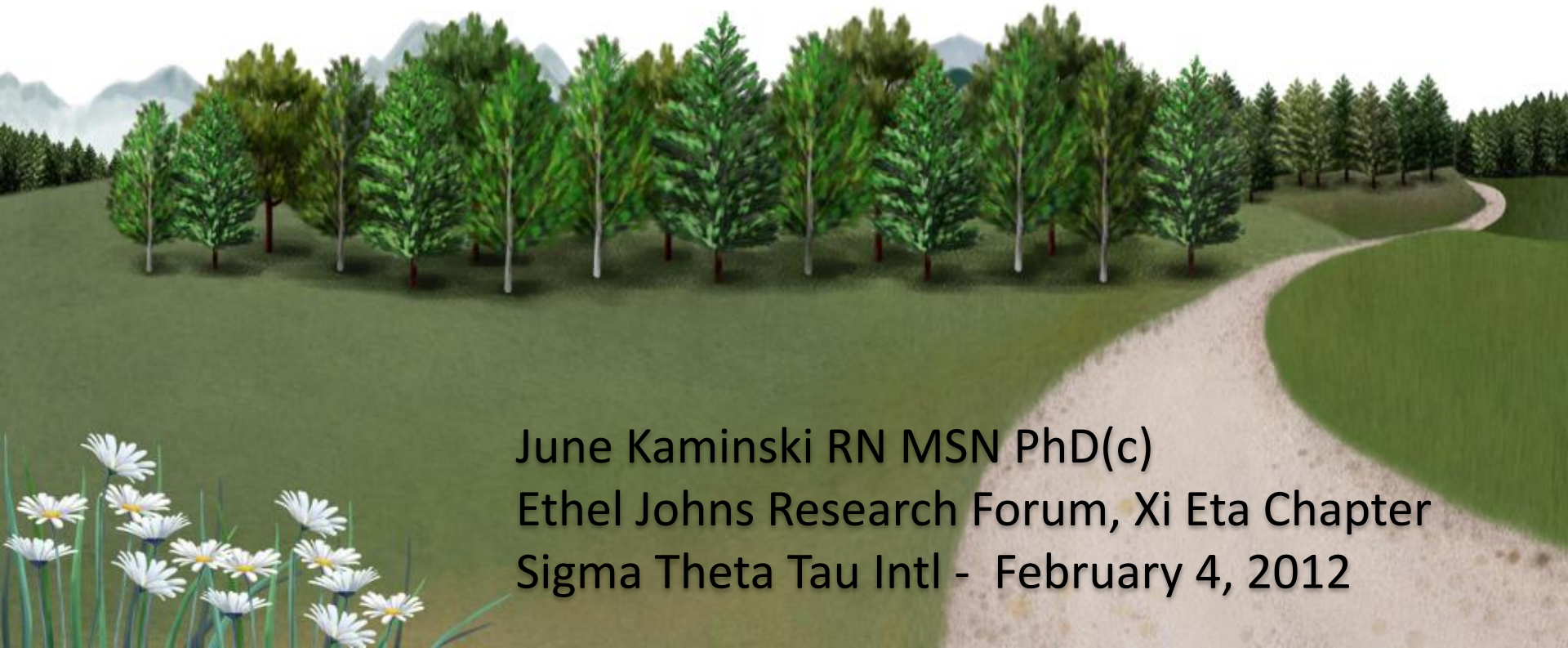


# First Nations ways of knowing: Developing experiential knowledge in nursing through an Elder in Residence Program



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# ELDER: Lekeyten Antone, Kwantlen First Nations

The establishment of a pilot Elder in Residence program was done to facilitate integrated curriculum in the three nursing degree programs at Kwantlen University, and to serve as a culturally appropriate leader and experiential resource for faculty and students.



# Schedule of Events

Sessions and experiential trips were held from April through June, 2010 on the Kwantlen First Nations traditional territories.

Some sessions were held on Kwantlen campuses while others were direct community events.

- 12 Dialogue Circles
- Graduation Tea
- BSN Day Brainstorming
- BSN Workshop
- Gathering Place Opening
- Ceremony for Educational Enhancement Agreement
- Cultural Events



# Experiential learning

Experiential learning could be described as essential First Nations traditional teaching and learning since this process entails the making of meaning from direct experiences - through reflection on doing or action.





# Food for Thought

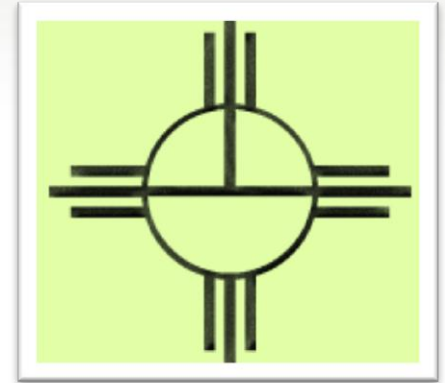
"Experiential learning, including learning from the land, Elders, traditions and ceremonies, community, parental and family supports, as well as the workplace, is a widespread and vital—but often unrecognized—form of Aboriginal learning."

