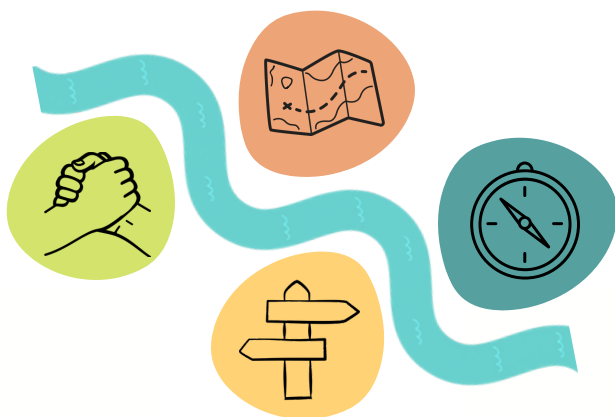


Healthy Campus Alberta's

2026 WELLNESS SUMMIT

Presenter Spotlights



Learn more about this year's
Summit Presenters!

DIRECTORY

Concurrent Session 1

- Co-Design for Connection: Student Partnerships that Build Belonging on Campus
- Thoughtful Thursday: Creative Practices for Wellbeing through Seasonal Wisdom and Peer Connection
- Grounding Your Wellness: A Medicine Wheel Reflection
- Rolling With the Anxiety: How Therapeutically-Applied Roleplaying Games Can Reduce Social Anxiety for Postsecondary Students
- Five Years & Beyond: The Path to Student-Athlete Wellness

Concurrent Session 2

- Unplugging with Purpose: Understanding Dopamine, Digital Habits, and Campus Approaches to Connection
- Helping Students Find the Right Pathway to Post-secondary: Creating a Better Understanding of Mental Health & Wellness In Post-secondary Education Through an Indigenous Lens
- Here For You HQ: Building a Culture of Care in Post-Secondary Education
- Meals That Last: A Community-Based Model for Men's Wellbeing and Violence Prevention on Campus
- Strengthening Student Mental Health Surveys: Practical Strategies for Institutions

DIRECTORY

Keynote 1: Dr. Carol Hopkins

Concurrent Session 3

- Voices of Recovery in Post-Secondary Education
- Beyond Digital Detox: Rebuilding Regulation and Real Connection
- The Value of Experiential Wellness Programming for Staff & Faculty
- The Conflict Lab: Transform How You Handle Conflict
- Digital Wayfinding: Making Instructional Videos to Guide Students Through Complex Systems

Concurrent Session 4

- Diverse Projects, Common Values: An Array of Student Research Projects on Postsecondary Mental Health
- Power Playbook: Innovative Support for Student-Athletes
- Cultivating student connection in a disconnected world using evidence-based strategies

Keynote 2 : Pass the Mic: A Student-Led Approach to Engagement

Student Research Showcase

Opening the Summit in a Good Way

May 21, 2026, 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

Elder Tom Snow

Tom Snow is a lethka Nakoda from the Stoney Indian Reserve in Morley. He has been a facilitator of traditional Nakoda teachings and ceremonies across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana. He managed a Child Services business for 11 years where he provided youth work, language instruction, and family reunification visits.



He developed a Wellness program for the Wesley First Nation before going to Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, where he continued as an Elder, leading ceremonies, circles, educating staff, reintroducing families to their own cultural practices. Tom also teaches the Nakoda language.

Now, Tom is with kihew waciston, MacEwan University's Indigenous Centre, as a Knowledge Keeper. Tom educates about historical trauma, including the effects of the Indian Act, Residential School, Colonization, Sixties Scoop, and more, to address the underlying causes of many Indigenous issues.

He is a Knowledge Keeper to Alberta Child Services', sits on the Indigenous Circle for End Poverty Edmonton, and is an ongoing contributor to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Tom is also involved with the Kihcikaw Askiy, a place in Edmonton for Indigenous people to gather for ceremonies, education and cultural activities. He is a member of the Edmonton Framework committee for better relations with Indigenous People, named Wahigicobi.

When not at work, Tom enjoys being with his wife, family from an earlier relationship, relatives, staying connected with his culture, hunting, fishing, camping and ceremonies. He is always in search of more material for Indigenous Antiquity in North America.

