

Queen's Law Virtual Symposium, Closing Remarks, 24 June 2026

(Sharry Aiken) Michele, over to you.

(Michele Leering) Okay. Thank you. I wasn't sure if you were going to lead the entire session, but I'm quite prepared to start. The first thing I want to say is that I am deeply grateful for everything that's been shared and learned over the course of the last three days. And I also want to express my gratitude to Queen's Law, to Natalie, to Mike, to Marc, to Yashica, to Nicole, who've supported this virtual symposium over these last few months. And to all the law teacher associations in Canada, to CAPIC, and the law teacher associations in the UK and Australia, the Nottingham Trent Centre for Legal Education, and the Legal Assistance Deans Network who are organising the Australian Law Academics conference next week. There are two more events coming in the Series. I'm sure most of us are not in the UK, or some of us will be in Australia. Some people will be in Australia, not me, but with the other events in this Series. So really, really appreciative of that, and the support of the Canadian Law and Society Association.

What I wanted to comment on are three things. I want to talk a little bit about what I've gained, and I hope you're all thinking about that too. And I want to say a little bit about what we're going to do next, and a little bit about what we'd like to learn from you.

So for me, this has, I cannot tell you what hope it has inspired in me for the future of the work that we do, that so many of us have come together to share really deep reflections on our work and our motivations for doing that work, and the challenges of increasing the reflective capacity of legal professions, and the transformations that we hope will happen as a result of our work. It's been deeply inspiring to hear this, and I thank you all for contributing in that way.

I also have found it very valuable to have so many different ideas shared about the theory and the practice of reflection. And I think what's going to happen with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in law around reflective practice over the next year or so, as we get these special issues together, is going to be absolutely fabulous. I also am deeply appreciative of the focus on access to justice, ideas of people-centred justice as primary motivators for our work, and systemic injustice more generally.

And the third thing that I feel that I've gained is a real strong sense of a community building around this issue of reflective practice in law, across all these 26 countries who've been participating in some way or will be watching the recordings and reading the transcripts online after this. So, our collective reflection together is also a really valuable piece of what's happened.

In terms of what we hope to do next, I have about ten items. I'm going to talk really fast, I don't have very much time.

The first is, on the Series website Abstracts tab, once Yashika gets it all reconfigured, we're going to start uploading the presentations that people are sending to us. And in the case of the virtual symposium, we've just had - recordings and transcripts that Mike is thankfully going to be looking after for us. And Nicole is going to be proofreading all the transcripts, and we're going to get those uploaded. So, I really think that that's important work. Sharry is going to be leading the stage of the vetting process for the articles for publication in the two special issues of *The Law Teacher* and the *Legal Education Review*. And I suspect we're also going to have to come up with another way of publishing the articles, because of the number of articles that we expect. And we're hoping to do some podcasts, some interviews. There were a few people who got missed, including a speaker in Session 10, that we intend to do follow up sessions with, so we can post their presentations. But also, about half a dozen interviews. We've also got annotated books that we've got to share with you, that we thought were valuable. Resources for law teachers we've been identifying, and we hope for your help with that. And we want to work to pull together the regulators and what they've been doing in terms of minimum competence around reflective practice in many countries. And then Sharry and I are going to write a report about what's happened in the symposium series over the coming months.

So, what we'd like to learn from you. We're very curious about how this series has been landing for you, and how to move the work forward. It was difficult to convene a session together that would have helped us envision the future of reflective practice and law when we were doing it virtually. So, we're going to need to rely on the survey that you'll get a link to, either tonight or tomorrow morning, on the Padlet, and with your future engagement in the work

as we go forward. You can expect a few emails from us as we publish different items on the site. But those are the directions that we're moving in.

So, thank you all for everything you brought to this session. Deeply, deeply appreciated.

(Sharry Aiken) Thank you so much, Michele. I have my own words to say, but I'm going to save them for a bit.

