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	[Intro Music]
Delmolino:	<p>Hello and welcome to another edition of Exploring AI in Government, a podcast series dedicated to interviewing leading global minds in the artificial intelligence ecosystem and getting at the insights that drive adoption across key industries and the federal government.</p> <p>I’m your host, Dominic Delmolino, Chief Technology Officer for Accenture Federal Services and I am here today with our guest analyst, Kathleen Walch — AI and Machine Learning expert, and Managing Partner at Cognilytica.</p>
Kathleen Walch:	<p>In today's program, we're exploring the issues and challenges surrounding the responsible and accountable use of AI within government. Federal agencies serve all citizens and need to demonstrate their decisions are without reproach. Given their role in society and the economy, they also have a huge opportunity to help define the rules and engagement for AI across all industries globally.</p> <p>While the federal government faces unique challenges in adopting emerging technologies, it is not alone. Many have suggested looking to our north for valuable insight on how a complex, advanced nation is addressing similar challenge. So we did just that with our next guest, Michael Karlin.</p>
Delmolino:	<p>Michael is currently the team lead for data policy for Canada's Department of National Defence where he promotes data-driven innovation and governance within Canada's armed forces. Previously he served as an advisor at the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. Where he specialized in public policy considerations of artificial intelligence and automation. And as we'll hear shortly, he helped develop Canada's algorithmic impact assessment tool.</p> <p>Michael, welcome to the show and is there anything else you'd like our listeners to know about?</p>

Michael Karlin:	No, I think that was a, that was a great introduction. Thank you so much.
Walch:	All right. Great. And welcome to the show. Michael, we're excited to have you on today. We'd like to start by framing this topic as far as citizens maintaining trust in the government. What are some of the risks associated with artificial intelligence?
Karlin:	<p>Well, I'm glad that you, that you framed it as trust in government. Uh, because this is really a matter of, of balancing benefits and risks as well. Governments also have to serve, you know, the entirety of their population. Unlike some sectors like you mentioned, you know, we can easily make these tactical choices to exclude a niche market segment. So, uh, as a result, we're going to encounter unique cases that really haven't appeared in datasets before. And so we have to deal with the consequences when an algorithm denies a person, something that they are otherwise they should be entitled to. Those recourse mechanisms have to trigger some internal reviews of processes and making sure that algorithms aren't making decisions based on incomplete data sets.</p> <p>At the same time, there's the idea of offering 24/7 services, including, you know, immediate decisions that could otherwise take weeks to make. It's a, it's a really attractive idea and I think it's something that we should chase if we can do it correctly. So, on the other hand, if we have a lot of algorithms that are making decisions for people on or on people for the government, you get to a situation where government becomes so ridiculously complex that relatively few people know how the guts work. So, without being able to communicate how government works effectively, you're going to start to see fake narratives emerge.</p>
Walch:	Yeah. And it's interesting that, you know, you bring up the government needs to serve every citizen. Unlike a lot of organizations where they don't serve, you know, an entire country's population. You do. So the use for responsible AI is very important. And I know that Canada has emerged as a leader in recognizing government's need to use AI responsibly. Can you talk to us about why and how that's come about?
Karlin:	Canada made, uh, through the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research made some really good early bets on machine learning and so as a result, we have a strong position in, in AI Research and development right now. Um, at the same time, we, there's a strong history of, of human rights advocacy in

