

From Experiential Learning to Experiential Education

Larissa Petrillo, Faculty, Anthropology, KPU

Director, CIRCLE (Centre for Interdisciplinary Research and Community Learning Engagement)

Experiential learning happens all the time. You can have an experience, and reflect on it, just getting on the bus in the morning. It doesn't mean that it isn't profound; it's just that there isn't necessarily an educator tied to it. Experiential education, on the other hand, is more structured; it might be a formal program or course, facilitated by the most inspired educator a group of learners would ever hope to see—I only partially jest, here.

At KPU, we are starting to see, very clear convergences between experiential learning and experiential education. Typically, at an institutional level, these types of experiential opportunities are partitioned into separate offices, and departments. Often, a university has it set up so that there is a Co-op Education office (connected to, for example, the Association for Co-operative Education, BC / Yukon (ACE) <<http://co-op.bc.ca/>>), a place for Extra-curricular opportunities (perhaps tied to the Student Association), and a separate entity for organizing faculty-based learning engagements (such as, UBC's Learning Exchange).

At Kwantlen, we have the advantage of being a close-knit organization; it increases our ability to collaborate across the institution. This has meant that discussions throughout the past year about Experiential Learning have become collegial spaces, whereby someone from the Co-op office can explain what the word 'Internship' might mean to an employer, while an educator might have a good long debate with those same people about what differentiates a Practicum course from a Service Learning course. Bringing these discussions together helps us deliver learning opportunities that are *tied in* to the many ways in which students experience their time at university.

One of the key goals of KPU's Academic Plan for 2018 is: "To Increase Experiential Learning Opportunities" (p. 9). So, there has been a lot of discussion on our campuses about ways to foster experiential learning – both in the classroom and beyond. In both contexts, the emergent and personalized nature of experiential learning is both an opportunity and a challenge.

For example, when students are placed in service learning contexts, the interactions create spontaneous events which the instructor must be able to recognize and then shape into a 'teachable moment'. It takes a bit of faith to know that you will be able to recognize those moments when they happen, and turn them into something relevant.

Encounters with Experiential Learning

There are many ways of noticing these moments to foster experiential learning—they can occur during the planning of a project, when mistakes happen during the work, when participants from beyond our KPU community come together to collaborate with our students, or in reflection after the primary experience is over. To foster reflection in a community service context, for example, I meet with the students one-on-one, and say

"This shouldn't be something that takes too much time—a couple of hours of work—but what is one thing that you can 'give back' to the organization, to future students, to the university, or just to yourself, based on some new understanding that you gained from your service learning experience?"

I find that our students can always answer this, usually in about one minute! And it's usually a really good idea that they come up with. Here are some visual examples of the type of transitions that are starting to take place as we increasingly focus on community engagement.

- The insider knowledge that students gain while on experiential learning projects leads to new insights and helpful tools for others.



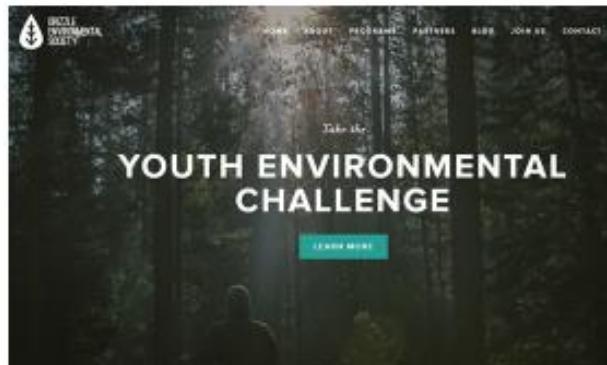
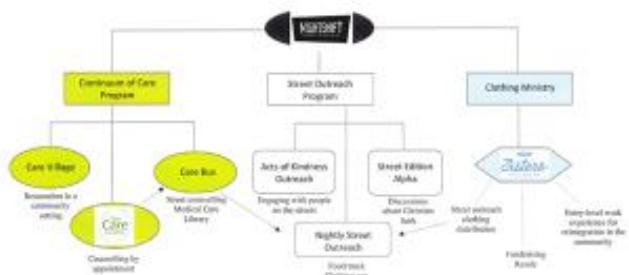
Fig. 3. Survey area agencies within 5 km of NCWM