It's my pleasure to call on Dory Jade, who is the CEO of CAPIC, which is the Canadian Association of Professional Immigration Consultants, the national organisation in Canada that represents immigration consultants. Dory is going to tell us a little bit about CAPIC and his vision for the organisation. And I really just want to especially acknowledge the significant contributions that CAPIC made that allowed us to hire the research assistants that are working with us, and that will be continuing on after the symposium. So, thank you, Dory. And I'm going to share a screen, because I know you had a few slides you wanted to share with everyone. So, let's see if I can follow the instructions I've given to everybody else.

1:13:57 (Dory Jade)

Oh, there we go. How's everybody? Thank you, thank you, Sharry. Thank you, Queen's team. You've been amazing. And I would like just to mention, not that I'm lazy; I didn't want to click on the link. I am legally blind. I have a visual impairment, so bear with me. Okay. So thank you. First of all, it's a pleasure to support the program. Pleasure to support Queen's, and of course any other research that is done for access to justice, for legal improvements in Canada and overseas.

So, just a brief description of what CAPIC is. And sometimes we mix it up with other things and it's unclear. CAPIC is the association, which is probably the largest, at least in Canada that I can tell of, which has practitioners in a legal field outside of being lawyers, even though we have a few lawyers with us, but as immigration consultants. So, immigration consultants is a term that has been integrated in Canadian law after CAPIC has worked for several years into pushing for getting the immigration practitioners, which are immigration and citizenship consultants, under an Act of Parliament. That has taken about seven years of work. We worked with Parliament, with the Senate. We worked with the minister, and we worked, of course, with IRCC, who were all very much in favour, but the process is very lengthy. So, this is really who we are. This is what we are behind. And of course, a program like the program offered by Queen's, and the symposium, is something that CAPIC supports and is very appreciative of.

This profession started, really, I want to take you a very long time back. Some people say in the 1700s, 1800s, whatever. But at the time, where there was something called an agent next to a boat somewhere telling, do you want to go to Canada or America or whatever, somewhere in the UK or so. And this is how they think this type of activity has started. But in our recent, I would say, 50 years, there have been practitioners in Canada who would help newcomers, or would-be immigrants, to come to Canada. So, what happened is, we wanted to get regulated by the government, because it would not have been possible to continue, and having some, I would say, unauthorised representation, that we call them now, unauthorised representatives, outside of regulation. And came forward in 1999, decision was 2000, what is known as the Mangat case. If you would like to go read about it, by the Supreme Court of Canada, which has given the first path to get regulation for the profession. So, then we came under two not for profit organisations, not for profit corporations, which were not strong enough to regulate, as is the college today.

The CICC is the outcome of about seven years of work from CAPIC. A group of members, volunteers, and of course all our resources put behind it, in order to get the Act forward. So, *The Birth of a Profession* is a book. And I would like to thank Sharry here. That is compulsory for all the newcomers to this profession, all the students, because they need to know how did it come about that they have a course through which they go, pass an exam, and from that exam they are able at least to start practising. So, this is, in a nutshell, what CAPIC has been doing and who we are. I think the next slide is now to go on. Thank you.

The idea is, even though we have brought all these years of support, if we don't continue moving forward, then things will fall apart. So CAPIC is very, very focused on best practice. We want our members and the industry at large to use best practice, and to ensure that they have the highest standard. So, in order to do so, we offer all the time continuous education. And I really always emphasise that it's not about the hours that the regulator is asking,

because sometimes people would think, okay, let me do those hours and I'm fine. We are offering, in a way, a very, very large number of hours per year. And in many ways they cost almost nothing, just to be a member. And this is really on purpose, because we want our members to cover all the knowledge needed so that they offer their clients the best. We also integrated for the members what we call the IMI suite. It's ten tools within one package that is key for every member, in order to practise better and to deliver the best service. They have access to one of the largest libraries. They have access to very special AI. And here I want to be very clear. It's what I call closed AI, which means it's an AI that works only with the material that we have given it. It's our own developed model that works only on immigration. As an example, if you ask this type of AI, and we call it, any question outside, like what's the average, and whatever other questions you may have in mind, it will tell you, I'm only specialised in immigration law and immigration practice. So we continue to support the immigration consultants in Canada, and again, any other related matters.

