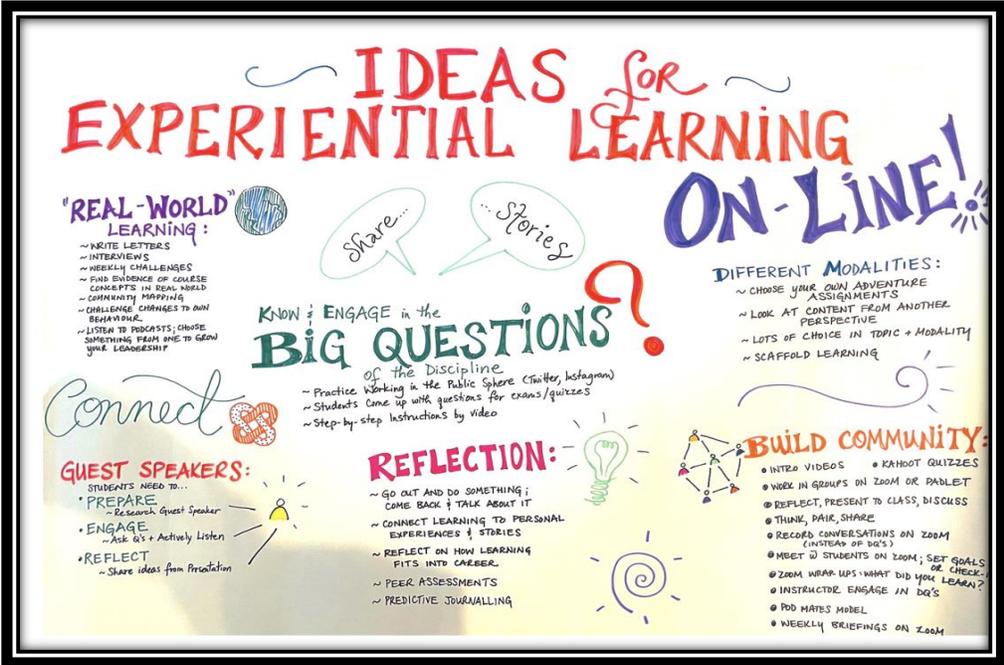


# Exploring the Value and Process of Experiential Learning in on-line courses

Recreation Studies – applied research project



Janet Ready and Shannon Wall

This work was written on the ancestral, unceded and occupied territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy̓ əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Lkwungen (Songhees and Esquimalt) and Səl'ílwətaʔ (Tseil-Watuth) nations of the Coast Salish peoples - whose relationship with the land is ancient, primary and enduring. We would like to acknowledge our privilege to be here learning, living and working on these lands.

We are grateful for the knowledge that was shared for this work by faculty at Langara College.

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## **Introduction and situating the work within our current context**

The intent of this paper and this exploratory research is to understand more about the value and process of experiential learning in on-line courses so faculty can use it in a more intentional way to engage students in deeper learning. This is an interesting moment in time for us globally and within the recreation discipline and post-secondary institution sector. How we learn as humans is becoming more clearly understood, from neuroscience, to a renewed focus on Indigenous ways. Structures and traditional ways of teaching within post-secondary institutions are adapting in foundational ways responding to how we understand and treat the learner as well as what is possible in how we deliver opportunities to learn. Technology continues to advance and create bigger possibilities for engaging learners within on-line environments. Learning management software that dictates the structure of how instructors and students interact is evolving to offer more options for on-line learners and teachers.

The Recreation Studies Department has been offering a fully on-line Bachelor of Recreation Management Degree since 2008 in asynchronous delivery format. Many courses in the Recreation Leadership Diploma are offered in mixed mode on-line delivery. As a result of Covid-19, Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 terms required all recreation courses in the department to be on-line, either a-synchronous or synchronous format using zoom software. This pandemic situation accelerated learning about teaching on-line with different software/formats and opened up more questions about how to infuse experiential learning opportunities into on-line learning. Now is the time to explore these questions and use the learning and momentum that faculty have gained in this recent on-line focused teaching experience.

The study of recreation is implicitly connected to experience. The process of engaging students in hands-on experiences and reflection is one of the core values of the Recreation Studies programs. Experiential learning helps students to connect theory and practice. Participation in Leisure and Recreation is a shared human experience and in learning how to plan, lead and evaluate recreation opportunities in the community, students are encouraged to draw on their own recreation experiences or participate in experiential learning opportunities within the Recreation Leadership Diploma and Bachelor of Recreation Management programs. Experiential learning opportunities are key to learning about recreation. Recreation Studies faculty have a strong tradition of providing thoughtful experiential learning opportunities in the face-to-face class environment. In the on-line environment, Recreation Studies faculty continue to grow their learning about how to lead experiential learning – though it often feels more challenging as the feedback loop isn't as immediate as in the face-to-face environment, and the on-line delivery format is not as easy to pivot/adapt on the fly.

This paper and the fall 2022 workshop are intended to create an opportunity for the recreation studies faculty to share ideas about what Experiential Learning is within on-line courses and continue to grow this area within their teaching. The principles of adult learning theory (based on the work of Malcolm Knowles and other Adult Learning Theorists) can inform our practice and make us better online instructors. Some of the principles (and their implications for online adult learning) we have considered include:

- Adults are autonomous and self-directed, and need to be involved in their education.

- Adults have a great deal of experience to call upon and this experience is a rich resource for learning.
- Adults are relevancy-oriented and they are most interested in learning what is immediately relevant to their job and life.
- Adults are goal-oriented and their learning should be problem-centered rather than content-oriented.

As we began to explore this topic and this research, it moved in parallel to conversations our Recreation Studies Department has been having about Decolonization and Indigenization. These conversations include questions about what knowledge and learning is and how it is done in Colonized, Decolonized and Indigenous ways. It struck us that our research area and those conversations are aligned, and that experiential learning is deeply connected to Indigenous ways of learning and knowing. Experiential learning is a key learning strategy within Indigenous cultures. Experiential learning opportunities help to decolonize curriculum and provide the students with other world views and ways of learning and knowing. In their book, "Potlatch as Pedagogy: Learning through Ceremony", Sara Florence Davidson and Robert Davidson present and take readers through a model for learning that is holistic, relational, practical and continuous inspired by Haida Ceremonial Practice. Their work reflects the experiential learning principles, creating opportunities for deep and meaningful learning. This is an area that could be studied more but is beyond the current scope of this project. This model and learning more about Indigenous teaching and learning practices is strongly connected to the values of community recreation and more work in this area would benefit Recreation educators. In the conversation with Carolyn Wing in Part 2 of the paper, she references [Principles for Indigenizing at snəweyət̓ leləm̓](#) this is another connection to incorporating Indigenous perspectives in Experiential Learning.

This research project builds on Steve Musson's Applied Research Project from 2013 "Explorations into Improving Online Education: "It's Not About the Screen"". It creates an opportunity for two faculty within the Recreation Studies Department to collaborate and build a relationship researching together and exploring learning and teaching within this experiential perspective. This work continues to grow the culture within the Recreation Studies Department of learning, sharing, and exploring questions about teaching and learning together.

The central question of Steve Musson's 2013 Department research project was "How can a faculty member become a better online instructor?" This current research continues to build on that question with a focus on the value and process of experiential learning in on-line courses. As Musson observed in his research, "Online activities and techniques cannot stand alone, and should not be plucked haphazardly from a smorgasbord. They must be a true reflection of a well-thought-out process that begins with the self-knowledge of the person who teaches." (p. 2, 2013). This reminds us that a strong teaching philosophy and pedagogy are at the core of good teaching.

The Recreation Studies Faculty have been committed to improving their teaching and learning since faculty in the department began teaching fully online courses in 2010. As a faculty team, we have cultivated a culture of experimenting and sharing successes and challenges in faculty meetings and retreats. In Recreation Studies, our students challenge us to teach creatively and to design learning opportunities that reflect the

dynamic sector and discipline we work in. Recreation itself is experiential learning. How the learning is delivered and evaluated needs to reflect that.

The recent Program Review for Recreation Studies created an opportunity to inventory the experiential learning opportunities in courses within the Recreation Leadership Diploma and Bachelor of Recreation Management programs. This applied research project aims to provide stronger pedagogical foundations to the value of experiential learning on-line and connections to adult learning theory. Knowing why they are offering experiential learning opportunities can move the teaching practice forward for faculty and can help them to refine their practice to create more opportunities for students to learn deeply.

