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## Experiential teaching and learning in Child and Youth Care Work

An integrative approach to graduate education

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### Abstract

The Graduate Diploma in Youth Work is in its fifth year at Concordia University in Montreal. In a department committed to experiential teaching and the training of practitioners, a large focus of the program is to immerse students in experiences that prepare them for engaging in reflexive and theoretically informed approaches to practice. The purpose of this article will be to illustrate our program model through four learning activities that are representative of our unique approach to youth worker education. An additional focus will be the ways in which our model and these activities align with the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice competencies.

A model of integrative youth work education was developed in 2015 by Ranahan, Blanchet-Cohen and Mann-Feder to form the basis for an advanced Graduate Diploma in youth work in Montreal, Quebec (Concordia University, n.d.). The purpose of this article is to share four structured experiential learning activities that illustrate this model. Prior to describing the activities, an overview of our approach to integrative youth work will be provided, along with a discussion of how it aligns with the competencies for practice developed by the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP) (Association for Child and Youth Care Practice, 2010).

### The Diploma in Youth Work

The Graduate Diploma in Youth Work at Concordia is currently in its fifth year of operation. As a preservice, post Bachelor's degree, it prepares students from a broad range of undergraduate programs in the social sciences to assume practitioner roles in a range of Child and Youth Care (CYC) and Community Youth Development (CYD) agencies. Our program also encompasses another model of practice with young people that is unique to French Quebec: Psychoeducation (Gendreau, 2001). Our Graduate Diploma, in striving to offer state of the art preservice education with local relevance, teaches foundational concepts in Psychoeducation (PSYED) in addition to CYC and CYD.

The Graduate Diploma is the only program of its kind in Canada, that educates students in the theory and practice of three distinct models of practice with young people. Concordia is the first English university in Quebec to teach

Psychoeducation and no other program integrates the model with other North American approaches to practice. Child and Youth Care educational programs are also rarely combined with training in community youth development (Magnuson, 2005). This reflects the orientation of the academic department in which the program is housed, which features degree programs that train students to engage in normative-re-educative practice (Mann-Feder & Litner, 2004). This means that all of our programs, including the Diploma, stress strength based intervention and the active involvement of the client or client system in any change process. The integration of CYC, PSYED and CYD also reflects the unique network of publicly funded services in Quebec, where child welfare and juvenile justice work in shared administrative structures with community agencies to provide a range of preventative and treatment programs in both French and English.

The faculty who developed the Youth Work Diploma were thus faced with the task of developing a model that would promote coherence and clarity across three practice disciplines that rarely, if ever, have been taught in the same academic program.

## The principles

In 2005, Phelan noted that while “professional schools at the degree and graduate level are expected to be practice-based and relevant without diluting academic rigor, faculty at this level are continually challenged with finding useful models, theories and research examples that are specific to a CYC orientation” (p. 350). After extensive discussions of the theoretical underpinnings of CYC, CYD and PSYED, the faculty at Concordia were able to identify five major principles that are foundational to all three approaches.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary (n.d.) defines principles as “comprehensive and fundamental law(s), doctrine(s) or assumption(s)”. Principles are based in values and are theoretically informed, providing broad perspectives that guide practice. Competencies, on the other hand, are observable, measureable and encompass skills, knowledge and attitudes that manifest in practice (University of Victoria, n.d.). We chose principles rather than competencies, because while the application may differ in CYC, CYD and PSYED, practice in all three models flows from shared theoretical roots and values.

Our principles “were delineated from the existing body of literature that already informs youth work practice” (Ranahan, 2016, p. 11), and as such, are consistent with the language of the constituent disciplines of our integrated model. The principles have been discussed in depth elsewhere (Ranahan, Blanchet-Cohen & Mann-Feder, 2015) and were derived after an extensive analysis of the “binary positions that have dominated the literature of youth work” (Ranahan et al., 2015, p.364).

