

# Community-Based Participatory Research and Experiential Learning in Schools

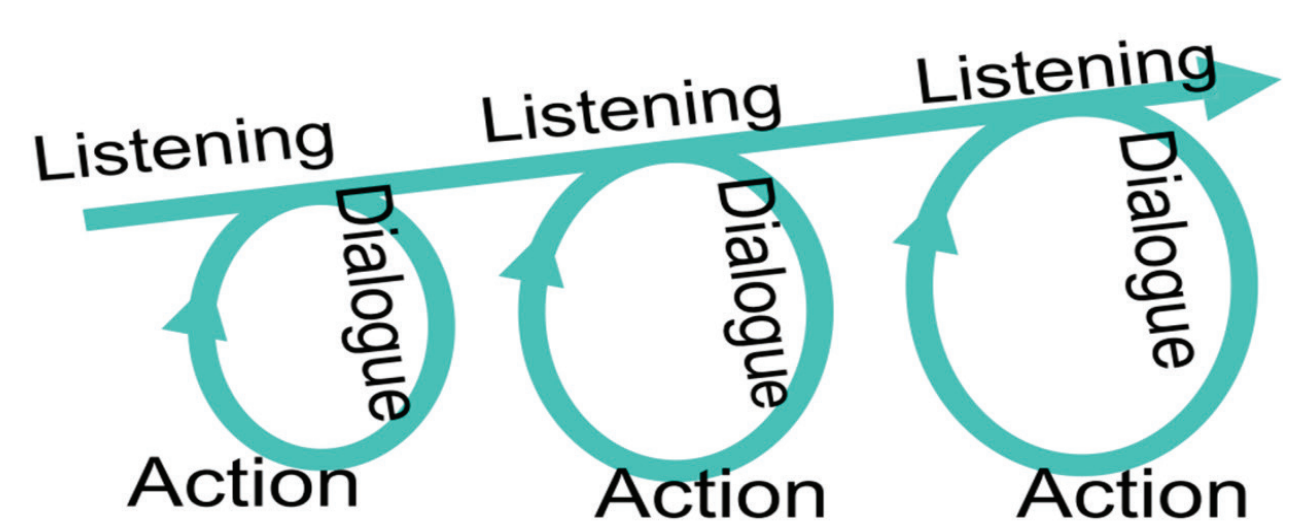
Colleen Knechtel, MEd (2015) Adult, Community, and Higher Education  
PhD Student (3rd year) Secondary Education, University of Alberta

## INTRODUCTION

### Community-based participatory research

(CBPR) is not a methodology; it is an orientation or approach to research that is participatory and action-based. Influenced by the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1946) who coined “action research”, and Freire (1970), whose “problem-posing education affirms [co-researchers] as beings in the process of becoming” (p. 72).

#### Reflection/Action Praxis from Paulo Freire



To be a good educator (researcher) “means above all to have faith in people; to believe in the possibility that they can create and change things.” Paulo Freire, 1970.

CBPR is a values-based approach that recognizes varying sources of knowledge and knowing, establishing knowledge sharing within a research group, resulting in richer knowledge creation (Grant et al., 2008).

Experiential learning involves research, creative thinking, reflection – including life and school story; explored through community-based learning activities such as internships, community-service learning, project-based learning, and “community-arts framed as cultural democracy” (Conrad, 2015). Freire (1970) describes this approach to education as “humanizing, as it is characterized by creative freedom and collaborative problem solving: Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge” (Freire, 1970, p. 68).

## PURPOSE AND GOALS

CBPR is a new paradigm research approach (Heron & Reason, 1997; Conrad, 2015) with, and by community members (co-researchers) who create knowledge based on experience that focuses on relationality, respect, reciprocity, and relevance (Steinhauer, 2002; Conrad, 2015).

CBPR is not only an action research approach for social change, but also a community development process that broadens community engagement to build reciprocity, understanding, and research capacity within a community (Grant, et al., 2008). Ross, et al. (2010) describe a community-academic partnership as a “bidirectional flow of knowledge, training, and skills” (p. 19) as one goal of CBPR.