### **Format of this Paper**

This paper is written within a storied narrative of conversations about experiential learning between the researchers and faculty in Recreation Studies Dept and other disciplines at Langara College. This storied approach is intentional. We recognize how colonized Canadian Academia is and wanted to challenge ourselves to share knowledge in different reporting styles and narratives. This format encouraged us as researchers and faculty to build our awareness of how knowledge can be learned and shared in diverse ways. Our hope is that we can combine theory and practice within this storied approach and build a toolbox of ideas and teaching practices that showcases experience-based knowledge, so that we can all learn from each other.

This paper is divided into two parts:

Part one situates the research within our current context and outlines the purpose of the project. Part one also includes information from the literature about the value and process of experiential learning and how this can be applied in an on-line environment. This is meant to provide the reader with a foundation for understanding experiential learning and the context that it is being used in this paper.

Part two provides information from conversations with faculty within the Recreation Studies Department and other disciplines within Langara College about how they are creating experiential learning on-line and their successes and challenges. This part of the paper is meant to provide the reader with a toolbox of ideas, understanding and teaching practices to build on in their own teaching. It is also meant to provide the reader with a sense that they are connected to a larger community of faculty within Langara who are engaged in creating opportunities for this type of learning.

The conclusion of the paper includes learning from the researchers and ideas for future research in this area.

In addition to this paper, there is a plan to facilitate an in-person faculty workshop in September 2022 to move these conversations and ideas forward into our teaching and share how we are doing that. (See outline of workshop in Appendix A)

## What the literature says about Experiential learning

Experienced-based learning (EBL) is a participative, interactive model of learning which has at its heart the idea that real-life experience is more than just a source of data: it is the context for applying and reflecting on learning. (Mawer, 1999). In this model, the experience of the learner (which may be comprised of earlier events in the learner's life, current life events, or those arising from the learner's participation in activities implemented by teachers and learners) occupies a central place in all considerations of teaching and learning (Anderson, Boud, & Cohen, 2000). EBL is based on a set of assumptions about learning from experience which Boud, Cohen, and Walker have identified as follows:

- Experience is the foundation of, and the stimulus for, learning.
- Learners actively construct their own experience.
- Learning is a holistic process.
- Learning is socially and culturally constructed.
- Learning is influenced by the socio emotional context in which it occurs (1993, p. 8-14)

David Kolb is said to have laid the foundations of much modern experiential education theory with his book, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. (2014). In order to set experienced-based learning apart from other approaches, Kolb identifies three factors which EBL appears to demand must be operating at some level:

1. Involvement of the whole person – intellect, feelings and senses.
2. Recognition and active use of all the learner's relevant life experiences and learning experiences.
3. Continued reflection upon earlier experiences in order to add to and transform them into deeper understanding. (1984, p.38)

Kolb's book also introduced his 'experiential learning model'- a model he based on the rich foundations of experienced-based learning provided by John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget (Kolb, 1984). The focus of this model is on the felt experience, where learning moves through four stages from experiencing to observing to conceptualizing to experimenting and back to experiencing: "Knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experience of the learner" (Kolb, 1984, p. 27). This supports Dewey's principle that "the continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after...(Dewey, 1938; cited in Kolb, 1984 p. 27). Project Adventure, an experiential learning company with a focus on challenge and adventure activities, describes the experiential learning cycle in this way: "Activities flow from hands-on initiatives to a processing that engages the mind and often the emotions as well. A well-structured debrief mines for insights and learnings that can then be transferred back to the next activity – and back to the workplace" (Butler, Murray, Smolowe & Smolowe, 1999, p. 59).

Experience-based learning has taken on many forms in recent years, and has included internships, work placements, adventure training and wilderness trips, initiatives, team challenges, studios, workshops, practicums, action research, role-plays, simulations,

video-based activities, problem-based learning, group work, self-directed projects, and the use of reflective journals (Andersen et al, 2000).

In experience-based learning, it is recognized that experience alone is not necessarily educative (Andersen et al, 2000). Reflection and debriefing are essential stages which turn an experience into learning for the participant.

The first step in creating an experiential learning space is to make a space for learners that enables deep learning (Border, 2007) by allowing them to fully engage in all four modes of the experiential learning cycle—experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting.

“Learning is like breathing; it involves a taking in and processing of experience and a putting out or expression of what is learned. As Dewey noted, “. . . nothing takes root in mind when there is no balance between doing and receiving. Some decisive action is needed in order to establish contact with the realities of the world and in order that impressions may be so related to facts that their value is tested and organized” (1934, p. 45). Yet many programs in higher education are much more focused on impressing information on the mind of the learner than on opportunities for the learners to express and test in action what they have learned. Many courses will spend 15 weeks requiring students to take in volumes of information and only a couple of hours expressing and testing their learning, often on a multiple-choice exam. This lies in contrast to arts education built on the demonstration-practice-production-critique process where active expression and testing are continuously involved in the learning process. Zull (2002) suggests that action may be the most important part of the learning cycle because it closes the learning cycle by bringing the inside world of reflection and thought into contact with the outside world of experiences created by action.” (Kolb, ch.7)

In the 2009 Kurt Hahn Address: Seeking Deeper Understandings from Experiences, Clifford Knapp asks the question, “I wonder if some teachers are missing this point by only covering their subject matter instead of un-covering it for students?”...We need to let the experience do the teaching more than our talking does (p. 284) Knapp also identifies the learner’s own participation in experiential learning and how the degree of experience increases as the participant becomes more responsible for the experience that occurs. (p. 284)

### **Pause to connect to your own thinking and teaching experiences**

The following quotes are selected from the book, *Theory and Practice of Experiential Education*, a Collection of articles addressing the historical, educational, philosophical, psychological, ethical, spiritual and social justice foundations of Experiential Education, and Clifford Knapp’s Kurt Hahn Speech at the Association of Experiential Education. The quotes are shared in this format to stay authentic to the writer’s voice (each of the authors is an experiential educator) and are specifically selected because they reflect the holistic approach of experiential learning. At this point in the paper, we encourage the reader to pause, read the quotations, and think about connections to their own philosophy and understanding of experiential learning.

“So...what is experiential education? It is an approach that has the students actively engaged in exploring questions they find relevant and meaningful, and

has them trusting that feeling, as well as thinking can lead to knowledge”.  
(Chapman, McPhee, Proudman, p. 7)

“Good experiential learning combines direct experience that is meaningful to the student with guided reflection and analysis. It is a challenging, active, student-centered process that impels students toward opportunities for taking initiative, responsibility, and decision making. An experiential approach allows numerous opportunities for the student to connect the head with the body, heart, spirit and soul. Whatever the activity, it is the learning and teaching process that defines whether a learning experience is experiential...emotionally engaged learning”  
(Chapman, McPhee, Proudman, p. 9)

“Experiential education is a holistic philosophy, where carefully chosen experiences supported by reflection, critical analysis and synthesis, are structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for the results, through actively posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, constructing meaning, and integrating previously developed knowledge. Learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, politically, spiritually, and physically in an uncertain environment where the learner may experience success, failure, adventure, and risk taking. The learning usually involves interaction between learners, learner and educator, and learner and environment. It challenges the learning to explore issues of values, relationship, diversity, inclusion and community. The educator’s primary roles include selecting suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting learners, ensuring physical and emotional safety, facilitating the learning process, guiding reflection, and providing the necessary information. The results of the learning form the basis of future experience and learning.” (Itin, p. 139)

“The philosophy of experiential education does not dictate a particular teaching method but rather, it speaks to a way of thinking about the teaching-learning transaction.” (Berv p. 43)

“He believed that teachers shouldn’t always give information that students could otherwise find on their own. Are there times in your teaching that you don’t give information even when you know it? How do you decide when to give your students the answers to their questions and when to send them off to find out for themselves?” (Knapp p. 276)

“These unmediated experiences, combined with a reflection or processing elements, could be called a transformation method of teaching because experiential educators help students take what happened to them and transform those experiences into meaningful memories and applications for later use. (Knapp p. 278) Both types of knowledge (know that / know how) are important especially when they are presented in conjunction with each other, because they contribute to a deeper understanding of life”. (Knapp p. 278)

“Experiential educators often deal with knowledge gained from experiences that is not easily counted on traditional standardized tests, but the knowledge these

experiences provide counts because it results in a deeper understanding that is often valued and retained longer". (Knapp p. 278)

### **Experiential Learning on-line**

The literature is limited in providing pedagogy and examples that speak to experiential learning specifically in the on-line environment. The global pandemic, Covid-19 pushed learning into an on-line environment, and there may be more reflective learning published in the future in this area. What the researchers found most helpful are examples of what faculty are doing and what they have learned from in their own teaching practice. The value of this research project is hearing from faculty as to how they create experiential learning on-line.

