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# From Placement Readiness to Relational Readiness

Reframing Work-Integrated Learning through  
Critical and Indigenous Pedagogies

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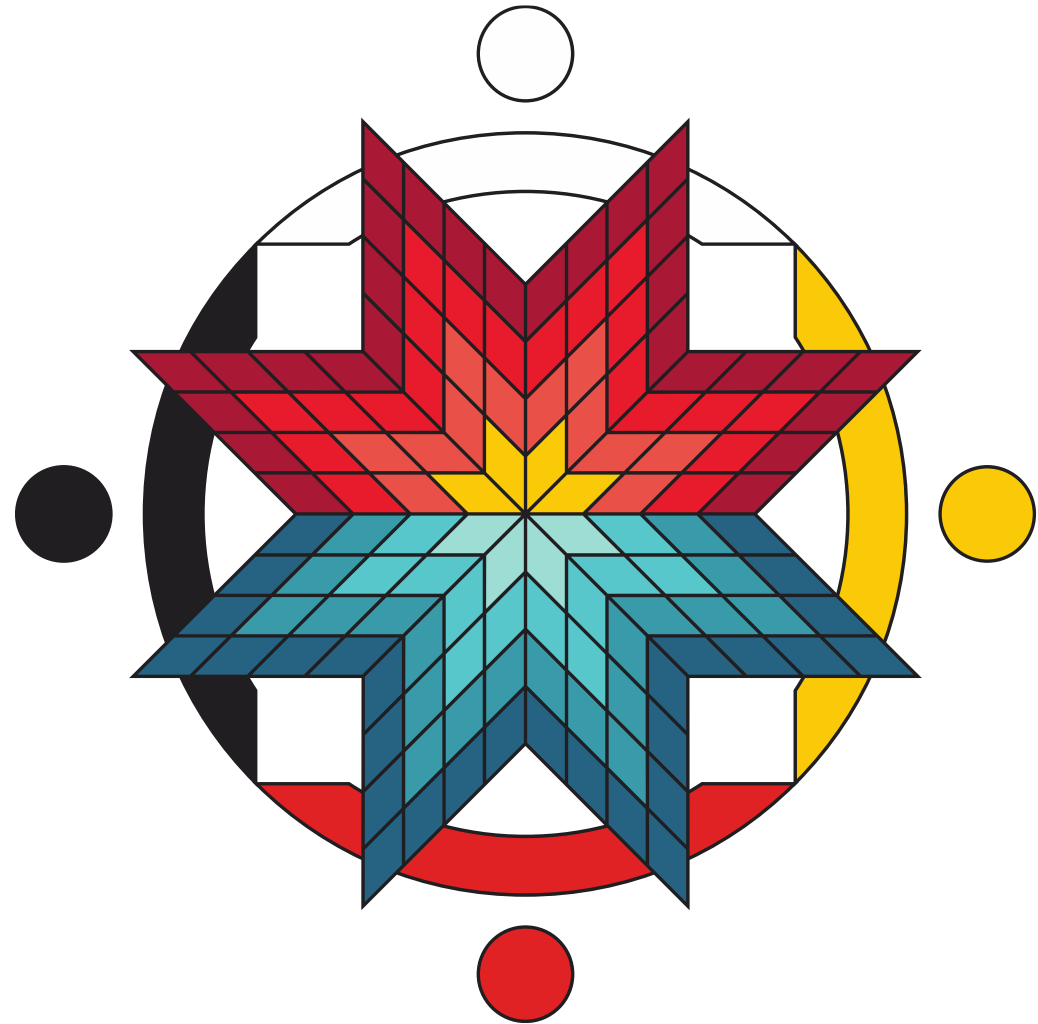
Tara Zaballa, Senior Manager, Work Integrated Learning

# Land Acknowledgement

George Brown Polytechnic is located on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and other Indigenous peoples who have lived here over time.

We are grateful to share this land as treaty people who learn, work and live in the community with each other.

**Opening Reflection:  
What relationships make  
our teaching possible?**



# What we will do together

1

## Notice

What WIL is already teaching

2

## Reframe

What is the difference between placement readiness and relational readiness

3

## Try

A parallel-path design move

4

## Carry

One change into your own teaching



**What does WIL prepare students to become?**



# Scholarship

# Two row framework: a parallel path

## Core WIL path

Practical preparation: networking, introductions, digital platforms, informational interviews, job search tools.



## Relational-critical-Indigenous path

A companion pathway asking: What is hidden? Who benefits? Who adapts? What responsibilities are shared? How might this be approached in a good way?