Concurrent Session 1

May 21, 2026, 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

Co-Design for Connection: Student Partnerships that Build Belonging on Campus



Ricardo Avelar (he/they)
Counsellor, Assistant Professor,
Mount Royal University

Ricardo has worked in various fields, including non-profit organizations, K-12 schools, post-secondaries, and private practice settings as teacher, sessional lecturer, counsellor, and clinical supervisor. He supports individuals regarding various concerns, and has specialized knowledge in identity development, sexuality and relationships, and trauma. Currently, he works as a registered psychologist and assistant professor at Mount Royal University.



Ashley Barrett (she/her)
Mental Health Promotion Coordinator,
Mount Royal University

For two years at Mount Royal University, Ashley Barrett (she/her) has designed student wellness programs rooted in connection and joy. Building on her leadership at the University of Alberta's Peer Support Centre, she believes in the strength of student-led support. Ashley is energized by building empowered campus environments where belonging is accessible to all.

Thoughtful Thursday: Creative Practices for Wellbeing through Seasonal Wisdom and Peer Connection



Andrea Hunt (she/her)
Educational Counsellor, SAIT

Andrea Hunt (she/her) is a Registered Psychologist providing counselling at SAIT and within the community. She draws on a wealth of diverse experiences to inform her work including work as a professional singer/songwriter, directing a wildlife rehabilitation center, and leading a nature-based spiritual group. She follows a Druidic spiritual path which informs her holistic approach to wellness.



Sara Dubreuil Karpa (she/her)
Program Coordinator - After Hours Peer Support,
Mount Royal University

Sarah Dubreuil Karpa (she/her) is a student-focused social worker dedicated to fostering inclusive, supportive campus environments. Her work centers on peer support, student well-being, and leadership development. Sarah is passionate about creating meaningful engagement opportunities and empowering students through innovative programming, collaborative initiatives, and strengths-based approaches that promote connection, resilience, and holistic success.

Grounding Your Wellness: A Medicine Wheel Reflection



Janice Randhile
Manager - Indigenous Engagement,
Medicine Hat College

Her journey has been one of courage, healing, and transformation. Janice openly honors the lessons she has learned through life's challenges and uses her story to inspire others to walk forward with strength, forgiveness, and self-compassion. Like the buffalo facing the storm, she believes in meeting life head-on and moving through adversity with dignity and purpose. Known for her generous spirit and powerful heart, Janice is someone who brings people together. Whether she is celebrating the success of students, honoring Elders, supporting women and girls, or standing up for community, she leads with authenticity and a deep love for her people. Working at Medicine Hat College brings her a deep sense of joy and purpose. Every day, she is grateful to be part of a space where connection, culture, and learning come together in such meaningful ways. Supporting students, walking alongside them in their journeys, and creating a sense of belonging fills her heart in a way that words can hardly capture. It's more than just work—it's a calling that continues to inspire and uplift her.



Nicki Eastly
Indigenous Student Specialist, Medicine Hat College

My name is Eskunatanupaki—my Blackfoot name, meaning strong, courageous, hardworking woman. I also go by Nicki Eastly, and I am originally from Piikani Nation. I am a proud parent to one spirited teenager, my little Creefoot, who keeps life full of energy and purpose. I currently serve as the Indigenous Student Specialist at Medicine Hat College, where I am deeply committed to supporting students and creating meaningful, culturally grounded connections within the learning environment. I am also working toward my Master of Social Work through the University of Calgary, continuing a lifelong path in the helping field. For over 20 years, I have worked across a range of roles—from needle exchange programs to family support services to postsecondary student supports—guided by a passion for social justice and community care. I carry a deep love for animals and believe strongly in compassion, advocacy, and lifting others up along the way.

Rolling With the Anxiety: How Therapeutically-Applied Roleplaying Games Can Reduce Social Anxiety for Postsecondary Students



Kasra Hakimattar (he/him)
Counsellor, Bow Valley College

Kasra is a Registered Social Worker and Counsellor at Bow Valley College, where he has been providing compassionate, approachable counselling for students since 2024. Since completing a Master of Social Work in 2022, Kasra has supported postsecondary students in a variety of areas including sexual violence, student conduct, and men's mental health. In his current work, Kasra is exploring how emerging interventions like tabletop roleplaying games can be used to help students reduce social anxiety, build community, and find belonging.



