

Surging to the Future: British Columbia Summit 2013

Christine Wihak, Thompson Rivers University, British Columbia, Canada

“Summit 2013 - Surging to the Future: Research-Informed Policy, Practice and Innovation in the Recognition of Prior Learning” was a two-day conference that brought established Canadian and international researchers in the area of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) together with members of BC PLAN (British Columbia Prior Learning Action Network). The overall goal of the conference was to ensure that BC PLAN’s efforts to advance PLAR policy and practice throughout the province are informed by the best available information from recent national and international research in the field.

The conference was held in Vancouver, British Columbia on March 25-27, 2013 with financial support from Thompson Rivers University and the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council. Presentations by scholars affiliated with PLIRC (Prior Learning International Research Centre) at Thompson Rivers University drew on the best and most current research into the development and implementation of PLAR public policy and practice. Keynote speeches were offered by Alan Davis of Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Judy Harris of Thompson Rivers University and Patrick Werquin of the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers. Presenters included: Roslyn Cameron, Dianne Conrad, Linda Cooper, Helen Pokorny, Mona Pierlorz, Nan Travers, Joy Van Kleef, Warren Weir, Ruth Whittaker and Angie Wong. (See <http://summit2013.bcplan.ca> for more information on presenters and presentations.)

The target audience for this dissemination of knowledge was PLAR stakeholders in British Columbia (policymakers, educators, employers in the public, non-profit and private sectors, PLAR practitioners, immigrant-serving agencies and professional associations), as well as a leavening of participants from other Canadian provinces and international researchers from China and Australia.

Overall facilitation of the conference was provided by a highly regarded applied researcher, Colleen Kawalilak of the University of Calgary, who assisted the participants in making the bridge between scholarly research and practical action in various spheres of interest. To this end, presentations from the internationally known scholars alternated with small group discussions. Members of the [BC PLAN board](#) acted as small group facilitators.

The conference presentations will allow British Columbian stakeholders to draw on the collective wisdom of scholars from other parts of the world who are in advance of BC in their implementation and policy development. Acknowledging that we learn as much from the mistakes of others as we do from their successes, this conference aimed to level the playing field for conference participants who would not in their day-to-day roles have time or resources to access the scope of research that this conference will amass in one place. The end result will be to build PLAR capacity in BC from the understanding that jurisdictions well beyond our borders have found new ways to respect, document and acknowledge the learning that comes from experience.