And on that note, I think you can go to the next slide, and I believe I will be hitting my five minutes here or so. And thank you all for giving me the opportunity to speak about CAPIC here. Thank you, Sharry, for an amazing reflection. I would name it rather a deep reflection, because I had a chance to listen to everything today. I had some issues yesterday, I just followed some stuff. But, amazing job. Thank you all. Thank you, Queen's team. Thank you, Sharry.

(Sharry Aiken) Thank you so much, Dory. And I will mention for participants that in fact CAPIC was very out in front in hosting a session on reflective practice at one of their national conferences several years ago and invited Michele to be part of the panel for a national gathering of consultants. So really, kudos to the organisation, because it's not just about knowledge, it's also about skills and building reflective muscle in practitioners. really want to acknowledge and thank you for that, Dory.

It's first my pleasure to bring back Gemma Smyth, who, as you will recall, moderated the wonderful panel yesterday, *"Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Pedagogies."* You'll remember that Gemma is a member of the faculty at Windsor Law, and she's going to share a few reflections with us now. Gemma.

(Gemma Smyth) Thanks so much, Sharry. It's hard to sum up a few days in five minutes or less, but I'll try my best. So, there were so many people at this conference who are my guiding lights. So, people I cite, people whose work I rely on, people who I count as colleagues and friends. And to have this community here, for whether you're here for one session or for all of them, has just been such a gift. So, thank you. I've also never had so many tabs open on my computer for future reading, so I know we all have a lot of follow up.

So, I think, in whatever institution you're in, whether it's a business, a firm, a clinic, university, a regulator, there are barriers, I think, to this kind of work that can lead to burnout, and sometimes a feeling of pessimism or malaise, or things feel impossible. And potentially, at least for me, this can bend towards sort of isolation or pessimism sometimes. So, Inga and Alexandra were just talking about the polycrisis. Anna talked about moves toward managerialism, and I think that's a global phenomenon, actually. And people talked about changing socioeconomic environments for students, state violence, ideological boundaries. So yes, there are lots of reasons, I think, to feel defeated. But in the panel that Sharry referenced, that I was fortunate to facilitate, the panelists described Indigenous pedagogies that value voice, community, land and the environment, emotions, spirituality. And Lindsay Borrows talked about humour.

And many of you probably know this quote, but I think about this all the time. Mariame Kaba talks about hope as a discipline. So here are a couple of comments that I hope reframe the depression into a discipline of hope, and Michele talked about a few of them already.

There is a wealth of reflective practice already happening around us that might not be acknowledged. We talked about that just in the last panel a little bit. So, Cassandra Spade talked about students having important insights and acting as facilitators and educators in our own classrooms. Liz Curran talked about the importance of reflection from the perspectives of clients and communities. And there are practitioner academics doing important work, and Alpita Shah was a great example, I thought, of that. This gives me hope. There's emerging research on all kinds of reflective practice, including, as Michele was talking about, connections between justice and reflective practice. There are creative and scholarly approaches to access to justice. Emmanuelle Bernheim talked about valuing experiential knowledge. All of this gives me hope.

And as, again, Michele noted, there is a global community of practice already developing, or developed. So, I was very interested to hear Denise Stockley, the keynote, talking about already having a community of practice in place. This consists of scholars, practitioners, students, regulators, community members, all strongly committed to teaching and learning across the personal and professional continuum. And we heard about your values that underline your work. This included cultural and emotional safety, relationality, accountability, ethics, justice, voice. All of this gives me hope.

So, thank you to everyone who contributed to this conference. I learned so much, and you've helped me feel less alone and more hopeful.

(Sharry Aiken) Thank you so much, Gemma. That was just perfect. We're going to hear a few words now from David Wiseman, who moderated the panel "*Empowering Justice and Encouraging Systemic Change*." David's with the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law. Over to you, David.