	<p>Canada, in academic and civil society community that's really engaged to making sure that, you know, the government stays honest. And as a result in our, in our drive to do better, these two forces of, of AI Policy Development and wanting to be a more responsible government, uh, have collided in a way to manifest itself in this in this what was niche, but now as a very strong, uh, part of the AI part of the AI industry and development.</p>
Delmolino:	<p>So Michael, you've written that deploying AI in government also means balancing innovation, stability, experimentation, and inclusiveness. Also, good service and program integrity. So that's an awful lot of things to balance. What does that balance look like and how can it be accomplished?</p>
Karlin:	<p>Uh, well, Canada, Canada doesn't have a, a population that necessarily values government being on the bleeding edge of technology. They want to use, they want easy to use services, they want privacy protection, they want recourse, they want oversight. Over the years, our, our public service fell behind in adopting new technologies and so what happened was there's this urgency to try to catch up. And what can happen is the pendulums can easily go the other direction and we can get ahead of the population's understanding and the sort of social agreement to, to continue.</p> <p>So, what's really important is to maintain that balance. Uh, so the striking that balances is really hard when you have a few successful use cases. You have this excitement in the town among chief information officers that or, or chief data officers that I can do these really interesting things, and wouldn't it be great if we scaled? But it's, if we get away from the core user need, then I'm afraid that we sacrifice just good utility of government services on a quest for innovating for innovation sake.</p>
Delmolino:	<p>Understood. So, it sounds like that kind of broad stakeholder engagement is key to success in this area.</p>
Karlin:	<p>Absolutely.</p>
Delmolino:	<p>Awesome. So, um, another thing we wanted to explore is the Canadian government recently took a lead in enacting a directive on automated decision making. Can you tell us a little bit about how that came to be and what the process looked like and where it's going?</p>
Karlin:	<p>We leveraged a, a quasi, it's like a quasi-legal instrument that's administrative policy. The way we went about it first is we didn't actually jump to a directive.</p>

	<p>Uh, at first, we led a white paper process where we actually crowdsourced a white paper on what does artificial intelligence mean for government? We opened it up. We had I think around 255 academic stakeholders, civil society and industry, actually helping to write text with the government, basically being the moderator and chief, uh, between different ideas, trying to sculpt a paper that was kind of a community driven effort. We also decided to write this policy in the open as well. It was, it was in a Google doc. Um, we regularly pushed the link out through social media. Uh, we drew in, uh, academics and, and, uh, government employees to participate in the process. And we really try to crowdsource, uh, an administrative policy, which was the first time we ever did that in Canada. What, uh, basically having a rule that people could literally log in and see us type the rule as we were working on it, uh, and leave comments and suggestions, that sort of thing. So, we wanted to build trust by keeping this in the open.</p> <p>Um, at the heart of the directive was that not everything government does should be treated the same. So, if you're trying to book a campsite on one hand and you have a quarantine order on the other hand these are, these are fundamentally different things in terms of their impacts on individuals and society and that human rights, uh, outcomes that result. So, we implemented this, uh, algorithmic impact assessment, which was a way to, to take a test and see where you scored in the directive.</p> <p>And uh, that means that if you're innovating in a space where there isn't a lot of human potential human rights impact than, than you could. There's very few very little red tape for you. And if you're innovating in an area where there could be significant impacts, we are deliberately introducing some checks and balances to make sure that you've done your due diligence and that ministers are aware of what's going on.</p>
<p>Walch:</p>	<p>So, it feels like there's a real consensus across government regarding your approach to responsible AI. And I know that that is not always easy to get. So how are you able to get everybody on the same page?</p>
<p>Karlin:</p>	<p>Uh, well first, honestly it was starting small. Uh, it's rather than try to boil the ocean, we're starting with a really definable problem and that's government making decisions about people. We made a bunch of exclusions deliberately such as national security decisions because we, we really wanted to take a subset of mostly, you know, social services, uh, type problems and, and see if the rules work there. We did some user journey testing on different, you know, hypothetical algorithmic systems that, what, how would the rules change the development. And then finally we never pretended that we had all the answers.</p>

