



Northern Lights
College

Northern Lights College
Early Childhood Education and Care Diploma Program
Practicum Mentor/Student Competency Guide

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Indigenous Acknowledgment

Northern Lights College resides on Treaty 8 land and expresses gratitude to the First Nations people of the Cree, Dane-zaa, Dene, Denek'éh, Dunne-za, Iroquois, Kaska, Sauteaux, Tsaa? Ché Ne Dane, Tse'khene, Tahltan, and Tlingit for sharing their territory with us.

We acknowledge the enduring presence of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people and as guests we live, we work, and we learn on their beautiful land. Together we are able to create hope and opportunity for all the people of our college region through post-secondary educational opportunities.

NLC Early Childhood Educator Competency Guide Overview

While many documents have influenced the development of this Competency Guide, we have adapted portions of the BC Ministry of Children and Families (2008) Child care sector occupation competencies: Assessment tool and the BC First Nations Early Childhood Educator Occupational Standards (2014).

Welcome to Practicum Mentors

To all Practicum Mentors, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude for your time and efforts in your role as mentor and guide to our students as they work towards reaching their educational and professional goals. In the field of early care and education (ECE), mentoring is a relationship-based arrangement designed to facilitate learning and the professional development of teachers or other practitioners. It is an adult based learning strategy intended to promote and support an individual's awareness and refinement of their professional learning process and practices (Whitebook & Bellm, 2013).

As a practicum mentor, we ask that you mentor the student in their learning role, support the understanding of child development and pedagogical practice and to acknowledge and assist the growth of the student learning through, competency and skill development. While Supervision is part of this role, we are asking mentors to:

- facilitate learning and development
- provide guidance and support
- encourage as skills and competencies grow
- offer on-going feedback to support growth and development

The NLC Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Competency Guide Explained

This competency guide is intended to act as a living document for students as they progress through their course and practicum work. It is expected that students will grow in their knowledge, core competencies, skills and professional practice throughout the four (4) practica, including supporting the Truth and Reconciliation goals of moving towards an understanding and appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing/being.

The ECEC program encourages the modeling of making learning visible. Documenting these competencies provides instructors with a holistic view of the student's growth. Students benefit from multiple perspectives that include the student voice, peer voices, the mentor and the NLC practicum instructor.

Overarching /Guiding Principles of Practicum

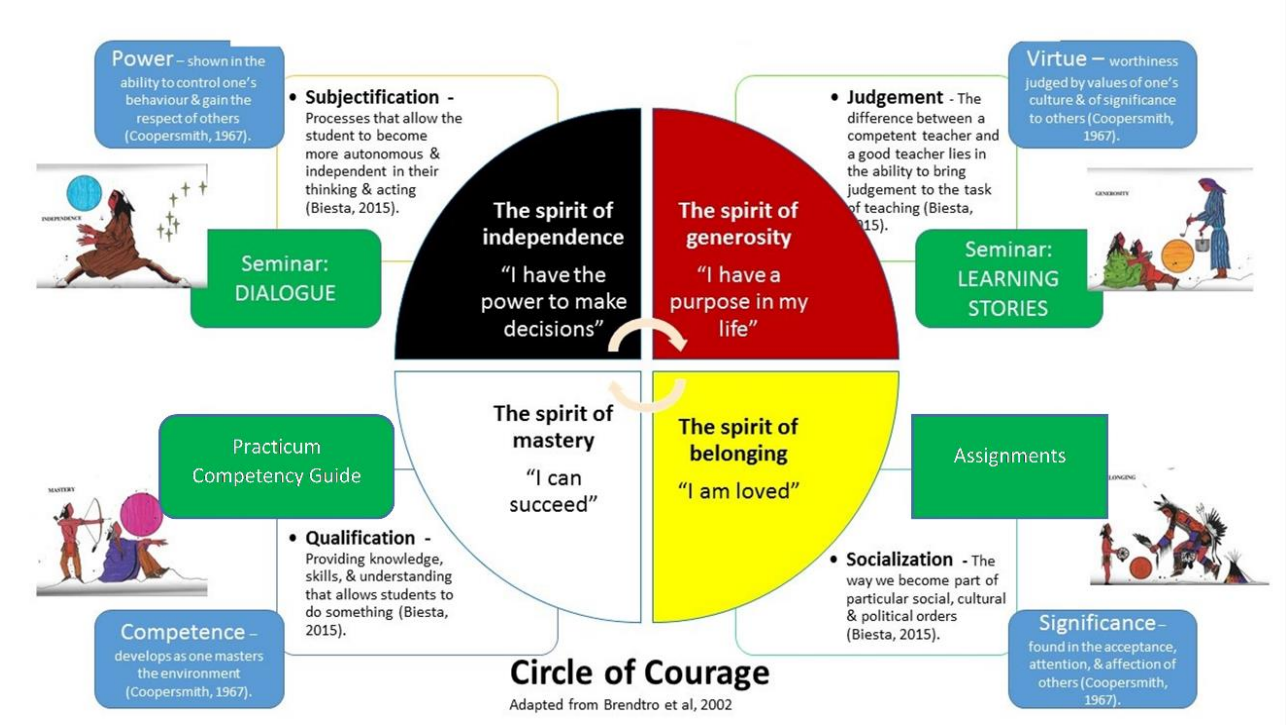
The ECEC program has adopted the following overarching principles for all practicum students (adapted from Principles of Care (Gonzalez-Mena & Widmeyer Eyer, 2014), which guide the theory and practice conversations in all course work at NLC.

