

HCA 2026 Wellness Summit Agenda

Day 1 - Thursday, May 21, Concordia University of Edmonton

8:30 AM Tegler Student Centre	Registration and Breakfast
9:30 AM Tegler Student Centre	Opening the Summit in a good way
10:30 AM–4:00 PM HA 303, Alan Huehn Lounge Tegler Centre Mezzanine	Summit Wellness Room Open (HA 303) Student Research Showcase (Mezzanine)
10:30 AM Tegler Student Centre	Break
10:45 AM–12:00 PM Tegler Student Centre	Concurrent Session 1 Co-Design for Connection: Student Partnerships that Build Belonging on Campus Ashley Barrett and Ricardo Avelar, Mount Royal University Student engagement is not only a marketing challenge, it is a relevance and relationship challenge. At Mount Royal University, the Healthy Campus Team has been working with students as partners to co-design initiatives that respond directly to student experiences and needs. This interactive session shares a practical co-design model used to develop programs that strengthen belonging and connection on campus. Presenters will explore how partnerships with students led to initiatives such as Speed Friending events that create intentional opportunities for peer connection, and Wellness Hour, a supportive space designed with equity-deserving students to foster community, psychological safety, and navigation of campus resources. Participants will learn how co-design processes can move ideas from concept to meaningful engagement. Through examples and practical tools, attendees will leave with strategies, a co-design sprint framework, and evaluation tips to help develop student-centered initiatives that build connection and increase participation on their own campuses.
HA 208	Grounding Your Wellness: A Medicine Wheel Reflection Janice Randhile and Nicki Eastly, Medicine Hat College At this interactive workshop, participants will be introduced to the Medicine Wheel, a powerful Indigenous framework for holistic health and balance. We will explore its four interconnected quadrants—often representing the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of self—and discover how this ancient symbol provides a roadmap to overall wellness. Through guided discussion and reflection, attendees will learn how to apply this model to their own lives, identifying areas of strength and those needing attention. This session offers a respectful and insightful opportunity to connect with Indigenous teachings, fostering a deeper understanding of balance and well-being within a campus setting.
HA 009	Thoughtful Thursday: Creative Practices for Wellbeing through Seasonal Wisdom and Peer Connection Andrea Hunt, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, and Sarah Dubreuil Karpa, Mount Royal University Creative, experiential approaches to wellbeing can offer accessible and meaningful ways for students to pause, reflect, and connect. This session brings together two complementary approaches that use art, mindfulness, and peer engagement to support student wellbeing. Participants will be introduced to a holistic wellness workshop framework grounded in seasonal wisdom from SAIT, including a short guided visualization and a nature-connected creative activity designed to support reflection and balance throughout the year. Building on this, presenters will share Thoughtful Thursdays, a peer-led, drop-in program developed through the After Hours Peer Support Centre (AHPSC) at Mount Royal University that promotes resilience and mindfulness through accessible, art-based activities such as vision boards, rock painting, and affirmation jars. Together, these approaches from SAIT and Mount Royal University highlight how creative practices and peer-led spaces can foster connection, support mental health, and provide low-barrier opportunities for students to engage in wellbeing on campus.

HA 010

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

Kasra Hakimattar, Bow Valley College, and **Nicholas Brandt**, Mount Royal University

In the Winter 2026 semester, Kasra and Nick facilitated a pilot of Dungeons & Worry Dragons, a Therapeutically-Applied Roleplaying Game administered in a group setting. Students engaged in a 10-week role-playing adventure that helps them practice communication, teamwork, and intentional social interaction to help them overcome interpersonal challenges in a fun and supportive atmosphere. This session, Kasra and Nick will share their experience and findings from facilitating this program, offering key takeaways for counsellors who may be interested in offering the program at their own institutions.

HA 017

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

Nate MacLellan, **Billie Brown**, **Ryan Bird**, **Meagan Goerz**, **Georgia Bowman**, **Branden Meier** and **Cohen Kushnerik**, Concordia University of Edmonton

Post-secondary recreation and athletics programs play an important role in supporting student wellbeing beyond physical performance and activity. This session brings together several perspectives on how campuses are creating environments that support student-athletes as whole individuals. Presenters will share approaches that expand recreation programming to foster inclusive campus community and connection across diverse student groups. Participants will also learn about initiatives that integrate wellness directly into athletics, including the Five Years & Beyond program, which supports student-athletes across the Seven Dimensions of Wellness. Together, these examples highlight how recreation and athletics spaces can become powerful settings for promoting belonging, wellbeing, and personal growth. Through a series of short presentations, attendees will gain ideas and practical insights for embedding holistic wellness approaches within campus recreation and athletics programs.