The five principles that form the basis for our model of integrative youth work are:

1. A developmental perspective, in which intervention is embedded in a thorough understanding of relevant lifespan issues;
2. An ecosystemic orientation, that includes ongoing consideration of the many levels of context when formulating interventions with youth;
3. A collaborative relationship stance, that permeates all work with youth and insures a relational approach as primary;
4. A rights-based approach, that recognizes all young people as “rights holders and duty bearers” (Ranahan et. al, p., 2015); and
5. An ethical and reflexive positioning, so that graduates of the Diploma develop ethical sensitivity and an awareness of their own needs, values and responses, all of which are integral to the critical application of ethical codes.

## Alignment with ACYCP Competencies

The five underlying principles of integrative youth work at Concordia align well with the five major competency domains identified in the North American Competency Project (Association for Child and Youth Care Practice, 2010). Table 1 provides a comparison.

**Table 1: Alignment of the ACYCP Competency Domain and Principles of Integrative Youth Work**

ACYCP DOMAIN	PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRATIVE YOUTH WORK
Applied Human Development	Developmental Perspective
Cultural and Human Diversity	Ecosystemic Approach
Relationship and Communication	Collaborative Relationship Stance
Developmental practice methods	Rights-based intervention
Professionalism	Ethical and reflexive practice

## Teaching and learning

In developing the integrative model, program faculty agreed from the beginning that experiential teaching and learning would be a central feature of the Diploma. The literature of youth work education in CYC stresses the importance of engaging students as active learners because of the need to promote “self-awareness, relationship skills and issues and attitudes” (Phelan, 2005, p.350), and to provide modelling by teaching staff. The Diploma stresses “creative learning activities where students engage in authentic helping experiences simulating the learner’s capacity to understand, empathize and connect to a youth’s experience of being helped” (Ranahan, et al., 2005, p.13). Activity-based learning is a method of teaching and learning in which students are also actively involved in their learning process (Prince, 2004; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014). Rather than experiencing their education passively, as listeners, they become active participants in the learning experience (Pasha, 2016) while the instructor takes on the role of “guide on the side” (McLellan, 1996). The instructor acts as a resource and classes involve learners in solving problems that they would encounter in the real world using the real tools of the discipline (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014). These methods are designed to promote a self-aware approach to professional practice, and cultivate self-motivated communicators who know how to find relevant information and apply it in their work (Henry, 1989; Warrier, Weil & McGill, 1989). Thus, our experiential activities stimulate growth in student skills and attitudes and facilitate the transfer of these competencies into the field of Youth Work (Flippo, 2016).

## The Activities

What follows are four learning activities from four different courses in the Diploma in Youth Work. Each illustrates different principles of integrative Youth Work, and both those and the relevant ACYCP competency domains are identified. In addition, key resources for each are provided, with additional content background available in the reference section of this article.

### Values Clarification: where do I stand?

**Context:** One of the defining features of any profession is the existence of ethical standards that govern practice (Sercombe, 2010). While these standards are usually formalized in a written code of conduct or code of ethics, ethical practice entails much more than the application of these codes. At the heart of educating ethical youth workers is the engagement of students in processes that increase their awareness of their own personal and professional values (Curry, 2005). What youth workers believe about what actions are preferable expresses itself in every action in practice (Roberts, 2009), especially given the complex and ambiguous settings of Youth Work practice. At the same time, “If ...we allow for the unfettered presence and impact of values in our work, the risk of exposing or impacting children and youth with harmful or negative intervention is great” (Gharabaghi, 2008, p. 186). Thus activities that increase awareness of personal and professional values are fundamental to Youth Work education. Students also need to be aware of the reality that, as practitioners, they will encounter “many

circumstances where ethical practice becomes compromised by competing value systems” (Gharabaghi, 2008, p. 195).

**Principles:** Ethics and reflexivity

**Competency Domains:** Professionalism

**Group Size:** Unlimited, but best with at least 12 participants. The total group should be easily divisible into smaller groups of 3-5 students.