When we talk about on-line teaching and learning, there are many options available. In Recreation Studies, on-line learning happens in Mixed mode courses in the Recreation Leadership Diploma and in asynchronous delivery in the Bachelor of Recreation Management.

The following questions faculty can ask in creating and assessing experiential learning opportunities in their on-line courses.

- *What experiences do you think are important for your students to have? How do you plan and lead your students into those experiences?*
- *Do we as instructors skillfully help students reflect on their experiences, or do we just offer experiences in learning?*
- *How well do we as instructors facilitate the reflection or processing part of experiential learning?*
- *Why do we use experiential learning in our courses and how do we use it?*
- *Does our own teaching philosophy align with experiential education philosophy and values?*

Using these questions and the following Principles of Practice can help faculty create more intention in designing, framing and assessing Experiential Learning.

### **Principles of Practice for Experiential Learning from Association of Experiential Education (AEE)**

- Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by **reflection, critical analysis and synthesis**.
- Experiences are **structured** to require the student to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for results.
- Throughout the experiential learning process, **the student is actively engaged** in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative and constructing meaning.
- Students are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully and/or physically. This involvement produces a perception that **the learning task is authentic**.

- **The results of the learning are personal** and form the basis for future experience and learning.
- **Relationships are developed** and nurtured: student to self, student to others and student to the world at large.
- The instructor and student may experience success, failure, adventure, risk-taking and uncertainty, because **the outcomes of the experience cannot totally be predicted.**
- Opportunities are nurtured for **students and instructors to explore and examine their own values.**
- **The instructor's primary roles** include setting suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting students, insuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process.
- The instructor recognizes and encourages **spontaneous opportunities for learning.**
- **Instructors strive to be aware of their biases, judgments and pre-conceptions**, and how these influence the student.
- The design of the learning experience includes **the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes and successes.**

Within these principles are themes of connection, community, failure, success, and the role of teachers . These principles also reflect the points in “Key Concepts of Learning” (from What the Best College Teachers Do by Ken Bain p.26))

1. Knowledge is constructed, not received
2. Mental Models change slowly
3. Questions are crucial
4. Caring is crucial

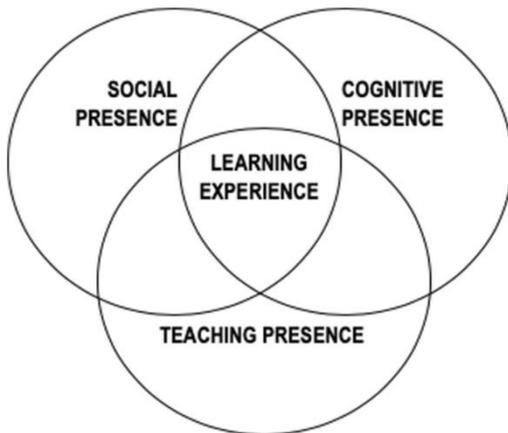
The correlation between the Principles of Practice in Experiential education, Key Concepts of Learning, and the connection to Col and UDL is not to be underestimated. In the interviews with faculty about their experiences in creating experiential learning opportunities, the above themes and principles were present – whether by intention or intuitively integrated to create engaging, relevant learning experiences for students.

### **Learning and Connection - Community of Inquiry Framework**

During the early stages of this research in our conversations about how to approach the topic, we asked the question, is connection-building in our courses a step that comes before leading experiential learning? Do connection and community within the on-line course deepen engagement and the learning of experiences? When we talk about connection, it is generally student-student, or student-instructor. Is experiential learning the same as connection in on-line courses? Can you have learning without connection?

These questions prompted us to talk to Carmen Larsen in Langara's TCDC department and then Natalia and Alex in TCDC who shared with us the Community of Inquiry Framework. This model reflects these areas of engagement/connection: to course material, with the instructor, and between other students.

The Community of Inquiry framework shows how students, instructors and content are connected in the learning experience. It shows that optimum learning happens when students feel connected to other students, the teacher and the content. In exploring experiential learning within our courses, one of the areas we may look at focusing on is community and connection from student-student, student-instructor, student-content (and we should add instructor-content). Using this framework as a lens can help us ensure that experiential learning is deeper learning. In the conversations with faculty, how to do this was identified in different ways by instructors, and it was an important part of building the foundation for deeper experiential learning. Creating these connections within an asynchronous on-line environment can be more challenging than face to face. Conversations with faculty in Part 2 of this paper shares thoughtful ideas and examples of how to create these connections.



The following link explains more about this Community of Inquiry framework and includes examples of how teachers can approach each of the areas.

[https://www.purdue.edu/innovativelearning/supporting-instruction/portal/files/4\\_Community\\_of\\_Inquiry\\_Framework.pdf](https://www.purdue.edu/innovativelearning/supporting-instruction/portal/files/4_Community_of_Inquiry_Framework.pdf)

### **Universal Design for Learning**

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and challenging for all. Ultimately, the goal of UDL is to support learners to become “expert learners” who are, each in their own way, purposeful and motivated, resourceful and knowledgeable, and strategic and goal driven. UDL aims to change the design of the environment rather than to change the learner. When environments are intentionally designed to reduce barriers, all learners can engage in rigorous, meaningful learning. (CAST org. 2022)

The aim of this research isn't to explain UDL, as the Teaching Curriculum and Design Centre (TCDC) at Langara has a website page dedicated to this topic and offers workshops in this area.

<https://iweb.langara.ca/tcdc/expand-my-teaching-and-learning/universal-design-for-learning/>

The point of including it in this paper is to acknowledge that it can be layered onto experiential learning to increase engagement and deeper learning for students. In interviews with faculty, connections to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) came through clearly as connected to Experiential Education and learning experiences. In some interviews, faculty didn't have a framework, model or theory to follow; they were guided by curiosity in their discipline and desire for students to experience relevant and deep learning in the subject. This pushed them to explore and design "real life" learning experiences that engaged learners in meaningful ways, even though they were not intentionally labeling it "experiential learning."

## **Inventory of Experiential Learning within Rec Studies Dept**

It is important to note that the Recreation Studies Department has been reporting on experiential learning in courses and has been building an inventory for the department.

[https://langara.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/sites/RecreationStudiesDepartment/\\_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BF493EF82-E50B-41D5-BB33-5FD15D23BD0C%7D&file=Program%20Activities%20Overview.xlsx&action=default&mobileRedirect=true](https://langara.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/sites/RecreationStudiesDepartment/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BF493EF82-E50B-41D5-BB33-5FD15D23BD0C%7D&file=Program%20Activities%20Overview.xlsx&action=default&mobileRedirect=true)

## **Conclusion to Part 1**

Experiential learning is an important part of learning about Recreation within the Post Secondary Environment. A focus on reflection and deep thought allows students to connect what they are learning to the "real world," making the learning more meaningful and lasting. Despite there being a gap in the literature about the value and experience of EBL online, the researchers found it natural to transfer and apply what we were reading about EBL to an online learning environment. We also found connections to this type of learning in other departments at Langara, including TCDC, who encourage a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework and a Community of Inquiry (COI) framework. Furthermore, we found natural connections with Indigenous perspectives to learning, whose holistic, relational, practical and continuous learning approaches reflect experiential learning principles by creating opportunities for deep and meaningful learning. Altogether, it is clear that Experiential Learning can enrich our online learning environments and help students to connect theory to practice.

## **Part 2**

### **Conversations with faculty about Experiential learning**

#### **Introduction**

We started this research framing the methodology as interviews with faculty, but as we moved into it, we found that interviews became too rigid a term; they were really conversations between the faculty researchers and faculty. Again, we saw this as a way for us as researchers to step back and see how to acquire and share knowledge in a dynamic and flowing manner that reflects our experience as instructors and as learners ourselves. The experience of having these conversations became deeper learning for the researchers – but it challenged how we could report the information in an academic

way in this paper. Should we try to analyze and code the interviews – looking for categories and connections? Would that be useful? Valuable to learning? We decided that including the notes from the interview/conversations as they were and leaving the reader to interpret them within their own experience and knowledge would be the most useful way to present this part of the report. This approach may also be more in-line with experiential learning values.

