations, with limited attention to the interdisciplinary socio-technical demands of creative industries. Through content analysis of existing AI literacy courses, this research extracts relevant competencies tailored to creative students' needs. Evidence-based course design incorporating experiential learning and critical education methods ensures the curriculum is practical, adaptable, and effective. The final curriculum is structured in four modules: (1) AI Fundamentals, (2) Critical Thinking & AI, (3) Responsible AI Use, and (4) Creative AI Application. Each module's assessment has an element built on from a future-ready skills incorporated on it, aiming to equip students not only with the content addressed topic modules, but also with the soft skills necessary to thrive in the evolving technological landscape. This study aims to contribute to the field of AI education by proposing a curriculum model that meets the distinct needs of creative school students while emphasizing future readiness.

Anxious Intelligence: Reclaiming Higher Education Student AI Anxiety as Valid Critique (20 minutes)

Rana Haidar (University of Toronto), Megan Boler, & Yoon-Ji Kweon

This study critically examines AI anxiety among post-secondary students, challenging the prevailing view of these concerns as mere "technophobia." Through analysis of 267 articles across eight databases, we argue that students' anxieties represent rational responses to profound technological shifts rather than psychological deficits requiring correction. Drawing from Science and Technology Studies and feminist perspectives, we apply Gunther Anders' concept of the "Promethean gap" alongside frameworks from Browne, Costanza-Chock, and Bassett to reposition this anxiety as valuable feedback indicating deeper structural issues. Current research predominantly employs quantitative measurements that fail to capture the existential dimensions of AI anxiety, often prioritizing technological adoption over students' legitimate concerns about technologies that potentially surpass human cognition. We propose shifting research questions from individual psychology toward examining how AI development practices and power structures create conditions for anxiety, suggesting

that authentic engagement with these concerns might guide more equitable, transparent, and human-centered technological development.

Shifting the Conversation: A Scoping Review of Backchannel Use in Postsecondary Education (20 minutes)

Tracy Byers Reid (University of Calgary)

Passing notes, whispering, or texting a friend - no matter the age, era, or technology, side conversations occur in most classrooms, often to the frustration of educators. Classroom social interactions can foster active engagement and enrich the learning experience; however, due to situational and dispositional barriers in adult classrooms, students may turn to backchanneling to overcome interaction constraints. A growing body of research examines how backchannels may unobtrusively improve student engagement via reciprocal communication opportunities, particularly in learning environments with challenging social dynamics, perceived participation biases, or large-sized classes. Backchannels are overt or covert digital communication streams occurring simultaneously during a live presentation. This scoping literature review explores educator and student-initiated backchannels to improve learning, participation, and engagement between 2001 and 2023 through the evolving perceptions, privacy considerations, and power dynamics related to their use. Findings highlight three limitations within existing research: lack of postsecondary vocational-focused studies, insufficient evidence of impact on learning performance, and long-term sustained engagement. For some educators, Zoom or Google Meet's embedded messaging features during the pandemic's remote teaching may have provided their first classroom backchannel experience. This review forms the basis for future research on whether online pandemic classroom experiences have influenced educators' backchannel use post-pandemic.

Celebrating a Decade of GO-GN: Advancing Open Research Through Collaboration, Equity, and Innovation (20 minutes)

Robert Farrow (The Open University UK), Beck Pitt (The Open University UK), & Carina Bossu (The Open University UK)

The Global OER Graduate Network (GO-GN) is a thriving international community supporting doctoral researchers working on open education topics. Through activities like online events, face-to-face workshops, collaborative publications, and scholarship schemes, GO-GN connects and amplifies the work of its 180+ members and alumni alongside a wider network of 200+ experts and collaborators. By fostering

interdisciplinary collaboration and supporting emerging researchers, GO-GN advances critical research in open educational resources (OER) and practices (OEP), contributing to a global and inclusive understanding of openness in education.