	<p>As I mentioned, that we could amend this a lot, but, um, it was better to try something in this space and then find out that we, that some parts of it aren't working a couple years down the road then then just sort of twist our hands and say there's nothing we can do or we don't really know what to do in this case.</p>
<p>Delmolino:</p>	<p>Sure. That makes sense. One of the other things I know many people have a question about is whether or not artificial intelligence is a black box. It makes a decision on apparently something that is inscrutable or hard to understand. And so there seems to be this rise of a call for things like explainable AI and I got to think if I'm a government agency building a system or writing my own algorithms, the opportunity to have my AI capability be explainable to some extent might facilitate that assessment. Um, is that, does that, does that resonate with you? Do you think that makes sense?</p>
<p>Karlin:</p>	<p>It really varies by the decision that is being made because sometimes there are legal reasons why we, why we can't necessarily disclose to an individual that we deny them a specific service because then they can just turn around and apply again with different information and then get it, even though they may not be actually in the real world entitled to it. Um, and then sometimes we, but we do have to provide decisions for people and, and those are legal principles that have existed for a long time. So it's, it's not the law and the legal principles right now are not gonna move, like suddenly pivot because we're using a new technology. So the technology in a sense has to bend what those norms are.</p> <p>At the, at the same time, there are probably ways around black boxes, uh, that, that we could use, um, such as well for example, most services that most people use aren't fundamentally that complicated where you're looking at millions of factors. You can probably for most both government decision making in most services. I'm making a huge generalization here. I know my colleagues are probably yell at me for this, but most government services, you're looking at a handful of factors that determine whether or not a person is, is eligible for something or not.</p> <p>And as a result, can't we just use decision trees? Like there are, there's more, there are simpler technology I think to get to the root of the problem than a black box in many in many cases. And then when we are using a black box, having to let's say, inform some of those factors, um, that you could build a decision tree around, then you've got humans in the loop that are able to say, hmm, I understand that this particular, you know, and looking, looking at the results that if I change a few factors, like a d a slightly different results and this is likely the reason, but I don't want to use this reason in decision making because of human rights reasons or because the population would simply find</p>

	<p>it find it unpalatable, et Cetera. So I feel like we have humans in the loop for most of these processes where we are using machine learning, which is still really early days. Um, for that reason.</p>
Walch:	<p>So you're right. For a lot of cases they are a great use and you are able to have an audit trail if that's what you need and go with those decisions. I know that you're currently serving as the team lead for data policy for Canada's Department of National Defense. And how has the directive impacting Canada's military?</p>
Karlin:	<p>So, on the surface of it, it doesn't, it doesn't affect it very much because this, again, this was regulating a subset of decisions and, and military decisions aren't generally bound by this group of policy. The principles that the directive is introduced have rippled through government and not just ours.</p> <p>I would say there's, there's sort of a cautious optimism to how AI could be introduced into military environments. and so, in terms of the, the military's use of AI, I'm going to say this, you know, running a military is a complex, expensive business. And most of the gains I know, I know there's a lot of social attention played to warfare in particular, but most of the gains in the AI in AI will be around managing this global multibillion-dollar enterprise in a more nimble and optimal way. I mean, it's movement of people and goods around the world. Um, and in a sense, there are, there are probably applications that a military would use that would be just as akin to a multinational corporation.</p>
Walch:	<p>How is the Canadian military addressing the issues surrounding autonomous systems in warfare?</p>
Karlin:	<p>Um, so it's a matter of doing user journeys. Uh, I mean it's, it's interesting to borrow from this from the service world, but it's, it's basically doing user journeys around various military applications and, um, and then understand what some of the ethical and legal implications for that are.</p> <p>I'll give you an example. We've talked about this in some public forum as well. Um, casualty evacuation, you know, for if, if our troops are fighting in areas where you're fighting against third parties, they don't believe that wearing a a red cross or, or sickle on you, makes you immune to a, to being a target. You know, it may be really dangerous to put medics in the front line if medics become the, the primary target. So can you use autonomous vehicles too, if that, to help evacuate, um, injured, injured soldiers from the front line? It's not a, it's not a weapon system. It may have no, intentionally lethal capability.</p>

	<p>Um, and, and yet I think it could be, it could be a potentially really powerful use case and save lives.</p> <p>So, I think, I think like with a lot of these arguments you have to take sort of speaking points and really boil them down to what is the specific use case I'm talking about. There are some, some really powerful use cases here, especially with nonlethal capabilities that that can't get lost because we're not having a nuanced enough discussion.</p>
Delmolino:	<p>So, Michael, I know another large social concern that we've heard about is the potential for bias in artificial intelligence. And I think many of us know that that bias comes about in artificial intelligence because of maybe historical data that skewed or is in and of itself bias. So we don't have good examples to train an AI in a way that we'd like it to be unbiased. Um, is the Canadian and government thinking about providing resources or tools to agencies to mitigate or dress or, uh, uh, address an issue of having bias in an algorithm? Like, can we do something to get ahead of that so that we know that when we're going to deploy AI, we are reducing the level of bias perhaps that it shows or evidences?</p>
Karlin:	<p>It's often just implementing good data management practices in government departments will help reduce some of that. It won't eliminate all of it. There's still big problems with collection biases as an example, but for hiring, hiring and training data literate, a data literate staff, having good data management practices, uh, having, uh, data sheets that provide some contextual information about how the data was collected, um having a data quality framework in place is super important. These are just being done for the management of programs and analytics programs as well. Um, and they will have a, a follow-up effect of, of improving machine learning outcomes as well. So I think departments, government departments around the world have to do this anyway just because it's good data management.</p>
Kathleen	<p>Yeah. Now, AI has been, you know, very transformational and with any transformational technology, there's always an impact to the workforce. So how should we think about AI as impact on the workforce?</p>
Karlin:	<p>There's, there's a camp that says that tasks are going to be automated faster than humans are going to be able to fulfill new markets or new niches and therefore there will be net unemployment. And there is a camp that says that despite lots of tasks being automated, um, there's always going to be, there's, there's going to be room for humans at least in the next generation or two or three because a lot of these tools don't work as well as they're advertised to.</p>