- Involve children in things that concern them
- Invest quality time, to be totally available to individual children
- Learn each child's unique ways of communicating and teach yours
- Invest time and energy in building a total person
- Respect children as worthy people
- Be honest about your feelings
- Model the behaviour you wish to teach
- Recognize problems as learning opportunities, and support children to try to solve their own
- Build security by teaching trust
- Be concerned about the quality of development at each stage

Circle of Courage

NLC's ECEC program has also adopted the concepts of the Circle of Courage (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Bockern, 1990) as a way of valuing and respecting growing knowledge and awareness. Burbee (2017) adapted this concept to reflect student agency in practicum experience learning.

The four dimensions portray universal human needs for belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. These are the foundations for resilience and positive development.



Adapted from C.Burbee (2017)

Adapted with permission from Carol Burbee, 2017

NLC’s ECEC diploma program welcomes students from diverse cultures, languages (including Francophone) and many countries, embracing differing values, beliefs, and customs. The Circle of Courage model not only supports growing awareness and respect for Indigenous populations, it encourages awareness and respect for **all** students within the college’s communities.

Note to Mentors and Students

The 4 dimensions of the Circle of Courage are interwoven in the learning journey. We encourage students to reflect specifically on one aspect for each practica, and consider how it impacts their professional growth

- ✚ ECED 109A practicum 1 students will reflect upon the beginning stages of “spirit of belonging.”
- ✚ ECED 110 practicum 2 students will reflect on “spirit of generosity.”
- ✚ ECED 111 Practicum 3 students will reflect on “spirit of independence.”

- ✚ ECED 208 and/or 210 practicum 4 students will reflect on moving into “spirit of mastery.”

For further information about the Circle of Courage (1990) see pages 16 and 17 within this guide.

What are competencies?

“Professional competencies are skills, knowledge and attributes that are specifically valued by the professional associations or organizations.” (U of Victoria. Co-op Program, n.d.).

Additionally, UVIC’s Co-Op Program describes a competency as being comprised of three elements: a **skill**, **knowledge** and **attribute**.

- A **skill** is about doing something well—the ability to choose and perform the right technique at the right time. It is usually developed through training and practice. For example, someone could become skilled at observational writing by practicing the many observation styles.
- **Knowledge** is information known, including theories, facts and procedures and the ability to apply this information in different situations. For example, someone could have knowledge about different communication styles. They may know the key steps to plan a program or project and be well-versed in strategies for evaluating success.
- An **attribute** is an inherent characteristic or quality and is often expressed through what one thinks, does and feels. For example, someone could be known for staying positive and calm in challenging situations. They may also bring a 'can-do' attitude to your work (able to try new things, ask for new assignments and show initiative).

Why are competencies useful?

To help understand the skills of the profession. Addressing/recognizing competencies helps identify competency levels and notices any skill gaps.

Connects academic and practicum learning. Competencies enable students and professionals to draw links between what is being taught in school, work and other experiences, as well as, thinking about the competencies developed can help bring learning to life. It is important for students to bring practicum competencies back into the classroom and apply them to their course work (and vice versa).

