Multi-Genre Project

For my multi-genre project, I chose to write about issues and experiences that are relevant to my life. My topics are based on my surroundings and events that have impacted me. I wrote a rant about Winnipeg’s road construction issue and a research paper about the racism in our city. I also wrote a Where I’m from poem about my life and a memoir about a hurricane I was in. The most in depth and strongest piece I wrote was the research paper on the racism issue in Winnipeg.

Rant

Main idea: Winnipeg road construction

Audience: residents of Winnipeg

Purpose: for people to laugh about the frustratingly ongoing construction

Form: article in the Winnipeg Free Press

Context: Rant

Research Paper

Main idea: racism in Winnipeg

Audience: specifically residents of Manitoba, but all Canadians as well

Purpose: address the issue and provide more information those who don’t know

Form: article in the Winnipeg Free Press

Context: Research Paper

Poem

Main idea: Where I’m from

Audience: me, it’s a personal piece of writing

Purpose: look back and summarize my childhood

Form: personal journal

Context: Poem

Memoir

Main idea: tell a story about a hurricane that I was in

Audience: personal piece of writing

Purpose: to relive the experience

Form: blog

Context: Memoir

Winnipeg Road Construction

I have a question; it’s been bothering me for a while now.  Specifically this morning when I was late for school because the road was closed for ripping up yet another road.  Is it possible for Winnipeg to go one season without starting a major road construction project?

Can you remember the last time there hasn’t been road construction?  No one really understands why they start projects that seem useless.  I say “start” because we all know most of them are never completed or take months to finish.  There’s always a new excuse as to why they can’t be finished in a reasonable amount of time.

Winnipeg road construction is like an annoying sibling that never goes away.  For example, ripping up Pembina Highway by our school.  What doesn’t make sense is that they aren’t even fixing the side of the road that has the most potholes.

Just a heads up to all you project managers; if you haven’t already noticed, no matter how many times you try to fix the roads, the potholes always come back.  No, this isn’t because of it not being done properly, but because of the harsh winters that we can’t control.  So why keep trying to fix something that will never be fixed?

I’m sure every Winnipegger loves having their tax money go to pointless road construction…Not!  So it’s simple, quit doing pointless jobs.  It’ll make for happier drivers and a whole lot less money spent on “speed fines double” tickets.

Not so Friendly Manitoba

In January, 2015, Winnipeg was named Canada’s most racist city (MacDonald Welcome). There is no doubt that indigenous Manitobans are being discriminated against in Winnipeg.  The city had the highest number of racist tweets in comparison to the top six Canadian cities known for high levels of hate crime (MacDonald Welcome).  Bartley Kives, a *Winnipeg Free Press columnist* said, “You’d have to walk around Winnipeg with your eyes covered in hockey tape and your ears filled with molasses not to notice this city’s racism problem.” (Deal).  Nine out of ten Manitobans have reported hearing negative comments about an Aboriginal person (MacDonald Welcome).

To solve Winnipeg’s racism problem, it is important to understand what exactly racism is and the causes of it.  Racism is prejudice, discrimination against someone of a different race based on the belief that one’s own race is superior.  It can be established in cultural values and patterns or personal behaviours.  The causes are complicated; they can include psychological victimization, economic and educational disadvantage and legal vulnerability.  Many people are racist to sustain psychological and social advantages over others.  In doing this, they disturb the mental health of both themselves and the victims (American Psychological Association).  A recent article in *Psychology Today* proposed that self-esteem and dominance are two common causes of racism.  When a person has low self-esteem they can gain feelings of personal confidence by bringing other people down.  Human history is filled with war, oppression and conflict between races (Psychology Today).  It seems racism has come naturally to people for many years.

Racism has always been somewhat of a problem in Winnipeg. Beginning with Louis Riel’s disagreements with the government and generations of tension to follow.  According to *Maclean’s* article published in January, 2015, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of racism. The murders of two Aboriginal sisters who were stabbed to death after calling police five times for help that they never received and the finding of Tina Fontaine’s body in the Red River were turning points in Winnipeg.  The vigil held after her death was record breaking for the number of non-indigenous residents at an Aboriginal ceremony (MacDonald Welcome).