# 2

## The shift we are testing

### Placement readiness

- Get the placement
- Perform professionalism
- Build a network
- Translate yourself into employability



### Relational readiness

- Enter relationships responsibly
- Notice power and access
- Ask without extracting
- Reflect on who work is shaping you to become

# The parallel path

The parallel path is not extra content. It is a separate way of travelling through the same content.

## Standard WIL path

How do I prepare for WIL?

How do I network?

How do I act professionally?

How do I reflect on skills?

How do I succeed?

## Parallel Path

What relationships am I entering?

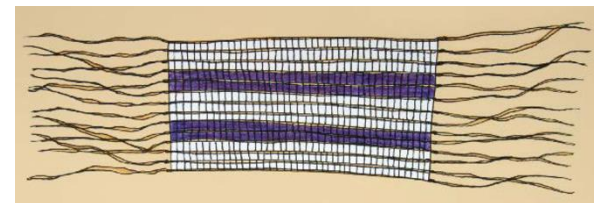
How do I build relationships without extraction?

Who defines professionalism?

Who am I becoming through work?

What values and responsibilities guide my success?

This design is informed by treaty thinking and relational knowledge systems. We are working with the idea that two pathways can travel alongside one another without one absorbing the other. In curriculum terms, this means practical WIL preparation is still intact, while a relational-critical pathway travels beside it, asking questions about power, place, responsibility, and relationship.



# 3 Networking as relational design

The unit does not abandon skills.

It asks what assumptions travel with the skills.

## Learning

Build relationships through introductions, questions, respectful outreach, and follow-up.

Use digital platforms and informational interviews to explore WIL pathways.

Design a next step grounded in reciprocity, access, and trust.

## Unlearning

Networking as self-promotion or using people.

The assumption that everyone has equal access to networks.

A single “right” way to sound confident or professional.

# Relational Design Studio

## Repeated Relational Questions for Networking Decisions



### Locate

Where is this professional world located?



### Access

Who has access here, who has been kept out, and why?



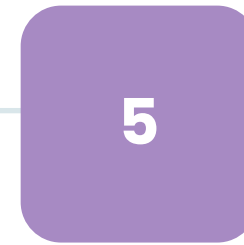
### Story

What story is mine to share?



### Ask

How do I ask for knowledge without extracting it?



### Visibility

What do I choose to make visible?



### Carry

How do I carry this relationship forward?



# Activity: Revise the ask

From: Can you hire or refer me? to Can I learn from your experience?

## Original message

1

### The request for time

Can I meet with you to talk about your job?  
Initial request: Can you help me get a placement?

2

### The request for insight

Can you tell me what I should know about your field?  
Surface request: Can I pick your brain?

3

### Request for direction

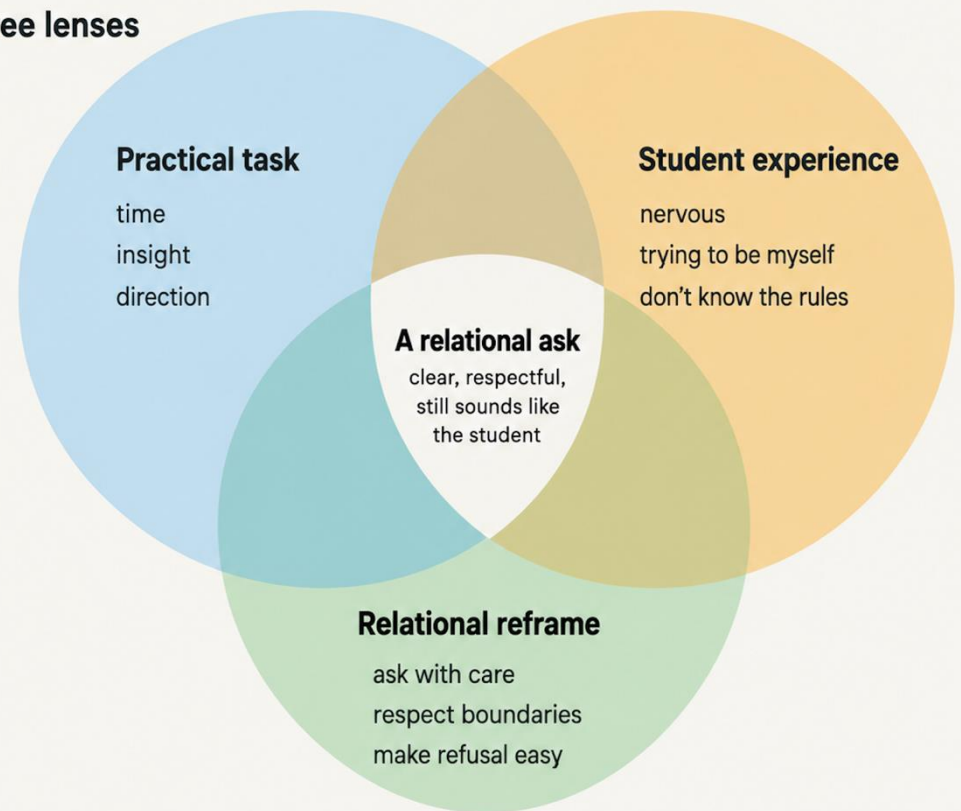
Can you recommend someone I should talk to?  
Surface requests: Can you refer me, who should I talk to?