### CBPR identifies as its goals:

- Social justice;
- Emancipation;
- Empowerment;
- Participatory democracy;
- Illumination of social problems;
- Capacity-building;
- Community development; and
- Social change



Experiential learning is best conceived *not* in terms of specific outcomes, but as a continuous process that creates knowledge grounded in experience (Kolb, 2014), involving both personal and social aspects of development (Dewey, 1938).

### GOALS of Experiential Learning:

- Self-discovery;
- Relationality;
- Communication skills;
- Problem-solving;
- Critical and higher level holistic thinking; and
- Creativity (imagination and intuitive competencies)

These developmental skills are nurtured through experiential and relational educational approaches.



## THEORETICAL & PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS

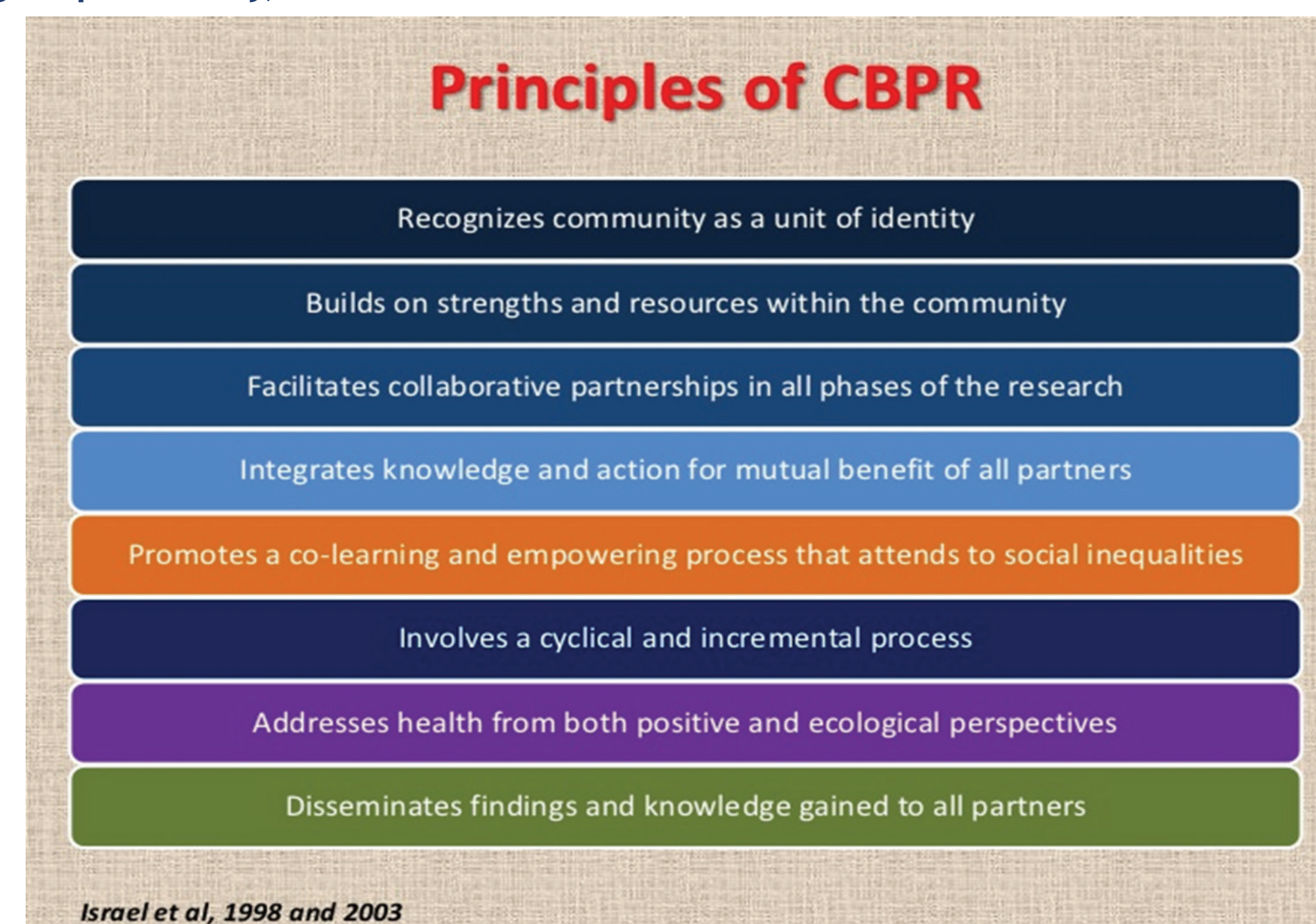
Drawing on feminist, critical, and post-modern theory, CBPR blurs the distinctions between researcher and participants by empowering community members as co-researchers (Flicker, et al., 2008). CBPR has many similarities to Indigenous research paradigms.

