

Symposium 2025 Breakout Sessions



Schedule at a Glance

9:30 am – 10:15 am	Opening, Welcome, Elder Blessing Education Ministry Sponsor Spotlight
10:15 am – 11:00 am	Learning Circle
11:05 am – 12:15 pm	Breakout Sessions (x 7)
12:15 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch Break/Networking
12:55 pm – 1:00 pm	Program Announcement
1:00 pm – 1:45 pm	Keynote
1:50 pm – 3:00 pm	Breakout Sessions (x 8)
3:00 pm – 3:20 pm	Sponsor Spotlight, Prize Draws, Awards
3:20 pm – 3:30 pm	Closing Remarks

Saturday 11:05 am – 12:15 pm

[How to Empower \(Not Help\)](#)

[Modernizing Alberta's Apprenticeship Education System: Opportunities and Innovations](#)

[The School Council-Trustee Relationship](#)

[Fundraising Association \(FRA\) Roles and Relationships](#)

[Starting a Social Media Conversation with Your Kids](#)

[National Council for Reconciliation](#)

[The Assurance Framework and School Councils](#)

Saturday 1:50 pm – 3:00 pm

[The Four Seasons of Wellness: Finding New Ways to Build Resilience](#)

[Rising Strong: *Resilient Schools, Stronger Futures: The Power of Rising Strong After Challenges*](#)

[Chair Basics: Not Just for Chairs!](#)

[Tools for Effective School Councils](#)

[AI: The Potential and the Peril](#)

[Empowering High School Students with Disabilities to Advocate at the Post-Secondary Level](#)

[Childhood Anxiety: Helping Children Heal **Pre recorded session*](#)

[Fundraising Association \(FRA\) Roles and Relationships](#)



Sue Huff

How to Empower (Not Help)

suehuff.ca

When someone is suffering, we naturally want to release them from that pain. We want to provide comfort, support, solutions, ideas, advice.... in short, we want to HELP. But sometimes, our help doesn't seem very... helpful. It may be met with defensiveness or ignored. It may seem to make things worse. It may be rejected entirely. Often that is because our good intentions aren't very empowering and the person who is on the receiving end of our help feels in some way diminished, blamed, misunderstood, or judged.

This workshop will start the process of shifting you from a well-intentioned helper to someone who empowers others. Your role will move from the "one with the answers" to the "one who helps them find their own answers". We will discuss healthy boundaries, the difference between feeling "Responsible FOR" someone and feeling "Responsible TO" someone. Sue will also share how active listening and becoming more comfortable sitting with difficult emotions can help you walk beside someone rather than feeling the need to protect them from their pain, rush in to fix it, or avoid it altogether.

Sue is trained in family peer support, emotion-focused family therapy, and mediation. She is a therapeutic behavioural assistant with Edmonton Catholic Schools, working with students who have emotional regulation and behavioural challenges. She also offers workshops for teachers and educational assistants (EAs) across the province on emotional de-escalation strategies, and has a private practice supporting parents who have children with eating disorders.



Kathryn Andrews

Modernizing Alberta's Apprenticeship Education System: Opportunities and Innovations

Government of Alberta, Advanced Education

Alberta's apprenticeship education system is modernizing to ensure it remains relevant and effective in an evolving education system and changing economic landscape. Parents and educators play a key role in guiding students towards diverse post-secondary options, including apprenticeships. Join us to gain insights into exciting developments, learn about opportunities for your involvement, and hear about how Advanced Education is increasing opportunities for K-12 system collaboration and strengthening pathways into and beyond Alberta's apprenticeship system.

Kathryn Andrews is the Director of Apprenticeship Education and Pathways with Alberta Advanced Education. Kathryn has worked in the Government of Alberta for more than 19 years in the fields of apprenticeship education, career development and supporting youth. She is passionate about helping Albertans pursue post-secondary education and finding a career they love.



Shaun Fay

Shaun Fay is a Senior Program Coordinator in Program Implementation with Alberta Advanced Education. He has worked with the apprenticeship system and skilled trades in the Government of Alberta for ten years. Prior to joining the Government of Alberta, Shaun worked in private industry as a Journeyperson and manager, promoting the opportunities offered by apprenticeship programs to staff and colleagues. He is excited to help expand Alberta's apprenticeship system and looks forward to developing new and exciting apprenticeship opportunities.