Nicholas Brandt (he/him)
Social Work Practicum Student, Bow Valley College/Mount Royal University

Nicholas Brandt (he/him), is a social work student at Mount Royal University. Since leaving the trades in 2023, Nicholas has been supporting Calgary's unhoused community working across various sectors of the field including shelter, detox, housing, outreach, and fund development. Most recently he has branched out to combine his love of tabletop role-playing games with his professional work, helping to pilot a counselling group at Bow Valley College using the medium of Dungeons and Dragons to promote community and support students experiencing anxiety.

Five Years & Beyond: The Path to Student-Athlete Wellness



Billie Brown (she/her)
Campus Life Wellness Coordinator - Concordia University of Edmonton

Billie Brown is a Wellness Coordinator who is passionate about student mental health and well-being. Billie has had the opportunity to take her previous knowledge of working at the University of the Fraser Valley, Canadian Mental Health Association, and the Foundry to spark change at CUE! She is currently pursuing a Master of Health Studies Degree with an emphasis of Health Promotion. Billie can't wait to take what she has learned and try new ways to implement health and well-being into every domain of the post-secondary environment.



Nate MacLellan
Director, Athletics & Wellness - Concordia University of Edmonton

Nathaniel Maclellan is the Director of Athletics & Wellness at Concordia University of Edmonton, a dedicated Sport Management instructor, and an ACAC executive member. With over 11 years of leadership experience, he is passionate about developing people and enriching student-athlete experiences. He holds a Bachelor of Sport Management and a Master's in Human Kinetics & Recreation. Outside of work he values time with his family.



Meagan Goerz (she/her)
Athlete Services & Communications Coordinator
- Concordia University of Edmonton

Meagan Goerz (she/her) is the Athlete Services & Communications Coordinator at Concordia University of Edmonton, where she leads communications, supports large-scale events, and enhances the student-athlete experience. She is passionate about community engagement, student wellness, and connecting athletes with resources that support success both on and off the field.



Ryan Bird (he/him)
Event & Communications Coordinator, Athletics
- Concordia University of Edmonton

Ryan Bird (he/him) is an athletics and recreation professional passionate about building community through sport. He has had the privilege to live and work across the country supporting a variety of athletes and community members through sport and recreation. His work experiences spans across multiple levels, including community, amateur, and professional sport & activities. Ryan knows that physical activity in all its varieties, is key to the overall well-being of individuals, especially their emotional and social health. He is a strong believer that the creation of community fosters improved health and wellness.



Cohen Kushnerik (he/him)
Student Athlete - Concordia University of
Edmonton

Cohen Kushnerik has just completed his second year at Concordia University of Edmonton in the Faculty of Science, majoring in Biology with a minor in Physical Education and Sports Studies. As a member of the Men's Volleyball team, he has firsthand experience of navigating the life as a student-athlete. Outside of his own athletic endeavors he coaches volleyball at the club level in Edmonton.



Branden Meier (he/him)
Student Athlete - Concordia University of
Edmonton

Branden Meier is a student-athlete at Concordia University of Edmonton as a member of the Men's Hockey team. When not playing hockey or baseball you will find him navigating Ninja Warrior courses as both an instructor and competitor. Branden has just finished his first year of the Bachelor of Education after-degree program and is currently in Thailand teaching. He has an infectious energy and passion for life that has been known to spread to those around him.



Georgia Bowman (she/her)
Student - Concordia University of Edmonton

Georgia Bowman (she/her) is a student-athlete at Concordia University of Edmonton, having played five years on the women's basketball team. Georgia holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology with a minor in Physical Education and Sports Studies. Currently in her final semester at CUE, she is finishing her Bachelor of Education after-degree and will be pursuing teaching this spring. Georgia's experiences with Concordia Thunder Athletics has fuelled a passion for supporting student-athletes' physical and academic wellness. She believes that having the necessary resources and support is essential for a student-athlete to build balance and resilience, helping them achieve personal performance goals and overall enjoyment in sport.