1:27:22 (David Wiseman)

Thanks so much, Sharry, and thank you to you and Michele, of course, for leading this fantastic few days and initiative, and everybody who helped you out at Queen's, and everybody who's presented, and to CAPIC for their support as well, of course. I've really taken away so much from this time and need to do some serious reflection on it all. And now feel even better equipped to do that, I guess.

For me, I'm thinking about where we are at in terms of reflective practice in the legal profession as a whole. So, thinking about legal education, or law faculties, but also transition to practice, lawyers, legal institutions, other types of legal professionals, immigration consultants, and so on, the institutions of the justice system. And I think, in keeping with what Gemma's said about how this demonstrates such a rich array of approaches and established practices, I think we're at really a tipping point on a number of fronts that will only enable the legal profession as a whole to embrace and spread and strengthen reflective practice. And I think it was, was it Malcolm Gladwell, who came up with the idea that the tipping point has reached at like 10,000 hours or something? I think 9,800 of them were put in by Michele. But others have been contributing to, of course. And it goes back decades.

But, you know, I think so, three areas where we're tipping in a productive way. In our understanding of the continuum that binds the legal profession, in terms of legal education and the role across that continuum of reflective practice. So, we're starting to understand better that this continuum spreads from law school, even before law school, through transition to practice, into the profession, and into the institutions that are engaging with the public.

I think another tipping point is in terms of competence, and how the competence framing along the continuum, but also not only competence framing, but a very rich understanding of competence. So, what it means to be a lawyer, or a legal professional, or an effective legal teacher or legal learner. And so, we're not just thinking about technical competence. We're thinking about this very rich idea of what competence means in this field, of course including reflective practice.

And then a tipping point, I think, in terms of culture, of the legal profession across all these sites and stakeholders and professionals, where there's a greater acceptance and exploration of reflective practice. And I think these are really important. I mean, maybe I am being too optimistic about this. But that's the feeling I have coming out, that the richness of this program reflects this sort of multi-dimensional tipping point that we might be at, and that this gathering is really important in terms of giving that even more momentum going forward.

So that's my reflection on the past few days. So, thanks again.

(Sharry Aiken) Thank you so much, David. Michele, I think we have a new way of framing how we're going to describe what we've just done for the last three days. That was wonderful. Well, let me add a few comments of my own as we bring this symposium to a close.

I find myself returning to a teaching I received many years ago when I was backpacking across Asia. And it was at Kopan Monastery in Nepal, just outside of Kathmandu, from the late Tibetan Buddhist master Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

He actually just passed away a few years ago. He spoke about the table as an ordinary everyday object. A table we might encounter, Lama Zopa explained, is not a solid, self-contained thing existing from its own side. It is a label we give to a particular arrangement of parts. Legs, a surface, supports, that function together in a certain way. And Lama Zopa actually used to point to the table as he would describe this. When you look closely for the real table, apart from its parts and apart from the mind that names it, you can't find it. It exists only relatively, as something dependently arisen and merely imputed.

For me, that deceptively simple teaching has always been about two things: humility and responsibility. Humility, because it reminds us that what we take to be fixed and obvious is often far more contingent and constructed than we assume. Responsibility, because once we see how things are put together, how causes, conditions, structures and stories combine, we also see that they can be put together differently. That, in a sense, is the deep promise of reflective practice that has animated the symposium, and that animates our work.

Over the past three days, we have heard from an extraordinary array of practitioners, educators, regulators and students taking the table apart in their own domains. We have heard about reflective practice as a pathway through uncertainty in clinical and experiential settings, as a discipline that supports ethical resilience in the face of pressures on the rule of law. As a tool that regulators are using to embed self-assessment, learning plans and year-end reflection across the life cycle of practice. We've seen how reflective methods are reshaping curricula, supervision models, continuing professional development frameworks, and regulatory interventions, often with the explicit goal of advancing people-centred and access to justice oriented legal services.

