



QUTSI (BIGHOUSE) HIMANIS, UKWANALIS, JUNE 2024

Project Overview

This newsletter is intended to share information and updates about *Learning Our Way* activities, progress and plans. Please send it forward to your contacts!

The *Learning Our Way* project seeks to address Indigenous-specific racism, and to promote culturally safe healthcare through immersive, relationally focused, intercultural learning experiences for health providers and nursing students.

Together with Indigenous community partners, and with support from CARTI (Centre for Applied Research, Technology and Innovation) and Continuing Education at North Island College, the *Learning Our Way* team co-developed & co-delivered four field schools in four communities between September 2023 and September 2024.

Participants engaged in community learning circles to listen, inquire, share and self-reflect on a variety of topics. Land-based experiences, shared meals, Elders knowledge sharing, storytelling and other cultural activities enriched each field school in unique ways.

Project Update

With completion of *Learning Our Way's* core implementation phase, we are currently conducting follow-up interviews with field school participants.

These reflective conversations provide rich, firsthand accounts of how the immersive learning experiences have transformed health provider & student perspectives on cultural humility, health (in)equities, resilience, and health care delivery in remote communities. Many participants have shared stories of their expanded understanding, personal growth and a renewed commitment to culturally safe practices in their work within the health & education systems.

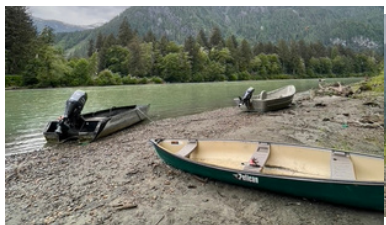
An essential part of this project is the active collaboration with our community partners. We are also gathering feedback from community members who were involved in *Learning Our Way*, as guides, teachers, and learning circle participants, ensuring their voices and insights inform the project's future. This step is key to understanding Indigenous community member's perspectives on the impact, value and lasting effects of hosting the field schools.

Field school highlights:



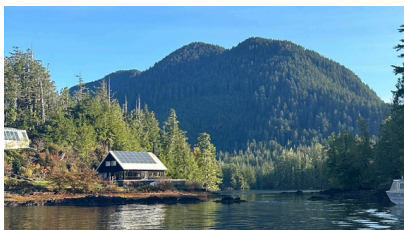
Field School No.1, September 2023: Wuikinuxv

The first *Learning Our Way* field school, hosted by Wuikinuxv in September 2023, brought together eight healthcare professionals from Vancouver, to learn about health and wellness from the Wuikinuxv people in Rivers Inlet, on the central BC coast. Through sharing stories and billeting directly within the community, the group focused on building healing relationships and deepening genuine cultural understanding.



Field School No.3, June, 2024: Ukwānalis

A group of 9 nursing students, along with other health professionals, including registered nurses, a midwife and an occupational therapist embarked on an unforgettable journey to Ukwānalis (Kingcome), home of the Dzawadā'enuxw First Nation. Amidst steep mountains and dense rainforests, Ukwānalis village sits alongside the pristine glacial waters of the Gwa'yī river, offering a unique field school location. For the participants, this experience promised to be a rare opportunity- living in an unfamiliar and remote place, coming to know the stories of the land, water and animals, meeting members of the community and engaging with deep learning through vulnerability & self-reflection.



Field School No.2, May 2024: Houpsitas

In May 2024 a transformative five-day field school was held in Houpsitas, a village on the west coast of Vancouver Island, only accessible by boat or seaplane. Participants included a nurse, a hospital social worker and another social worker who teaches at NIC. The group participated in a medicinal plants workshop, shared in community meals, visited the local school, met many community members, and enjoyed viewing dozens of bald eagles. This community highlighted cultural resilience, motivation in the face of challenges, and abundant pride in their children & youth.



Field School No.4, Sept, 2024: T'saxis

In September, Learning Our Way participants experienced five impactful learning days in the Kwakiutl territory lead by community- knowledge keepers, elders, and energy movers. Highlights included Auntie Glo's regalia sharing, feasting on salmon and root vegetables from the community pit cook, and group facilitation by Tom Child. We are in the process of collecting feedback from participants and community and look forward to sharing details soon.