12:00 PM

Tegler Student Centre

Lunch

1:00 PM–2:00 PM

Telger Student Centre

Concurrent Session 2

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

Danial Jamal, **Abdelrahman Alramahi**, **Adham Bahy**, **Noureldin Alsafadi**, and **Imaad Nayeem**, University of Calgary

Meals That Last is a grassroots men's wellbeing program that brings men together in the kitchen to cook, eat, and have real conversations about masculinity, relationships, fatherhood, and violence prevention. What started with a few cohorts in Calgary's Muslim community has since grown into recurring mixed-men sessions on campus with the support of Residence Services and the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Support Office. In this session, we'll share how the program works, what we've learned from running it, and how cooking side-by-side creates the kind of space where men actually open up. We'll also discuss how this model could be adapted across campuses and communities.

HA 208

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, Mi'kai'sto (Red Crow) Community College

As the late Honorable Murray Sinclair once said, "Education is what got us into this mess, and education will get us out."

Navigating the pathway to post-secondary education can be daunting. Whether students are recent high school graduates or someone returning to school later in life. The process is often filled with uncertainty, fear, and questions, but it does not have to be. This session will help reveal this journey, so that we can empower individuals to take that first step with confidence. Understanding the Who, What, When, Where, why, and how of post-secondary education is essential. Who do you talk to? What questions should you ask? Where do you go for support? Why is this path right for you? How to possibly search for funding? These are just a few of the critical questions that can shape a successful educational experience. This session will guide attendees through helping students identify the right program, accessing funding opportunities, and knowing when and how to ask for help. Whether you are exploring options for yourself or supporting someone else, this is the place to begin your journey. Together, we can build a pathway that leads not only to academic success but to personal growth and community empowerment.

HA 009

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

Lisa Teigen and Taylor Doef, The King's University

As digital technologies increasingly shape how we work, learn, and connect, many students are navigating constant notifications, multitasking, and online engagement. This session explores how campuses can better understand and respond to the impact of digital habits on student well-being and connection. Engaging in regular positive social interactions is critical for well-being. These interactions, however, have undergone significant changes in our modern digital age. The mobile smartphone provides access to an inexhaustible amount of stimulation and distraction. Phubbing or "phone snubbing" occurs when people use their phone in a social setting instead of talking directly to those in their company. The experience of phubbing in dyadic relationships demonstrates negative impacts on relationship satisfaction, enjoyment of conversation, and mood. To combat this, digital detoxes provide beneficial effects regarding smartphone use and social media addiction. Building on this foundation, presenters from The King's University will share their King's Unplugged initiative, highlighting events designed to encourage students to step away from screens, strengthen in-person connection, and spark broader collaboration across campuses.

HA 010

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

Taryn Nelson, Red Deer Polytechnic

Developed at Red Deer Polytechnic by a former student turned staff member, Here For You HQ was created to strengthen wellbeing on campus. Designed to centralize information and resource sharing, event promotion, engagement activities, and passive education, the initiative aligns with the objectives and outcomes of the Student Mental Health Strategy. This presentation will walk through the planning, development, and implementation of Here For You HQ, highlighting key considerations and lessons learned. Now serving as a welcoming, one-stop hub, Here For You HQ encourages students to stop by, engage, connect with community resources, and learn how to best support their own wellbeing.

HA 017

Strengthening Student Mental Health Surveys: Practical Strategies for Institutions

Adrijana D'Silva, University of Calgary

This session explores how post-secondary institutions can ethically and meaningfully engage students in mental health survey practices. Drawing from a multi-phase research initiative examining survey-based mental health data collection across Canadian campuses, we share lessons from an environmental scan and student-engaged focus groups that informed the development of a Student-Informed Mental Health Survey Framework. Rather than focusing solely on findings, this presentation highlights the research process itself (building partnerships, clarifying roles, navigating ethics, and aligning with accountability frameworks) to strengthen trust, transparency, and impact in campus mental health research.

2:00 PM

Tegler Student Centre

Break

2:30 PM–4:00 PM

Tegler Student Centre

Keynote Address

Dr. Carol Hopkins, Thunderbird Partnership Foundation

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. [\(continued on next page\)](#)

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.

4:00 PM–4:15PM
Tegler Student Centre

Share & Celebrate

4:00 PM

Break

**Tegler Student
Centre**

**Summit Dinner and Recovery Champion Awards, hosted by
Recovery
on Campus**

The Summit Dinner and Recovery Champion Awards, hosted by Recovery on Campus (ROC) Alberta, is an opportunity to celebrate the summit and recognize the post-secondary institutions involved in creating campus recovery programming on their campuses, the Lived Experience Award winners, and successes in the past year.

Join us for mocktails, a delicious dinner, connection, and celebration!