Philosophical underpinning of CBPR is a collaborative partnership between academic researchers and the community (Ross, et al. (2010).

Values-based focused on partnership and action include caring, compassion, community, self-determination, participation, power-sharing, human diversity, and social justice. Social innovation is an ethical project (Steinhauer, 2002).

There is an ethical imperative to do social innovative work, including experiential and relational educational approaches. Social innovation can be seen through the lens of complexity theory, with a need for tolerance of ambiguity and unpredictable events (Conrad, 2015).

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION is a holistic philosophy, engaging participants “intellectually, emotionally, socially, politically, spiritually, and physically in an uncertain environment where the learner may experience success, failure, adventure, and risk-taking” (Daniel, et al., 2014), develop accurate self-knowledge, self-efficacy, problem-solving responsibility, and internal locus of control.



Israel et al, 1998 and 2003

## METHODS AND PROCESS

Methods for this research approach include art-based processes such as the creation of art-informed portfolios, other forms of expression such as drawing, collages, narrative, photographs, with guided critical discussion and reflection on narrative or imagery (photovoice), or video creation (Flicker, et al, 2008) to understand issues and create plans for change.

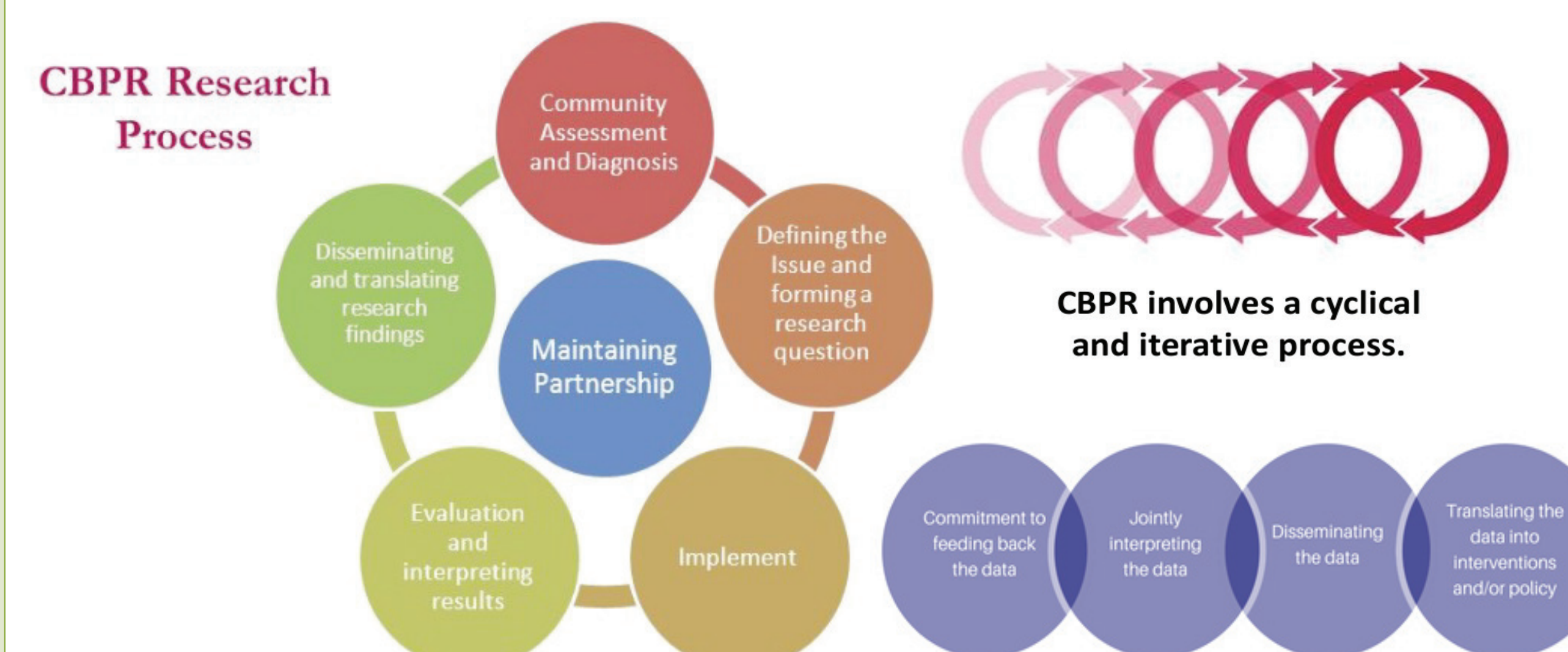
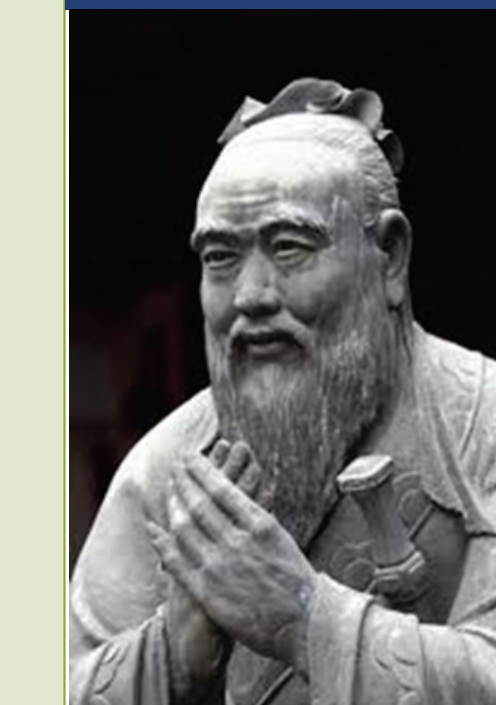


Image from: Israel, B. A. (2005). Methods in community-based participatory research for health. (1st edition). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Creative problem-solving, creative ways of meaning-making, continuous reflection are important methods of teaching and learning in experiential educational programs.