**Time Required:** Two to three hours, depending on group size.

**Required materials:** Paper and pencils

A copy of the Association for Child and Child and Youth Care Practice Definition of the Field (2010) for each participant, as well as a copy of relevant definitions that have been adopted by local professional associations. At Concordia, we use two additional documents: from the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Care Practice (n.d.) and from the Order of Psycho-educators of Quebec (Order des Psychoéducateurs et Psychoéducatrices du Québec, n.d. ).

A Values Clarification Checklist, such as those available online from Binghamton University’s Career Development Centre (n.d.).

Sample items from the International Child and Youth Care Website discussion thread on values (CYC-Net, n.d.).

**Physical setting:** Moveable tables and chairs that allow for transitions from individual work to small group work to large group work.

**Procedure:** There are five steps in this values clarification exercise: An introductory lecture, the generating and sharing by students of lists of personal values, the generating of lists of professional values, the analysis of relevant definitions of the field, and finally, a comparison of group values with the values of CYC, CYD and PSYED.

The introductory lecture provides a definition of values and how values differ from ethics. The instructor also points out that values also can be organized into discrete domains, and we all have personal values that bridge a number of important areas of functioning (family relations, friendship values, economic values, etc.) as well as professional values. An important emphasis is on a discussion of how both personal and professional values influence practice. Students need to understand and discuss the reality that Youth Work is deeply personal work that will constantly stimulate biases about what actions are preferable, both on our part and on the part of our clients. An overview is provided about why becoming aware of our own values is critical, and how our values can conflict with the needs of our clients, with organizational policy or even with ethical codes in Youth Work. Helpful examples are shared by the instructor from their own practice. Students are then engaged in a values clarification exercise.

Each student is asked to privately generate a list of at least 10 personal values.

They are then asked to rank order them based on the following question: if you were in a situation where you had to choose, in what order are these values important to you?

Students are then asked to share their top 5 values with a partner. The following questions are provided to guide the discussion: How different were your values from each other’s? Were there points of commonality? Can you share a time when you were in a situation that conflicted with any of your top 5 values? The work in dyads in debriefed, with a request that students share their experience of the process rather than speak to the specific personal values they came up with.

Students are then asked to generate a similar list of their professional values as a future Youth Worker. The following questions are posed by the instructor: What is most important to you in your work with young people

and families? The sample values from CYC-Net (n.d.) can be shared as examples. The students are then asked to prioritize their top 5 values and write them down anonymously on an index card.

Finally the group is divided into small groups of a maximum of 5. Each group is given a copy of a field specific definition in the field of Youth Work. Groups can work with different statements if available or all can work on the same statement. The groups are then asked to decide what underlying values are represented by each definition, prioritizing a maximum of 5. This can take up to 20 minutes. Each group is then asked to present their findings and record them on the blackboard. By the end of this step, there should be a list of values for each definition of the field that is relevant to your class. Students can ask clarifying questions of each group. It is also interesting to compare how different values may be expressed by different professional Youth Work organizations.

While the students have been working on their analysis of the underlying values in the field, the instructor tabulates the top professional values for the current group of participants by collecting and reviewing the index cards. Following the presentations on the descriptions of the field, the instructor presents a summary of the professional values represented in the class, with a focus on the five that came up most often, and an indication of the level of agreement in the room. This becomes the basis for a discussion of possible value conflicts for the group as they engage in professional youth work practice.

A formal assignment that follows is that each student reviews the article on CYC ethics and values by Gharabaghi (2008), using it and the experience in values clarification as the basis for a reflection paper on how their own personal and professional values might emerge in practice. Most students report that this is the first time they have taken stock of their values and find this an illuminating and important experience in their professional development.

**Cautions:** This exercise works best if a climate of trust and respect for difference has been established. It should not be attempted in a first meeting or in a workshop as a first exercise. For some students, this is a deeply personal experience and instructors should seek informed consent for collecting and tabulating the index cards with individual value statements. While at no time are individual results identified or discussed, some students may want to opt out of that part of the experience.

