

35TH ANNUAL

ISLAND FITNESS CONFERENCE

FEATURING Anne Marie Hogya, Brian Justin & Krista Popowych!

SATURDAY October 24th 2026 | Esquimalt Gorge Park Pavilion



islandfitnessconference.com

PRESENTERS and SESSIONS

ANNE MARIE HOGYA

Anne Marie Hogya is an Occupational Therapist, 5Rhythms® facilitator, and DJ known for creating grounded, welcoming group experiences that support participation, connection, and confidence. In her occupational therapy practice, she specializes in exposure therapy with individuals navigating anxiety, trauma, and pain that interfere with daily function and engagement. With more than 30 years as an occupational therapist, over 20 years teaching movement, and a Master's in Leadership and Adult Learning, she brings together clinical expertise, practical tools, and creative leadership.



KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

The Power of Paying Attention: Coaching the Room, Not Just the Workout

8:30 – 10am | UPPER PAVILION

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Great classes are not built on programming alone; they are built on attention. Occupational therapist and movement facilitator Anne Marie Hogya explores how fitness leaders can coach the room in real time: reading crowd signals, noticing sensory overload, and responding to the full range of ages and nervous systems in front of them. She shares practical cueing and adjustment tools, and examines how warmth, humour, eye contact, and meaning help people take risks, push their edges, and keep coming back. The outcome: deeper connection, greater safety, and a room full of people who feel seen.

Creativity, Risk, and What New People Need

10:15 – 11:45am | UPPER PAVILION

L

Many of us are comfortable in the physical, until we are asked to be creative, imperfect, or new. In this experiential session, Anne Marie guides participants through a 5Rhythms®-informed movement journey designed to stretch comfort zones with choice and safety. Afterward, the group debriefs: What helped you take risks? What shut you down? What would you have needed to feel differently? You will leave with practical insights and cueing tools to help new participants feel included, engaged, and willing to return. This session is 5Rhythms®-informed and inspired. It is not training instructors to teach 5Rhythms®.



VÉRONIQUE MERCIER

Véronique is a fitness professional with over 20 years of teaching experience and the co-founder and CEO of Partyfit®, a dance fitness program blending simple dance moves with functional movement. She is also the founder of VeroFitness, where she offers in-person and on-demand classes that emphasize proper form, mindful movement, and functional strength. Through her dynamic teaching style, she helps people move with confidence and joy in ways that carry beyond the studio.



Partyfit® - Morning Workout

7:00am – 8:00am | LOWER A

A

Partyfit® is a high-energy dance fitness class that blends easy-to-follow choreography with functional movement patterns. Designed with instructors in mind, your playlist becomes your class plan, making it easy to keep classes fresh. With an intuitive color and complexity system, routines can be mixed and matched to create a variety of formats and intensity levels. Come dance, sweat, and discover why Partyfit® might become your next favorite class to teach.

BRIAN JUSTIN

Brian has been in the fitness industry for 32 years and currently working as a full time Kinesiology Faculty Member at the University of the Fraser Valley in Abbotsford/Chilliwack BC where he teaches Exercise Physiology, Exercise Testing and Prescription, Strength and Conditioning, Persistent Pain Management Strategies, and Post Rehabilitation Techniques. Brian is currently pursuing a PhD in Pain Management with a lifestyle medicine lens. He earned his Master's and Bachelor's degrees in Kinesiology from the University of British Columbia.



Training for Successful Aging

10:15-11:45am | LOWER C

L

"You know you are not young anymore". How many of your clients get a little perturbed hearing this? Granted biology does change as we age but to what extent? As trainers, we have a large role in helping our clients age successfully so that they can pursue the things they love to do. Join Brian as he takes an integrated viewpoint on training for successful aging.

Pain to Gainz

12:45-2:15pm | LOWER C

L

Your client wants to train but persistent pain gets in the way. It could be from muscle imbalances, osteoarthritis, poor technique, or the residual leftovers of an injury. As a trainer what do you do? There are lots of things you can do. This workshop will go over pain science, movement pattern modifications and programming strategies so that you feel comfortable still being able to train your client when they have painful episodes that act up just before your session. Exercise is medicine and keeping our client's moving so they can handle stress, build strength, pack on muscle, and grow their metabolic capacity is important even when it occurs on a background of persistent pain. This workshop will go over 7 strategies you can implement to help your clients thrive.

Does Hanna Somatics Belong in Personal Training

2:30-4:00pm | LOWER C

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Where does somatic movement belong in personal training? Hanna Somatic Education is a self-regulating movement system to help clients manage persistent pain but also to sense and move better! As personal trainers, our role is to help people improve their movement along with improving their fitness capacities. Join Brian as he explains the origins and applications of Hanna Somatic Education, perform a quick somatic assessment of each other, and learn some of the basic movement applications to help with the Neuromuscular Stress Reflexes.