## In pairs:

What changes when the request becomes learning rather than access?

## Relational reframe

Three lenses

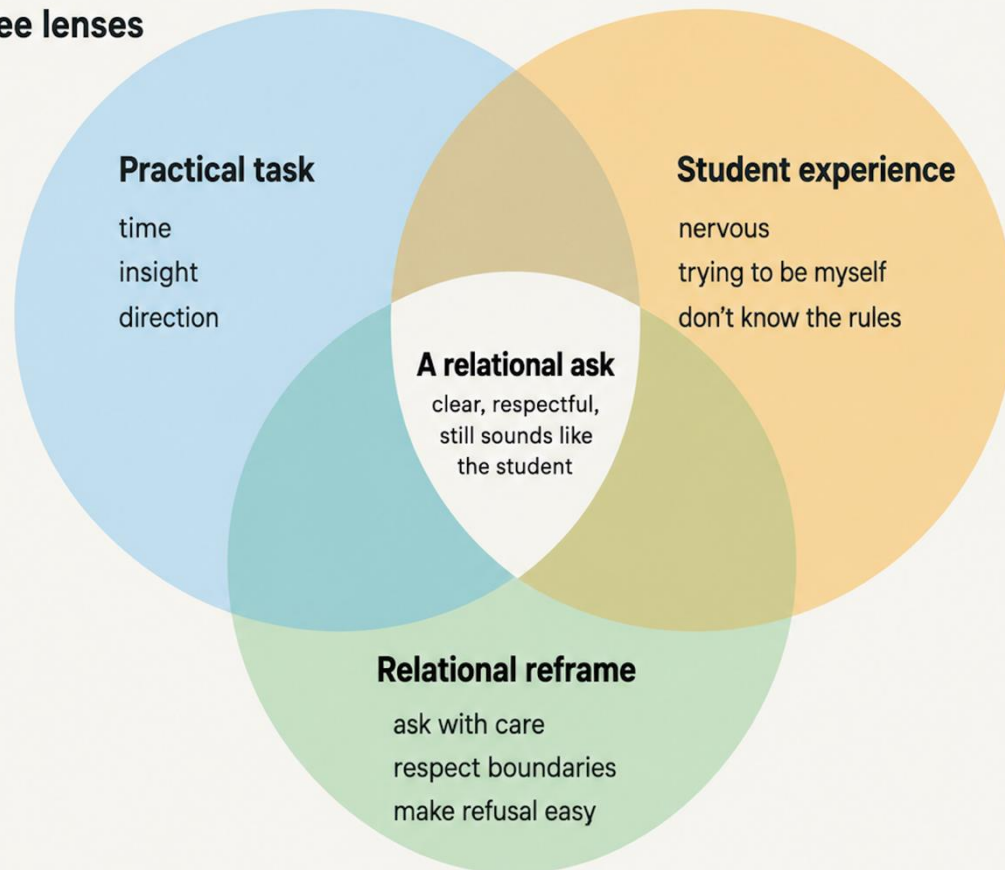


# Activity: Reframe informational interview

From: Can you hire or refer me? to Can I learn from your experience?

## Relational reframe

Three lenses



## Revised Request

1

### Keep the practical task

Can you help me understand how this field works? Can you help me learn what pathways are possible?

2

### Understand the student lived experience

Can you point me toward learning without taking responsibility for my search? Can I keep a self of myself and agency?

3

### Add one relational question

Can I respectfully ask for knowledge, time, and perspective?



4

# Practical Applications



# Relational Readiness is Treaty Work



## Respect | Non-interference | Responsibility

What would it mean for WIL experiences to maintain relationships – not just prepare students for placements?

# Contact us

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