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KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION THROUGH
CONTINUING EDUCATION: REFLECTIONS ON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MICROCERTIFICATE
IN TRAUMA-INFORMED EDUCATION

Nathalie Reid and Christie Schultz

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KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION THROUGH CONTINUING EDUCATION: REFLECTIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MICROCERTIFICATE IN TRAUMA-INFORMED EDUCATION

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Abstract

This dialogue explores the development and implementation of a microcertificate in trauma-informed/sensitive pedagogies and practices at the University of Regina. Through a conversation between Nathalie Reid, an assistant professor and director of the Child Trauma Research Centre, and Christie Schultz, dean of the Centre for Continuing Education, the discussion highlights the need for trauma-informed practices in education and the process of translating research into practical, accessible professional development for educators who are themselves adult learners. The dialogue details the origins of the microcertificate, the partnerships that facilitated its creation, and the impact it has had on educators, students, and researchers. Key themes include the importance of co-creation with stakeholders, flexibility in delivery methods, and the reciprocal relationship between research and practice. This dialogue underscores the potential of continuing education as a vehicle for knowledge mobilization, offering insights into effective strategies for bridging the gap between academic research and practice.

Résumé

Ce dialogue explore le développement et la mise en œuvre d'un microcertificat en pédagogies et pratiques informées par les traumatismes à la University of Regina. Une conversation entre Nathalie Reid, professeure adjointe et directrice du Child Trauma Research Centre, et Christie Schultz, doyenne du Centre for Continuing Education, met en évidence la nécessité des pratiques informées par les traumatismes en éducation et explore le processus permettant d'appliquer les recherches pour offrir un perfectionnement professionnel pratique et accessible aux éducateurs qui sont eux-mêmes des apprenants adultes. Le dialogue présente les origines du microcertificat, les partenariats ayant facilité sa création et ses répercussions

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sur les éducateurs, les élèves et les chercheurs. Les thèmes principaux comprennent l'importance de la création collaborative avec les parties prenantes, la souplesse en ce qui concerne les méthodes d'offre et la relation réciproque entre la recherche et la pratique. Le dialogue souligne le potentiel de la formation continue pour la mobilisation des connaissances et suggère des stratégies qui permettraient de rapprocher la recherche académique et la pratique.

Keywords

knowledge mobilization, continuing education, trauma-informed pedagogy, microcertificate, professional development

Mots clés

mobilisation des connaissances, formation continue, pédagogie informée par les traumatismes, microcertificat, perfectionnement professionnel

In recent years, the need for trauma-informed pedagogies and practices in education has become increasingly evident, prompting educators and researchers to seek effective ways to integrate these approaches into professional development for practising teachers and other educators. Our dialogue—between Nathalie Reid, an assistant professor and director of the Child Trauma Research Centre, and Christie Schultz, dean of the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) at the University of Regina (URegina)—details the creation and implementation of a microcertificate in trauma-informed/sensitive pedagogies and practices, now being offered through CCE at URegina.

Through our conversation, we explore the collaborative efforts that brought this program to life, the challenges and successes encountered along the way, and the profound impact it has had on educators, students, and researchers alike. By examining the reciprocal relationship between research and practice, this dialogue highlights the potential of continuing education as a powerful vehicle for knowledge mobilization, bridging the gap between academic research and practice.

Situating the Dialogue

This dialogue was recorded, transcribed, and edited with an audience of educators, researchers, and adult education practitioners in mind. The initial conversation took place in February 2025, nearly five years after the University of Regina introduced its first microcredential.

Terminology

Microcredentials

A *microcredential* is an umbrella term that includes badges, microcertificates, and other short programs, typically offered by educational institutions and sometimes offered by private providers. Since the rapid expansion of microcredentials in 2020, in Canada and internationally (Brown et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2023), university continuing education units in Canada have primarily focused on microcredentials for upskilling and reskilling in response to labour market demand. They have typically worked to develop such

microcredentials independently or in partnership with employers and industry (Schultz, 2024; Universities Canada & CAUCE, 2021).