12:00-1:00 | Lunch Break (See [lunch options](#))

1:00-2:00 | Keynote

Room: SJA-362D

Jennifer Wemigwans (keynote) - Digital Bundles

Reflecting Indigenous Knowledge online has the potential to transform education across Canada. In this talk, Dr Wemigwans explores how to ethically present Indigenous Knowledge online through the creation of Digital Bundles. FourDirectionsTeachings.com is an example of a Digital Bundle, an online site where Elders' Teachings from five distinct First Nations are presented. Digital Bundles represent a way to transform and reframe education by using new technologies to articulate Indigenous Teachings and introduce Canadians to Indigenous epistemologies.

2:15-3:15 | Concurrent Sessions 10

Supported Open Learning as a Path to Decolonisation: Reflections on Educational Technology Initiatives in the Global South (20 minutes)

Robert Farrow (The Open University UK), Beck Pitt, Tim Coughlan, & Fereshte Goshtasbpour

Open education is increasingly seen as a pathway to social justice and decolonisation. This paper examines decolonisation processes through reflections on three educational technology projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, Myanmar, and Kenya, all involving contributions by The Open University (UK). Acknowledging the importance of under-represented Global South perspectives, the paper critically evaluates these initiatives from a Global North framing to explore how the Supported Open Learning (SOL) model facilitates decolonisation. Using the concepts of coloniality of being, power, and knowledge, the paper analyses how colonial legacies persist and shape educational practices. The SOL model, rooted in open educational practices (OEP), is presented as both an ethos and a set of pedagogical strategies that promote equity, inclusion, and critical exchange.

Concluding with a framework mapping SOL's relationship to decoloniality, this work contributes to understanding how openness can support transformative, inclusive education.

Indigenization of the Academy: Resistance and Rethinking colonial practices (20 minutes)

Emma Posca (York University)

Indigenous feminism, Indigenization and decolonization will be used to examine the existence of gender, race and Indigenous-based discriminations that exclude Indigenous scholars from the academy. These are rooted in dominant white hegemonic colonial views that socially construct differences to oppress, marginalize, and eradicate those constructed as the "other." Storytelling holds the experiences and descriptions of trauma experienced by Indigenous communities that has made Indigenous people a minority and virtually non-existent in the academy. Storytelling amplifies Indigenous voices forcing the rethinking, and resisting of discriminatory practices and structures, especially in academic settings. This paper will be an education for non-Indigenous people of the impact of discriminatory colonial structures that exist against Indigenous people within the academy. This education will pave the way non-Indigenous people to acknowledge privilege, build a knowledge-base and create awareness that ignites Indigenous scholars, frameworks, methodologies and ways of thinking-to become a part of the academy.

Techno-Colonialism in the Age of AI: The Rollback of DEI and the Fight for Inclusive Representation (20 Minutes)

Tanya Dixit (University of Victoria) and Michael Paskevicius (University of Victoria)

This project is an exploration into unpacking how colonial legacies are either reinforced or challenged by generative AI (Gen-AI), investigating whether AI can be reclaimed from the control of capitalist enterprises and hegemonic systems to ensure fair representation. Techno-colonialism (Hughes, 2023), historically dominated by the West, continues to shape the ways in which AI impacts post-colonial societies. Several scholars have noted that AI-generated content could reinforce existing inequities (Karastergiou & Diamantopoulos, 2024; Pukiene, 2024; Hoffman, 2024). Currently, Gen-AI tools replicate biases by mimicking the cultural, linguistic, and ideological frameworks of the past (Bender et al., 2021). With a focus on decolonization, this paper explores how Gen-AI inadvertently disseminates these biases while also mirroring and shaping political discourse. Can its capabilities be harnessed as a tool for resistance and empowerment—ideally well before they become fully integrated into educational systems? A transformative approach is needed, calling for more

inclusive technology governance and Gen-AI design that advocates for ethical and culturally responsive practices.

