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Experimenting with Place-Based Curriculum: Postcards from Home and Away

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Robin Reid, Thompson Rivers University, Canada

Canadian campuses are increasingly internationalized places, due in part to institutional strategies for growth. Is there a gap between the rhetoric of internationalization, interculturalization and mobilization at the institutional level and the students lived experiences on our campuses? How do we build community that gives meaning to the places where students live and learn?

A connection to place—either the place where the students are now or the places they have come from—has particular relevance to discussions of globalization, localization and community. Drawing on the work of David Gruenewald, the distinction can be made between actually *inhabiting* a place where we are likely to build relationships and merely *residing* in place, where we are less likely to invest time or energy or ultimately care about that place.

What are the potentials of tourism education to activate change in the way we engage with each other and the landscapes we inhabit, even for a brief time? Place is always storied and as tourism practitioners we are in a privileged position of being able to mediate and construct narratives of place. But what happens when the students are empowered to talk about their relationships with place, both home and away from home? Place-based curriculum not only gives meaning to the places where we teach and learn, it also encourages students to engage with each other and ground tourism curriculum through narratives of place that students create, connect with and understand.

In an effort to explore how place-based curriculum could increase student engagement and give meaning to “place,” the Pedagogy of Place Group at Thompson Rivers University developed a series of “postcards from home” assignments that were incorporated into TRU courses over the 2012/2013 academic year. In the first half of this interactive session, examples of the postcard assignment implemented at TRU will be shared with participants. In the second half of this session, participants will be invited to brainstorm possible place based assignments that could be used across disciplines to mediate and construct student narratives of place.