SONJA BIDESE

Sonja Bidese is the owner of Success Fitness and an award-winning BCRPA Fitness Professional with over 30 years of experience in the Health and Wellness industry. She is a BCRPA Trainer of Fitness Leaders, Certified Personal Trainer, Registered Holistic Nutritionist, and Registered Canadian Reflexology Therapist (RCRT™). Sonja is passionate about mentoring fitness professionals and helping clients achieve sustainable results. "You don't need to be perfect to be powerful—just real."



AI in Fitness: Tool, Threat or Your Biggest Opportunity?

10:15-11:45am | BOARDROOM

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Artificial Intelligence is rapidly entering the fitness industry — from program design to client communication—but where do we draw the line? This interactive session challenges you to think deeper: Can AI replace coaches? Or does it simply amplify what we already do? Discover how to use AI as a powerful tool without losing the human connection that truly drives results. This session will spark conversation, shift perspectives, and give you the confidence to stay relevant in a rapidly evolving industry.

Spin, Strength & Mobility: The Next Evolution of Indoor Cycling

12:45-2:15pm | LOWER A/B

A

Indoor cycling is evolving, and today's participants are looking for more than just a high-energy ride. They want purposeful programming, smarter coaching, and a well-rounded fitness experience that supports performance, mobility, recovery, and long-term participation. This interactive workshop explores how instructors can modernize their indoor cycling classes by incorporating elements of strength, mobility, posture, recovery, and rider engagement—while working within the reality of a cycling studio environment. Participants will learn practical coaching strategies, creative class design ideas, and simple ways to keep rides fresh, effective, and relevant in today's fitness industry. Through education, live coaching demonstrations, and practical application, instructors will leave with tools they can immediately implement to elevate their classes and create more meaningful rider experiences.

The Power of Pause: Recovery, Breath & Reset

2:30-4:00pm | UPPER PAVILION

A/L

In a world that constantly pushes intensity, this session explores the power of slowing down. Learn how to integrate simple yoga-based movements, breathwork, and recovery techniques into your classes or training sessions. You'll also be introduced to elements of reflexology and nervous system regulation to support both physical and mental recovery. This session helps fitness professionals create balance, enhance client experience, and understand that recovery is not optional—it is essential.

BRENDA ADAMS

Brenda is a Professor of Kinesiology at Vancouver Island University and a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Victoria. Her research looks at the challenges Personal Trainers face in maintaining their own health and wellness with the aim to inform future curriculum and interventions that better support trainers in their personal and professional lives. With more than 29 years as an Exercise Professional and 23 years dedicated to supporting others in the industry, Brenda brings extensive practical experience to her work. As a kinesiologist, adult educator, and certified Life Coach, she is known for her ability to teach for deep understanding and practical application.



Pull Away from the Pack—How to Stand out from Your Competition

12:45-2:15pm | BOARDROOM

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You've probably heard that it takes more effort and expense to recruit new clients than to retain existing ones—luckily, you can save time and money by creating top-notch experiences for the clients you already have! Trainers spend time designing fitness programming for clients (and rightly so), but what about designing the all-important “customer experience” that keeps your clients coming back? In this session, you will discover simple techniques for turning your clients into raving fans who recommend you to their friends/family and on social media. Use these tactics and stand out as the trainer to hire in your area!

Practicing What We Preach: Supporting the Wellness of Personal Trainers

2:30-4:00pm | BOARDROOM

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Personal trainers are experts at helping others improve their health, yet many experience a gap between the wellness behaviors they promote and their own daily practices. For the past five years, Brenda Adams has been exploring the field of personal trainer wellness. This workshop will share her emerging research and help attendees identify practical strategies to support their own wellness so they can build more sustainable careers in the fitness profession.

KRISTA POPOWYCH

Krista Popowych (Bachelor of Human Kinetics) is one of the fitness industry's leading experts, and a highly sought after educator and presenter on group fitness, personal training and program management. Krista has dedicated her entire career to inspiring others through movement and education. She has been recognized both by IDEA™ as a Fitness Instructor of the Year and honoured three-times by Canfitpro™ as the Canadian Fitness Presenter of the Year. Krista enjoys spending time with her family and friends in Vancouver, BC, Canada.



Resilience Ride: Strength, Courage & Tenacity

10:15-11:45am | LOWER A/B

A

Step into your strongest self with Resilience Ride! This motivating session blends heart-pounding climbs, empowering intervals, and mental grit training. Discover how physical strength and unwavering tenacity create transformative experiences—for you and your class. Take your instructors on a journey that goes beyond fitness, unlocking deeper motivation and resilience that lasts long after the ride ends. Develop physical and mental endurance through challenging climbs and intensity intervals, setting a new standard for what's possible. Inspire courage and grit in your classes, helping riders push past barriers and celebrate new breakthroughs. Equip yourself and your participants with tools to maintain motivation, smash goals, and cultivate unstoppable performance.