Questions were intentionally open and broad to capture larger conversations about experiential learning. In some cases this led to dialogue about engagement and connection and what learning is within the discipline. Stories of experiential learning approaches and assignments were situated within a broader context of engaging students and connection, active learning and deep learning. In most of the interviews it was understood that there was more to learning than just covering the material; that students needed to have opportunities to connect to it in their own way, to make the learning “real” and to be engaged by the learning experience and assignments.

Instructors within the Recreation Studies Department were asked to share their knowledge and ideas for this paper. Instructors interviewed outside of the Recreation Studies Department were identified by TCDC as instructors who were using experiential learning within their courses.

It is interesting to share that we noticed a broad difference in the method for capturing the responses from our team. Since some instructors were on vacation, they preferred to email their responses to the questions asked. While their answers were well-thought out and added much value to our topic, they differed in scope from the zoom interviews with other instructors, which quickly became dynamic discussions. The back-and-forth between interviewer and interviewee, in person, in “real time”, cracked the discussions open, and allowed us to dive even deeper into the topic. This made us think about the difference between on-line discussions and those in person or on zoom, and reminded us that synchronous ways of learning seem to create more opportunities for rich discussions than those that are simply ask-and-answer responses (or, to think of it visually, 3D vs 2D learning).

Each faculty person’s knowledge and experience added to our understanding of the value and process of experiential learning on-line in unique ways from their own disciplines and connected to a bigger conversation about what creates good teaching and learning. It is understood that the following information from the conversations captures a specific context of how each person understands and practices experiential learning in their teaching at this moment in time. As we are on a learning journey as instructors, we expect that the conversations and knowledge will grow and change over time. The following knowledge, practices and experiences reflect the current context of our understanding.

It is also understood that the information shared in the conversations was filtered through the faculty researcher’s understanding and then onto the page. The researchers tried to capture the information and the context, in some areas, this may have been missed. A final draft of the paper was sent to the faculty interviewed to review for contextual accuracy and provided an opportunity to add information to their sections that would benefit understanding about their learning in experiential education.

The value of the following notes and conversations is that they capture examples of real life teaching and learning. We started this research with the idea that faculty knew about models of experiential learning and designed how to intentionally work through the stages, but these conversations showed that it did not work that way. Most of the faculty intuitively created learning experiences and assignments with a desire to engage learners and provide applied, relevant learning. They followed the stages of the Experiential learning model without knowing about it.

To zoom out from this research, and helicopter above, we discovered in the following conversations that faculty themselves were moving through the experiential learning process by creating a learning experience for students, reflecting on how it worked, learning from that and applying it to creating new learning experiences. This process is Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

We hope these conversations spark some ideas of how you can include more experiential learning into your on-line courses. We also hope that you can engage in your own experiential learning by having the experience of teaching an experience, reflecting on it and applying it to your teaching.

-----  
**Eric Stewart, Photography Instructor, Langara College  
May 16, Zoom meeting**

Eric Stewart is a Photography instructor at Langara College. He credits his experiential teaching philosophies to his dad who was a middle school principal and then a supervisor of new teachers at UVic.

When google started and everything was on google, you could look up anything, so the question became why bother memorizing stuff? People remember the experiences not the googleable facts. There is more to teaching than covering the material, and especially in photography, a lot of that is experiential learning.

Ungrading. For some assignments, Eric asks students to grade themselves on an agreed rubric. This is paired with a written self reflection document. He then looks at how they graded themselves and either agrees or offers feedback as to why the grade may be too high or too low. He notes that good students tend to grade themselves lower than he would. The student's rubric and self reflection document often leads to conversations about why each student graded themselves where they did. Eric's move to explore ungrading came from his personal experience in post secondary. On his first go at school, he cared about his grades a lot. On his second go at post secondary he didn't care about grades at all, just the learning.

Eric co-teaches a Creativity and Ideation course with Kevin Smith. During Covid, the class was scheduled face to face, but because of the restrictions, it was scheduled off campus at different locations in Vancouver. Face to face and off campus worked really well, and the course is now scheduled that way, and will likely remain in that format moving forward. Eric and Kevin wrote a book which students receive in the first class. The book acts as textbook, power point and workbook all in one. Because the students are in nature, the variety of activities that can be done in class is greater than if they

were in a classroom at Langara. Most projects are presented in class, and to boost creativity, most assignments are graded pass/fail. This allows students to explore their own creativity without worrying about their grades. Students don't think about what the teacher thinks of their work, they are only concerned about what they think about it. The major term project for this course will be ungraded moving forward as well. The class does improv, forest bathing, city walks and other difficult to grade activities with a high participation from students.

One of his classes has a lot of guest speakers. Years ago one guest speaker asked the class, "who googled me before class?" no one had. This led to Eric thinking more about engagement with guest speakers and he worked with the students to co-create a rubric that focused on three areas: preparing for the speaker, engaging with the speaker, reflecting after. The class co-created the rubrics. 9 groups – 3 or 4 / group. Prepare / Engage / Reflect rubric. For each of the areas, students are required to show work that they did to prepare for the guest speaker (research the speaker/topic), engage with the speaker during the presentation (ask questions, actively listen), and reflect on the speaker after (share ideas that came from the presentation). This assignment requires that students actively engage in the experience of the guest speaker and follows the experiential learning model with active and accountable reflection.

A 4<sup>th</sup> term class in Photography is a capstone course. Students are trying to build a professional portfolio, but Eric and co-instructor Tomo Tanaka added a business element to the course. Students now choose fake jobs off a job board, negotiate scope of work and pricing with an instructor and try to make 20,000 Langara dollars over the term. There are also "Take a chance" cards which adds scenarios that are worth 1% of the term grade. These scenarios mostly come from program alumni. Grades are based on how much a student earned. Some students like the format, others struggle with it. Usually students do really well, or then need a lot of help to just pass the course. There are stopgaps in place for students who are struggling. They call one project the Pheonix Project – a project where the student's term can rise from the ashes and get them back on track.

Eric will be trying a new style of teaching for the first time in the fall. He met with Carmen Larsen from TCDC, and asked for some volunteers from the student group to look at what he was planning – getting sound advice and buy in from students taking the class. Eric went through the course learning outcomes and broke it down into 4 major skills. Students will be creating their own projects to demonstrate their knowledge of those 4 learning outcome skills. There are modalities – different ways to doing things to provide variety in the work. Students will decide which projects they want to do based on the skills and modalities. It's a little like a choose your own adventure class. The assignments will include a project brief, the project, a reflection and a summary of the learning. It will be graded as pass/fail. The project must be up to professional standard, or they keep working on it. Students will also create their own due dates.

When teaching or grading in a new way, students need to buy in. Eric uses an early assignment as a kick in the butt for the students. International students especially take more time to buy into this type of learning. Eric feels that sometimes he's spending more time on the ungrading piece than the content, but there is a huge benefit in the end. While there are challenges to teaching in new ways, especially when using D2L, the outcomes are worth it.

Photography has a cohort program and this helps the students know the instructors and stay accountable with experiential learning. Eric talks about the importance of having rapport with the students beforehand – trust – you have to trust the students and the students have to trust you.

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**Cara Tremain, Anthropology Instructor Langara**  
**June 12, zoom meeting**

Cara shared the link to a 20 min video presentation she did for the Archeology - this video really captures her method of creating experiential learning for the students as well as her rationale for why she chose these experiences and assessments.

**Video Presentation on Digital Assignments - [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H1-XAtF\\_cCQ-WktO-jEbt5meRr1U98mk/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H1-XAtF_cCQ-WktO-jEbt5meRr1U98mk/view?usp=sharing)**

Notes on the video:

Knows and engages in the big questions of the discipline (relevance and keeping Archeology modern / ethics)

Excited about exploring new technology with the guiding principles of the discipline.

Step by step instructions/videos with screen capture for students to understand how to do the work.

Uses blog and twitter to have students learn how to work in the public sphere – again with clear pedagogy as to why she is using that platform and how it connects to the discipline.

Reflections at the end of the presentation show that she is clear about why she is using different platforms for students to learn archeology.

Clearly understands and is excited about archeology and her discipline. Knowledgeable enough to try new things to share learning about the discipline.