Reflect on learning. Reviewing competencies helps students think about what they are learning in professional practice. Questions to think about during the reflection process are:

- ✚ Which competencies are most visible or developing?
- ✚ Where are the areas to focus on more thoroughly in the competency development?
- ✚ Which competencies are strengths/areas of confidence?

How to complete the guide

The student and mentor will complete the competency guide independently. Students' progress through the practicum will be continuous; however, we **suggest regular reflective conversations** between the student and mentor to address what competencies are visible and how the student and or mentor are viewing growth and development as an educator.

An example from the student perspective may include "this week I have really paid attention to this competency and found that I"

An example from the mentor perspective may include be "this week we have seen this competency in action and would suggest the following ideas to take it to the next level"

We encourage a more formal conversation at two (2) points during practicum (midterm/final) for Mentor/Student reflection, addressing the questions listed under "reflect on learning" above.

Suggestions for competency discussions and guide completion

Since this competency guide will form the basis for growth and development of knowledge, skills and attributes, we suggest the following feedback criteria

For the "checklist of competencies", please use the following acronyms to complete the column identified for midterm and final.

Competency Indicators

- **(NYD) – Not yet demonstrated:** Is aware or not aware of information, ideas, etc. related to this competency and/or have not yet had an opportunity to practice.
- **(BEG) - Beginning:** Has made an initial assessment of what is expected but an understanding of the impact of actions is limited. Actions meet some performance expectations but there are opportunities for improvement.
- **(DEV) - Developing:** Demonstrates this competency and thinks about how to develop it further. Engages in conversations with others about how best to contribute and how this competency is important. Actions usually meet the expectations of self and others.
- **(COM)– Competent/Confident:** Reached overall goals and often thinks about opportunities to use and practice this competency. Consistently meets the expectations of self and others. Considers the learning and appreciates the significance of this competency in relationship to experiences. Demonstrates high quality work that has a positive impact.
- **(EXE) - Exemplary:** Overall mastery of this competency. Understands and demonstrates it in all areas. Considered a role model by others and regularly exceeds expectations. Work is of a very high or exceptional quality and has significant impact.

For the summary within each competency section (both the Student and Mentor), please provide a general overview of where you see the student is at in this current practicum and include specific suggestions for growth. **The student is responsible for completing the end summary, focusing on the Circle of Courage aspects.**

Competency Expectation

For each practicum, it is reasonable to expect students will have a broad range of competency skills dependent on the practicum site, the student engagement and perceptions of the mentor teachers. Except for 109A, to be successful in practicum, students should have no fewer than 20% of their skills identified as 'not yet demonstrated'. It is reasonable to expect that ECED 109A students will be at the **B** (Beginning) or **D** (Developing) levels. Also noted that in 109A, the students should have no fewer than 20% of their skills identified as NYD in Sections 1, 2 and 5.

As each practicum level progresses NLC expects to see the students' level of comfort, confidence, and connection to their competencies increase. Therefore, upon completion of ECED 110, ECED 111, ECED 208 and/or ECED 210 students will have most of their skills noted as **DEV** (Developing) and **COM** (Competent/Confident).

Northern Lights College ECEC Program Competency Guide

Student:	Instructor:
Practicum Mentor(s):	
Placement:	

	Mid-Term	Final
1. Professionalism: (Basic Student Expectations) The student:		
1-1. Seeks to understand and respect the placement/practicum program’s philosophy and practice in the context of her/his role as a student.		
1-2. Courteously, clearly and consistently communicates practicum requirements to the Sponsor Educator and other staff as appropriate.		
1-3. Is punctual and takes responsibility for notifying the Practicum Mentor and Instructor of factors affecting attendance: illness, extenuating circumstances, etc.		
1-4. Models professional appearance and dress as per program policy: clothing is comfortable and non-revealing, wears designated “inside” shoes indoors, and appropriate clothing for outdoors.		
1-5. Demonstrates professional conduct while supervising children: refrains from the inappropriate use of cell phones, socialization with staff, smoking, chewing gum, drinking coffee/tea etc. as per program policy.		
1-6. Uses respectful language and humor while working with staff and children.		
1-7. Practices reflection and self-evaluation: In conversation with the Practicum Mentor, identifies competencies that are strengths and competencies where more focus on knowledge, skill or change of approach is		
1-8. Seeks constructive feedback from the Practicum Mentor on a regular basis about knowledge, skills and attitudes and accepts it with respect.		

