

Introduction to the Proceedings of the 10th annual TRU Undergraduate & Innovation Conference

The common thread that unites the rich variety of submissions in these proceedings of the 10th TRU Undergraduate & Innovation Conference could be expressed as “exploring our world from microcosm to spiritual connection.” On this path of exploration, we encounter sub-themes such as chemical analysis, the evils of war, the quest for justice, indigenous issues, the student experience, and finally, the spiritual and cultural roots which bind us to our world. The papers could be seen to progress through these themes collectively, yet each individual presentation is also, in its own way, a journey from the microcosmic to the spiritual.

Devin Chattu, Riley Endean, and Kevin Cooley set the microcosmic stage by examining various chemical substances that impact our daily lives. Devin Chattu enquires into the occurrence of Triclosan, a commonly used antibacterial, in places where it might have unintended environmental impacts. Riley Endean seeks to bring a nuclear magnetic resonance technique within reach of undergraduate chemistry students, and Kevin Cooley explores improved ways to analyze the cooking oils humans use for nourishment the world over.

But another element calls our attention the world over: war. Tyler Pineau and Eric Maher address this pervasive evil, raising our awareness by examining the too-often-neglected story of women in war (Pineau) and bringing to light facts about the resurgence of mercenaries in today’s military conflicts (Maher).

This focus on strife and how we deal with it carries over into the submission of Rachel Lepage and Kirsten Roche, as well as that of Jennifer Friend, who respectively shed light upon the plight of transgender sex workers in B.C. and enquire into fairer justice practices in cases of gendered violence in indigenous communities. The roots of these inequalities are further examined by Nicole Vance in her analysis of Janet Campbell Hale’s *Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter*.

The quest for a better world circles back to the microcosm of the university campus, with three papers that explore the student experience. Debra Andrews, a 10-year veteran of the TRU Undergraduate & Innovation Conference, draws attention to the connection between undergraduate research and student engagement, while Felicia Girouard enquires into the motivations underlying student volunteer activities. Meena Balachandran's research offers a student perspective on effective feedback techniques for improving ESL writing.

Completing the circle of reflection from the concrete to the spiritual, from the broad to the personal, are three submissions that examine the intimate ways in which we find connection with our world—or indeed our worlds. Leif Douglass journeys back to his childhood home to find a very different “Applespring”, while Ariel Little explores how food connects us to our heritage. Jason Charlie's reminiscence of a children's powwow leads to reflections about ways of knowing that reach deeply into his culture and traditions.

Many of the papers in this publication cross over between the sub-themes identified here. Riley Endean is are working to provide a heightened student experience for chemistry majors—a goal that Debbie Andrews would share. Jason Charlie's reflections tie in with the indigenous issues explored by Nicole Vance and Jennifer Friend. And the quest for justice--in both peace and war--pervades many of these papers. Thus, though richly varied, the submissions in these proceedings offer common threads of reflection that remind us of our interconnectedness with each other and with our world. Congratulations are due to the researchers whose work is presented here as part of a rapidly growing tradition of undergraduate research excellence at Thompson Rivers University.