Suzanne Lynch

The School Council-Trustee Relationship

Alberta School Council's Association

Understanding this relationship is vital to assist you in successfully furthering your role in the school community. School councils should understand the role of the school board Trustee, and the Trustee should be aware of their role with school council. A Trustee is a valued partner who can share school board information with parents they represent, and school councils can provide valuable parent perspectives to aid in division planning and decisions.

Suzanne has been self-employed for 34 years as an aesthetician. She continues her passion for learning and personal growth, earning her license as a Realtor and graduating with an Addictions and Community Service diploma. She has a great love for helping others reach their true potential.

Suzanne has been self-employed for 34 years as an aesthetician. She continues her passion for learning and personal growth, earning her license as a Realtor, and a diploma with Addictions and Community Service. She has a great love for helping others reach their true potential.

Suzanne has been an active member of her daughter's school community and School Council, and volunteers in her community regularly. She enjoys developing interpersonal relationships with diverse groups.

Suzanne joined the ASCA team nine years ago and is excited to be working within school communities. Seeing parents engaged in their child's success, while supporting their understanding of School Councils and Fundraising Societies, is something she finds very rewarding.



Brenda Kell

Fundraising Association (FRA) Roles and Relationships

Alberta School Councils' Association

Parent participation in Fundraising Associations is an important contribution to their child's school. We will discuss the role of the Board members, the decision-making process, the role of the School Principal, and the role of the Association membership. Join us to learn how the stakeholders work together for the benefit of students.

Brenda Kell has twelve years' experience with School Councils in a variety of positions. Six years as a Fundraising Coordinator, two years as a parent representative to the GATE Parents Association, one year as Vice Chair and three years as a School Council Chair permits her to understand a wide scope of school council issues.

Brenda has volunteered extensively in schools with a focus on classroom presentations demonstrating how Math and Science are integrated into other subjects. Brenda is a retired Electrical Engineer, and her professional background is in regulatory affairs, strategic planning, and best practices.

Known in her neighbourhood as the Lab Lady, Brenda breeds champion Labrador Retrievers and is always happy to "talk dogs".



Jo Phillips

Starting a Social Media Conversation with Your Kids

JoOutLoud

Today's kids live in a digital world where social media is central to their relationships, learning, and self-expression. But when things go wrong online, many kids stay silent—often out of fear that adults will react by taking away their devices instead of offering support. Even kids who *don't* use social media themselves are impacted by it daily, whether through their peers, family members, or the adults in their lives.

This session is designed to help parents, educators, and caregivers build trust and open communication with the young people in their lives. Informed directly by in-school sessions where kids share their experiences, this conversation will bridge the gap between adult concerns and kids' realities.

In this session, participants will:

- Gain insight into how kids actually experience social media—the good, the bad, and everything in between.
- Understand how kids are impacted by social media and device use, including the behavior of adults around them.
- Learn what kids *wish* adults understood about their online world.
- Develop better questions to ask, shifting from control-based rules to trust-based guidance.
- Walk away with practical tools to foster ongoing, positive conversations at home.

Instead of banning and blaming, we can help kids navigate social media safely while maintaining their trust. This session provides the understanding and strategies parents need to support their kids in making smart, confident digital choices.

Jo Phillips, known online as JoOutLoud, is a professional speaker and youth resilience coach based in Alberta, Canada. With a background in psychology and extensive experience in social media, Jo has dedicated her career to empowering youth and fostering meaningful conversations between young people and the adults in their lives.

As the founder of the "Starting a Social Media Conversation" program, Jo has engaged over 170,000 students and 10,000 parents across Western Canada, facilitating open dialogues about social media use and its impact. Her approach emphasizes understanding the online experiences of young people and equipping adults with the tools to guide and support them effectively.

In addition to her work with youth, Jo co-founded and led Joe Social Media, a social media agency, for 11 years, providing social media management, training, and resources to help communities navigate the digital world. She is also the Executive Director of Rural Red Deer Restorative Justice, demonstrating her commitment to community engagement and conflict resolution.

Jo holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Calgary and is a certified Youth Resilience Coach through the Youth Coaching Institute. She is passionate about creating supportive spaces for kids and teens, fostering stronger relationships, and providing adults with the tools to focus on the needs of young people.

Through coaching, restorative justice, and practical resources, Jo works to change how we approach parenting, education, and youth engagement, prioritizing communication, connection, skill development, and growth. Her mission is to help kids and adults get back on the same page, building resilience and empowering the next generation.