Unlocking the Power of AI: Inspiring Mathematical Engagement and Data Literacy through Artificial Intelligence Exploration (20 Minutes)

Sojourner San Vicente (GeniusLab) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau

How can Artificial Intelligence (AI) serve as a gateway to deeper mathematical understanding and engagement? This panel brings together educators and experts to explore how AI-driven learning can make advanced mathematics and data analysis more accessible, relevant, and inspiring for students. Building on the curriculum and resources from the M4AI project, panelists will discuss innovative strategies for integrating AI concepts into lessons on mathematical modeling, probability, and statistics. By demonstrating real-world applications of AI—from machine learning to predictive analytics—this approach fosters essential data literacy skills while sparking curiosity and engagement. A key focus of the discussion will be equity and inclusion in STEM education, particularly how AI-centered mathematics instruction can engage Black and racialized students by connecting mathematical concepts to their lived experiences and cultural contexts. Panelists will share insights on designing culturally responsive lessons that empower students to see themselves as future data scientists, mathematicians, and AI innovators. Whether you're an educator, policymaker, or AI enthusiast, this panel will offer valuable perspectives on how AI can transform mathematics education into a more inclusive, engaging, and future-ready experience.

3:15-3:30 | Break

3:30-4:30 | Concurrent Sessions 11 | Invited Speakers

Opportunities for Affordable and Accessible Higher Education in Canada

Invited Speaker: Robert Luke, eCampusOntario

Higher education is at a crossroads. Funding models are under stress, causing contraction in programs, staffing and availability of education more generally. There is no one causal factor, though recent changes to international student recruitment coupled with social pressures on learner and community supports have conspired to create the conditions for stress and change. And we might ask: what is the value of higher

education? Is it a public or private good? What is society seeking in supporting higher education? What are learners seeking?

Open education presents opportunities to amplify affordable and accessible education in Canada, helping to address some of the issues these questions raise. The Canadian Coalition for Affordable Learning is an initiative designed to support making postsecondary education more accessible and affordable for Canadian students by exploring inter-provincial strategies. The focus is on four strands of work: The adoption and promotion of Open Educational Resources (OER); improving alternative and flexible delivery modalities, such as online and hybrid courses and programs; enhancing access to new learning paths such as through micro-credentials; and enhancing the digital fluency of educators to more effectively leverage digital teaching & learning environments. The premise: open education, digital delivery models, digital fluency, and micro-credentials can provide a more equitable and affordable educational landscape for students across Canada.

Indigenous Allyship in the Academy: What I've Learned Along the Way

Invited Speaker: Jess O'Reilly

This session is a personal reflection on what allyship can look like within academic institutions striving toward decolonization and reconciliation. I'll share some of the tensions I've encountered and reflect on how allyship, when rooted in relationality and reciprocity, can offer more than performative support. I'll speak to the importance of cultural protocols, the emotional labour often carried by Indigenous faculty, staff, students, and administrators, and the complexities of sharing Indigenous knowledge in open education spaces. Participants will be invited into a reflective space, with the option to engage in a simple yet essential culturally grounded practice. Together, we'll consider how we can continue to show up for each other in mutual support of reconciliation efforts on our campuses.

5:30 | Conference off-site event

Happy Hour at C'est What (Downstairs in the pub)

C'est What? is a renowned craft beer pub and restaurant situated in the historic St. Lawrence Market area of Toronto, Ontario. Established in 1988, it was among the first establishments in the city to exclusively offer local craft beers and Ontario VQA wines, pioneering the local craft beer movement. <https://cestwhat.com/>

[Let us know if you'd like to attend.](#)

Address: [67 Front St E](#), Toronto, ON M5E 1B5

Lunch Options

On the St. James campus you will find a [food court](#) (Building A lower level) and a Tim Hortons Coffee shop

There is a large outdoor patio accessed from the stairwell on the second floor of the St James Campus

The St Lawrence Market is a five minute walk and has [many exciting vendors](#).

A three minute walk will take you [St James Park](#), a beautiful garden and green space to take your lunch

[Metro Foods Grocery Store](#) is a six minute walk from the conference location with lunch options and pharmacy

Neo Coffee bar is a two minute walk for espresso and treats <https://maps.app.goo.gl/s1ZihbHqtwLf86Lk9>

Explore [other nearby restaurant options on a Google Map](#)