Fig. 4. Whalley King George Brial

Fig. 5. Organizations within walking

A student providing food donations noticed overlap with other organizations, so provided a map of all agencies in the area. She also chose to make up an organizational chart of an organization so future students could see all of their programs.



One student helped a charity with their social media campaign, during an Experiential Learning course. This student, then, started up a nonprofit organization, immediately upon graduation, and also went on to work as the Sales and Marketing Associate for Potluck Café, a social enterprise in Vancouver.



- The diversity of experiences during Experiential Learning engagements is significant. For example, every summer, students have the chance to take the Psychology Practicum course. Below are photos from the course, as facilitated by Gira Bhatt.



**Psychology
Practicum
Placements**



- The student journeys that we are starting to be able to track, as the alumni cycle moves forward, are fascinating. Here are two examples from the Anthropology Department.

ANTH 4501
Selected Problems in Anthropology
Advocacy Anthropology
2012 Spring

Instructor: Larissa Petillo
Class Section:
ANTH 4501 S10 Friday 1-3:50PM
Location: Surrey Fir 218

Office Hrs:
Surrey Tuesday 1:30-2:30PM
Surrey Thursday 9:30 - 10AM
Surrey Thursday 1-3:30PM
Surrey Friday 12:00-1PM

Office: Surrey Fir207 (across the hall from Surrey Fir218)
Email: larissa.petillo@kwantlen.ca [not.net]
[Please put Course and Section number in Subject line of the email.]

Course Description:
Students will engage in the study of a particular issue in the field of anthropology. They will critically analyze relevant literature and attendant ethical problems, thereby developing a comprehensive understanding of disciplinary contributions. Students will evaluate recent developments in methods and particular approaches, assess the implications of these developments, and identify future directions for the field of anthropology itself.

Required Readings:
• Les W. Field and Richard G. Fox, eds. *Anthropology Put to Work*. Oxford: Berg, 2007. ISBN 9781845206017.

 History Culture People Economic Development Members

we are
KWANTLEN FIRST NATION
and this is our story...

*Kwantlen First Nation
hired one of our students
after an experiential
project, interviewing
community members*

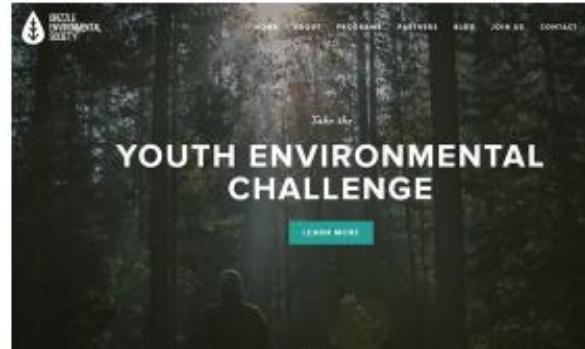
K: Alright it's recording.
K & A: It's 1:28pm.
J: Ok. Hi there, we'll be conducting an interview at Kwantlen Polytechnic University starting at 1:28pm. Today is March the...
C: 16th.
J: 16th, 2012. Uh, start off with introductions. I am Jacob, a Kwantlen Polytechnic University anthropology major student. Here we have
A: I'm Andrea also a Kwantlen Polytechnic University anthropology major.
C: I'm Chandra and I'm also a Kwantlen Polytechnic University anthropology major.
J: And behind the camera.
K: Kim, running it.
J: And finally we have.
T: My name is
J: So uh I guess we can just start with uh getting uh you to tell us a little bit about yourself who you are, where you're from.