	<p>I'm kind of personally, I'm in the second camp. I feel that I feel that if you come to work, um, if you're, if you're already a knowledge worker and your engineering team comes with solutions that automate 20% of your tasks, chances are you can fill that 20% with other tasks that are more meaningful.</p> <p>It gets a bit more tricky. It gets a bit trickier when you get to someone who 80% or 90% of their tasks are now automated and they can't fill the rest of the new 90%. So there's a there's a pilot going on right now in Toronto to, uh, convert a retail workers to digital product managers and digital product managers. That's a, that's a, that's a growing field and retail, it's facing automation pressure. So those sorts of job specific pilots are easier to solve than solving the entire labor market.</p>
Delmolino:	<p>That sounds great. Thank you so much Michael. Um, final question for you. What risks are we overlooking with artificial intelligence?</p>
Karlín:	<p>There's a greater discussion about the environmental footprint of, of, uh, of machine learning, uh, uh, training runs that require large, uh, cloud service providers and the impact that computing is having on that computing is having on the environment.</p> <p>Um, humans losing their edge in some areas we, uh, we expect if you have a decision around a person that's automated and automated and you know, time after time, it seems that this is a, this is a better functioning tool than a human would be in a, in a similar job. If those humans are not making decisions as often as they used to, they're going to become less effective. And so humans losing their edge and yet us relying on them to provide some degree of oversight recourse or, or back up. You're, you're writing the human backup out of the system and that's a problem.</p> <p>And then finally, I'm really concerned about overhyping leading to an AI automation and reduction in investment because we were talking about explainable AI. And I think there's a, there's a great deal of research and development pushing towards explainable AI. But if, if everyone, if all everyone's talking about is AI and, and then some of these tools are perhaps not as working as well as as they were advertised, um, and, and, uh, the models aren't performing well on real world data and, uh, you get institutional disappointment.</p>
Walch:	<p>So Michael, thank you so much for joining us today on this podcast. And for listeners that want to know more and follow you and know more about your work, how can they engage with you?</p>

Karlin:	So the best way is to reach out on Twitter or Medium, uh, or LinkedIn. A, my Twitter/Medium handle is @supergovernance, @supergovernance, and, uh, I'm more than happy to engage.
Walch:	Great. Well, thank you so much.
Delmolino:	<p>Thank you, Michael.</p> <p>Our next guest today is Dr. Eric Daimler, a computer scientist and AI authority that helped found Carnegie Mellon's Silicon Valley campus. He's also founded six technology companies and as we will discuss shortly, served in the office of science and technology policy for the Obama administration.</p>
Walch:	Eric - welcome to the podcast.
Eric Daimler:	Thank you, good to be here.
Delmolino:	And Eric, as a member of that policy organization within the Obama administration, you helped develop some of the initial thinking and initial documentation and policies around a national AI strategy. Almost seems like a long time ago, back in 2016. Can you tell us a little about what went into the thinking at that time?
Daimler:	I'm really fortunate to have been there during a busy time, during the last year, where we produced a lot. I came into that work, that tour of duty, and I was asked, "What do you want to accomplish during your time in the last year of this administration?" I said that I wanted to shift the conversation from the Hollywood narrative about AI, of a dystopia or a utopia, into something more productive. I wanted to create a more mature, nuanced conversation that would help us engage with AI. And out of that, there were a whole series of actions that were outlined. These included a sort of speaking tour, a listening tour around the country where we engaged in different sort of conversations with the general public. We also produced a series of reports that, even a couple years later, actually still really valuable as a resource to frame one's thinking about AI in general, but certainly for users within the federal government, thinking about an AI strategy. And then we ended the administration with... a Frontiers Conference, a look into the future about the technology in the 2020s and beyond, what it would look like and how that might integrate with the structures we have within the federal government.