As well as responding directly to labour market demands, universities in Canada have a unique opportunity to bring the “university to the people” (Campbell, 2017) by mobilizing research knowledge through continuing education and microcredentials. University continuing education units have the experience and capacity to support the translation of research into microcredentials for the benefit of working professionals seeking to build new, relevant, and research-based skills. However, doing so requires an openness to thinking across silos—and an openness to thinking about continuing education as a form of knowledge mobilization (Hall et al., 2016; Sá et al., 2010). Our dialogue, therefore, presents a case study of a research centre, a professional association partner, and a continuing education unit collaborating, with a shared vision, to bring research to the people who will be able to transform knowledge into practice.

While microcredentials are diverse in their structure and are still evolving, when we consider the language and definitions of *microcredentials*, most definitions note that they “are typically focused on a specific set of learning outcomes in a narrow field of learning and achieved over a shorter period of time” (Oliver, 2022, p. 5). In UNESCO’s conceptualization, they typically include a record of achievement; include assessment based on defined standards; are awarded by a trusted provider; have standalone value or may contribute to other credentials; and meet relevant quality assurance standards (Oliver, 2022).

In the case study below, *badges* serve as the record of achievement for each course-based learning experience, and the completion of a set of three badges constitutes a *microcertificate*. When digital badges are issued, and because badges can vary widely, the learning requirements are included in the digital record. For this particular microcertificate, we chose to structure each badge as three synchronous sessions (Zoom class times) of three hours each (nine hours), with an additional requirement of five asynchronous (offline) hours of commitment (homework, assignments, discussion board), for 14 hours of structured learning time. We felt this structure and duration would acknowledge and be supportive of educators’ complex and busy lives. Badges, in this case, were awarded on the basis of assessment completion to a specified standard, not numeric grades; in doing so, we intended to invite the practical application of knowledge to practice. In the dialogue, we outline the evolution and timelines of the creation of this microcertificate.

Knowledge Mobilization

It is crucial to strive to better understand how research (traditional/non-traditional, empirical/non-empirical, and lived knowledge) is translated into effective knowledge products (e.g., information briefs, infographics, helpful tips, workshops, etc.), training opportunities, professional development opportunities, and/or interventions. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) defines *knowledge mobilization* as an umbrella term that encompasses a broad array of activities relating to how research results are used and shared. These activities include, but are not limited to, knowledge synthesis, dissemination, transfer, exchange, and co-creation/co-production of research by researchers and knowledge users. SSHRC also stipulates that knowledge mobilization is a “reciprocal and complementary flow and uptake of research knowledge between researchers, knowledge brokers and knowledge users” (SSHRC, 2025). Others (e.g., Bate & Robert, 2002; Lomas, 2000; Shaw et al., 2019; Sweet et al., 2014) have written extensively

about knowledge mobilization as a relationship that moves beyond a unidirectional transmission of knowledge, and the importance of harnessing what both researchers and knowledge users consider a worthwhile investment of time. It is with these commitments to reciprocity, mutuality, and resonance that Nathalie grounded the creation of the micro-certificate, which shaped the relationship between Nathalie Reid and the CCE at URegina. Ultimately, these commitments continue to shape the ongoing evolution of the micro-certificate with feedback and input from participants. It is through these three separate but interconnected threads that we sense we have achieved the mandate of knowledge mobilization. And yet, we acknowledge that recognizing microcredential development and delivery as knowledge mobilization is not common. Expanding awareness of this potential approach is one of the goals of this article.

Trauma and Trauma-Informed/Sensitive Practices

There are many words that are used liberally to refer to trauma, but it is an extremely difficult term to define. While there is an entire canon of research literature about trauma and trauma-informed practices, the understanding of *trauma* that situates this work and this paper is:

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], n.d.)

This definition accounts for both the direct and indirect experiences of trauma as well as foregrounding the long-term impacts as a differentiator of trauma from stress. SAMHSA (n.d.) also offered a concrete and active definition of trauma-informed approaches. It stated that trauma-informed approaches include realizing what trauma is, its widespread impacts, and the potential paths to recovery; recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma; and knowing how to respond at the programmatic, policy, practice, institutional, and systemic levels to resist re-traumatization. For the purposes of the microcertificate in trauma-informed/sensitive pedagogies and practices, we included the term *sensitive* because there has been hesitation in the field of education to adopt trauma-informed practices due to the sense that they are beyond the scope of teaching. Trauma sensitivity moves away from clinical practice and toward a way of being alongside students and colleagues. As such, it seems to invite more engagement (Reid, 2022).