Progress has already begun to change Winnipeg’s racial division.  Groups of young activists are taking matters into their own hands by doing simple things like joining the rally on Selkirk Avenue every Friday evening.  This empowers this generation of Aboriginal kids and is a small event, but makes a big difference (MacDonald Welcome).  Unfortunately, this problem is much harder to solve than a few kids gathering on Friday nights and that’s why people like Robert Falcon Oulette-who ran for mayor in 2015-are so important in Winnipeg’s development.  He is an Aboriginal man with his Ph.D., two masters’ degrees and almost two decades of serving in the army under his belt.  “I want to change perceptions,” is what he said in an interview after being told, “You Indians are the problem with the city,” (MacDonald Welcome) while in the midst of getting signatures for his mayoral nomination.  Many people may not know that our current mayor Brian Bowman is Metis and admits that the racism in Winnipeg is a big problem (Deal).  He too wants to change the perception of indigenous Winnipeggers.  Bowman, along with Winnipeg’s indigenous leaders have decided to take action by creating an art project called “Perception.”  The goal is to challenge the negative views people have on Aboriginal residents.  Before the launch of the project, students from twenty high schools across the city marched against racism at the Legislative building (MacDonald Winnipeg). 

Fig. 1.  A moving photo from the “Perception” project (Urban Shaman Gallery).

Deborah Tsao, a student from St. John’s-Ravenscourt said, “We can’t write legislation, but we can send a message.” (MacDonald Welcome).  Her statement is realistic because racism is a worldwide problem that cannot be solved all at once.  We must all work together and take it one step at a time by doing simple things like the members of the march against racism.  Since *Maclean’s* released their article there have been positive changes to the racism in Winnipeg, but we still need to do better as a city and as a whole.

Where I’m from

I’m from blue skies and sandy beaches,

From humid air and hot weather.

I’m from rushing home from school

To climb in the mangroves and swim in the pool.

I am from home videos and talent shows,

From play kitchens and scooters.

I am from long plane rides to Winnipeg

And summer vacations at the family cabin.

I’m from boarded up windows and Rubbermaid bins;

Packing everything we could.

I’m from wondering what would happen next,

From waves and wind crashing against the window next to me.

I’m from a long journey in hope of finding our family,

From too many “are you ok’s” and too many hugs.

I’m from wishing I could see my parents while my grandma tried to comfort me.

I’m from hardship, but experiences that have made me a strong person.

Hurricane Ivan

I lived in the Cayman Islands in a quaint sized condo with my parents and three sisters. It was three storeys high and had a bright blue tin-like roof. We had an outdated kitchen and tile floors that cooled your feet when you walked on them. Although our home wasn’t the most stylish, it was filled with laughter and joy. My parents both worked a lot at the hospital so my twin sister and I had a nanny named Marlene who took care of us during the day. I grew up with her guidelines instead of rules and being told, “Everything happens for a reason,” in hopes I would think before doing something bad to veer me in the other direction. I grew up with tropical storms being quite common. It was normal to have a few every year and I was used to strong winds, heavy rains and large waves every so often. My average day was spent at school, then coming home to swim in the pool and play with all of my friends who also lived in our complex. Although I had this routine for a long time, things began to feel different.

The parents in the complex no longer went outside every evening like usual and the seldom occasion that they did, it would be only to have serious conversation. My parents were constantly watching the news and the reporter was always talking about someone called Ivan. I didn’t know how someone called Ivan could be important enough to be on the news every night. My parents spent most of their evenings packing food and various supplies in Rubbermaid bins. I thought to myself, “We just got back from a vacation, why are they packing again?” As days went on the preparation intensified. Our neighbours began to bring in their lawn furniture and board up their windows with sheets of drywall. I saw no point in bringing everything inside because it was practically summer all year ‘round. Our home went from casual conversation to being flooded with worried phone calls and anxiousness. Soon enough, my parents informed us that there was a hurricane coming and suddenly the strange actions of my neighbours and family were making sense. It was odd to me that this much preparation went into just another tropical storm, but I figured everyone wanted to be safe rather than sorry.