Charlene Bearhead

National Council for Reconciliation

National Council for Reconciliation

Calls to Action 53-56 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada called for the establishment of a National Council for Reconciliation for the purpose of monitoring and reporting on the progress towards reconciliation in Canada. In this 10th year since the release of the TRC Final Report and 94 Calls to Action, the inaugural nine-member Board of Directors was announced on March 3, 2025 - marking the official launch of the National Council for Reconciliation.

The primary areas of focus for the National Council will include children in care, funding for education, educational attainment and more, related to Indigenous peoples in this country. As one of the nine Directors appointed to the inaugural board, Charlene Bearhead will provide insight into the composition and undertaking of the National Council for Reconciliation, relating it to the work of parents and school councils.

Charlene Bearhead is an Alberta-based educator, Indigenous education advocate and author who has served Survivors, intergenerational Survivors, and Indigenous Peoples more broadly for over 30 years. Recently named to the inaugural Board of Directors of the National Council for Reconciliation, Bearhead has focused throughout her career on education as a tool for reconciliation, having worked to establish the National Indigenous Education and Reconciliation Network Gathering that has taken place in May since 2017.

Since 2019, Bearhead has served as the Vice-President of Learning and Reconciliation at the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, and has extensive experience in education and reconciliation at the regional, national and international level. She served as the education coordinator for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and served on the Indigenous Education working group for both the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the National Film Board. Bearhead worked as the coordinator for Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation's first Residential School Survivor program in the 1990's, was the first Education Lead for both the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre at the University of British Columbia, and volunteered in the planning and delivery of children's and youth tracks of Healing Our Spirit Worldwide in Edmonton, Alberta, and New Mexico and Hawai'i, USA.



Brenda Cryer

The Assurance Framework and School Councils

Alberta School Councils' Association

The Assurance Framework, introduced with the *Weighted Moving Average Funding Model* in February 2020 and implemented provincially in September 2020, is designed to demonstrate to Albertans that the education system is meeting student needs and that students are successful.

The Assurance Framework is based on the importance of stakeholder engagement (i.e., parents on school councils) in a more meaningful planning process. School boards are responsible for the engagement of the parents of their students, and to provide the opportunity for school council engagement in developing the education plan, results report, and other items critical to student success. Principals are expected to create similar opportunities specific to the local context of their own school communities.

All education partners share the responsibility for student growth - including parents and school councils!

Brenda was involved in school councils in Parkland School Division for 19 years. She was involved with four different school councils, sometimes two at once, as well as the COSC, and had the pleasure of starting a new school council for a new school. Brenda received a Special Recognition award from the Office of the Superintendent of Parkland School Division and is a recipient of the School Council Parent of Distinction Award from ASCA. Both of her children have graduated from the school system, but she has a passion to ensure the school system works in the best interest of the students.



Kelly Maxwell

The Four Seasons of Wellness: Finding New Ways to Build Resilience

The SILA Skills Group

As spring approaches, it's the perfect opportunity to reflect on our mental wellness and that of our loved ones. Each season represents a unique phase of our emotional journey:

Spring symbolizes growth and renewal. It's a time filled with eagerness to learn and develop new skills, fostering hope and potential.

Summer embodies abundance and joy. During this season, we often feel on top of the world, experiencing a sense of wholeness and fulfillment.

Autumn can bring challenges. Emotions may feel heightened, and interactions with ourselves and others can become difficult, leading to a sense of introspection.

Winter represents stillness and reflection. This season can feel dark and empty, but it also provides an opportunity for rest and renewal.

In this session, we will explore how to appreciate and navigate the season we are currently in, both personally and for our loved ones. Through practical skills and strategies, we will learn how to build resilience, fostering a deeper understanding of ourselves and enhancing our connections with others. Join Kelly Maxwell as she leads you to discover new ways to thrive through each season of wellness.

Kelly Maxwell is an accomplished educator with over 30 years of experience. Her wellness journey was deeply influenced by her adult son's mental health challenges, which inspired her to co-develop SILA Skills, a program that teaches individuals and organizations in workshops and seminars based on Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills.

In her engaging presentations, Kelly shares relatable stories that illustrate practical tools for building resilience and connecting with others. Participants appreciate her dynamic style and leave equipped with strategies they can apply immediately in their personal lives and work environments.

Join Kelly and explore how to foster hope and resilience during tough times, and to empower yourself and those around you.



Kimberly Knull

Rising Strong: Resilient Schools, Stronger Futures: The Power of Rising Strong After Challenges.