### **The Blanket Exercise**

**Context:** The idea of centering Indigenous worldviews and knowledges in the academy context has increasingly been articulated by Canadian universities under the principle of “Indigenizing the Academy” (MacDonald, 2016). The goal should thus be to bring Indigenous knowledges to the research and teaching that happens in the universities (both through academic literature and through bringing Indigenous knowledge holders as part of the academy), to the spread of Indigenous knowledges to all disciplines (not just Indigenous studies, but political sciences, philosophy, environmental studies, youth work, etc.).

In Québec and across the country, Indigenous children and youth are overrepresented in our child welfare systems – both as the recipients of services, and to an even greater extent, as those placed outside of their families and cared for by the state (Sinha, Trocme, Fallen, McLaurin & Fast, 2011). Thus, youth workers will inevitably have the opportunity to work with Indigenous families and children. The activity takes students through 500 years of colonial history while they role-play being part of Indigenous communities that see their land (blankets) shrink before their eyes and see children removed from their arms through disease, residential schools, the 60’s scoop, and later, the child welfare system. For many students, particularly in the context of eastern Québec university classes, this is the first time they are learning these truths about Canada’s treatment of Indigenous peoples. Participants will better understand how Indigenous families view social services and youth services and will therefore be better informed on how to offer culturally safe services.

**Principles:** Ecosystemic orientation, rights-based stance, ethics and reflexivity

**Competency Domains:** Cultural and human diversity, professionalism.

**Group size:** 12-80 (for larger groups, more than one facilitator is required)

**Time:** 1-1.5 hours for activity, 1-1.5 hours for debrief circle

**Required materials:** Trained facilitator(s), scripts, maps blankets

**Physical setting:** Large room ideally without tables and chairs (participants move around room and sit on the floor for the debrief circle).

**Procedures:** This activity has three steps: the introduction, the blanket exercise, and the talking circle.

First, the facilitator has participants sit in a circle and introduces themselves and the activity. If the group is unfamiliar with one another they may do a quick circle of introductions. Then the Blanket exercise begins as the facilitator hands out scripts and cue cards to participants and explains that each script has a number and when they call out the corresponding number, participants are to read the script. Participants are asked to take up a standing position on a large expanse of blankets, all of which taken together represent the map of Canada. Many of the scripts include instructions such as moving around the "land" which is represented by the blankets, or being killed off by diseases, in which case they are instructed to leave the circle. The exercise moves through 500 years of colonial history starting with pre-contact, into contact, treaties, incursion onto lands and resources, Indigenous resistance, residential schools, the 60s scoop, re-location, and the contemporary realities and impacts of colonial policies on the lives of Indigenous peoples. As the exercise progresses, fewer and fewer individuals are left standing on the blankets, and large areas of the blankets themselves have been removed, symbolizing the losses of people and lands inflicted on Indigenous peoples.

At the completion of the script-reading, participants get a short break and then gather back in a circle and are each given the opportunity to reflect on the activity, and potentially how it relates to them personally and professionally. The completion of the activity with the talking circle allows participants and facilitators to provide some closure to the process and demonstrates Indigenous practices of ensuring healing and educational work allows participants a measure of cultural safety and support in learning difficult material and transitioning to applying the teachings into practice.

In follow up reflections, most, if not all, students have written about the profound impact that this activity has had on them in thinking differently about the myth of Canada as a just nation. They also write about their new understanding of their own role in helping to reveal these truths to their own friends and family members, now that they have received this education.

The activity helps students to carefully consider the ethics of their practice in not continuing the perpetuation of these cycles and ideally allows them to increase their own reflexivity in how their behavior and actions may become implicit in these systems. Furthermore, the opportunity to embody Indigenous experiences with colonization over time, and considering the state, organizational, community and family contexts in a way that becomes alive to them using the experiential approach. In addition, the importance of advocacy is highlighted through demonstrating how Indigenous rights have been systematically undermined through processes of state-imposed assimilation.