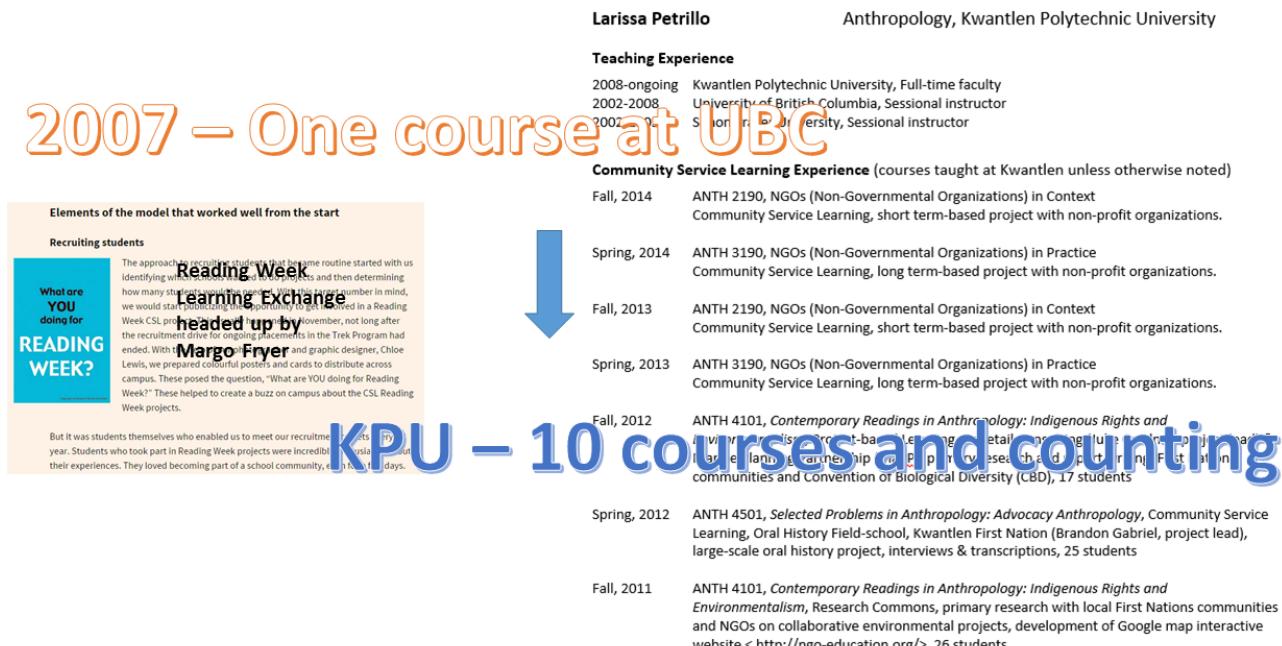
One student helped a charity with their social media campaign, during an Experiential learning course. This student, then, started up a nonprofit organization, immediately upon graduation, and also went on to work as the Sales and Marketing Associate for Potluck Café, a social enterprise in Vancouver.





Increasing the Quantity and Quality of Experiential Education: Join us on the Journey!

As faculty members we are also on a journey of learning. What might start out as a short experiment with one course, can lead to an effort to incorporate Experiential Learning into as many courses as possible. I taught my first Experiential Learning course at UBC in 2007, have gone on to teach more than a dozen of these courses at KPU, and now facilitate others at KPU in this process....



We are also on an institutional journey:

- The Vision 2018 Strategic Plan set out an ambitious direction for Experiential Learning at KPU.

VISION 2018 Strategic Plan



The impact of KPU's community engagement has doubled by 2018.

- Implement a coordinated approach to document, expand, measure, and celebrate effective partnerships with KPU's communities.
- Establish KPU as a place where the community gathers for informed discussions on relevant topics.
- Establish KPU as a key partner in regional economic development.
- Create distinct campus identities within the unifying institutional vision.
- Cultivate KPU's relationship with its alumni in order to celebrate their accomplishments, respond to their life-long educational needs, and support their role as KPU ambassadors in our communities.
- Partner with Aboriginal communities to develop appropriate educational pathways and programs to facilitate Aboriginal learner success.