Courageous Leadership

Representing Dr. Brené Brown's latest research on vulnerability and shame, the Rising Strong™ workshop will provide insights into:

- Rising after failure, disappointment, and loss, and the process for moving through them
- The physics of vulnerability and guidelines for rising after a fall
- How stories have power in your life to drive emotions, thoughts, and behaviours
- What it means to rumble with emotions like shame, guilt, anxiety, blame, accountability, resentment, grief, forgiveness, and perfectionism
- Emotional offloading strategies and how they move us away from our values
- Recognizing and capturing the stories we make up when faced with struggle
- Writing your own daring endings to tough stories
- Daring people fall. Own your story of falling to write your own bold ending.

This session is for anyone looking to rise from setbacks, losses and disappointments with greater courage in any area of their professional and personal life, and tips for helping students do the same.

Teachers, students and administrators have and continue to face unprecedented challenges in their professional and personal lives. It's imperative that we learn the skills that create resilience so that we can support them in managing the tremendous stressors that they face.

Kimberly Knull is a Registered Psychologist, motivational speaker, trained by Brené Brown as a Dare to Lead™ facilitator and host of The Overwhelm Cure Podcast. She's the Co-Founder of Momentum Walk-In Counselling Society, a non-profit mental health counselling agency for those who would otherwise be unable to access quality services.

Kimberly is no stranger to the media. She's recognized as one of Avenue magazine's Top 40 Under 40, hit the CBC AM and 880 CHED Radio's airwaves as their parenting columnist, and is a go-to for local news.



Brenda Cryer

Chair Basics: Not Just for Chairs!

Alberta School Councils' Association

Chairing a school council meeting can be exciting, confusing or down-right scary! Having confidence with a clear understanding of Chair responsibilities and processes will help to keep meetings focused, productive and fun! Overview of the roles of the Chair, agenda preparation, duties of other members, communication, meeting management tools and skills will be discussed.

Brenda was involved in school councils in Parkland School Division for 19 years. She was involved with four different school councils, sometimes two at once, as well as the COSC, and had the pleasure of starting a new school council for a new school. Brenda received a Special Recognition award from the Office of the Superintendent of Parkland School Division and is a recipient of the School Council Parent of Distinction Award from ASCA. Both of her children have graduated from the school system, but she has a passion to ensure the school system works in the best interest of the students.



Suzanne Lynch

Tools for Effective School Councils

Alberta School Councils' Association

In this fast-paced session, a myriad of resources, tips, templates and tools will be provided to help participants to understand the culture of their local community and basic volunteer psychology. Participants will also be encouraged to conduct their own exploration of their school community culture/barriers, volunteer motivation, and strategies to increase the effectiveness of their own School Council.

Suzanne has been self-employed for 34 years as an aesthetician. She continues her passion for learning and personal growth, earning her license as a Realtor, and a diploma with Addictions and Community Service. She has a great love for helping others reach their true potential.

Suzanne has been an active member of her daughter's school community and School Council, and volunteers in her community regularly. She enjoys developing interpersonal relationships with diverse groups.

Suzanne joined the ASCA team nine years ago and is excited to be working within school communities. Seeing parents engaged in their child's success, while supporting their understanding of School Councils and Fundraising Societies, is something she finds very rewarding.



Doug Doran

AI: The Potential and the Peril

Red Deer Polytechnic

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has great potential to do things currently not possible for a human and to do those things quickly and consistently. This can include automating work, cutting edge medical research, diagnosis of medical conditions, or the design of new high tech devices. In the process AI may be used for tasks that will not benefit human kind.

The use of AI in military applications or to replace human workers at scale is only the beginning. Within a few years, it is expected that AI will be as smart as a human and quickly thereafter, the emergence of superintelligence may outstrip our ability to control AIs progress.

Doug Doran is the Chief Information Officer at Red Deer Polytechnic (RDP) and has had a long career focused on technology training, technology operations, and the impact of technology systems on business processes. In addition to his role (since 2106) at RDP, he has also taught, worked in private industry and held leadership positions at the University of Calgary, and SAIT. Doug holds a Master of Science in Internetworking and an Education degree from the University of Alberta.