Step-less Step Interval Challenge

12:45-2:15pm | UPPER PAVILION

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Join Krista for a creative cardio and interval-based workshop inspired by classic step training — without the actual step. This engaging, movement-driven workshop recreates the feel of step intervals using floor-based movement patterns, directional travel, rhythm changes, power pushes, and athletic conditioning drills. This session is perfect for instructors and participants looking for fresh interval and programming ideas, accessible training options, and high-energy cardio without equipment.

Beat Breaker: Rebel Ride!

2:30-4:00pm | LOWER A/B

A

Break the rules and unleash your inner rebel with Beat Breaker! This electrifying, rhythm-based workshop throws the rulebook out the window, combining powerful music, epic sprints, and boundary-pushing intervals. Get ready for a ride that's as fun as it is challenging—where creative expression fuels motivation and every instructor find their unique edge. Perfect the art of riding in sync with energizing beats to make every class a party on the bike. Leverage music-driven intervals to push your riders' limits and maximize both intensity and enjoyment. Reimagine indoor cycling as a vibrant, motivating and results-driven experience that appeals to every fitness level.

THANK YOU TO THIS YEARS SPONSOR



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE Saturday, October 24, 2026 at Esquimalt Gorge Park Pavilion

6:30-8:30am **Registration – MAIN RECEPTION**

7:00-8:00am	Morning Workout with Veronique Mercier Partyfit® LOWER A/B	(A)
8:30-10:00am	Keynote Presentation: Anne Marie Hogya The Power of Paying Attention: Coaching the Room, Not Just the Workout UPPER PAVILION	(L)

10:00-10:15am Session Break

10:15am-11:45pm	Anne Marie Hogya Creativity, Risk, and What New People Need UPPER PAVILION (L)	Krista Popowich Resilience Ride: Strength, Courage & Tenacity LOWER A/B (A)	Brian Justin Training for Successful Aging LOWER C (L)	Sonja Bidese AI in Fitness: Tool, Threat or Your Biggest Opportunity BOARDROOM (L)
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11:45-12:45pm Lunch Break (lunch not provided, food trucks on site)

12:45pm-2:15pm	Krista Popowich Step-less Step Interval Challenge UPPER PAVILION (A)	Sonja Bidese Spin, Strength & Mobility: The Next Evolution of Indoor Cycling LOWER A/B (A)	Brian Justin Pain to Gainz LOWER C (L)	Brenda Adams Pull Away from the Pack—How to Stand Out from Your Competition BOARDROOM (L)
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2:15-2:30pm Session Break

2:30-4:00pm	Sonja Bidese The Power of Pause: Recovery, Breath & Reset UPPER PAVILION (A) (L)	Krista Popowich Beat Breaker: Rebel Ride! LOWER A/B (A)	Brian Justin Does Hanna Somatics Belong in Personal Training LOWER C (L)	Brenda Adams Practicing What We Preach: Supporting the Wellness of Personal Trainers BOARDROOM (L)
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4:00-4:30pm Certificate Pick up at Registration Desk

Session handouts available on line. Please bring your own mat.

EARLY BIRD PRICE

June 1– August 31 | \$155

REGULAR PRICE

September 1 – October 23 | \$175

Groups of 10 or more receive 10% off. Please contact dan.atagi@saanich.ca to register at group rate.

Register at islandfitnessconference.com starting on June 1

History of the Vancouver Island Fitness Conference

The Island Fitness Conference began in 1989 as “Fit into the 90’s”. The purpose of the Conference was to ensure that Vancouver Island fitness leaders had access to quality educational training on Vancouver Island. In 2000, “Fit into the 90’s” became “The Island Fitness Conference”. What started 30 years ago as a small group of volunteers has grown into a committee of programmers, instructors and fitness enthusiasts representing a good portion of Southern Vancouver Island.



CREDITS AVAILABLE FROM

British Columbia Recreation & Parks Association (BCRPA)
Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP)
British Columbia Association of Kinesiologists (BCAK)
National Strength & Conditioning Association (NSCA)*
American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)
National Federation of Professional Trainers (NFPT)
International Sport Sciences Association (ISSA)
Canadian Fitness Professionals Inc. (canfitpro)

*EXTRA FEES APPLY

Need a place to stay?

Book a room at the
Delta Hotels

Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort
by September 8th, 2026 to receive
conference rate of \$279 for the night
of October 23rd and/or October 24th

100 Harbour Road, Victoria, BC
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Book your group rate for
Island Fitness Conference Room Block
Reference # M-WEVXUGA

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