



RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

Prairie Research Centre

Name of Project:

Wahkohtowin: Learning Together about Justice and Injustice in the City

Research Start-up Summary and Abstract:

The “Wahkohtowin: Learning Together about Justice and Injustice in the City,” project brings together university students from Law, English, Indigenous Studies, and Women’s and Gender Studies with students from “outside” the university—specifically, Indigenous youth from Oskayak High School and former gang members from STR8 UP, a gang prevention organization. This work builds upon an earlier project, funded by UAKN in 2013, and contributes significant new research to one of UAKN’s core research themes: social cohesion (community well-being, education, justice). The 2013 project titled, Learning Together: Str8Up, Oskayak High School, and the University of Saskatchewan final paper and key findings can be found here: <http://uakn.org/research-project/learning-together-str8up-oskayak-high-school-and-the-university-of-saskatchewan/>

Together, through relationship building, storytelling, and place-based educational practices with our students, we will cultivate analyses of injustice and justice in the city of Saskatoon, as well as forging critical pedagogy that unites Indigenous, feminist, and community-based methodologies. In addition to offering the 8 week class in the fall of 2016, the project includes a community-engaged research symposium and a specific research output—a collaboratively produced digital narrative map, which will highlight stories of justice and injustice in Saskatoon and serve as a resource for future education in both university and community contexts.

Engagement objectives:

In a previous iteration of the Wahkohtowin (“kinship” in Cree) class, the project explored with university students, STR8 UP members, and Oskayak students their knowledge and experience of injustice, particularly in relation to policing, criminal legal trials, and incarceration. For this project, we again focus on injustice, but within a broader scope, linking injustice in a legal and penal sense to the larger context of social injustice in settler colonial cities (here, Saskatoon). This project aims to understand participants’ knowledge and personal experience of injustice in the city, including

the realities of poverty, food and housing insecurity, gentrification and the privatization of space, and interpersonal and institutional violence, particularly against Indigenous women, girls, and the LGBTQ2S community. This project also aims to explore the city as a site of resistance and social justice—from community gardens and Idle No More round dances to organizations like Str8Up and Oskayak High School themselves, which, through gang prevention and Indigenous education, respectively, typify the many ways in which “justice” is enacted in our city.

Methodology:

Throughout the class, participants will document the stories and places we visit through artistic expression/stories, and collectively we will assemble the stories and art pieces to create a visual and narrative “justice map” of Saskatoon. Informed by participatory action research methodologies (van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011), this justice map will take specific form with the inspiration and input of participants. We will also draw from recent scholarship that connects the genre of digital storytelling to traditional Indigenous oral storytelling (Wilcox, Harper, Edge, 2012). The map will include interactive oral, written, performative, and visual components, and will be made available online through a Facebook page, our individual Department and College webpages, and the websites of Oskayak and STR8 UP.

Through the Wahkohtowin model, a unique pedagogy that brings together students from distinct groups—those inside the university and those historically excluded from it—we also seek to contribute to knowledge about community-engaged educational initiatives and continue our work of making the university more accessible to Indigenous and often marginalized youth.

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