Methodology and Methods

Our reflective efforts in this dialogue are situated within a self-study methodological framework (Baroud & Dharamshi, 2020; Buchanan & Mooney, 2023; Kim et al., 2021; Moorhouse & Tiet, 2021). That is, we were interested in the immediate efficacy of our approach to microcertificate development, and, more broadly, we thought and talked together about the conditions that helped create this specific example of knowledge mobilization through continuing education. We chose the dialogue format to emphasize the conversational and collaborative experiences that initiated and fostered the microcertificate's development. We also note that we chose to talk about this specific microcertificate

because it is the first such microcredential developed in partnership with a research centre that has been launched at our institution.

Dialogue: Case Study of Knowledge Mobilization Through Continuing Education

Christie: Welcome, Nathalie, to our conversation about our collaboration that led to the new microcertificate program offered through the University of Regina's Centre for Continuing Education. I'm excited to discuss how this project came to be. Could you start by sharing a bit about yourself and how you came to this project?

Nathalie: Thank you, Christie. I'm Nathalie Reid, an assistant professor in the Child Trauma Research Centre at the University of Regina. My journey began as a secondary teacher, where I encountered many experiences we now recognize as traumatic. My master's research drew me to inquire into the implications of death and dying in high schools, and my doctoral studies focused on the experiences of educators of and with trauma. Ultimately, these experiences inspired my desire to develop an educational program to provide educators with relevant and meaningful professional development in trauma-informed practices.

Origins of the Microcertificate

Christie: It's fascinating to hear about your experience and how it influenced the creation of this program. As dean of the Centre for Continuing Education, [I'm aware] we're known for our professional development programs, and I've also seen the potential of continuing education to mobilize research. But what inspired you to reach out to the Centre for Continuing Education?

Nathalie: I realized that for a program like the microcertificate we were planning to develop to be effective, it needed a system and structure that offered credentialing to support educators' professional development, to honour the time they would commit to this learning engagement. I first approached the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) Professional Learning to gauge their interest in this kind of program, and they were very supportive. We then connected with the Centre for Continuing Education to explore offering a microcertificate in partnership.

Christie: Yes, a breadth of partnerships is indeed crucial for programs like this. And to this partnership, the Centre for Continuing Education brings expertise in developing and delivering professional development and microcredential programs, including those specifically designed for mid-career adult learners. How did you approach developing the content for the microcertificate?

Nathalie: We wanted the content to be resonant and responsive to educators across the province. So we worked to recruit a facilitator community representing diverse backgrounds, geographies, roles within schools, and career stages. We also included guidance from an Indigenous Elder and the Treaty Education Alliance to ensure the content was inclusive and supportive. The University of Regina and STF Professional Learning practise deep commitments to reconciliation and, as such, have embedded relationships with Elders and Knowledge Keepers. For this microcertificate, we felt the guidance and wisdom of an Elder, as well as a badge dedicated to engaging in good ways with Indigenous children and youth in schools, was contextually relevant, needed, relational, desired, and central to what we hoped this microcertificate could achieve. While we did not work directly

with Indigenous communities, we drew on our professional relationships to engage an Elder and Indigenous instructors for the creation of all the badges. Once formed, the facilitator community met virtually four times over a period of six months in early 2022 (Reid & Tran, 2025) and once face to face for a two-day training session in Saskatoon with STF Professional Learning. Following this training, the group subdivided into smaller groups, each with the Elder's guidance, to develop each of the badges of the microcertificate. This development drew on the facilitators' pre-existing professional experience and knowledge, current research, my own doctoral work, as well as my work shaping a graduate-level trauma-informed teaching course. The entirety of the microcertificate was piloted from January to April 2023, and the feedback from the pilot cohort shaped adaptations and enhancements for future offerings.

Structure of the Microcertificate

Christie: I love how many people and perspectives you brought together to design the learning. Can you share more about the structure of the microcertificate?