Concurrent Session 2

May 21, 2026, 1:00 – 2:00 PM

Unplugging with Purpose: Shifting Student's Digital Habits and Campus Approaches to Connection



Lisa Teigen (she/her)
Accessibility and Wellness Coordinator,
The King's University

Lisa Teigen (she/her) is passionate about supporting students through her roles working with accessibility services and wellness at The King's University. She has been a part of the Student Life and Learning Department for over 10 years. Lisa enjoys living, working, worshipping, and playing in Treaty Six territory. She loves reading, taking walks in the Millcreek Ravine, spending time with family, and enjoying Edmonton's short summers as much as she can. She is excited to chat with others from Healthy Campus Alberta about helping students "unplug" and thrive.



Taylor Doef (she/her)
Student - The King's University

Taylor Doef (she/her) is a psychology student at The King's University in Edmonton, Alberta. She is passionate about fostering connection with fellow students, as well as promoting physical and mental health. Taylor has had the privilege to be a Community Student Wellness Worker for the past two years at The King's University. She is currently hoping to pursue her Master's in Clinical Psychology because of her interest in the intersection between healthcare and psychology.

Helping Students Find the Right Pathway to Post-secondary: Creating a Better Understanding of Mental Health & Wellness In Post-secondary Education Through an Indigenous Lens



Patricia Bruised Head, Programs Service Manager, BHSc, MEd

Oki, Nisto Akok Ikkinanhkiaakii, Gentle Singing Woman. Hello, my name is Patricia (Trish) Bruised Head, I'm from the Siksikaitsitapi 'Blackfoot Confederacy', Kainiawa Blood Tribe. I'm a proud mother to three amazing sons and grateful to have two beautiful grandchildren. Currently, I'm the Student Services Manager at Mi'kai'sto Red Crow Community College, where our department supports Blood Tribe Post-Secondary Student Support Program in their educational goals. Previous to this role, I worked an Academic Counsellor within the same department. I also served as the Service Manager for Blood Tribe Recreation Programing. In 2021, I earned a Master of Education from the University of Calgary. In 2018, I completed a Bachelor of Health Sciences in Addictions Counselling at the University of Lethbridge. "Life is a journey not a destination." – Ralph Waldo Emerson. This has been my motto from the day I believe my journey in education started, which is what got me to where I am today.

Here For You HQ: Building a Culture of Care in Post-Secondary Education



Taryn Nelson (she/her) Mental Health & Wellbeing Coordinator, Red Deer Polytechnic

Taryn Nelson (she/her) is a mental health professional dedicated to education, advocacy, and stigma reduction. A 2024 Psychology graduate from Red Deer Polytechnic, she now supports the RDP community as the Mental Health & Wellbeing Coordinator, striving to create engaging and impactful initiatives that help students access supports and opportunities to thrive during their post-secondary journey.

Meals That Last: A Community-Based Model for Men's Wellbeing and Violence Prevention on Campus



Danial Jamal (he/him)
Meals That Last, Founder

Danial Jamal, a Bachelor of Social Work graduate (University of Calgary, 2025), co-created Meals That Last, a men's cooking and wellbeing program fostering honest, transformative conversation and belonging through the kitchen. Focused on GBV prevention and healthy masculinity, he and his team advance community-engaged violence prevention priorities across campus and community settings.



Abdelrahman Alramahi (he/him)
Meals That Last, Co-lead & Facilitator

Abdulrahman Alramahi (he/him) is a final year Mechanical Engineering student at the University of Calgary with experience in risk analysis, technical reporting, and project coordination through his internship in the energy industry. He is passionate about engineering, community impact, and using his skills in meaningful ways, and deeply cares about justice and humanitarian causes, including Palestine.



Adham Ali (he/him)
Meals That Last, Co-lead & Facilitator

Adham Ali is an engineering student focused on mentorship and youth development. As a facilitator in Meals That Last, a men's cooking and wellbeing program, he leads group sessions that use shared activities to spark conversations around confidence, teamwork, and emotional growth. He also coaches youth soccer and tutors, emphasizing leadership, accountability, and character development.



Nourelden Alsafadi (he/him)

Meals That Last, Co-lead & Facilitator

Nourelden Alsafadi is a third-year electrical engineering student at the University of Calgary. He has spent much of his time working and volunteering at events that matter to him, from teaching others to swim to coordinating activities at his local community hall. He enjoys taking part in something he and others find meaningful and positively impactful. With Danial's cooking program, he wants to build on that and be part of something bigger than himself, something impactful and clearly helpful to others. Cooking is interactive and hands-on, making collaboration natural and helping people form deeper, more meaningful bonds and connections. He is also motivated to address the problems of meaninglessness and violence that many young men go through. These challenges often compound and can lead to destructive habits. He wants to help counter that by building friendship, social bonds, and brotherhood in a practical, face-to-face way. By putting their hands to work and talking honestly about what's on their minds, he believes people can find solutions and comfort together and help prevent unsafe or unwanted behavior toward themselves and others.