Provides unique opportunities for students to share their learning and to be flexible in how they approach the assignments within a clear structure.

Notes from conversation with Cara:

Began experimenting with different technologies and trying different things. Her colleague is a bit of a tech wizard and explained how he was using them, and it helped to see the applications.

It is hard to get students to engage. Students don't like writing essays and there are a lot of issues with Plagiarism. Looking for something more exciting and engaging, encouraged them to be more attentive to what they are learning. New experiences in learning and technology help them engage and see what they are doing is more relevant than writing another essay. Try to lessen the amount of plagiarism and have students look at the content from another perspective.

Love the opportunities to create assignments that were really different. Initially thought that this technology might be difficult for the students to learn but students are more intuitive with technology, and it wasn't a stumbling block for them. Offered more opportunities to engage in different ways. The research project was augmented reality, virtual reality. It went so well, one of the requirements was it was mandatory that I meet once during the term. Used virtual reality headset, new iPad – augmented reality and 3D modelling. Created a research study about using this technology for students in the Dept.

For on-line classes, she has a tiny little assignment worth 1% for students to do a video introduction, video drop-in, video wrap up. The introduction video asks students to introduce themselves, name, pronouns, talk about why they decided to take anthropology. Most of the students do it. Opportunity to create connection between students in the class. Students respond to the videos on the discussion board.

For midterm review in on-line course, has a zoom session with a kahoot quiz. Some would turn on cameras and start talking to each other.

Used twitter to post for a class, sent them a link to how it works so they understood the platform. Didn't have to use their real name, used it twice in the semester, asked students to improve on the second one. Created an opportunity for students to learn how to be professional in a public space when talking about the content. Created a blog website for another class. Students posted information about archeological websites. Not sure if she would do that again. Twitter was more engaging.

Used Padlet for in-person in class. News and media curation - excuse to get them to look at news and think about it in anthropological way. Broke them into groups – each group had a padlet board. Each week, find a news article, and posting very quickly 100-200 words what it is about and how it relates to anthropology. Pretty engaging. And the students really liked it.

Try to encourage active learning as much as possible. Do things – tactile stuff. Try to get them to reflect, present to the class, connect to the class – not just the content – but what they found difficulty, what they found easy. Students made 3D model artifacts on the 3D printer, and we put them in the library in the display cases. Then we evaluated that, reported on what worked well, what didn't work – trying to take it the step further to reflect on it.

As faculty, we don't have a space at the college to connect and experiment with these technologies – like virtual reality. It would be great to have a digital space – engaged space where faculty can come in and play with VR and think about

how we could apply this technology in our courses. A space to try out ideas and talk to other faculty about how to use them.

Link to the presentation Cara gave in April, about the research study with AR/VR that she have been conducting at the college:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H9OckCIXIXiVTQcQbuGrtpqTtxpApK2/view?usp=sharing>

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### **Carolyn Wing – Early Childhood education Instructor, May 16 (zoom)**

Carolyn uses intentional lenses to evaluate and design the learning experiences in her Early Childhood Education courses. One lens is an intercultural lens, another lens is the model of Decolonization and Indigenization principles. She starts with a focus on personal learning, then moves to learning about the community and making it practical. Within the on-line course delivery, Carolyn works to connect students to students and connect students to her as the instructor, by asking people to bring in their own personal culture. This awareness of culture, personal, community, helps the students in growing knowledge and culture of the discipline as working with families is an important part of ECE.

Indigenizing principles was created through a research project funded by Langara College. It focuses on experiential and holistic learning and connecting to place. Carolyn sees this as important to ECE students in their work and this extends to recreation students as well. Understanding time and place and looking at a holistic picture of recreation.

Following is the link to the Principles for Indigenizing at Langara. It can be used as a lens to design experiential learning within our courses:

<https://iweb.langara.ca/grammarjunkie/indigenization/principles-for-indigenizing/>

An example of how Carolyn uses the lenses in her course design is looking at general wellbeing. She first asks students to connect to themselves and their own community, introduce themselves based on a lesson they learned from elders. Students share and then reply to each other in the discussion area – this shared knowledge helps them see each other as human beings instead of other students.

Introduction to the course/ culture/ elders/community. Always about a story.

Foundations of ECE – history course – Carolyn asks students to talk about a story that an elder has shared that they believe/don't believe. She makes an effort to have students connect to their own family community or the bigger community. This connects to the work they will be doing in working with families for Early Childhood Education.

She asks students to create connection with each other by sharing things that are about being human – like sharing about food that is traditional in their culture. S

A lot of learning requires her students to go out to do something and then come back to talk. Indigenous and intercultural. Supports that learning environment. Instructor shares those stories as well. She is intentional and explicit about why assignments and the course are designed in this way and the application to what students will be required to do in their work.

Connects the learning to personal experience first – ties it to their own personal learning and then move broader. Realize a lot of similarity and differences.

For example for the topic of risky play – she asks students to watch a video, then pauses and discusses parts of it – ties it to their childhood experience – were parents overprotective? Then moves to connect this reflection to their practice when working with children. This clearly follows the experiential learning model of having the experience, reflecting on it and then applying that to life.

On-line in DQ groups. Instead of responding by DQ post. Conversation via zoom and record it. On-line – do they want community? A synchronous. – some do and some don't.

Memorization – quizzes – flips the exercise -- here is the answer what is the question. Pre-quiz, post quiz, part of their grade. Low stakes quizzes. Could repeat it as many times as they wanted, to get the grade that they wanted. It is about their learning. As many times as they want to get good marks. You may only have time to do it once. You'll know where to find the information when you need it.

Connecting to students - First intro video from the instructor – make that super open, vulnerable, human. When they meet on zoom they feel like they know you.

Creating a structure in Brightspace where students need to finish one experience or assessment to move forward in content. Go through that video quiz, before the next part releases. Opening a secret door. Once you've done this, this module – this next module opens.

One part of the course was on Infectious diseases. Each student chose a disease and made a video about it to present it – it had to be connected to what happens when you are in a childcare situation. Students watched each other's videos and then built those videos into the quiz. Ask each other questions about presentations. Had to watch the video to answer the question.

For assignments that ask for students to Menu plan, she asks them to connect that to that culture – share recipes. Assignments always have a focus on sharing ideas, building relationships and community – as this is an important part of ECE.

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**Diane Thompson, Library Tech, Langara**  
**Meeting with Diane – Tuesday May 10, 2022 (zoom)**

Diane shared that community is a key piece for her as an on-line instructor in the Library Tech program. Creating on-line engagement and feeling a connection between the instructor and cohort is important to learning in the course. Practicums are important experiential learning for Library tech students and during Covid, students were connected on-line with their agencies. Diane and other instructors in the program explored different strategies about how to get the students to experience learning in on-line practicums. This on-line context opened the opportunities of what the Library tech students could do in their practicums. Organizations from outside of BC including the Chicago Button Museum, San Francisco jail re-entry service (answering letters to people who were incarcerated about law related information), etc. These opportunities really engaged the students and were real world activities. Diane found that there is a lot more engagement when it isn't just a made-up assignment. Using real people and real situations increased the experiential learning within the on-line courses.

Designing experiences that are more student-centred increases engagement. Creating opportunities for students to choose their own topics works really well, but can be tricky as some students choose topics they already know a lot about and the learning is not as in-depth. How she frames and introduces this encourages students to challenge themselves.

In her on-line courses, Diane uses software tools to engage students and provide experiential learning. Padlet, kahoot, gets them participating as well as Brightspace tools such as Groups and Discussion Forums. In the asynchronous environment they can do them on their own time, but be part of a community in the course.

Currently Diane is trying out a new software platform for Practicum students called Pebble Pad. Students will do more reflecting on the experiential part of the practicum. At the beginning of the course, Diane meets with each student on zoom and talks about their goals and what they want out of the experiential learning of the practicum. If they haven't really thought of what they want to get out of it - this provides an opportunity for them to make decisions about their learning. They can look at areas where they want to build up their skills and want to practice the skill instead of falling back on things that they already know and are already comfortable with. In the meeting, she encourages them to push forward and think about things that make them feel uncomfortable. This initial meeting asks students to think about what you are going to get out of this experience. In Pebble Pad, students reflect on their goals and create a written contract with themselves. They are asked to write down three goals and then reflect on how they will achieve those goals.