**Cautions:** The facilitators must allow adequate time for a talking circle at the end of the activity in order to give students a chance to process the feelings that may come up as a result of this heavy history/contemporary reality of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Feelings may include guilt, shame, anger and sadness. The instructor may wish to prepare students in advance for the feelings and reactions that come up, as well as plan some outside resources if students need extra support following the activity.

**Adaptations:** Chairs/wheelchairs can be used in the circle if necessary

**Resources:** The Kairos website has an excellent list of materials that can help instructors to both prepare and later debrief with students. <https://www.kairosblanketexercise.org/resources/#scripts>

### **Suicide Intervention Simulation**

**Context:** Suicide prevention education is often a missed or sidelined topic in pre-service education (Ranahan, 2013), or a topic delegated to an expert guest speaker (Ranahan, 2011), which may render child and youth care workers believing they have a limited or devalued role in the mental health care of children and youth (Ranahan, in press; Ranahan, 2011). The likelihood that workers will need knowledge and skills in suicide intervention is strong, as suicide remains a leading cause of death worldwide for young people (World Health Organization, 2014). White (2012) suggest that youth suicide is a “wild” problem and deeply embedded in local, historical, political and relational contexts” (p.42). As such, the complexity of suicide intervention is an important and rich opportunity to develop professional competencies in relationship and communication. In particular, child and youth care workers can learn to apply effective skills in relationship development and interpersonal, family and professional communication. In the Youth Work program at Concordia University, a suicide intervention simulation activity is directed towards the development of these professional competencies, and is in line with promoting students’ engagement in the program’s principles of collaborative relationship and reflexivity (Ranahan et al., 2015). Collaboration requires students to view young people as partners in the intervention process, where young people have the opportunity to shape how the interaction unfolds and participate in the decisions therein. Reflexivity involves students “questioning our own assumptions and taken-for-granted actions” (Cunliffe, 2016, p. 751), where “contradictions, doubts, dilemmas, and possibilities” are exposed (p. 755).

**Principles:** Collaborative relationships, reflexivity.

**Competency Domains:** Professionalism, Relationship and Communication

**Group size:** The Suicide Intervention Simulation (SIS) activity is ideally used as an unfolding simulation within the classroom context with no more than thirty students, followed by an evaluated learning activity completed individually.

**Timing and time required:** The SIS activity is ideally situated at the halfway point in a 12- or 13-week semester within a core course completed as part of a child and youth care diploma or degree program (i.e., child and youth mental health, interventions with children and youth, etc.). It is beneficial to provide students with the outline of the SIS including the objectives, tasks, suggested reading list and evaluation rubric prior to engaging in the learning activity. Timing of the activity and clearly communicated expectations in written form can provide a level of safety for students to explore their ideas, beliefs, attitudes, histories, and conceptions of suicide. Based on the procedures outlined below, 6-hours of in-class instruction and activity, followed by 4-6 hours of dyad and individual work, are required.

**Required materials:** A reading list is provided to students prior to the in-class instruction and activities. This reading list is comprised of relevant research, theoretical and practical literature that can provide background information for students. In addition, educators are advised to provide a list of available community resources. Devices suitable for video recording and a means for sharing this digital recording with the instructor (e.g., USB key) are also required.

**Procedures:** There are three parts to the SIS learning activity: 1) presentation of the process of suicide intervention, 2) group role-play simulation, and 3) a video-recorded role-play and individually written critique.

Initially, background information on suicide and suicide intervention is presented to the whole group. As a precursor to engaging in a simulated intervention, students begin by learning and discussing the topic of suicide in

relation to theories of suicidal behaviour, discursive constructions of suicide, suicide within particular populations, and current research relevant to suicide within child and youth care practice. A presentation of how a suicide intervention may unfold is offered.

