



NOIIE Symposium
Strong Roots: Rising Up
May 8-9, 2026

PROGRAM DAY 1
Friday, May 8, 2026

7:30 - 8:30	Check-In and Breakfast
8:30 - 9:00	<p>Welcome to the Symposium Lori Burger (SD 52 Prince Rupert) and Tashi Kirincic (SD 37 Delta)</p> <p>Acknowledgement of Territory Alec Dan</p> <p>Cowichan Tzinquaw Dance Group The Cowichan Tzinquaw Dance Group represents the Cowichan Tribes, part of the Coast Salish peoples of Vancouver Island.</p>
9:00 - 9:15	<p>Strong Roots: Rising Up Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser, NOIIE</p>
9:15 - 10:15	<p>Lessons from <i>Spic'n</i> - A Collaborative Journey Grounded in Story, Identity, Land, and Shared Vision Leona Prince, Anne Tenning, Jason Andrews, Christine Yanciw, and Jody Billingsley</p> <p>What becomes possible when we center story, land, and identity, and name the systemic challenges that stand in the way?</p> <p>This panel shares the journey of <i>Spic'n</i>, an evolving collaboration rooted in relationship, responsibility, and a shared commitment to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Grounded in Indigenous Storywork and land-based teachings, this work invites a reorientation of leadership and educational practice: one that is relational, responsive, and deeply accountable to community, place, and future generations.</p> <p>Panelists will share stories of practice that reflect both the tensions and the possibilities of this work, highlighting how transformational leadership can emerge when we lead with humility, center identity and voice, and stay grounded in the teachings of the land. Together, we explore what it means to build <i>with</i> community, to hold a shared vision, and to move toward meaningful, sustained change.</p>
10:15 - 10:45	Stretch & Network



NOIIE Symposium
Strong Roots: Rising Up
May 8-9, 2026

10:45 - 12:15	<p>Beautiful Work: Ron Berger</p> <p>My central passion over my 50 years in education has been the idea that we vastly underestimate the power of students to do beautiful work. By beautiful work, I don't just mean aesthetically beautiful work, but also mathematically, scientifically, historically, and ethically beautiful work. I believe that when students create academic, artistic, and athletic artifacts and performances that are far beyond what they and their community thought to be possible, those students are never the same. They have higher expectations for themselves and for the world around them. They have a rekindled and passionate mission, vision, and sense of agency to lead their own learning.</p> <p>I believe that beautiful work is transformational for individuals and academic communities. Schools are typically concerned that a focus on beautiful work will distract teachers and students from preparation for the high-stakes exams that are crucial for school success and students' academic journey. I have found instead that school communities that cultivate beautiful work and establish a culture of quality create a tide that lifts all boats: students are more proud, more focused, study more intently, treat each other with more respect, and student performance on exams rises commensurately.</p> <p>We will examine together examples of student work from across the world, and the stories of those students and the success of their schools. I will share strategies for building a school culture of excellence, where beautiful work is the standard, and strategies to help us shift school routines and daily lessons to support students to create work of quality.</p>
12:15-1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 2:00	Group Presentations, Break-Out #1
2:00 - 2:15	Stretch & Network
2:15 - 3:15	Group Presentations, Break-Out #2
3:15 - 3:30	Stretch & Network



NOIIE Symposium
Strong Roots: Rising Up
May 8-9, 2026

3:30 - 4:00	From Roots to Seeds: Jillian Lewis Building on the concept of “portable generosity” introduced last year, this conversation will create more space to consider the gifts we bring, muse on the origins and awakening of these gifts, and imagine the seeds these gifts nurture in others, whether we know it or not!
4:00 - 5:00	Social Hour (with cash bar)

PROGRAM DAY 2
Saturday, May 9, 2026

7:30 - 8:15 am	Breakfast
8:15 - 8:45	Welcome to the Day - Music and Movement Lori Burger, Tashi Kirincic, and Jillian Lewis
8:45 - 10:15	Leaders of Their Own Learning: Ron Berger The most important assessments that take place in every school are not high-stakes exams or interim assessments. They happen every day, all day long, in the minds of students. Every student assesses her understanding, her contributions, her work, and her behavior continually throughout the day, and adjusts her behavior accordingly. Do I understand this well enough? Should I ask a question? Is this paper good enough to turn in? Is my behavior respectful enough, responsible enough? This is the level of assessment that determines the quality of student growth and success in school and life, and the point of all other assessments is to find ways to turn up the dial on standards and effort in our students’ minds. What if that level of assessment—student ownership of one’s own standards and commitment—was at the center of a school’s structures and practices? What if students were in the driver’s seat of leading their own learning? We will look together at structures and practices that inspire and compel students to take responsibility for their own learning and growth—making learning public in



NOIIE Symposium
Strong Roots: Rising Up
May 8-9, 2026

	<p>a range of settings. Looking at videos from many schools, we will consider the constellation of strategies that motivate students to try their best, to assess their growth honestly and insightfully, to seek critique and support, and to maintain high standards for their behavior and work.</p>
10:15 - 10:45	Network & Stretch
10:45 - 11:15	<p>Journeys with Jo: The Promise of Transformation: Jo Chrona</p> <p>Moving from inequity to equity is a journey of transformation that requires intent and persistence. There is tension between what was and what can be, what is familiar and the yet untried. In navigating those tensions, let's talk about how we can engage with both self and systemic change awareness to create more powerful education systems.</p>
11:15 - 11:45	<p>Wellness, Belonging, and Connection: Returning to Relationship Through Land and Keyoh: Leona Prince</p> <p>This session invites participants to re-ground understandings of wellness, belonging, and connection through an Indigenous, land-based lens. Drawing on Keyoh Principles and recent learning about relational accountability, cultural safety, and Indigenous ways of knowing, the session explores how our relationships, to land, to one another, and to the stories we carry, shape individual and collective wellbeing within school communities.</p>
11:45 - 12:00	Strong Roots: Rising Up: Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser
12:00 - 12:15	Rising Up - Moving Forward