During and towards the end of their practicum experience, there are several activities within Pebblepad that keep prompting them to think. Students are asked to find an article that is talking about one of the skills they have in their goals. This gets them to think about what they are reading vs. what is actually happening in the organization that they are working in for their practicum. Towards the end, they have to start thinking about what the supervisor or host will say about their performance. Students are asked to rate themselves on the likert scale. Was there any surprises they didn't anticipate? Other optional activities are available such as having them create a linked

in profile and find their classmates and add their instructor. Once the practicum is complete, they reflect on the whole experience and also on the evaluation that they received from their host in order to make further connections to real life learning.

After the practicums are completed, Diane hosts zoom session with the students and asks them, What did you learn? This was an optional session and 1/3 of the students showed up. This is an opportunity to meet classmates and talk about their practicum experience. In the classroom for this same opportunity 80% show up. Mixed in terms of motivation for coming. Social connection is important – other people who are curious to know what others experienced in the practicum.

In the on-line environment, Diane has students work in groups and recently discovered peer assessment in working to create community and more experiential learning. Brightspace is releasing a new peer assessment piece in the fall. Learning from each other creates experiential learning as well.. This could look like evaluation of a website. Assessments on each others' work. This helps them understand what the output of other students is like.

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**Meeting with Natalia and Alex, TCDC, Zoom meeting Tuesday May 10, 2022**

Natalia and Alex work in TCDC and in our zoom meeting it became clear how experiential learning connects to the Community of Inquiry Model (CoI) and Universal design for Learning (UDL). An interesting point from our meeting was that we can design the learning strategies in our courses can be experiential.

The Community of Inquiry framework elevates learning community within the course. CoI – 7 principles for online instruction. Sorensen and Baylen 2009.  
[https://langara-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/nazire\\_langara\\_ca/\\_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B0542E439-F76B-4212-B3B4-80A73153CA81%7D&file=Frameworks%20for%20Experiential%20Online%20Courses.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true](https://langara-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/nazire_langara_ca/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B0542E439-F76B-4212-B3B4-80A73153CA81%7D&file=Frameworks%20for%20Experiential%20Online%20Courses.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true)

We talked about using Padlet to connect learnings in a more visual way than Brightspace discussion posts. Students can connect to each other with lines and share how their own experience connects to another student. Scavenger hunts provide an opportunity for students to get to know a place (for example community centre) - exchanging stories about finding.

Other ideas for experiential learning included simulations and Virtual Reality. Jamboards can help to increase the levels of engagement, can be used for collaborating on ground rules for the class. Here is an example link from the Pulling Together workshop, Community of Practice ideas:  
[https://jamboard.google.com/d/1h9CPgYVOe\\_5laIH0INzpgRM2\\_luwRqSbiBps30OzWr8/viewer?f=0](https://jamboard.google.com/d/1h9CPgYVOe_5laIH0INzpgRM2_luwRqSbiBps30OzWr8/viewer?f=0)

Using Intelligent Agents in Brightspace can increase the level of engagement in learning through earning badges and tokens. Here is a link for a webinar on Brightspace Intelligent Agents by Diane Thompson, Langara:

[https://stream.langara.ca/media/t/0\\_6v37m28h](https://stream.langara.ca/media/t/0_6v37m28h)

Have students provide some of the questions for quizzes in the course and/or the student questions for the course – questions sometimes create more learning than answers.

Create weekly challenges for the students – they can choose one or more of the challenges and report into the discussion forum or at a zoom class how the challenges went. This encourages students to go and experience learning and then report back to their group or the class.

Create a video and have a debate – or canva or google slides. Assessing other classmate videos – important part of the learning. Providing feedback.

Move ownership of the learning to the students – for example - video taping recreation centres and using that to have conversations about what they see/ don't see. Students provide the experience and connect to the learning.

Natalia and Alex created a file for Recreation Studies in ONE drive that has more information on experiential learning, UDL and Col at the following link:

[https://langara-my.sharepoint.com/personal/nazize\\_langara\\_ca/\\_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fnazize%5Flangara%5Fca%2FDocuments%2FRec%20Studies%2FExperiential%20Learning%20Resources&ct=1654369037561&or=OWA%2DNT&cid=a3da2c29%2D787f%2D5c8d%2Daae5%2D452ff3e2ada0&ga=1](https://langara-my.sharepoint.com/personal/nazize_langara_ca/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fnazize%5Flangara%5Fca%2FDocuments%2FRec%20Studies%2FExperiential%20Learning%20Resources&ct=1654369037561&or=OWA%2DNT&cid=a3da2c29%2D787f%2D5c8d%2Daae5%2D452ff3e2ada0&ga=1)

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**Joanne Edey-Nicoll, Recreation Studies Instructor  
Meeting on May 19, 11:00am-12:00pm (zoom)**

1. *What do you see as the value of EBL in online courses?*
  - *Same value as in person: provides students with the chance to apply their learning to practical situations. But online, it also gives students a chance to get away from their computers! Online learning tends to be text-heavy, with lots of screen time...so EBL helps make learning more practical. EBL is critical for learning online.*
  
2. *When has it worked for you in the past?*
  - *1160: Foundations Course: Students have to choose 4 leisure ideals that speak to them and then record evidence of these ideals happening in the field; then write stories about their own experiences based on their experience. The students' lightbulbs go off in this assignment!*

- *Ageing Course: 1<sup>st</sup> Assignment: Present 5 aging theories to students that have connection to leisure, then students choose a theory and go and research that theory more, expand their knowledge, and then find an older adult to interview about the theory and write a case study about whether that theory applies or doesn't apply. It is real-life learning for the students.*
- *2<sup>nd</sup> Assignment: Choose a community and do a map of 10 service providers for older adults and what benefit those provide to older adults.*
- *3<sup>rd</sup> assignment: Action plan: look at neighbourhood and gap in services and identify a group that is underserved...then present an idea based on theories of aging. So lots of real-life learning.*
- *All of these ideas take theory and apply it to the real world.*
- *Lots of reflection weaved into all assignments; reflect on experience working in groups too.*

### 3. Challenges:

- *DQ's - too forced*
- *Discussions are so much more dynamic in person.*
- *Group work – but since this is the norm in community programs, think about how we can do more of this online.*
- *When providing students with instructions to go out and do things, instructions can be overwhelming. In the classroom, students can ask questions so easily. But online students don't ask. (Some solutions to this are to create videos with instructions, and also host zoom meetings where they can ask questions as well. Basically, to find different ways to present information to students online.)*
- *Another challenge is that online you don't get to witness the moment of transformation, so you can't always be sure it is happening.*

### 4. How can we get students to fully engage in all four modes of Kolb's model online?:

- *Kolb model fits nicely into 4400 course but not chronologically, because they begin with reflection. Frame it by leading students through scaffolding assignments that lead to final projects. There is much reflection throughout.*
- *Building community online comes through the instructor being present and interacting with students in DQ's. Sets tone for the course.*
- *Find different ways to present info to students.*

**Erin Wilkins, Recreation Studies Instructor and Department Chair  
Meeting on May 25, 2:30-3:30pm (zoom)**

We know how valuable EBL is, so any opportunity to have people do EBL is important. Some examples of when EBL has worked:

- *Going into the community for assignments*
- *Walking in nature*
- *Creating own outcomes for assignments or the course*
- *Running special events in real life – coming together as a group, making friends, reflecting on the event after*
- *Interviewing people for an assignment in the community*
- *Any time self-reflection is involved*
- *She has an assignment where students reflect on their current behaviour, then think about what change they want to make, then they make the change, then they reflect back on it afterwards.*
- *Thinking about what we can move into DQ's from assignments to scaffold the learning, so that they will be able to practice a skill in the DQ that they will need to do later in an assignment*

More instructors need to understand Kolb's stages. We know what the process is but haven't given a name to it. Using the framework as a guideline will take the students through the stages. Need to be intentional but not too much theory.

How do we build community online?

- *Create opportunities for students online:*
- *In breakout rooms on zoom with time built in to build community*
  - ii. *Have to be forced to be intentionally vulnerable*
  - iii. *Lots of deep thinking, reflection*
  - iv. *Being intentional in our course design*

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**Emma Courtney, Recreation Studies Instructor  
Meeting on May 26, 10:00-11:00am (zoom)**

The value of EBL is that it makes learning real; it embodies knowledge. It asks students to apply knowledge to the world around them instead of in a classroom setting. It makes learning REAL.