Again and again, you have all reminded us that reflection is not a private luxury or a nice to have add on. It's a core professional competency, and in some contexts, a form of resistance and moral imagination.

We have explored reflection as a way of cultivating wellbeing and psychological safety for students and practitioners, as a means of recognising trauma and responding in more humane, embodied ways, as a way to bridge the gap between critical theory and everyday professional decision making. We've heard about triple loop learning, reflective supervision, restorative and trauma responsive practices, mindfulness, and Indigenous and other non-Western epistemologies, each inviting us to question what we treat as given in legal education and practice, and to experiment with different arrangements of those parts.

If Lama Zopa's table is only a table because of how its parts come together, and how we choose to name and use it, then so too is the legal profession, legal education, and even access to justice. These are not monoliths sitting out there with inherent existence. They are assemblages of rules and routines, institutions and technologies, case books and codes of conduct, learning outcomes and assessment rubrics, shared habits and unexamined assumptions. Reflective practice, in the rich, multidimensional sense we've been working with here, gives us a method for examining how those assemblages are built, noticing who they serve and who they exclude, and then intentionally reconfiguring them in light of our values.

At its best, reflective practice also calls us back to interdependence. The teaching on emptiness is not about nihilism. It's about recognising that nothing stands alone. In these sessions, you have all modelled that insight by thinking across disciplines, drawing from health professions education, social work, psychology and restorative justice, by learning from Indigenous legal orders and other cultural traditions of reflection, by situating individual wellbeing within organisational cultures and broader systems, all in polycrisis. That kind of cross-pollination is itself a practice of acknowledging that our work as legal professionals is always relational: to clients, communities, colleagues, future generations, and, as several of you have stressed, to the more than human world.

So, what do we hope you will carry forward from this gathering? From my perspective as co-organiser, at least three things.

First, a renewed commitment to disciplined, critical, and compassionate self-reflection about our own positionality, our professional identities, and the impact of our work on those most affected by legal systems.

Second, a sense of reflective practice as a collective endeavour, something we build into classrooms, clinics, regulatory processes, supervision structures and organisational routines, so that we're not doing this work in isolation.

And third, a determination to let insight lead to action, to ensure that the reflections sparked here translate into concrete changes in how we teach, regulate, serve and design legal institutions.

If, after the symposium, you find yourself pausing before reacting to a difficult client, redesigning an assessment task to foreground reflective judgement, revisiting a policy through the lens of people-centred justice, or creating a small space in your organisation for shared reflective dialogue, then the table we have been assembling together these past three days will already be starting to take a different shape. And if you can do that while holding, even lightly, the knowledge that none of these structures are fixed, that they can be reimagined in the direction of greater justice, inclusion and mutual flourishing, then the connection between a Tibetan Buddhist teaching and the future of legal education becomes, I think, quite clear.

Before concluding, I want to make a wee bit of space for gratitude. My heartfelt thanks to all of our session moderators, who have guided conversations with such care and discipline over the past three days. To our presenters, who have been so generous in sharing their research, their pedagogical innovations, and often very personal reflections on struggle and change. To all of you as participants, across time zones and roles, for your questions, your honesty, and your willingness to sit with discomfort and complexity.

I also want to acknowledge once again our advisory committee members, whose guidance has shaped this symposium from its earliest stages, and our sponsors and supporting organisations, whose commitment to reflective practice and access to justice made all this possible.

And finally, my deepest thanks to my co-organiser, Michele Leering, whose vision, research and relentless dedication to cultivating a culture of reflective inquiry in law has been the beating heart of this Symposium Series.

With that, and with immense appreciation for what we've learned together, I will simply say, may the reflections begun here continue to unfold in your classrooms, offices, courtrooms, communities, and within yourselves. May they support not only better lawyers, better practitioners, consultants, but more humane legal systems, and perhaps, in a modest way, contribute to easing the many interlocking crises we face today.

Thank you all so much for being part of this work, and for the work you will carry forward from here. And with that, we will bid you adieu.