A 45-minute group simulation exercise follows, whereby a volunteer is asked to play the role of a young person in distress. The volunteer is asked to individually construct a scenario that is not reflective of his/her/their personal experience. The instructor facilitates the group simulation, inviting individual students to take on the role of a child and youth care worker and engage the 'young person' and work through the intervention process. The 'child and youth care worker' can stop the simulation and ask questions to the larger group, or 'tag' another student into the role-play to continue as the worker. The instructor identifies how the intervention process is unfolding (e.g., identifying suicidal distress), illuminate the challenges or complexities located in the interaction (e.g., staying present when the young person is talking about dying), and coaches the 'child and youth care worker' as required (e.g., "How might the worker identify the young person's reasons for living and key supports in their life?"). Upon completion of the role-play, the instructor debriefs each worker in the order that they engaged with the young person. The young person is given an opportunity to share their experience of being 'helped' in the process.

Students are subsequently divided into dyads to construct a 10-12 minute video-recorded improvised role-play of a suicide intervention between a child and youth care worker and a young person. Each student is expected to play the role of a worker and the role of a young person in distress. It is expected that the worker will demonstrate several key elements of the suicide intervention process, yet not necessarily complete the intervention due to the time allocated. Each student submits a written critique of the intervention for evaluation along with the video recording, and is assessed based on engagement and presence (e.g., giving explicit attention to the quality of the relationship and interaction), elements of intervention (e.g., demonstrated understanding of ethical and legal implications), and overall presentation (e.g., comprehensive construction of a role-play aligned with practice). With careful construction, the SIS can be a powerful learning experience that draws attention to relational engagement in the midst of complex circumstances.

**Cautions:** Students may believe that suicide is a topic to be managed by expert mental health providers and struggle to see his/her/their role in suicide prevention. Students may disclose past or current suicide ideations, behaviours or a family history of suicide. Educators are required to balance their role as an instructor activity with providing and modeling supportive and empathic responses to disclosures. In some circumstances, referrals to campus health and wellness services for counselling are needed.

### Experiencing the Structural Psychoeducative Model

**Context:** In order to complete the Youth Work Diploma program, students must complete an internship designed to provide a full time supervised experience in a professional role as a youth worker. As part of the internship course, students meet throughout the semester for a seminar. The purpose of the seminar is to support the integration and application of the curriculum to the real world experience. More specifically, during their internship students are asked to plan and animate a developmentally appropriate psychoeducational activity for a youth group by using the Structural Psychoeducative Model (SPM) (Gendreau, 2001). This model is a critical component of Psychoeducation, and specifies 13 components which must be taken into consideration when planning out re-education activities and organizing intervention settings (Arseneault, Bégin, Bluteau & Pronovost, 2012).

**Principles:** Developmental perspective, collaborative relationship stance, reflexivity

**Competency Domains:** Developmental practice methods, Relationship and communication

**Group size:** A group of 15 students enrolled in different internship field placements. The group is further divided in teams of 5 students each.



**Time required:** The exercise requires approximately one hour and a half to two hours to complete.

**Materials:** Video: «The line activity» from the movie Freedom Writers.

Tables for groups of three and 15 chairs.

Fifteen discussion cue cards, Play-doh and Popsicle sticks, Jenga blocks with questions.

Pens for every table and a copy of the psychoeducative activity model template for every table.

**Physical setting:** The classroom space should be large enough for students to move freely from one table to another. Each table should be far enough from one another in order to allow students to discuss freely.

**Procedures:** This activity consists of six steps: preparation by the instructor, a warm-up exercise, experiencing of the activity, the debrief and providing an overview of the Psychoeducative approach to designing activities.

Prior to the seminar, the instructor prepares three different activities. Discussion cue cards with questions; numbers are added to the Jenga blocks and a sheet with is provided with questions related to the internship experience; Playdoh and sticks. In addition, three tables are set up, one for each activity. Pens and a psychoeducative model template are provided at each table. The instructor then engages the group in a warm-up exercise: «The line activity» from the movie Freedom Writers is screened (approx. 5 minutes). In this film, a teacher tries to build a sense of community in her classroom by asking students to share information about themselves. Students in the internship class are then asked to reflect and identify elements of the activity than can be associated with each component of the psychoeducative model. The actual activities are then introduced, with an explanation that each team will experience each activity for approximately fifteen minutes. After engaging in the activity, members of the team will have five to ten minutes to complete as many components of the psychoeducative model template as possible. Students will then be asked to switch tables with another team.