1-9. Engages in professional dialogue with the Practicum Mentor and placement staff by sharing on a regular basis what he/she is learning in her/his ECEC courses in an open and respectful way.		
1-10. Maintains confidentiality with respect to staff, children and families; communicates any concerns appropriately.		
1-11. Seeks personal or professional guidance as needed to cope with stressful situations.		
<u>Comments and/or Examples Relating to Professional Practice:</u>		

	Mid-Term	Final
2. Health and Safety:		
The student:		
2-1. Demonstrates knowledge of and complies with current licensing regulations and requirements.		
2-2. Scans the whole group effectively (once every 3 minutes) when working with one child or a small group and is aware of the number of children in attendance at any time. (head counts)		
2-3. Models universal hand-washing; explains hand washing and toileting routines expected of children in developmentally appropriate ways.		
2-4. Supports the program's physical environment cleaning and sanitizing routines for toys, equipment and furniture.		
2-5. Supports safety checks- both inside and outside (furnishing, equipment, materials, outdoors).		
2-6. Supports children's safety routines: models' safe behaviour and explains safe practice to children in developmentally appropriate ways.		
2-7. Is aware of children's allergies and where medications and the first aid kit are stored		
2-8. Understands her/his role in the event of fire and emergency situations (including injuries, allergic reactions, reportable incidents etc.).		

2-9. Practices universal precautions for all personal care activities.		
<u>Comments and/or Examples Relating to Health and Safety</u>		

3. Program Planning: The student:	Mid-Term	Final
3-1. Utilizes informal and formal (i.e. anecdotal, pedagogical narrations, learning stories) observations of children to facilitate experiences, which support a variety of curriculum areas.		
3-2. Utilizes informal and formal (i.e. anecdotal, pedagogical narrations, learning stories) observations of children to facilitate experiences that support children’s social play. (Solitary, parallel, co-operative, etc.)		
3-3. Contributes to and creates play environments that facilitate participation by children with a range of physical abilities.		
3-4. Contributes to and provides children with access to space for individual, small and large group experiences.		
3-5. Accesses and contributes appropriate resources and materials for children and staff (professional dialogue with Mentor, BCELF framework and course articles, hands-on resources for children, etc.).		
3-6. Supports and provides a wide arrange of stimulating and challenging play-based (emergent/interest-based experiences) that foster the development of the whole child.		
3-7. Demonstrates use of variety of facilitator (educator) techniques to enhance children’s development and learning.		
3-8. Supports, develops, implements and maintains programming that is developmentally appropriate and affirms diversity.		
3-9. Identifies and acts on opportunities to improve programming based on self-reflection, current research (BCELF/Emergent Curriculum) and emerging trends that reflect good practice.		

3-10. Provides programming that ensures an appropriate balance of child-initiated, adult-guided, structured and open-ended experiences.		
<u>Comments and/or Examples Relating to Program Planning</u>		

4. Family Partnerships: The student:		
4-1. Shares in the development of an environment that is safe, accessible and welcoming for each child and family.		
4-2. Supports opportunities with families for support and network with each other.		
4-3. Communicates with families through a variety of creative and respectful methods that builds trusting relationships.		
4-4. Develops and maintains a consistent relationship with each family (as appropriate to the student role).		
4-5. Listens and responds to each family's views in a manner that supports and respects the individual family (as appropriate to the student role) and their role as primary caregiver of the child.		
4-6. Maintains confidentiality in all verbal and written communication with and about, families in keeping with legislative, professional, and centre policies.		
4-7 Provides program activities and materials that respect and reflect a full range of family structures.		
4-8. Identifies, researches and shares/discusses information with their Mentor about community resources that responds to family diversity and needs.		
4-9. Advocates on behalf of and with, children and families, supporting them as they access resources and fulfilling their rights.		