4:15 PM

Mocktails and Networking

5:00 PM

Buffet Dinner Starts

5:15 PM

Formal Program Starts

6:00 PM

Networking Time

6:30 PM

End of Networking Time & Summit Day 1 Close

7:00 PM

Mingling & Take Down

HCA 2026 Wellness Summit Agenda

Day 2 - Friday, May 22, Concordia University of Edmonton

8:00 AM Tegler Student Centre	Doors Open and Breakfast
8:30 AM	Welcome and Day 1 Reflection
9:00 AM–4:00 PM	Summit Wellness Room (HA 303) and Student Research Showcase (Mezzanine)
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Tegler Student Centre	Concurrent Session 3 Voices of Recovery in Post-Secondary Education Renaud Gom and Amrit Matharoo , <i>Recovery on Campus/University of Calgary Recovery Community</i> Drawing on findings from a Canadian pilot study conducted by the Recovering in Place Lab, this session shares student-identified recovery supports, barriers, and campus conditions shaping recovery experiences in post-secondary settings. Emphasizing practice over theory, participants will engage in facilitated breakout groups to reflect on how these findings show up on their own campuses and identify concrete, actionable strategies to strengthen recovery-supportive environments. Through a guided mapping activity, participants will also have the opportunity to surface shared questions and priorities for future community-based inquiry, helping connect evidence to practice in ways that are relevant, feasible, and collaborative. The session supports collective wayfinding toward more sustainable, recovery-inclusive campus systems.
HA 208	Beyond Digital Detox: Rebuilding Regulation and Real Connection Richard Lee-Thai , <i>Excuses to Connect</i> Many of us know the pattern. You check your phone for a moment. 30 minutes pass. You are still scrolling. Doomscrolling, binge-watching, constant notifications. It can begin to feel like technology addiction. In "The Anxious Generation" by Jonathan Haidt, he highlights how rising screen use is causing a mental health crisis. Across campuses, digital overuse often functions as a coping strategy. It helps avoid difficult emotions and manage loneliness, but it actually creates more disconnection and dysregulation. This experiential session offers a different approach to digital detox. Instead of focusing on restriction, discipline, or productivity hacks, we explore what is happening in the body. Participants will engage in guided movement, breathwork, music, and structured reflection to understand how stress shows up physically and how to shift it in real time. When people feel safer, more regulated, and more connected in their bodies, the impulse to digitally numb begins to decrease.
HA 009	The Value of Experiential Wellness Programming for Staff & Faculty Leigh Bodnar-Rollings , <i>Mount Royal University</i> Leigh will share what Mount Royal University (MRU) is currently doing on their campus to promote wellbeing and share low-cost ways wellness programming can be implemented. Specifically, she will focus on the value of experiential wellness programming and explore ways that campuses can tap into the resources that are available to them on campus to promote wellbeing. This presentation will discuss how the MRU programming got started, how they built leadership buy-in, and the types of events they hold for employees, and then open up a Q&A/discussion session.
HA 010	The Conflict Lab: Transform How You Handle Conflict Julie Hrdlicka , <i>Conflict Revolution</i> This one-hour workshop introduces the Three Conditions for a Conflict Revolution: Building Place (self-awareness), Holding Space (relational engagement), and Seeing Systems (contextual understanding) within postsecondary life. Postsecondary institutions are meant to foster dialogue and difference, but polarization, pressure, and disconnection often get in the way. Students experience this in how they relate to themselves, peers, and instructors. Through interactive exercises, participants practice the three conditions to strengthen their capacity to engage conflict with more clarity, curiosity, and care.

HA 017

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

David Campbell, Red Deer Polytechnic

Digital wayfinding is increasingly essential as students navigate complex post-secondary systems with limited time, capacity, and support. This session explores a system for making instructional videos that can support student well-being by reducing confusion, anxiety, and cognitive load, while also supporting staff sustainability. Drawing from practice in accessibility and student services, participants will learn why video is an effective wellness-oriented communication tool and how to create clear, engaging instructional videos without formal media training. The session combines motivation, practical examples, and a live demonstration of a simple, repeatable video-creation workflow that participants can adapt for their own contexts.

10:00 AM

Tegler Student Centre

Connection/Wellness Break

This year's Connection/Wellness Break will include a Speed-Friending session!

10:30 AM–11:30 AM

Tegler Student Centre

Concurrent Session 4

Diverse Projects, Common Values: An Array of Student Research Projects on Postsecondary Mental Health

Dr. Brittany Lindsay, Jenin Ahmad, Monique Chen, and Skylar Earle, University of Calgary

In this session, Dr. Brittany Lindsay will introduce postsecondary mental health research within the University of Calgary context, which will be followed by presentations on various student research projects from former honour students from the Mental Health Lab at UCalgary. Projects explored the impacts of climate anxiety (Jenin Ahmad) and university expectations on student wellbeing (Monique Chen), as well as the stigma towards accommodations and neurodivergence (Skylar Earle). The session will end with a collaborative Q&A discussion with all presenters.