Delmolino:	<p>Like you said, moving beyond the fantasy world of Hollywood into the practical realities of what AI and robotics means for the federal government. I'm really curious, know that we you know as AI becomes even more pervasive, and with the recent administration's executive order on AI, what's your perspective on how the overall national strategy toward AI has evolved since those early days?</p>
Daimler:	<p>Well, I think it is reflective of the public discourse around AI to some extent, where there remains a lot of confusion about what it even is, and how to put it into place. It is unfortunately too often considered a type of black box, where there is this narrow, but perhaps technically correct, thinking around AI, just as a learning algorithm. I'm really hoping to broaden the perspective that people have around the technology. I hope that it will be reflected in future work in the federal government, where we think about how to bring more people into the conversation.</p> <p>We additionally have a national security concern, because the implications of this technology are beginning to really show themselves in their vastness. We had a hint of that five years ago, six years ago, certainly a decade ago. But really, every month we're going to be more acquainted with the ramifications of this technology, and the interactions of those technologies with other developments in the computer ecosystem. And that is going to be a continual conversation we need to have as a society, and that we need to have as a government, especially as it relates to national security.</p>
Walch:	<p>So, are federal agencies thinking enough about the responsible and ethical use of AI? And how real of a risk is bias in AI decision making?</p>
Daimler:	<p>So, there are some ongoing conversations about how to try to solve this problem. It's really an unpleasant reality of our current world, is that these algorithms will learn bias and then they will express bias. My best solution is that we have a whole bunch of circuit breakers. Humans! Human groups, human connectors into these technologies that can present our values or double check our values, or otherwise just express the values that we have as a society, into these algorithms. But then also is the outcome, because we don't want to just be taking the output from many of these algorithms as somehow infallible, just because they came from a machine, or a machine that we think is very good somehow created the output.</p> <p>So, my best answer to bias right now is that it's part of this whole system, but we need a lot of humans interacting in this. We need humans in the beginning, humans in the middle, humans in the end, at multiple layers. Machines are fallible. They can make mistakes, and the one reason that they</p>

	<p>can make mistakes is because we program them. We give them their power, and they're also probabilistic. 99% accuracy may seem really terrific, but if the 1% failure rate affected you or your family or your enterprise within the government, that may be a really unpleasant outcome, because a lot of these contexts in which the federal government operates are very high consequence. The ability to double check this work I think is really important, and the research that will be important to continue to invest in will be the handoff between the machines and the people.</p>
Delmolino:	<p>I remember when I started my freshman career as a computer scientist. I was told, "Got to learn to do freshman writing seminars." Communication skills were taught as an important part of the discipline, even as an engineer. Do you think it's possible to expand that curriculum to include some of these ethical concerns or ethical frameworks, in addition to teaching communication skills for budding engineers in the field?</p>
Daimler:	<p>I think it is important to have these ethical considerations, but they need to evolve as our understanding of the technology is evolved. It's my belief, it's my experience that certainly my colleagues have a sense of ethics, but I think that really gets its power from a conversation, from a societal conversation, from a team-based conversation. And that understanding evolves as our technology evolves. I think it would be difficult for any of us to have projected in 1995, or even 2005, the issues that we are currently confronting, and to have firmly developed standards around which we must now manage ourselves in 2019 and 2020 from understandings a decade or two previous, I think would not have us be well-placed to compete or even operate, really, the vast resources that we have to make decisions to deploy. I am advocating... I've been working with a terrific think-tank, the Halcyon House in Washington, DC, to develop is a linked certification. A type of understanding both at the high level, government level, business level... with the user level, with the consumers of the technology, so that we have a common nomenclature for what we mean by privacy.</p>
Walch:	<p>Yeah, that's interesting. And I know that there's been a lot of discussion in general about that. How do we use data, what kind of ethical concerns do we have, and then, how are these all the working parts? And what do we need to teach people, and how do we need to be thinking as companies and organizations?</p> <p>So, I know that you have a new book coming out called Every Business is an AI Business. And from the title alone, it makes a very strong case for AI. So, can you tell our listeners. Maybe give them a teaser about what the book's about?</p>