Immad Nayeem (he/him)

Entrepreneur, University of Calgary

Immad is a Calgary-based entrepreneur and co-founder of Urban Retreats, a short-term rental management company operating across Calgary's urban core. A former industrial paramedic, he brings a disciplined, high-stakes mindset to building and scaling a hospitality portfolio focused on operational excellence and guest experience. Beyond business, Immad is a life coach passionate about mentoring youth to discover their calling and live with purpose, and shares his perspective as a guest lecturer with Meals That Last.

Strengthening Student Mental Health Surveys: Practical Strategies for Institutions



Adrijana D'Silva (she/her)

Senior Scientist, University of Calgary

Adrijana D'Silva (she/her) is a senior researcher focused on youth mental health. Her team's work centers on partnering with young people to improve mental health services and systems. She is particularly interested in how collaborative, real-world methods can translate evidence into meaningful changes across campuses and community settings. She completed her PhD in Health Services Research, followed by a CIHR Health System Impact Fellowship at the University of Calgary.

Day One Keynote

Dr. Carol Hopkins

2:15 PM–3:45 PM



Carol Hopkins is the Chief Executive Officer of the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation and is of the Lenape Nation, Canada. Carol was appointed as an Officer in the Order of Canada, 2018. In 2019, she received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Western University. Carol has spent 30 years in the field of First Nations substance use and mental health. She holds both a Master of Social Work Degree from the University of Toronto and a degree in sacred Indigenous Knowledge from Midewiwin, equivalent to a PhD in western based education systems. Carol has throughout her career, made use of Indigenous knowledge and culture in the areas of research, policy, practice-based evidence, teaching, education, and in facilitating processes of decolonization specific to epistemic racism. She has co-chaired national initiatives known for best practice in national policy review and development. Her leadership has been engaged within Health and Mental Health for First Nations, Provincial, Territorial, and Federal governments serving several expert advisory committees and task groups. In recognition of this work, Carol has received several national awards over the years, and most recently received the 2025 Canada's Top Mental Health Advocate Award for Indigenous Mental Health.

Concurrent Session 3

May 22, 2026, 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Voices of Recovery in Post-Secondary Education



Renaud Gom (he/him)

Research Associate - Recovery on Campus

Renaud is a Research Associate dedicated to maximizing the impact of community-driven recovery research through his work with the Recovering in Place Lab. His research focused on understanding persistent changes in emotionality resulting from disorders of the brain. Renaud's current work emphasizes ensuring that recovery initiatives, including Recovery on Campus programs, are evidence-based and effectively meet the needs of diverse communities.



Amrit Kaur Matharoo (she/her)

Recovery Support Specialist and PhD Student - Recovery on Campus & UCalgary

Amrit is a social worker and researcher whose work spans frontline support, systems navigation, and community-based research. She is an incoming PhD student in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. Amrit is deeply committed to creating spaces of belonging and dignity, walking alongside students and staff in their recovery journeys with care and compassion. In her spare time, she enjoys being an auntie to her nieces and nephew, spending time with her dog Mowgli, and crocheting.

Beyond Digital Detox: Rebuilding Regulation and Real Connection



Richard Lee-Thai (he/him)

Founder, Excuses to Connect

Richard Lee-Thai (he/him) is a TEDx speaker, SAIT faculty member, and founder of Excuses to Connect – an initiative dedicated to ending loneliness. Rooted in yoga teacher training, Internal Family Systems, and nervous system education, his trauma-informed approach creates spaces where people feel safe to show up whole.

The Value of Experiential Wellness Programming for Staff & Faculty



Leigh Bodnar-Rollings (she/her)
Employee Wellness Advisor - Mount Royal University

Leigh is an Employee Wellness Advisor at MRU, providing programs and resources that support employees in leading healthier lives. By leveraging existing campus resources and emphasizing experiential learning, Leigh develops health promotion initiatives that support well-being across all dimensions and foster a healthy, connected campus community. With a background in human resources and adult education, Leigh brings a practical, people-centered approach to workplace well-being.