On the eve of Ivan’s arrival we made our way to the hospital where we would stay until the storm passed. Since the majority of people on the island would be going there as their shelters of choice, we weren’t allowed to bring much. All we took were a few bins of food, some blankets and pillows, and very little clothing. On the way, we stopped to check out how high the waves were. My cautious nature convinced me to stay in the car while I watched the rest of my brave family get dangerously close to the raging waves. After what felt like an eternity, we made it to the hospital and parked our car on a round-a-bout on the highest piece of land we could find, in hopes that it wouldn’t be destroyed in what lay ahead. My mom reserved a corner of the hospital on the second storey for us to stay at because she didn’t like my dad’s idea of the weight room on the main floor.

Ivan came in full speed with no mercy. There was not much to do except sit in the hospital for thirty hours listening to waves crash against the window three feet beside me. I lay awake at night listening to the water hit the hospital as hard as a train at full speed and I was pretty certain the hurricane-proof windows weren’t going to do their job. They had over two hundred seventy kilometer winds coming towards them with pieces of cars, houses and palm trees, you name it, flying with. We had no electricity, no water and no toys, which left me with nothing to do, but mop up water that was quickly seeping onto the second floor after it had already flooded the first. I spent a lot of time thinking about what would happen next. I didn’t know if I would ever see my friends or family ever again and I didn’t know if the hurricane would ever stop, but thankfully it finally did.

Naturally, after a day and a half of crazy wind and water it didn’t all disappear instantly. We waited another three days for the water on the roads to disperse so we could leave the hospital. We found our van exactly where we left it and headed to our home, which was a little difficult to get to with sailboats, trees and portions of houses throughout the road. It was especially hard to navigate without street signs and landmarks. When we got there, I didn’t recognize it. This was not the same home I had seen just four days before. There was no longer a blue roof, it didn’t have its glass sliding doors anymore and the kitchen was now home to a family of crabs. There wasn’t much time to mourn about my almost non-existent home as we were instructed to evacuate. My dad drove my mom, my sisters and I to the airport where we waited eight long hours in the blazing hot sun for the next flight out. On the plane ride out, I watched what I had used to call home disappear as it no longer looked like an island, but more of a crime scene.

Hurricanes are rated on a scale of one to five with one being the weakest and five being the strongest. Ivan was a category five hurricane that destroyed everything I had ever known in a matter of hours. Not only did everything on the island of Grand Cayman change when it hit, but so did my family. My parents had to return to the Island after only staying four weeks in Canada because their jobs restricted them. They left my sisters and I attending new schools in a new country with people we only ever saw once a year. Sometimes I think back to what Marlene used to tell me, “Everything happens for a reason.” Still to this day I don’t know why Ivan came to destroy everything in my life, but one day I hope to understand and that for whatever reason, it was worth it.

In completing this project, I have gotten the chance to re-live some of the experiences in my life and remember all of the good and even bad memories. As a writer, I have grown tremendously in the sense that I am a much stronger writer now than I was at the beginning of the semester. In doing this project, I have learned how to summarize large amounts of information into a well-rounded research paper. Throughout the semester, I have gotten many opportunities to think about and answer the question, what do I stand for? I have given this a lot of thought and come to the conclusion that I don’t yet know what I stand for. Standing for something is having a real purpose in life, meaning that you actually believe in yourself and the goals you set out to accomplish each day. I do have small goals that I accomplish each day and relatively large ones like attending university in a year, but is this big enough to answer the question? In doing this project, I have found out that I am not all that afraid of voicing my opinion whether that be in writing or in person. Despite the many things I have learned about myself throughout this course, I still have yet to figure out my purpose in life and what I stand for.