

As educators, we live in an era where AI promises to streamline everything from lesson planning to student assessments. As we begin our work with the BCPVPA's landmark Leadership Competencies this year, grounded in the First Peoples Principles of Learning, I am reminded of philosopher Jean Baudrillard's caution about the danger of simulation replacing authentic human connection. Baudrillard's concept of 'Simulation' is particularly relevant today: it occurs when something fake becomes real to us – say, when we start believing that the lush life an influencer portrays on Instagram is their reality. Or, when people believe that the video they are seeing is a real video with real people, rather than an AI-generated performance.

"When the real no longer is what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality: of second-hand truth, objectivity, and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of lived experience, a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared."

Jean Baudrillard, Simulation

Inspired by Indigenous wisdom, the metaphor of the BCPVPA's Leadership Competencies – Being in the Canoe – captures an essence of leadership that cannot be automated.

The First Peoples Principle of Learning that states, "learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors", fundamentally shapes how we view leadership in British Columbia's schools. This holistic understanding demands something no AI can provide: genuine humility in recognizing that we are part of an interconnected web of relationships, histories, and futures.

As school leaders in BC navigate the AI revolution, as explored in our groundbreaking webinar series **AI, Your School, and You: An Exclusive AI Roundtable Series for Education Leaders**, we are witnessing a proliferation of automated solutions. Want to generate personalized learning plans for 500 students? There's an AI for that. Need to craft parent communications? ChatGPT stands ready. Looking to analyze student data? AI algorithms await your command.

But here's what our Leadership Competencies emphasize through their core themes: while AI excels at processing data and generating content, it fundamentally cannot embody the genuine humility and authenticity or genuineness that define effective educational leadership. True leadership, as our competencies recognize, begins with the humble acknowledgment that we are always learning, constantly growing, and always in service to our communities.

The Competencies' *Contextual Literacy and Agency* and *Growing the Capacity of Self and Others* remind us that genuine leadership requires being fully present – and genuinely humble – within the complex web of relationships that make up our school communities. This aligns perfectly with the First Peoples Principle that, "learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational."

Authentic school transformation happens in our hallway conversations with struggling teachers, in the careful navigation of complex parent meetings, and in those crucial moments when a student needs not just academic guidance, but genuine human understanding. These moments demand what is at the heart of our Leadership Competencies: authentic presence and humble leadership.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

WHY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CAN'T BE AUTOMATED

by

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*"Authentic school
transformation
happens in our
hallway conversations..."*





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The core elements of effective school leadership – trust-building, emotional intelligence, cultural sensitivity, and ethical decision-making – cannot be reduced to algorithms because they require something fundamentally human:

- The humility to know when we need to learn from others
- The genuineness to admit when we don't have all the answers
- The authenticity to build genuine connections with our communities
- The courage to lead with both strength and vulnerability

The Competencies *Stewardship for the Future of All Children* and *Fostering a Culture of Curiosity and Inquiry* remind us that as we embrace technological tools, they should amplify our humanity, not replace it. These Competencies, deeply rooted in Indigenous teachings, emphasize that leadership is about fostering relationships, understanding, and growth through genuine human connection.

As a counterbalance to our haste to streamline and scale educational processes, the BCPVPA Leadership Competencies ground us in this truth: the most meaningful aspects of education resist automation because they require genuine human connection and humble leadership. Connections like student engagement. Like teacher mentorship. Like school culture. These are worth doing the slow, human way.

After all, we are not just managing institutions; we are nurturing communities where the next generation learns not just what to think, but how to be human. This work demands leaders who understand, as our Competencies emphasize, that true leadership begins with humility, thrives on genuineness, and is sustained through authentic connection. And that is something that no algorithm can replicate.

"... the most meaningful aspects of education resist automation because they require genuine human connection and humble leadership."