Some examples of EBL she has come across:

- An assignment where they had to identify their mission, vision and 3 goals based on what they wanted to get out of the program. In their final course, they reflected on how they embodied these values throughout the program. The intent was to be living these pieces throughout the program.
- A course where there is choice in every assignment – they could create multimedia projects, videos, many different options.

- When knowledge is used as a verb – students reflect on how they show up in the world and they showcase that.
- Co-create an environment with students where learning needs are met through experience.
- Peer marking as experiential learning. We learn better by teaching, so adding this as a component to our courses.
- Co-learning as a process.

How do we build community online?

- *Group work and partner work*
- *Intentional design; carefully curated DQ's*
- *Option for synchronous lecture OR online DQ each week. Students then post two take-aways from the lecture, or they answer the DQ.*
- *Poll at beginning of class to find best time for synchronous time.*
- *Lots of scenario-based activities.*
- *Co-creating the learning environment.*
- *Try to add interaction in asynchronous environments.*

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**Dave McBride, Instructor, Recreation Studies**  
**Received by email on May 24, 2022**

1. My comments for each of your questions are specific to online RECR 1160 (Foundations of Leisure and Recreation).

I see great value in using experience based learning in my online teaching because it allows students to better grasp the concepts being taught, enhances creativity, provides meaningful opportunities to reflect on their learning, and often results in improved student attitudes toward learning. Since this learning is not based on specific existing knowledge, it helps to level the playing field for all students, regardless of their current knowledge/experience of the subject matter. I find this especially beneficial in an elective course (for those not pursuing a career in Recreation), as it precludes having a formal training or work background in our field, and provides a more equal opportunity for all students (both domestic and international) to be successful. I don't recall an instance where this teaching approach has been particularly challenging. Rather, as an instructor, it is personally rewarding to have students connect the dots and learn from their own individual experiences.

2. Examples of experiential learning in RECR 1160 include both the Recreation Ideals and Recreation Scope major assignments. In the Ideals assignment, students have considerable discretion to choose 4 of the 20 Ideals presented in the course, and to write a reflective narrative of either their own personal experience, or their personal witnessing of the chosen Ideals being actualized by another person (e.g. family member, friend, coworker, etc.). In the Scope assignment, students can similarly use their discretion to visit, research, reflect and demonstrate their understanding of the variety and diversity of any 3 recreation places or spaces in their chosen community that meets the definitions

of a not-for-profit/volunteer, public and commercial recreation sector organization. These student 'personal stories' are shared with classmates in a discussion question forum that highlights personal reflection and, ideally, personal growth and learning that can be applied by incorporating more recreation into their personal discretionary time.

In terms of assessing this experiential learning, there is a focus on learning ("doing") something new and significant. Students are asked to not spend much text talking about things they already knew before the assignment. The students who emphasize "new learning, new understandings, new realizations", etc. receive the best marks. By engaging students in hands-on experiences and reflection, they are better able to connect the theories and knowledge learned in the course to real world situations.

3. I agree with the COI framework, which links teaching, social, and cognitive presence to optimize the "deeper learning experience" for students. I have shared examples of intentional course design in my response to question 2 above. Building community in a fully online course is challenging (especially when there is a lot of student diversity), but my experience is that many students really respond and connect to personal stories and experiences from their classmates, rather than theory outlined by the instructor. By requiring student participation in experiential activities, instructors can hopefully encourage students to retain knowledge that increases their intrinsic motivation and interest in the course material. Ideally, this will translate into positive changes in how students choose to use their discretionary leisure time.

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**Yue-Ching Cheng, Recreation Studies Instructor**  
**Received by Email on May 17, 2022**

I haven't done a ton of work to systematically build in experience-based learning. The biggest challenge for me has been the time constraints (both course design time, as well as the course duration). It takes time to create opportunities for students to have an iterative experience, and it takes time to execute across a semester. The other challenge I find is that students are adept at churning out deliverables in a way that compartmentalizes the various concepts across a course/program. They get a job done and move on, never to look back (no reflection).

In general, I don't explicitly tell students WHY I designed a course the way I do. I don't tell them the reason I engineered specific experiences the way they're presented to them. I also don't assess the experience directly, I'm still assessing the deliverable (report, paper) that comes from the experience.

For specific examples of what I think are experiential learning/COI in my online courses:

RECR 1170 / 1270

Predictive Journaling / Reflective Journaling / Industry Mentor

Students get a short introduction to a module's topics (introduction, learning outcomes for the module, sometimes a story or illustrative example or video). In some modules, they take a 'predictive quiz' which is a selection of old exam questions on the module's

content to get them to start the struggle of connecting ideas that they might already know from life. Then they answer a few questions in a predictive journal:

- How much do you know about the topic
- Where do you see the content fitting into your career
- What worries you most about the topic
- What are you excited to learn about

At the end of the module, students reflect back on the content and see if their opinions have changed about where it fits into their career and what they found most interesting. They also have to identify what they want to know more about. This is in addition to the conversations they have with their industry mentor about the topic content – I give them some starter questions, but they have to come up with their own questions to ask/discuss with their mentor.

All of the journaling is done in the discussion area in Brightspace but is set up as private personal message boards that only I (and the student) can see. We have async conversations based on their reflective journaling as I respond to their answers to:

- What still confuses you/ is muddy in this module?
- How do you see this helping you in your future at work/life?
- Identify one thing that you would like to know more about from this content.

RECR 4270 –

#### Student Pods

I group students into teams of 3 or 4 and they meet over Zoom in lieu of discussion posts/forums. The whole course flips between individual assignments to short group assignments based on the individual assignments. For example, they learn about partnerships in the community, and write a report about a community partnership they're interested in as their individual assignment. Then they have a Pod assignment where they compare and contrast their partnership with their pod mates

I used the Pod Model to build online community and allow students the opportunity to work with others in a synchronous environment. In 4270, I've experimented with the jigsaw method of splitting out Pods into different expertise groups so that students from different Pods can work together and then bring information back to their home-Pods. It's a mash of async and sync collaboration – needs some tweaking but it's not terrible.

Other things I do is post weekly briefings that are recorded Zoom sessions. Students can optionally attend the short 20-30 minute briefings for an opportunity to talk to me or other students about the topics but I record them and post them up in announcements.

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**Naomi Brand, Recreation Studies Instructor**  
**Received on June 16, 2022**

I see huge value in getting learners to leave the screen and engage themselves physically in a learning experience. Taking them away from a passive, seated position

for "learning," hopefully wakes them up, creates excitement or "buy in" and variety to their online work.

When I taught 2260 online synchronously, there was some successes that really surprised me. Because of the content of that course (Arts, Culture and Heritage) we talked about performance as an art form, and I asked them to perform their engagement through agreed upon gestures of thumbs up, smiling, twinkling fingers, etc. I was transparent about my need for regular check ins throughout class time to assure they were "with me." We had one particular guest artists class where they led a theatre improv workshop that worked way better than I had imagined. Students participated fully and physically, acknowledging the screen and each other in a playful and fun way that gave the feeling really being together in time and space.

It is challenging when there is no accountability (in the case of asynchronous online learning) or the "real time" sharing with classmates to amplify or deepen the experience. In face to face, reluctant or ambivalent learners can get swept into the group engagement and energy of an activity. The casual "peer pressure" of seeing everyone else participating can be a positive force that is hard to replicate in an online asynchronous environment.

Thank you for sharing (Kolb's model). This is a really lovely model. I haven't conceptualized any activities or assignments specifically with this framework in mind. In RECR 3260, I have an assignment where students are asked to profile 3 cultural assets. For this assignment, they must go out into their own community and visit three cultural assets (based on readings and materials that define and discuss what makes up a cultural asset) and then write up a profile supported by research along with their own understanding and experience. The profile must have a picture of the asset that includes themselves in it or a sticky note with 3260 written on it, with their profile of the cultural asset in order to demonstrate that they actually physically visited the site. The intent is for them to experience the place in context, with all their senses, as a member of the community would so that they can include that in the assignment. This is perhaps an example of Action, thinking and reflection working together?

In my asynchronous course this is a big question for me as the lack of a shared community feeling is difficult for me as an instructor. I will admit that I don't think I have succeeded yet and also wonder if students in the BRM even want community, or if they are so busy that they just want to do their courses and get to work. Early on in 3260 there is a video/audio assignment that asks learners to analyze and share their own cultural overlaps, identities, and conflicts (as defined through course material). This is probably the most community building as it is the most personal moment of the course and learners hear each others' stories. The requirement to do this as a video or audio recording allows people to access the person in a way that can feel deeper than simply reading text.