Comments and/or Examples Relating to Family Partnerships:

<p>5. Relationships with Program Staff and other Professionals:</p> <p>The student:</p>		
<p>5-1. Identifies and/or contributes to local, provincial, & federal childcare related organizations (BCELF, ECEBC, CCCF, Licensing etc.)</p>		
<p>5-2. Shares personal /professional development experiences with colleagues in an open and respectful manner</p>		
<p>5-3. Models current practice and engages in conversation with program staff and volunteers.</p>		
<p>5-4. Reflects on and evaluates professional practice on an on-going basis using the ECEBC code of ethics.</p>		
<p>5-5. Develops and implements a personal, professional development plan, identifying achievable, realistic and appropriate short and long-term goals.</p>		
<p>5-6. Invites input, feedback, and evaluation by colleagues and others.</p>		
<p><u>Comments and/or Examples Relating to Relationships:</u></p>		

British Columbia Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS)
BC First Nations Early Childhood Occupational Standards (2014)
Indigenous Competencies

A quick reference on Terminology

As outlined in the Indigenous Terminology Guide (Joseph, n.d.) the term “aboriginal peoples include the Indian (or First Nations), Inuit and Metis Peoples so legally it will always have a place at the terminology table” (Joseph, p.5). However, Joseph goes on to say that we “can use interchangeably with First peoples, with First Nations and with Indigenous Peoples.” He cautions us that “if using interchangeably with First Nations some First Nations prefer not to be called Aboriginal Peoples, if using this term, it should always be Aboriginal Peoples together as opposed to Aboriginal or Aboriginals” (p. 7).

In the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation (2015), it is important for all of us in the field of early childhood education and care to acknowledge First Nations ways of knowing and being.

While you may not visibly see children, families, students and staff from Indigenous communities represented in your program, our children are living in the spirit and context of reconciliation. In NLC’s ECEC program, we are committed to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action, specifically #12:

“We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

We have chosen just a few of the many BCACCS competencies to share with Mentors and Students, to allow students to reflect upon at their stage of learning. As you read the outlined competencies, engage and have a conversation together (mentor and student). Consider the following questions. *What do these First Nations Competencies mean to you? What do they mean to your practicum/workplace centre? How might you begin/continue to include some of these competencies into your practice? What would that look like?*

As part of the weekly practicum course seminar, instructors will be taking time to discuss these competencies and invite the sharing of your knowledge/wonderings/understanding of how educators can support and enhance their role in living Truth and Reconciliation through the First Nations/Indigenous competencies.

We invite students and mentors to consider those competencies that have or may have relevance within their community and childcare centre. Mentors are not asked to assess students' understanding in these areas; rather, they are asked to contribute to the conversation to allow students to participate in seminar discussion and complete a final reflection (Part C, p. 17).

To begin, take some time to reflect together (mentor and student) on the traditional lands that you live near or reside on.

We acknowledge our Early Childhood Educational and Care program is on or near the traditional lands of the: _____

Demonstrates knowledge about the rights of children and the diverse beliefs, values, and approaches relevant to Aboriginal/First Nation communities.

Assesses how community and cultural expectations, protocols, and communication practices, impact professional practice in Aboriginal/First Nation communities.

When working in your area and/or community including First Nations communities, the student takes time to learn about the historical context of the land and the First Nations culture.

Demonstrates, supports, and respects the importance of First Nations traditional foods, preparations and practices related to food to sustain culture.

Demonstrates an awareness of safety protocols that respect First Nations cultural traditions and practices that include children in their indoor / outdoor communities (i.e., using tobacco /sweet- grass to cleanse (smudge) rooms, lighting candles throughout the centre as a way of protecting the children, scraping hides, cleaning fish etc.).

Supports and adheres to the cultural and traditional teachings of the First Nations communities in which they work, which includes understanding how to implement relevant and appropriate experiences to promote and sustain cultural and traditional knowledge.

Supports the cultural practices that use the land and natural environment as a key place and way for children to learn.

Includes into the programming, appropriate First Nations culture, language and spiritual development opportunities.

Seeks advice from Elders about appropriate outings and field trips and the role of the children/teachers on that trip.
Plans and implements opportunities for culturally and community relevant learning in the First Nations programming.
Demonstrates recognition and value of the interconnectedness of language, culture, and spiritual experiences in First Nations child development.
Uses observation and assessment documentation techniques that are appropriate for First Nations families, culture and language.
Is aware of cultural protocols related to songs, stories, artifacts and regalia in First Nations communities and their use when working with and planning for First Nations children and families.
Approaches and practices are sensitive and responsive to cultural beliefs and values related to each stage of development of the child.

