

Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada



Aboriginal Nursing Student Mentorship Forum

The Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada is developing a Student Mentorship pilot project aimed at Aboriginal students with career interests in the health care field, especially nursing. The project called, *Aboriginal Nursing Student Mentorship Forum*, will begin early January 2008 with approximately 20 Aboriginal students and 10 established nurse mentors from across Canada.

The *Aboriginal Nursing Student Mentorship Forum* aims to increase and support Aboriginal nursing students by providing a culturally safe and secure environment to develop meaningful, mutually respectful and responsible relationships with experienced Aboriginal nurses. This will be achieved by providing an online forum space for nursing students and experienced nurses to come together to exchange ideas, information, experiences and stories.

Mentorship Program Objectives

- To provide Aboriginal nursing students a culturally safe mentoring experience;
- To provide an online open space where both mentors and mentees can exchange ideas, information, experiences and stories;
- Evaluate and report on the development, implementation and outcomes of the program.

Why an online Mentorship Forum?

The Mentorship Forum will be a secure and safe assembly place for open discussions to occur between students and nurse mentors. The forum will allow mentees to obtain practical and honest career advice and guidance from experienced registered nurses. The forum format will allow information to flow in a timely and useful manner that responds to contemporary and ongoing mentee concerns.

How does it Work?

Many members of the A.N.A.C. are experienced nurses who are willing to share their expertise and wisdom through the *Aboriginal Nursing Student Mentorship Forum*. Participants will be able to log on to the secure portion of the A.N.A.C. website where they can view short profiles of all potential mentors. Questions may be directed to a specific mentor or to the mentors as a group. Each mentor will have listed several "Key Areas of Mentorship Interest" to assist the potential mentees in forming and directing questions.

What is Mentoring?

'*Mentor*' as a term has its origins in the ancient classic, *Homer's Odyssey*. The hero Odysseus left his son Telmachus with a good friend when he went off to fight in the Trojan War. While Odysseus was off at war, the goddess of domestic arts, Athena, disguised herself as an old man and becomes Telmachus' guardian and teacher. Her name was "*Mentor*". Mentor becomes Telmachus trusted counsellor and guide into adult life. Mentor is frequently described as a wise, experienced and faithful advisor to an aspiring profession.

The modern term has evolved to describe a complex phenomenon that can be formed instinctively or naturally, but can also be developed via organized programs such as A.N.A.C.'s pilot student mentorship program. Mentoring is more than the experienced guiding the inexperienced as it involves the building of a dynamic relationship. The individuals (mentor and mentee) concerned engage with each other and share their personal experiences and philosophies of practice in order to develop a partnership. This partnership is characterized by enabling and cultivating by the mentor to enable the empowerment of the mentee.

Mentors take a specific interest in assisting nursing students with their professional and career development over time. While the term may be used interchangeably Mentoring is not the same as

preceptoring or supervision. Preceptors act for their employers to assist a new employee or student to orientate and settle into a new role, while clinical supervision is aimed at providing nurses with support to critically reflect on their clinical practice.

Benefits of Mentoring

The strengths and benefits of mentoring arise from the reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship that is developed between the mentor and the mentee.

Benefits of being a Mentor

- Enhanced self-fulfillment;
- Increased job satisfaction and feeling of value;
- Increased learning, personal growth and leadership skills;
- Motivation for new ideas;
- Potential for career advancement.

Benefits of being a Mentee

- Increased competence;
- Increased confidence and sense of security;
- Decreased stress;
- Expanded networks;
- Leadership development;
- Insight in times of uncertainty;
- Increase knowledge through sharing;
- Sense of support through mentorship.

How to Participate in the Mentorship Pilot Project?

- Mentees must be enrolled in a nursing program in a recognized post secondary institution;
- Both the mentors and mentees must be members of A.N.A.C.;
- Must have internet access.

For more information, please visit the A.N.A.C. website at www.anac.on.ca or by telephone at (613) 724-4677 or Toll free at (866) 724-3049.