Evaluations of impact: online feedback surveys, an interactive student-focused workshop delivered in the school by student leaders. CCPR can be evaluated on multiple levels (Flicker, et al., 2008).

## BENEFITS, IMPACTS, AND CHALLENGES



### CBPR and EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

*Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember; involve me and I will understand*

Confucius

Born: 551 BC, Died: 479 BC (Full name: Kong Qiu)

### BENEFITS

- CBPR and experiential learning in schools offer diverse and flexible ways for students to explore their personal aspirations through interdisciplinary learning.
- Positive youth development strategies for self-discovery and self-understanding.
- Collective self-reflection and analysis promotes self-development initiatives such as self-confidence; sense of belonging; solidarity; and dialogue within the community to advance “individual and collective intellect ... with positive social values” (Rahman, 2008, p. 59) as a means of knowledge creation, considered by some International co-participants as “real literacy of the people” (p. 56).
- Community arts and community cultural development projects are also laboratories for cultural democracy and engaged citizenship (Conrad, 2015).

### IMPACTS

- Potential to be transformative and transgressive

### CHALLENGES

- Building relationships; acknowledging and sharing power; encouraging participation; making change; and establishing credible accounts (Grant, et al., 2008).



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## IMAGES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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email: Colleen.Knechtel@ualberta.ca