Nathalie: This microcertificate consists of three badges. To successfully complete the microcertificate requires learners to complete two core badge courses and one elective. The first courses we developed were:

- *Introduction to Trauma and Trauma-Informed/Sensitive Practices* provides a comprehensive understanding of trauma and its effects on behaviour. It covers topics such as the neurobiology of trauma, trauma responses, and the impact of trauma on learning and behaviour. This badge sets the stage for the other badges by ensuring all participants have a solid foundation in trauma-informed practices.
- *Walking Alongside Indigenous Children and Youth in Schools* is a unique offering that involves a face-to-face weekend session guided by an Elder and a Knowledge Keeper. This badge focuses on understanding the cultural and historical contexts of Indigenous communities and how these contexts influence trauma and healing. Participants learn about the medicine wheel and its application in educational settings, fostering a holistic approach to supporting Indigenous students.
- *Creating and Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools* explores the concept of leadership in trauma-informed practices. It challenges traditional notions of leadership by considering both individual and systemic perspectives. Participants examine how they can become trauma-informed leaders within their schools, promoting a culture of trauma-sensitivity and support.

While these are the three badges that make up the microcertificate, we also developed a badge titled *Supporting Newcomer and Refugee Children, Youth, and Families*. As we were developing the other badges of the microcertificate, it came to our attention that, as a result of the significant influx of Ukrainian refugees to Saskatchewan, teachers in the field needed more knowledge about how to support children who have experienced war. This badge functions as an alternative elective to the leadership badge. More recently, we have also begun developing additional elective badges on topics like early intervention and prevention mechanisms in schools, as well as one on grief. Our hope has been to offer flexible content and delivery methods to best suit adult learners.

Christie: That's great to hear. You just mentioned the importance of flexibility in delivery methods. Can you elaborate on how you've incorporated flexibility into the program?

Nathalie: Flexibility has been a key consideration from the start. We offer the badges across synchronous and asynchronous formats to accommodate different schedules and learning preferences. For example, the introductory badge can be completed virtually while the Indigenous-focused badge requires in-person attendance for the weekend session. We have also tailored a face-to-face offering of the introductory badge for large groups. This flexible approach ensures that we can meet the specific needs of diverse groups of educators.

Impacts: On Educators as Adult Learners

Christie: It's impressive how the program and its structure address various aspects of trauma-informed education. What impact on educators has the microcertificate had so far?

Nathalie: The response has been very positive. Participants have appreciated the depth and relevance of the content. Several have commented on how the ways in which the synchronous times were structured built community quickly and drew them into meaningful discussions around very difficult topics, in ways that were affirming and real. Educators have reported significant "aha" moments, such as understanding that negative behaviours are often a form of communication. This realization has improved their relationships with students and enhanced their sense of competence. The program has also created a space for educators to share experiences and support each other in class, through the in-between-class discussion forums, and through the collaborative nature of their assignments.

Christie: What impacts do you hope the microcertificate will have on the broader field of education?

Nathalie: I hope the microcertificate will contribute to a broader understanding and adoption of trauma-informed practices in education. By providing educators with the knowledge and tools they need to support students affected by trauma, we can create more inclusive and supportive learning environments. I also hope this microcertificate will create a ripple effect that extends the reach and impact of trauma-informed education.

Impacts: On Program Developers

Christie: In the context of impacts, and as you think about the impacts of this program, what lessons have you learned during this process?

Nathalie: We've learned the importance of co-creation with stakeholders, flexibility in delivery methods, and effective promotion.

Christie: Resonance and flexibility are indeed crucial, especially for educators who are balancing multiple responsibilities. You mentioned promotion. How have you addressed the challenges of promoting the microcertificate?

Nathalie: Promotion has been ongoing, and we've learned a lot along the way. We've leveraged our networks and partnerships to spread the word about the program. For example, STF Professional Learning has promoted the microcertificate on their website and calendar. We've also used social media and our own platforms to reach potential participants. And, of course, the Centre for Continuing Education is also promoting the program. Moving forward, we plan to engage more directly with school divisions and professional development coordinators to increase awareness and participation. It again

comes back to the importance of partnerships. By working directly with schools, school divisions, and professional associations, we are able to both promote the microcertificate and show the organization's support.

Christie: It sounds like a really comprehensive approach to promotion is evolving. What advice would you give to others who are considering developing a similar program?

Nathalie: My advice would be to start with a clear understanding of the needs of your target audience and to involve them in the development process. Co-creation with stakeholders ensures that the program is relevant and responsive. Flexibility in delivery methods is also important, as it allows you to reach a wider audience. Understand the budget and funding model within which you're working, whether it's externally funded or developed through initial investment with revenues (course fees) expected later, which is the model we followed. Finally, don't underestimate the importance of marketing and promotion. Building strong partnerships and leveraging existing networks can help you reach your target audience more effectively.