Daimler:	The big value I hope to provide for readers in the federal government is how to be thinking about AI deployment. And I think it comes to this issue of looking at what jobs I want to innovate, what jobs I want to automate. I don't want to have a technology-led initiative, especially in the federal government, where these mistakes can be vast. I want to be thinking of what problems need to be solved, and then think about what technology can be used to effect solutions to those problems.
Delmolino:	So Eric, one of the things we hear a lot of concerns about is that AI's long-term impact is going to be market-shaping, and many jobs will change, alter, maybe even go away. How do you intend, or how do you think we ought of address people's fears in this area? And is there a way to potentially address a large portion of the workforce that may be impacted by AI moving into their space?
Daimler:	I really like how you framed the question, because there's a separate answer for what should we do, versus how should we address people's fears about what we should do. The second part, how to address people's fears, may be actually the more difficult issue, because there's been an effort over the last generation or two to occasionally retrain people that have been counting on jobs in parts of our world that no longer exist. And this continues today. The idea is that we will need to continue to be curious about how technology can impact the jobs we're doing, and be willing to be flexible and adaptable inside of that curiosity about how we as individuals and as managers, as leaders, may be able to be reconfiguring ourselves or reconfiguring our groups to be using technologies to do our work better.
Delmolino:	So, given that potential for large scale impact from AI, and obviously some of these positive benefits you've talked about here, what's the best way to facilitate or encourage the use of AI for overall societal good? How do we make sure that we have that kind of outcome we desire?
Daimler:	My best answer is, if you broaden the perspective of what AI is, you can find places for people to engage, for people to be interested, and for people's natural skills to connect with these technologies. So that we shouldn't just keep them to the pointy-headed nerds like myself and treat them as similar to black boxes that are then reacted to only after I come out of my cave. That's where I'm really spending my time in a general sense, is working with people to take advantage of their earned expertise in these traditional industries. And I think that's the best way to be taking care of our society, the best way to be strengthening our federal government, and make effective the trust and the resources given to us by the taxpayers.

Walch:	Yeah, that's a great point and a great way to end. So, Eric, this has been a fascinating conversation, and we really appreciate and thank you for joining us on this podcast. For our listeners that want to follow you or learn more about your work, how can they engage with you?
Daimler:	You can certainly follow me on social media. I'm on both social media sites as Eric Daimler, Twitter I think I'm EAD. And then, my corporate site, conexus.ai. It's conexus.ai.
Delmolino:	Thank you so much.
Delmolino:	Well that was a great discussion! As AI began to emerge on the scene in 2016, it became clear that government needed to formulate national concepts related to its impact on society. With its broad applicability it was important to get beyond the entertainment-based depictions of AI and think about it holistically. National discussions about what data will be needed to accurately train AI, reduce the potential for bias, and the need for AI specialists continue to be at the forefront of this discussion today.
Walch:	In just a few short years the discussion around AI and data has greatly matured. It's important to continue to make sure we focus on reducing bias in AI, continue to have discussions around AI's impact on the workforce, and government's role around the responsible and ethical use of AI.
Delmolino:	And while in the future we'll likely have experts in the use of AI in particular fields, right now we're coming to the understanding that we need to start small and be mindful of how AI decisions can impact individuals. A clear guidance framework that highlights how AI systems need to be managed and reviewed is an important step in helping us realize their potential in a trustworthy manner. Canada's approach is a solid example in this direction.
Walch:	Thanks for joining us, we'll be back next time with a discussion of AI for Citizen Service. If you liked what you heard, share this show with a friend or rank us on your favorite podcast provider!
Delmolino:	Thank you for listening to Exploring AI in Government, brought to you by Accenture Federal Services. To continue the conversation, visit us at Accenture.com/ExploreAI , where you can listen to other episodes and

	<p>download relevant research. Or you can connect with myself, Dominic Delmolino, and our guest analyst, Kathleen Walch, on social media. We look forward to seeing you at Accenture.com/ExploreAI</p>
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