KPU's operations support purposeful learner FTE growth of at least 5% annually to meet the educational needs of its region's diverse population.

- Expand initiatives to increase operating and capital funding from government and other external sources.
- Undertake research to understand the needs of learners in the diverse communities KPU serves.
- Create financially viable professional development, degree completion post-baccalaureate, and graduate programs.
- Expand the distinctiveness and scope of KPU's program offerings to realize its polytechnic university mandate.
- Develop a comprehensive strategic enrollment management plan directed towards traditional and non-traditional, domestic and international learners to support strategic growth.

Experiential learning is integrated into every KPU program, connecting theory to application and the classroom to the community.

- Ensure every KPU program of study includes experiential learning that connects theory to its application.
- Support and coordinate opportunities for experiential learning, applied research, and community engagement.

- The resulting Academic Plan operationalized this direction in a set of Strategies and Actions:



Academic Goal: To Increase Experiential Learning Opportunities

Experiential learning informs our synthesis of theory and practice by expanding activities that are integrated with teaching and learning within and across program areas. KPU students will have ample opportunities, in class or on and off campus, to enrich their learning through a range of focused activities, such as: creative endeavors, volunteering, service learning, on-the-job experience, clinical practice, applied research and other activities.



Strategies and Actions:

- Launch course-based, faculty-led academic learning activities that are community-based. These activities will build integrated, mutually beneficial, innovative initiatives with our local school districts, regional businesses, and industry partners.
- Encourage community-engaged scholarship that aims primarily to benefit community life through teaching, discovery, integration and application of learning.
- Encourage scholarly activity to advance teaching through expanded knowledge, content engagement and knowledge mobilization. Launch faculty/student research projects.

- And, our Academic Plan Implementation Group established a central resource hub for Experiential Learning at KPU, www.kpu.ca/experiential/

The image shows a screenshot of the KPU Experiential Learning website. The top navigation bar includes links for NEWS & EVENTS, FUTURE STUDENTS, CURRENT STUDENTS, INTERNATIONAL, CONTINUING & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES, and a search function. The main content area features a sidebar with links to Experiential Learning Homepage, Credit Based, Co-Curricular Programs, Extra-Curricular Opportunities, Case Studies, Definitions, and Contact Us. The main content area displays a 'Definitions' page with a list of experiential learning models, each accompanied by a small icon. The right side of the screen shows a larger view of the KPU website homepage, which has a red header and various sections for different types of experiential learning opportunities.

Finally, our KPU journey benefits from other developments across the province, the country and beyond.

Experiential Learning

BCCAT has contracted with Dr Nancy Johnston of SFU to conduct research into experiential learning. The study will review current literature on experiential learning; catalogue the various definitions and forms currently operating in the province; identify successful practices in BC and elsewhere; and identify areas for further study. The final report is expected to be completed in March 2016. For further information contact John FitzGibbon at jfitzgibbon@bccat.ca

Community-Based Research Canada

Community-Based Research Canada's (CBRC) mission is to be a national champion and facilitator for community-based research (CBR) and campus-community engagement in Canada. We envision vibrant Canadian communities enabled by CBR.

CARNEGIE Community Engagement Classification



- Classified Campuses
- What Is the Community Engagement Classification?
- How Is "Community Engagement" Defined?
- Classification and Re-Classification
- Classification
- Classification (U.S.)
- Classified Campuses

Your CAO Options

All of us at KPU are looking forward to the continuing discussions about Experiential Learning. It is an exciting journey for all of us and one in which learning will occur throughout.

For more information or to suggest additional content for the Experiential Learning website, contact:
experiential@kpu.ca
larissa.petrillo@kpu.ca