Impacts: On Knowledge Mobilization and Research

Christie: The impacts of this program have reached both educators and program developers. I'm also curious, how has the experience of developing the microcertificate informed your research?

Nathalie: The process has been bidirectional and circular. Our trauma research combined with the facilitators' experiences to shape the content of the microcertificate, and then the experiences of and feedback from microcertificate participants informed our research—through understanding the gaps, what currently exists, and what might be needed next. We then drew from the participants' feedback to inform further research. This new research continues to inform subsequent iterations of the microcertificate, creating a continuous cycle of knowledge mobilization. This relationship enhances the relevance and impact of both the research and the professional development initiatives we're creating.

Christie: That relationship between your research work and the program's evolution is so valuable. What are your future plans for the microcertificate? More specifically, how do you see the program evolving alongside your research?

Nathalie: We plan to refine the existing badges based on feedback and emerging research, develop new badges, and explore opportunities for broader geographic reach. We are also considering integrating microcertificates into university credit programs to create pathways for further academic and professional development.

Christie: This collaboration has already been incredibly valuable. Speaking in more general terms, how do you see continuing education and research centres partnering in the future?

Nathalie: I believe interdisciplinary research centres, especially, are well-positioned to partner with continuing education units. These partnerships can bridge the gap between research and practice, ensuring that research is relevant and impactful for the people who can benefit from the research the most. I think there is a lot of value in universities recognizing and supporting these collaboration efforts as part of their overall knowledge mobilization strategies.

Christie: Indeed. This makes me wonder: How has this experience influenced your thinking about knowledge mobilization?

Nathalie: This experience has reinforced the importance of a reciprocal relationship between research and practice. The feedback from participants has been invaluable in shaping our research and improving the program. It's a continuous cycle of learning and improvement. I've also come to appreciate the potential of continuing education as a powerful vehicle for knowledge mobilization. In this specific case, it allows us to bridge the gap between academic research and practice, making a tangible difference in the lives of educators as adult learners and their students. On the flip side, Christie, how do you see the role of continuing education evolving in the future, particularly in relation to knowledge mobilization?

Christie: I also see continuing education becoming increasingly integral to knowledge mobilization efforts. As the pace of change in education and other fields accelerates, the need for ongoing professional development will only grow. Continuing education can provide a flexible, responsive platform for translating research into practice, ensuring that professionals have access to the latest knowledge and best practices. I also see the potential for greater collaboration between universities' research centres and continuing education units to create more integrated and impactful programs. The potential for collaboration and innovation in continuing education is immense. As we wrap up our conversation, is there anything else you'd like to share about the microcertificate or your experience with this project?

Nathalie: I would just like to emphasize how rewarding this experience has been. Seeing the positive impact the microcertificate has had on educators and students has been incredibly fulfilling. It's a testament to the power of collaboration and the potential of continuing education to make a real difference. I'm excited to see how the program continues to evolve and to explore new opportunities for knowledge mobilization in the future.

Christie: Thank you, Nathalie. It's been a pleasure working with you and discussing this important work. I look forward to continuing our collaboration and seeing the ongoing impact of the microcertificate.

Nathalie: Thank you, Christie. I feel the same way. This collaboration has been a great example of how we can leverage our respective strengths to create something truly impactful.

Conclusion

The dialogue we've shared provides insights into the development and implementation of a microcertificate in trauma-informed pedagogy and practice. This conversation highlights the importance of partnerships, flexibility, and the reciprocal relationship between research and practice. The microcertificate program, structured around three core badges, aims to translate research into practical, accessible professional development for educators, addressing the critical need for trauma-informed practices in educational settings.

We have emphasized the significance of co-creation with stakeholders, including STF Professional Learning, to ensure the program's relevance. In doing so, we recognize that such collaborations also have the potential to sustain the program's development and implementation over time. Indeed, the reciprocal relationship between research and

practice has been a cornerstone of the program, with participant feedback continuously informing ongoing research and program improvements. Ultimately, the microcertificate serves as a powerful vehicle for knowledge mobilization, bridging the gap between academic research and practice for the benefit of adult learners. In creating this microcertificate, we recognize the potential of university continuing education to support the goals of researchers to extend the impact of evidence-based practice.

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