The Conflict Lab: Transform How You Handle Conflict



Julie Hrdlicka (she/her)
Owner, Conflict Revolution

Julie Hrdlicka (she/her) is a mediator, facilitator, and community advocate with 25 years of experience in conflict transformation. She founded Conflict Revolution to help individuals and communities navigate conflict, integrate mind-body awareness, and build connection using somatic practices alongside Transformative and Restorative Justice principles.

Digital Wayfinding: Making Instructional Videos to Guide Students Through Complex Systems



Dave Campbell (he/him)
Accessibility Technology Strategist, Red Deer Polytechnic

Dave works in Accessibility Services at Red Deer Polytechnic, supporting students navigating learning barriers and disability funding systems. With 15 years at RDP, a Master of Education, and a teaching background, he is passionate about reducing barriers through clear communication, universal design, and scalable tools like video to improve student success.

Concurrent Session 4

10:30 AM–11:30 AM

Diverse projects, common values: An array of student research projects on postsecondary mental health



Dr. Brittany Lindsay (she/her)
SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Calgary

Dr. Brittany Lindsay (she/her) is a current SSHRC postdoctoral fellow at UCalgary. Her research primarily focuses on understanding and reducing the stigma towards mental illnesses and suicide thoughts and behaviours. She is also involved in teaching, research, and service around mental health and wellbeing more broadly. During her time at UCalgary, she aims to be a mental health champion on campus, dedicated to promoting and prioritizing mental health and wellbeing across campus.



Skylar Earle (she/her)
Research Assistant, University of Calgary

Skylar Earle (she/her) is a recent graduate with a Bachelor's in psychology from the University of Calgary. She is passionate about reducing barriers to mental wellbeing, with particular interests in the postsecondary setting and the workplace. She is currently working as a research assistant at the University of Calgary before pursuing further education.



Monique Chen (she/her)
Research Coordinator, University of Calgary

Monique Chen is a research coordinator in social work with a background in psychology. Her work explores wellbeing, simulation-based education, and intimate partner violence. Monique is passionate about advancing social justice through research and knowledge mobilization, with interests in improving wellbeing outcomes using an intersectional lens.



Jenin Ahmad (she/her)

Research Assistant, University of Calgary

Jenin Ahmad (she/her) is a research assistant at the University of Calgary who has recently completed her Honours degree in psychology. Her thesis examined the role of environmental self-efficacy in coping with climate-related distress. This research was inspired by her three years as lead organizer and facilitator of UCalgary's Climate Café, a peer-led climate grief support group that aimed to connect those struggling with the climate crisis. Jenin also has an extensive research background in addictions treatment. Her research interests include public health, policy impacts on community mental health, and EDI topics in psychology. She hopes to pursue clinical psychology in her graduate studies.

Power Playbook: Innovative Support for Student-Athletes



Madison Kane-Rissling (she/her)

Student/Student-Athlete Alumnus, University of Calgary

Madison Kane-Rissling (she/her) is a policy analyst with the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women in the Government of Alberta. She is also an alumni from the University of Calgary's (UofC) School of Public Policy and Dinos Women's Track and Field team. During her time at UofC, Madison had the privilege to advocate for student-athlete mental health through her capstone research and in her leadership roles on the student-athlete council. Today, she continues to pursue her professional career in public policy while maintaining an athletic semi-professional career as a long jumper in the Canadian Track and Field League. Madison knows that mental health is a strong indicator of performance and believes that student-athlete mental health, mentality and culture are the pillars for building a strong foundation for student-athlete's success throughout university.



Sonia Skobkareva (they/them)
Student-Athlete, University of Alberta, The Hidden Opponent

Sonia Skobkareva (they/them) is a Pandas Tennis varsity student-athlete and Honors Psychology major at the University of Alberta. Drawing from their own lived experience, they advocate for student-athlete mental health through their involvement with The Hidden Opponent, and for youth mental health through their honors research on internalizing symptoms and experiences of victimization in 2SLGBTQ+ adolescents.