HA 208

Indigenous Student Support Community of Practice

Connection space

This is a dedicated session for those working in Indigenous campus centres and First Nations postsecondary communities to shape a shared provincial space for connection, collaboration, capacity-building, and knowledge-sharing.

HA 009

Counsellors Community of Practice Roundtable – Open Invitation

Facilitated by Courtney Warren, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology

Join us for a Counselling Community of Practice (CoP) roundtable! This event is a collaborative space for professionals working in the field of student counselling and mental health to connect, learn, and share expertise.

This meeting will bring practitioners together to create and exchange knowledge, build professional networks, and identify emerging trends, research priorities, and advocacy needs in the field to help shape resources and programming that support both counsellor well-being and student success. Whether you are new to the profession or a seasoned practitioner, your insights are valued, and your participation strengthens our collective practice.

While this CoP is aimed at Counsellors in postsecondary settings, practitioners in all fields of counselling are warmly invited to attend and contribute to this growing professional community.

*Note: this CoP will run from 10:30 AM-12:30 PM.

HA 010

Power Playbook: Innovative Support for Student-Athletes

Sonia Skobkareva, U of A and The Hidden Opponent; Madison Kane-Rissling, University of Calgary Alumnus; and Isaiah Neil, Blue Shoes and U of A

Building on last year's student-athlete panel, which focused on raising awareness of the unique mental health challenges faced by student-athletes, this interactive session presents an integrative, holistic approach to student-athlete mental health within a campus community of practice. Participants will join current and former student-athletes in a simulated time-management exercise that reflects the lived realities of the student-athlete experience. Then they will explore strategic tools and resources for engaging with the student-athlete body and how they can be implemented on their campus. Finally, participants will come together to discover the benefits of these strategies on the greater campus community.

HA 017

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

Jessica Lynn-Walsh, Owerko Centre with the Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute, UCalgary

Canadian data indicate that 53% of postsecondary students experienced loneliness last year, while 48% reported low social support. At the same time, growing numbers of students are struggling to form lasting friendships during their postsecondary studies. A lack of meaningful social connection poses significant risks to both physical and mental health and can adversely affect academic engagement and achievement. This presentation will provide an overview of current student wellbeing trends in Canada and Alberta, highlight the critical role of social connection and belonging for health and well-being, and outline evidence based strategies to strengthen student connection and foster inclusive campus communities.

11:30 AM–12:30 PM

Tegler Student Centre

Collaboration Session and HCA Community Hub Launch!

Healthy Campus Alberta is excited to launch the new and improved Community Hub! The Mighty Networks HCA Community Hub serves as an engaging, accessible, and ongoing way to interact with and learn from the Healthy Campus Alberta Community of Practice. This is a space to connect and collaborate online, outside of HCA in-person and live events across the province. It is not just another discussion board; rather, a place to share resources, explore hot topics, and stimulate conversations related to post-secondary mental health and well-being.

This session will bring together all attendees to learn about Healthy Campus Alberta's new Online Community Hub, and impact the future of this exciting platform's development. See how you can continue to share resources, connect with campus community members from across Alberta, and collaborate with others over topics that matter most to you.

12:30 PM

Tegler Student Centre

Lunch

1:30 PM–3:00 PM

Tegler Student Centre

U of A Keynote Panel - Pass the Mic: A Student-Led Approach to Engagement

Richard Lee-Thai (Moderator), Rafay Meer, Adam Trudel, Janvi Bali, Fareena Ahmed, Rabia Dhanani, Isaiah Neil, and Gurleen Kaur

Creating meaningful student experiences on a large campus requires more than well-designed programming. It calls for authentic partnership with students and a willingness to share power in how engagement takes shape. This University of Alberta student panel brings together diverse student perspectives from across campus, including those involved in wellness initiatives, peer engagement, advising contexts, and broader campus life. Moderated by Richard Lee-Thai, connection expert and founder of Excuses to Connect, panelists will explore how student voice can meaningfully inform and shape programs, services, and initiatives, highlighting both volunteer-driven models and other forms of student leadership and engagement. Drawing on approaches grounded in universal design, intersectional awareness, and relational wayfinding, the discussion will emphasize moving beyond transactional interactions toward more relational, responsive, and inclusive practices. Attendees will gain practical insights on how to engage students as partners across varied contexts, amplify diverse voices, and create conditions where students are not only supported, but actively influencing and co-creating the systems intended to serve them.

3:00 PM–3:15 PM

Tegler Student Centre

Share & Celebrate | Closing the Summit in a good way