

*Integrity, Innovation and Survival: Reimagining
the Arts, Science, and Indigenous Studies
in Uncertain Times*

Date/Time	Event/Session (unless otherwise stated, all events are in the Spirit Room)
Thursday, February 19, 2026	
7:45am – 8:45am	Networking Breakfast Buffet
8:30am – 8:45am	Welcome and Introductions
Morning Sessions	
8:45am – 10:15am	Presentation by Marian and Carey Newman: <i>Creatively Uncertain</i>
10:15am - 10:30am	Morning Coffee Break
10:30am - 12:00pm	Societal Impact and Challenges Facing Universities in Canada
12:00pm - 1:00pm	Buffet Luncheon (Terrace Ballroom)
Afternoon Sessions	
1:00pm – 2:30pm	Post-secondary Prison Education Initiatives Presentation by Wade Deisman
2:30pm – 2:45pm	Afternoon Coffee Break
2:45pm - 4:15pm	Keynote Speaker, Julita Vassileva: <i>Navigating the AI Transformation from GenAI to Agentic AI to OpenClaw Framework: Strategic Frameworks for Academic Leadership</i>
6:00pm – 8:00pm	Dinner Buffet (Terrace Ballroom)
Friday, February 20, 2026	
7:45am – 8:45am	Networking Breakfast Buffet
Morning Sessions	
8:45am – 10:15am	AI Workshop with Keynote Speaker, Julita Vassileva: <i>Policy Lab: Possible Approaches Against Risks in Teaching, Research, and Management</i>
10:15am - 10:30am	Morning Coffee Break
10:30am - 12:00pm	Financial Pressures & Resource Allocation: Leading Arts, Science, and Indigenous Studies in a Constrained Environment
12:00pm - 1:00pm	Buffet Luncheon (Terrace Ballroom)
Afternoon Sessions	
1:00pm – 2:30pm	Faculty and Staff Perspectives: Institutional Culture and Morale
2:30pm – 2:45pm	Afternoon Coffee Break
2:45pm – 4:15pm	Burning and Regional Issues
4:20pm – 5:00pm	Business Meeting – Determine New Host Institution



Marion Newman is Kwagiulth and Sto:lō First Nations with English, Irish and Scottish heritage. Born in Bella Coola, Marion grew up in Sooke, BC, immersed in and embraced by her community and culture. She is one of Canada’s most accomplished singers in repertoire ranging from Charpentier to Current and operatic roles including **Carmen** and **Rosina** in *The Barber of Seville*. Nominated for a Dora Award for her leading role in the world premiere of *Shanawdithit* (Nolan/Burry) with Toronto’s Tapestry Opera, Ian Ritchie wrote “she invests her character with towering dignity and courage”.

Marion created the role of **Dawn** with the Welsh National Opera in the 2022 world premiere of *Migrations* (Todd), with stories by six writers based on their personal experiences of migrations and working with refugees. Also with Welsh National Opera, Marion starred in the premiere of *The Shoemaker*, a fusion of Latin American, Persian and Western classical musical influences, and she performed in *Migrations* Autumn 2022 UK tour.

Other recent highlights include a Juno nominated recording of the opera *Missing* (Current) in the role of **Dr. Wilson**, the role of

Maddelena in *Rigoletto* (Verdi) with Pacific Opera Victoria, Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis* with Grand Philharmonic Choir and Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony and the role of **Miss Chief Eagle-Testickle** in a preview of the indevelopment opera by Kent Monkman and Dustin Peters at Bourgie Hall in Montreal.

Recent guest appearances include Mozart’s *Requiem* - a digital co-production with Canadian Opera Company and Against the Grain Theatre, and *Five Songs on Poem’s of Marilyn Dumont* (Cusson) with the New Orford String Quartet as well as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Marion has performed several works written specifically for her, including a Canada-wide tour of *Ancestral Voices* (Tovey) with the Vancouver Symphony and *Nuyamf-ii Kulhulmx - Singing the Earth* (Hostman/Robinson) with the Victoria and Vancouver Symphonies and Continuum Concerts in Toronto. Marion premiered the role of **Sacajawea -Nu Nah Hup** (Abrahamson/Edwards/Ralls) with Opera Theatre Oregon. The story of Sacajawea from her point of view, with her direct descendent as librettist. Upcoming new works include the role of **Mimi** in *Indians on Vacation*, an operatic adaptation of the novel by Thomas King (Cusson/Vavrek) with Against the Grain Theatre.

Through commitment to authenticity, both in storytelling across the operatic canon and her approach to every role she inhabits, Marion has emerged as one of the most important artists working in Canada today. A driving force for truth and reconciliation within the context of classical music, she is helping lead colleagues and audiences through long overdue discussions about the very nature of what it means to call something “Canadian music”.

Confronting existing power structures at every turn, using every opportunity she can to elevate, empower, and promote new voices, particularly from Indigenous and other equity seeking communities, Marion is sought as a leader, consultant and performer who always demands accountability from herself and others. As a co-founder of Amplified Opera, an organization committed to holding space within the opera community for artists from diverse backgrounds, and as a professor of voice at the University of Victoria, Marion can bring people together to strengthen their voices and help create new avenues for their talents.

In her role as host of CBC’s Saturday Afternoon at the Opera Marion is bringing her inspiring colleagues to the attention of listeners across Canada and beyond. In helping to bring about a better understanding of the immense and broad scope of talents this country holds, Marion hopes to build pride and lasting support for the arts. She firmly believes that this is vital work that breathes fresh air into and brings new audiences to opera while also creating a better understanding that our national identity must include the voices of those who have traditionally been undermined and unheard.



Carey Newman OBC, MSM, FRSC whose traditional name is Nulis, is a multi-disciplinary artist, carver, filmmaker, author, and scholar. Through his father, he is Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish. Through his mother his ancestors are English, Irish, and Scottish Settlers. In his artistic practice he strives to highlight social, and environmental issues as he examines the impacts that colonialism and capitalism have on Indigenous people and culture.

Perhaps his most influential work, *The Witness Blanket*, made of items collected from residential schools, government buildings and

churches across Canada, deals with the subject of Truth and Reconciliation. It is now part of the collection at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

Newman is the inaugural Impact Chair of Indigenous Art Practices at University of Victoria, in 2023 he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws by Royal Roads University, and at a traditional ceremony in July of 2025, was transferred the name Nulis, making him a hereditary chief within the Kwakwaka'wakw nation.



Julita Vassileva is a Distinguished Professor in Computer Science at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research area is human-centred AI across a spectrum of computer science and application areas, including intelligent tutoring systems, user modelling, personalization and recommender systems, social computing, multi-agent systems, trust and reputation mechanisms, persuasive technology, and behaviour change. She serves as the inaugural section editor of *Frontiers in AI: Human Learning and Behaviour Change*, co-editor of the *HCI* section of *PeerJ Computer Science*, and a member of the Editorial boards of two Springer Nature *User Modeling and User-Adapted Interaction* and *International Journal of AI in Education*. She held the NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Prairies) from 2005 to 2011.