Isaiah Neil (he/him)
Student-Athlete Alumnus, University of Alberta

Isaiah Neil is a youth advocate and entrepreneur focused on mental health, resilience, and high performance. As the founder and speaker for Blue Shoes, he has utilized storytelling to provide keynote experiences on mental health and resilience for youth aged 15–30 providing mental health literacy and practical tools for resiliency. On the national stage, Isaiah serves as a Youth Ambassador and Speaker for Jack.org and is a member of the National Youth Council with the Mental Health Commission of Canada. In these roles, he supports mental health projects, initiatives, and campaigns across the country to improve mental health literacy, awareness, and health outcomes for Canadians. His leadership was recently recognized nationally, being selected for the 7th Cohort of the 1834 Fellowship, highlighting him as one of the top 20 upcoming Black youth in Canadian civic leadership. Isaiah's professional journey is deeply rooted in his lived experience and skills as a former student-athlete for the University of Alberta Golden Bears football team. By drawing on the discipline of elite athletics, he leads with a signature blend of authenticity, strength, and empathy—demonstrating adversity and vulnerability is not at the expense of high performance and excellence.

Cultivating Student Connection in a Disconnected World Using Evidence-Based Strategies



Dr. Jessica-Lynn Walsh **Manager, Community Partnered Research and Engagement, University of Calgary**

Dr. Jessica-Lynn Walsh is Manager of Community Partnered Research and Engagement at the Owerko Centre for Neurodevelopment and Child Mental Health with the Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute at the University of Calgary. Over the past 10 years, Dr. Walsh has partnered with communities and organizations to mobilize evidence to practice in children's and women's health, literacy, resilience, flourishing, and social connection. Dr. Walsh holds an MSc in Medical Sciences from the University of Calgary and earned her medical degree from Trinity College Dublin in Ireland.

Day Two Keynote

Pass the Mic:

A Student-Led Approach to Engagement

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM



Richard Lee-Thai (Moderator) **Founder, Excuses to Connect**

Richard Lee-Thai (he/him) is a TEDx speaker, SAIT faculty member, and founder of Excuses to Connect — an initiative dedicated to ending loneliness. Rooted in yoga teacher training, Internal Family Systems, and nervous system education, his trauma-informed approach creates spaces where people feel safe to show up whole.



Rafay Meer (he/him/his)
Health Promotion Volunteer, University of Alberta Wellness Supports Team

Rafay Meer (he/him/his) is a Health Promotion Volunteer with the University of Alberta's Wellness Supports team. He is privileged and grateful to be able to give back to his community through volunteering - one of his many passions. He is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Psychology at the University of Alberta.



Fareena Ahmed (she/her)
Health Promotion Volunteer, University of Alberta Wellness Supports Team

Fareena Ahmed (she/her) is an Honors Immunology and Infection student at the University of Alberta and a member of the Wellness Supports Health Promotion Team. Whether she's contributing to campus newsletters or meeting new people while tabling, she is always looking for ways to foster a supportive and welcoming community. By sharing her personal perspectives, Fareena aims to inspire collaborative environments where students feel heard, supported, and empowered to thrive together.



Adam Trudel (he/him)
Intern/Volunteer, University of Alberta, Wellness Supports Health Promotion

Adam Trudel (he/him) is a second-year After Degree Nursing student at the University of Alberta, where he previously completed a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. He has been involved with Campus Wellness Supports – Health Promotion for the past two years as both a student staff member and a volunteer, supporting student wellness initiatives. Adam is passionate about health promotion, student well-being, and creating accessible community spaces that foster connection.



Janvi Bali (she/her)
Graduate Student, U of A Alumnus

Janvi Bali (she/her) is a graduate student and community advocate passionate about inclusive engagement and co-creating systems that respond to diverse student needs. Through leadership in mentorship, mental health advocacy, and student-led wellness initiatives, she has supported programs that promote connection and belonging on campus. She is currently pursuing a Master of Health Science degree at Western University. Janvi believes students are not just recipients of support, but essential partners in shaping more equitable campus communities.



Rabia Dhanani (she/her)
Community Engagement Assistant, Healthy Campus Alberta

Rabia is a community engagement professional passionate about building belonging, wellness, and equity in underrepresented and equity-seeking community spaces. She is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Community Engagement from the University of Alberta and brings diverse experience in volunteer management, philanthropy, and social impact. Through her previous work, Rabia has led initiatives that strengthen community partnerships and empower interest-holders to create meaningful change. Her academic and professional practice is grounded in collaboration, storytelling, and systems thinking. She believes that mental health and well-being thrive when people feel seen, supported, and connected. Outside of work, Rabia finds joy in creative expression, travel, and exploring wellness practices that nurture balance and intention. She values inclusion, relational leadership, and lifelong learning.