- Table 1: Discussion cue cards: students will pick a card and answer questions to explore common experiences with other students in the group.
- Table 2: Build a tower: Playdoh and sticks: working as a team, students will try and build the highest tower using playdoh and sticks.
- Table 3: Jenga and questions: students will retrieve blocks from the Jenga tower and answer questions pertaining to different aspects of their internship experience (values, personal qualities and challenges etc.).

**Debrief:** When all activities are completed, students are asked which activity seemed the most appropriate to use in a youth work setting. This allows students to reflect on their experience and this practice is at the heart of a student skill development. Lastly the groups present their Psychoeducation activity templates with the different answers and information and the instructor provides feedback to validate correct information and clarify misunderstandings. The students get to experience this activity in a group context which is also a safe environment for them. Afterwards, students express that they feel more comfortable about their ability to plan activities in the internship setting.

**Cautions:** Some students might feel uncomfortable sharing personal information about themselves and their internship experience. Therefore, it will be important to stress that students should share only what they feel is appropriate. In a group of students, some might be more passive, so that the instructor must be prepared to intervene and make sure that students engage with their team members.

**Resources:** Recommended materials for the activities are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Recommended lists for Experiencing the Structural Psychoeducative Model**

## Discussion cue cards:

- I think I have enough guts to .....
- One thing that I am proud of ...
- If I had one good thing to say about me, it would be.....
- One thing I own that I am proud of...
- One method I use to control my emotions...
- One difficulty that I have been able to overcome...
- People can trust that I will...
- Something important that I would like to accomplish in the next two months...
- I am happy to have near me.....
- People who know me appreciate this aspect of my personality...
- Activities I enjoy doing are ...
- I received a compliment recently, it was...
- The one thing that touches me most is...
- One value that I try to bring forward is...

## Jenga questions:

- The youth with whom I feel I am at my best...
- A youth that worries me...
- My relationship with my supervisor....
- What is holding me back presently in my internship...
- I feel I am the only one going through this in my internship...
- A situation where I felt left behind...
- A situation where I was able to assert myself
- A situation where I took a risk....
- I have discovered this strength in me....
- One of my best interventions...
- A limit that I didn't know I had...
- The worst thing that could happen to me during my internship
- My reaction to some procedures in place in my internship...

**Conclusions**

The four activities described above demonstrate the range of experiential learning activities in use in the Diploma in Youth Work at Concordia University. They address principles and competencies of Youth Work while providing students with an opportunity to be active participants in their own learning. At the same time, students experiencing situations that they will encounter in the field, which in turn maximizes the transfer of learning.

Exit questionnaires have been administered every year since the program began and while we have yet to accumulate enough responses to merit an analysis of the findings overall, the Diploma has been well appreciated by graduates particularly because of the interactive teaching and learning that they had experienced. For many who came out of undergraduate programs in the social sciences, it has been the first time that they have experienced these kinds of interactive exercises and simulations in the class room. At the same time, students also experience the program as quite demanding and may at time experience a high level of stress. Local employers, on the other hand, have commented favourably on the range of knowledge and skills that graduates have upon completion of the program. A significant percentage of our students secure jobs in either clinical and community youth development settings soon after finishing.

In 2016, Brion-Meisels, Savitz –Romer and Vasudevan described their program at Harvard, stating that “the setting of a graduate school is powerful in that it helps recognize Youth Work as having both scholarly and practical significance “(p.84). We concur, and believe strongly that an experiential and activity based approach to pedagogy, as well as the articulation of underlying principles of practice, has contributed to the advancement of Youth Work in Quebec.

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