Is aware of how First Nations children develop as a result of First Nations ways of knowing and being.
Uses culturally sensitive approaches to create trusting relationships with First Nations children, families, and communities.
Demonstrate skills in various forms of screening and assessment tools, particularly those typically used in First Nations programs. (ECED 208/210)
Seek advice from family and Elders to support guiding practice relevant and appropriate for First Nations children in the program.
Understand that there may be issues that may result from working professionally with relatives and close family friends and how these relationships may impact practice.
Consider the unique circumstances of First Nations family life and the unique contexts and diverse beliefs and values across families and communities and plan outreach and orientation activities consistent with these families and communities.
Supports First Nations families to address existing barriers to accessing resources.
Acknowledges unique circumstances and protocols that exist in First Nations families and communities and how this might affect the level of support ECEs provide for families and the ways in which that support is offered and understanding that First Nations people may define family to include extended family and friend.
Include family (as defined by the First Nations family) as partners in discussions to plan for children with diverse abilities.
Becomes familiar with and respects cultural resources in the community such as Elders and other community members.

Demonstrate and model's communication skills that are reflective of and responsive to the unique active listening skills relevant to First Nations children, families, co-workers, staff and other members in the community in which they work.
Explores the ways in which the program can meet and complement the needs and expectations of the First Nations children and families.
Is aware of the processes and relevant, appropriate protocols of connecting with First Nations Elders, families, and communities.
Researches the unique historical and contemporary contexts of First Nations family and community life and the influence of these contexts on their relationships with organizations, agencies, and institutions.
Maintain records as required by First Nations families and communities.
Appreciate sensitivities that may exist for First Nations peoples related to documenting and reporting to authorities.

Thank you!

Practicum Mentors: We appreciate the time you have taken to complete this booklet and discuss its findings with the student and the NLC instructor.

This form has been submitted by (Signature): _____ Date: _____

FINAL REFLECTION PIECE FOR PRACTICUM STUDENTS ONLY

PRACTICUM SUMMARY:

(STUDENT COMPLETES PARTS A, B AND C)

Part A:

As you reflect on your skills and competencies describe your key comforts and areas of discomfort. As you move forward in your next practicum describe how you will continue to build and enrich your comfort areas and what two (2) steps you will take to ease your areas of discomfort. Use specific examples to support the areas of comfort and discomfort.

Part B: Circle of Courage: This will be used as your overarching guide as a summary tool for deeper reflection into learning.

The **Circle of Courage** (Brendtro et al, 1990) was introduced earlier in both the competency booklet and during seminar.

The focus for ECED 109A is for students to reflect upon the beginning stages of “spirit of belonging”. In ECED 110, the focus is on “spirit of generosity”, with ECED 111 focusing on “spirit of independence”. In ECED 208/210, students will be focusing on moving into “spirit of mastery”. However, you will find that many of the 4 dimensions of the circle of courage are interwoven throughout your learning journey.

Students must include specific examples in their summary, appropriate to one of the following practica.

1. **For ECED 109A Practicum 1:** Using the spirit of belonging as your guide, provide a detailed summary on how, as a student, you felt connected to (belonging to) the program? The children? Other professionals? Belonging looks like but is not limited to: feeling secure, accepted, valued, and emotionally connected.
2. **For ECED 110 Practicum 2:** Using the spirit of belonging and the spirit of generosity as your guide, provide a detailed summary of how, as a student, you continue to grow in the spirit of belonging and moving into the spirit of generosity - speaking about ideas shared and ideas shared with you. Generosity looks like but is not limited to: sharing of learning, reaching out without expectation, joy in displaying your current learning, and displayed non-judgmental behavior to all people in practicum.

3. **For ECED 111 Practicum 3:** Using the spirit of belonging, spirit of generosity and the spirit of independence, provide a detailed summary of how as a student you took on a role of independence throughout the practicum journey. Independence looks like but is not limited to: responsibility for own learning, self-management, and making good choices.
4. **For ECED 208 and/or ECED 210:** using all four (4) dimensions of learning with the key focus on spirit of mastery, provide a detailed summary of how as a student you have moved into mastery. We know that it is impossible to achieve mastery in all levels of your competencies, but the goals are to be successful and reflecting on where you are at right now. Mastery looks like but is not limited to: pride in one's competence, willingness to learn new skills/competencies/ways of knowing, being capable and able to fulfill daily ECE duties, taking on new challenges, accepting of mentors/sponsor continual feedback and direction, and to be able to self-manage your time.

Part C: Indigenous Competencies: Reflect on your conversation regarding the competencies. Provide a summary of your mentor/student discussion and what you learned from engaging in this conversation. Indicate how these supported your understanding of the indigenous people and their ways of knowing as you continue to develop your worldview.

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