Gurleen Kaur
Student-Writer, Psychology, Blue Sky Lab,
University of Alberta

From crisis work to student mental health advocacy throughout undergraduate psychology, I've grown to love engaging in and promoting sustainable health practices. Let's create avenues for various expressions and artistry for love, care, community for all young ones, women, and adults. This allows for growth for many as health is within all roots carried from Kashmiri Kawa, turmeric remedies, and Sufism and other spiritual practices. Looking forward to connecting and supporting lifelong well being.



Isaiah Neil (he/him)
Student-Athlete Alumnus, University of Alberta

Isaiah Neil is a youth advocate and entrepreneur focused on mental health, resilience, and high performance. As the founder and speaker for Blue Shoes, he has utilized storytelling to provide keynote experiences on mental health and resilience for youth aged 15–30 providing mental health literacy and practical tools for resiliency. On the national stage, Isaiah serves as a Youth Ambassador and Speaker for Jack.org and is a member of the National Youth Council with the Mental Health Commission of Canada. In these roles, he supports mental health projects, initiatives, and campaigns across the country to improve mental health literacy, awareness, and health outcomes for Canadians. His leadership was recently recognized nationally, being selected for the 7th Cohort of the 1834 Fellowship, highlighting him as one of the top 20 upcoming Black youth in Canadian civic leadership. Isaiah's professional journey is deeply rooted in his lived experience and skills as a former student-athlete for the University of Alberta Golden Bears football team. By drawing on the discipline of elite athletics, he leads with a signature blend of authenticity, strength, and empathy— demonstrating adversity and vulnerability is not at the expense of high performance and excellence.

Student Research Showcase Presenters



Skylar Earle (she/her)

Research Assistant, University of Calgary

Skylar Earle (she/her) is a recent graduate with a Bachelor's in psychology from the University of Calgary. She is passionate about reducing barriers to mental wellbeing, with particular interests in the postsecondary setting and the workplace. She is currently working as a research assistant at the University of Calgary before pursuing further education.



Monique Chen (she/her)

Research Coordinator, University of Calgary

Monique Chen is a research coordinator in social work with a background in psychology. Her work explores wellbeing, simulation-based education, and intimate partner violence. Monique is passionate about advancing social justice through research and knowledge mobilization, with interests in improving wellbeing outcomes using an intersectional lens.



Jenin Ahmad (she/her)

Research Assistant, University of Calgary

Jenin Ahmad (she/her) is a research assistant at the University of Calgary who has recently completed her Honours degree in psychology. Her thesis examined the role of environmental self-efficacy in coping with climate-related distress. This research was inspired by her three years as lead organizer and facilitator of UCalgary's Climate Café, a peer-led climate grief support group that aimed to connect those struggling with the climate crisis. Jenin also has an extensive research background in addictions treatment. Her research interests include public health, policy impacts on community mental health, and EDI topics in psychology. She hopes to pursue clinical psychology in her graduate studies.



Neetu Shah
Manager, Student Health and Wellness Centre,
Norquest College

Recent graduate, Doctor of Social Sciences

Neetu Shah is a leader in student mental health and wellness at NorQuest College, where she serves as Manager of the Student Health and Wellness Centre. With more than 15 years of experience in post-secondary mental health, leadership, and student support, she oversees interdisciplinary services including counselling, nursing, social work, violence prevention, 2SLGBTQIA+ supports, and community wellness initiatives. Prior to her current role, she held leadership positions in counselling and student services and worked extensively in direct clinical practice supporting diverse student populations.

Dr. Shah recently completed her Doctor of Social Sciences, with research exploring what clinical practitioners need from leadership to promote resilience and mitigate burnout in post-secondary counselling environments. Her work highlights the critical role leaders play in fostering psychological safety, trust, autonomy, and sustainable workplace cultures for helping professionals.

A former international pair figure skater who represented Canada, Dr. Shah brings a unique perspective on resilience, performance, and human potential. Through her research, speaking, and leadership, she is passionate about transforming how organizations support the well-being of those who care for others.