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### **Janet Ready, Recreation Studies**

RECR 3230 - Grow your Leadership assignment. Students choose a podcast from the Happiness Lab, Wisdom of the Ancients, Dr. Laurie Santos. Choose what practice they will include in their life to grow their leadership for 2 weeks. Report into the DQ, and choice of assignments (ppt, video, paper) to report on how this practice grew their leadership – or didn't. Students are encouraged to include if they couldn't keep the practice going and why – failure is okay as long as students can clearly explain why the practice failed – it is all considered good learning.

RECR 3230 – In week 8, students write a letter/email to a person in their life who has influenced their leadership. Students are encouraged to use the leadership concepts they have covered in the course to identify specifically what about leadership they learned from that person. They are required to send the letter/email. And they reflect on the experience of writing the letter in the DQ area that week. Students aren't required to share the specific letter but share the learning they had writing the letter and sending it.

RECR 4150 - Experiencing recreation systems in the community. After studying systems theory, students are asked to choose a non-traditional recreation system in their community that reflects one of the Leisure Ideals from RECR 1160. Students report on elements and interconnections of the system as well as the purpose of the system. They are required to go out and take physical photos of the system with evidence it is for the course and include that in the assignment. The final assignment in the course is a Solve a Problem system where students identify a problem in a recreation system in their community and show how looking at the problem through a systems thinking lens could help to see it in a different way and identify new solutions to the problem. Students identify specific levers in the system or elements or interconnections that could be adjusted to create positive change in the system. Students include photos and evidence of the system (interviews). Students have the choice of presenting these assignments, in video, narrated powerpoint or written format.

RECR 4400 – Students create a research question, work with a recreation organization to answer the question. They have the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to the recreation field and work with an organization to solve a problem or add new knowledge to a specific topic or area in recreation.

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### **Shannon Wall, Recreation Studies**

RECR 3160 – Assignments require students to “go forth” into the community and find examples of the theories in practice, then write “blog posts” about their experience. They also write a reflection piece about what they learned from this assignment. Another assignment asks them to write a letter to someone in their life explaining a concept from the course, and then they write a reflection piece about the experience of writing the letter and the ensuing conversations they had with the person they wrote it to.

RECR 2295 – This Connecting to Nature course requires students to spend 2 hours a week in nature, on their own. They write journal entries each week reflecting on this time and what they are learning as they explore nature. They then meet with me individually

(twice) on zoom to discuss how this experience is going for them. Their other assignments involve researching organizations both locally and internationally that are helping to connect people to nature, and they write about these (or present their learnings in a creative way) and share those learnings with the class.

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### **Steve Musson – Retired Recreation Studies Faculty**

Steve recently created a blog, The Examined Adventure. His posts are a really good example of working through Kolb's model of having the experience, reflecting on the experience and then applying it to real life. He gave permission for us to include the link to the blog in this paper.

<https://theexaminedadventure.ca/>

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### **Conclusion**

The intent of this research project was to explore the value and process of experiential learning on-line. Part One of this paper included a review of some of the literature the value of experiential learning that can be applied to the on-line environment, but specific examples of the process of experiential learning on-line were limited. In addition to Adult Learning theory and Kolb's Experiential Learning model, the Community of Inquiry Framework and Universal Design for Learning added to learning about how to build an engaged and connected community of learners to create stronger experiential learning. It was also noted that experiential learning is embedded in Indigenous knowledge transfer. Part Two of this paper included conversations with faculty from the Recreation Studies and other Departments at Langara College to learn more about how these instructors used experiential learning in their on-line courses and what their experiences were. There is value to experiential learning within the Recreation discipline. Recreation is experiential, therefore learning about recreation should also value experiential opportunities in order to stay aligned with the integrity of the learning. Creating opportunities for experiential learning in an on-line course can be challenging but as the conversations show, there are faculty who are exploring and creating these opportunities on-line. Further sharing within this community of practice at the Fall 2022 workshop will continue to grow this culture of challenging ourselves and each other to continue to grow our on-line experiential learning and teaching in recreation.

### **Further Research**

We suggest that there is great value in continuing to discuss and share new ideas about Experiential Learning online, in our Recreation Studies department, and with other departments in the College who are also wrestling with these ideas. Sharing successes and failures about Experiential Learning on-line will continue to challenge us to be better instructors and to make the learning in our classes more relevant and meaningful. Regular department check-ins and opportunities to share ideas in this space should be incorporated into our bi-annual staff meetings and staff retreats.

In conversation with Cara Tremain, she talked about the value of having a digital makerspace at Langara for faculty to experiment with Virtual Reality, simulation and other digital teaching methods. This space would help faculty understand how to use the technology, and host conversations with faculty about how it could be used in on-line teaching.

Exploring more about Indigenous knowledge, learning and teaching would be valuable in understanding more perspectives of experiential learning. An attempt was made for this research project to speak with a Musqueam Elder at Langara College, but no reply was received.

### **Researcher Learning**

Janet Ready -- I appreciated this opportunity to really dig into the topic of Experiential Learning on-line. I also appreciated the opportunity to have conversations and learn from faculty outside of the Recreation Studies Dept. at Langara. It is encouraging to speak with really engaged faculty who are really thinking about how to provide relevant, engaged learning to students. I hope we can continue to have these conversations about engaged teaching and learning at Langara in one way or another. Working on this topic created a strong commitment for me in my teaching to focus on how to do this better. It also provided examples and ideas from other faculty that inspired me to be creative and intentional about how I can do this.

As with any research project I have participated in, this one didn't really go as planned, and that is a good thing. The topic and format of the paper really helped me stretch my thinking about academic writing and format, useful writing and format, and colonized and decolonized ways of sharing information. I am continuing to navigate this and working through this project helped me experiment and really think about these big questions.

I am grateful to work on this research project with Shannon Wall. Her knowledge about Adult Learning theory combined with her passion for experiential learning helped me learn more deeply about this area. This has been a tough two years teaching in an isolated environment, pivoting fully on-line, trying to be flexible and structured enough as an instructor to create engaged learning environments for students within on-line courses within a global pandemic. Working on this project with Shannon and talking with the faculty for this research helped me feel connected to a bigger community of teachers and learners committed to creating deep learning experiences for students.

Shannon Wall -- This research project has been a wonderful opportunity to explore and grapple with a topic that I have always loved - experiential learning – in a different light. During the pandemic, when so many instructors were forced to teach online, it felt like we all had our heads down and just had to get the work done. But now we have arisen for air, and it has been really refreshing to take this time to share stories and experiences and to think deeply about the practice of teaching online.

I loved my discussions with other faculty about this topic, and I learned a lot from their experiences and their ideas. It was encouraging to discover that other instructors also struggle with building community online, and how to make DQ's more relevant and less

tedious for both students and instructors. It was inspiring to hear about creative assignments and ways that other instructors are using experiential learning in their classes. I left each discussion feeling enlivened and inspired and struck by a feeling that we are all in this together, each of us trying in our own way to be better instructors for our students. That the answer to better pedagogy isn't found in just one book or one teacher, but in the constant trial and error and valiant attempts of many of us, and the stories we share with each other of our successes and failures. It is not a straight path, but it sure is an interesting one, and one that I am grateful to be on.

Most of all, I loved working with Janet Ready, who has done many research projects for our department and is incredibly adept and skillful in her execution of them. She pulled us along as we tried to discover where we were going with the project, and what value it could add to our department. I have always enjoyed wrestling with ideas alongside Janet, and this project was no exception. Her leadership and commitment to being a better instructor push me to be better myself, and it has been such a privilege to work alongside her on this project.

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APPENDIX A:

## **Draft Outline of Faculty Workshop:**

September 16, 2022 (Proposed date)

10:30-10:50: Welcome and Ice Breaker

10:50-11:15: EBL Inventory

11:15-11:30: Program Inventory

11:30-12:00: Brainstorm Blitz (Workshop Ideas)

12:00-1:00: Lunch break

1:00- 1:30: Group and Small Group Discussion

1:30-2:00: Identify your Plus One (or Two)!

2:00-2:30: Closing and Next Steps

Appendix B

The following graphic illustration was created by Shannon to reflect the main points and ideas in this research project. Building on the idea that there are different ways to present knowledge and growing our pedagogy from the Decolonization workshop with Recreation Studies faculty April 2022.