Ana Pardo

Empowering High School Students with Disabilities to Advocate for Themselves at the Post-Secondary Level

Academic Accommodation Advising-Bridge the Gap

The transition to post-secondary can feel overwhelming, exciting and nerve-racking, all at the same time. One of the shifts from high school to post-secondary is the amount of self-advocacy that students with disabilities have to do; the post-secondary institution nor the instructors will do things for the student, instead they will do them with the student. For example, if they require any academic accommodations, it is up to the student to ensure that they have the right skills and materials to put them in place.

This information session is for parents, students, and other interested professionals who have a grade twelve student who experiences a disability related barrier in the learning environment, and will be attending a post-secondary institution this coming Fall.

Dr. Pardo has spent the last thirty-five years of her career examining disability, diversity and equity issues. She has also had the opportunity to work with post-secondary students by teaching at both the graduate and undergraduate levels in the areas of equity and disability. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology with a specialization in Disability and Multicultural Organizational Change. Dr. Pardo served as President of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS). She has been the Director of Access and Inclusion Services at Mount Royal University and was previously the Director of Accessibility Services at the University of Calgary. Most recently, she is owner and an advisor with Academic Accommodation Advising – Bridge the Gap, a self-advocacy coaching service for high school students with disability related barriers in the learning environment.



Tammy Schamuhn

Childhood Anxiety: Helping Children Heal

Institute of Child Psychology *(Note – this session is pre recorded)*

Does your child or the children you work with struggle with anxiety: panic attacks, separation anxiety, stomach aches, headaches, tantrums, obsessions/compulsions, avoidance of activities, racing thoughts, or troubles with sleep?

Anxiety has many faces, and in this workshop - parents, caregivers, and professionals will learn about the psychological and physiological roots of anxiety, why it is on the rise in our children, and what to do to help children better manage it.



Tania Johnson

This workshop has a holistic and strength-based approach that focuses on what we as caretakers, parents, and professionals can do vs. stigmatizing children who are struggling. Various facets of the child's environment will be explored that can contribute to a child's emotional struggles.

Research and theory in the field of mental health, education, attachment, naturopathic medicine, and interpersonal neurobiology will be explored.

This workshop aims to enlighten, empower, and inspire those who take care of children.

Tammy is a Registered Psychologist, best-selling author, Registered Play Therapist Supervisor, Co-Founder of the Institute of Child Psychology, and Founder of the Child-Centered Animal Assisted Therapy Association. Tammy also has a Bachelor of Education from the University of Alberta and practiced as an elementary teacher in Edmonton before going on to complete her Masters degree in Psychology.

Tammy has been working in private practice for the past 12 years in Alberta, primarily with children and their families. She approaches her clinical and educational work with parents and professionals with an attachment and neurobiological lens: all of her work is based on the neurology of the brain and how attachment is integral to adaptive functioning of both children and adults. As a child who endured much trauma in her past, she speaks about her personal experiences with family substance abuse, domestic violence, emotional abuse, and how the power of connection is integral to healing and overcoming adversity.

Tania was born in South Africa, where she received an Honours degree in psychology. She spent several years teaching in Taiwan before adventuring to places like Mount Everest base camp and the Andes in Peru and Bolivia. She then completed a one-year internship at Cancer Treatment Centres of America in Chicago, where her focus was on supporting patients in the stem cell unit. Tania then earned her Master's degree in counselling from City University of Seattle. She and her husband were foster parents to four First Nations children for five years and have two bio children of their own. She currently supervises Master's-level students and provisional psychologists. Tania works primarily from the perspective of attachment theory, which focuses on bonds between parents and children. Her gift, both in the therapy room and when writing, is to translate the latest research into concrete strategies that parents can implement in everyday life with their children.

Fundraising Association (FRA) Roles and Relationships

Alberta School Councils' Association

Parent participation in Fundraising Associations is an important contribution to their child's school. We will discuss the role of the Board members, the decision-making process, the role of the School Principal, and the role of the Association membership. Join us to learn how the stakeholders work together for the benefit of our students.

Brenda Kell has twelve years' experience with School Councils in a variety of positions. Six years as a Fundraising Coordinator, two years as a parent representative to the GATE Parents Association, one year as Vice Chair and three years as a School Council Chair permits her to understand a wide scope of school council issues.

Brenda has volunteered extensively in schools with a focus on classroom presentations demonstrating how Math and Science are integrated into other subjects. Brenda is a retired Electrical Engineer, and her professional background is in regulatory affairs, strategic planning, and best practices.

Known in her neighbourhood as the Lab Lady, Brenda breeds champion Labrador Retrievers and is always happy to "talk dogs".



Brenda Kell