KYUQUOT, OCTOBER 2024

What is the Learning Our Way Project?

The *Learning Our Way* project aims to address systemic racism and promote health equity of Indigenous peoples through transformative cultural learning experiences for people working in healthcare and related social services, as well as students in those areas. Participants attend field schools, which are land-based, immersive programs hosted in an Indigenous community and led by Indigenous Knowledge Holders.

This three year project, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), is a partnership between, Wuikinuxv, Kwakiutl, Ka'yū:k't'h'/ Che:k'tles7et'h' and Dzawadā'enuxw First Nation communities.

Learning Our Way also acknowledges support from:





UKWANALIS HEALTH CENTRE, JUNE 2024

Reflections ...

“One of the positive impacts, is that holding the field schools in community, has provided a venue for community members to fulfill one of the social determinants of health, and that is making a “contribution”, enhancing self-esteem, and self-worth.

- Paul Willie

Next phase of the project: Celebrate & Disseminate

Entering the Celebrate & Disseminate phase of this project marks a pivotal step in sharing reflections & lessons learned, and honoring the collaborative efforts of everyone involved, from Fall 2022 through Spring 2025.

Over the next few months, the *Learning Our Way* research team is dedicated to compilation and consideration of all feedback received, collaborating with community partners on findings and next steps for dissemination and celebrating the project’s achievements.

Looking to the future

Healthcare providers, leaders and educators in the health and human services across BC have a professional, ethical and social responsibility to employ their collective power in addressing the persistence of racism & health inequities experienced by Indigenous people.

We must move beyond position statements and on-line training. Our systems won’t transform until the people working in them do. To transform biases and beliefs, people must be engaged in supportive, relational, reflective and meaningful experiences.

Our findings strongly indicate this model of experiential learning contributes towards intercultural understanding, enhances cultural humility mindsets and develops genuine capacities in cultural safety for those working within healthcare and education systems.

We need advocacy, funding and long-term commitments to make projects like *Learning Our Way* available and sustainable. Interested in getting involved? Email heidi.deagle@nic.bc.ca



Wuikinuxv



KDC Health



Ka:yu:k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations



Dzawada'enuxw

MEET THE TEAM



Dr. Evelyn Voyageur,
Research Lead



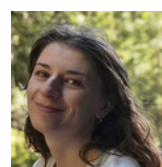
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Stories of impact: Field school in Kwakiutl Territory

Together with Kwakiutl Health Director Caitlin Hartnett, Culture Navigator Chelsea Hunt, and other community members, *Learning Our Way* co-hosted a 5-day field school in T'saxis (Fort Rupert).

T'saxis is a beautiful oceanside Kwagu'ł village located about 500 km north of Victoria, B.C. Participants at this field school were from various communities and diverse professional roles, including educators, nurses, addictions support staff, a psychologist and others!

Transformational learning was experienced through relationship and trust building, hearing stories, sharing traditional meals, hands-on monument painting, canoeing, and engaging in learning circle discussions with community hosts.

Origin stories and songs introduced participants to Kwakiutl values and worldviews, enhanced by the settings of forest, beach and Big House. An invitation from Mervyn Child was a deep honor for field school participants, who contributed to painting parts of a canvas dance screen Child designed for the ceremonies at Stan Hunt's memorial pole raising in Ottawa.

Paddling together in a huge traditional cedar canoe emphasized the importance of unity, cooperation and leadership.

Cultural safety starts with a commitment to honest self-reflection, an openness to learning, and a willingness to listen to Indigenous peoples, directly & in their home communities. When participants take the vulnerable step of being guests within a village, participating in activities that may be unfamiliar, and genuinely listening to Elders and others in the learning circle, this builds trust and understanding.

For more information about this project, or to hear about future offerings, please visit the NIC CARTI webpage at:

[LEARNING OUR WAY](https://www.nic.bc.ca/about-us/research/carti/projects/learning-our-way/)

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