[\(Canadian Council on Learning\)](#)



# Expert Advice

First Nations students thrive best in a program that "...encourages and supports experientially oriented approaches to education that makes extensive use of community-based resources and expertise"



[\( First Nations Accreditation Board, 2007, p. 15\)](#)



# Experiential Learning Cycle

Includes the elements of **Experiencing**, **Reflecting**, **Meaning Making**, and **Acting**, that reveal an engaged, deliberate, open and aware process - one that is reflected in the traditional knowledge and learning processes, and has profound meaning in the 21st Century for students preparing to participate in Self Governance initiatives, and leadership positions within their communities.



# Experiential Learning Cycle





# Experiential Learning Cycle

- **Experiencing** - Engagement in "Real life" learning experience
- **Reflecting** - Internalization of the Experience
- **Meaning Making** - Analysis of the Experience
- **Acting** - Application of Experience to other Real Life Situations



# Expert Insight

“The first principle of Aboriginal learning is a preference for experiential knowledge.

Indigenous pedagogy values a person's ability to learn independently by observing, listening, and participating with a minimum of intervention or instruction.” [Dr. Marie Battiste](#)



# Context of Sessions

The essence of experiential learning is that what is learned has meaning - to the individual learner's own needs and goals, and to the community in which the learner lives his or her life. Both nursing faculty and nursing students participated experientially as peers in the Elder In Residence sessions.



# Cultural Community Experiences

- First Salmon Ceremony, Fort Langley
- Cedar Harvesting, Stave Lake
- Smudging Ceremony, Langley
- Sweat Lodge Ceremony, Langley
- Ceremonial Burning, Maple Ridge Cemetery
- Cultural Workshop, Band Office, Fort Langley
- Educational Enhancement Agreement, Aldergrove Park





# Self-Directed Experience

Providing a learning climate where learners can design their OWN experiential learning experiences is empowering and provides a multi-layered educational experience, since the student engages in the incubation, planning, implementation, and evaluation of their own learning. Lekeyten encouraged each person to glean their own personal 'lessons' from each experience.



# Holistic Life Long Learning

This approach can have far-reaching effects in helping learners to develop a holistic and well-developed self-directed and self-initiated lifelong learning approach to their own education. The learner grasps the basics of taking control of their own learning, and choosing how they will enact their learning within their own community.



# Embedded in Culture

- To facilitate the experiential learning of the faculty and students who participated, the Elder organized rich experiential events that taught them about his culture first-hand.
- He often explained an event through story telling and grounding the event in traditional practices carried out by the Kwantlen people for millennia.



# First Salmon Ceremony

- ✦ An Aboriginal leader catches the first salmon of the season
- ✦ The community prepares a feast to celebrate
- ✦ The first salmon is divided so that all community members receive a portion
- ✦ All of the salmon's bones are gathered from everyone and are returned to the waters in a very reverent and respectful way, including prayers, speeches, songs, regalia, drumming





# What do they experience?

- ✦ Relationship with the land and waters
- ✦ Respect for the salmon
- ✦ Gratitude for the food provided by the salmon
- ✦ Cultural practices
- ✦ Ceremonial process
- ✦ Community sharing
- ✦ Witness expressions of identity and belonging
- ✦ Traditional language
- ✦ Hears oral teachings









# Cedar Harvest

- ✦ In the spring, cedar bark is gathered for weaving
- ✦ An Elder leads the group in prayer and in giving an offering to the biggest tree
- ✦ The bark is carefully removed from the trees in long thin strips, then peeled
- ✦ The strips are dried for several months before being cured enough for use





# What is Experienced?

- ✦ Relationship with the land and plants
- ✦ Respect for the trees
- ✦ Community effort
- ✦ Cultural practices
- ✦ Oral teachings
- ✦ Traditional language
- ✦ The harvesting process
- ✦ Sense of identity



# Experiential Learning

- ✦ Is connected to the experiences of life
- ✦ The “classroom” is the community and the natural environment
- ✦ Is learning by doing
- ✦ Is a community based way to teach skills, attitudes, language, literacy, and knowledge



# Reflection

- ✦ Reflection and making sense of a learning experience are important in reinforcing experiential learning
- ✦ The Elder encouraged participants to reflect on what they experienced during these cultural and community based sessions



# Inviting the Elders

- You can invite Elders to share their knowledge and culture with nurses through:
- story telling,
- cultural activities such as making things (beading, cedar work, weaving, art, music, drumming)
- learning about the natural world
- sharing values, beliefs, worldview





# Smudging Ceremony





# Experiential Smudging

## Elder's Approach

- Lekeyten led us through the smudging ceremony, step by step – explaining the time honoured practices within each step and why they were done this way.
- He also drummed and sang sacred songs through every pilot event.



# Sweat Lodge Ceremony





# Experience of the Sweat Lodge

- Lekeyten prepared the group a week before the actual sweat lodge.
- He explained each step, the significance of the grandfather stones, why cedar was used to sweep the path, and the number of times we would enter the lodge.



# Conclusions

- The experiential learning offered in this Elder In Residence Program was very rich and vivid in culture and in traditional knowledge and practice
- This learning will not be forgotten quickly and helped each participant to develop an awareness of First Nations philosophy, world view, traditional ways of knowing and doing, and to appreciate the wisdom and reasons behind each cultural practice.
- It is not enough to read about these experiences or even to hear about them second hand. Direct personal experience is critical for true understanding.

