

BACKGROUND: YouthUnited@UWinnipeg Inner City Work/Study Experimental Course Synopsis

Inner City Work/Study is an experiential learning course that combines a third year, six-credit hour course with practical learning in a community-based non-profit setting. The course is the anchor component of YouthUnited@Winnipeg, a two-year pilot project funded by the City of Winnipeg. Selected students engage in an intensive 15-week program offered from May 3 to August 31st. Students engage in paid work 28 hours per week in a community organization as part of the program.

Twenty UWinnipeg students from both the inner-city and suburban neighbourhoods are enrolled in the intensive, 15-week work/study experience. The central theme of the program is reconciliation, drawing on the Calls to Action set out in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) report. The TRC highlights the importance of youth engagement in the process of reconciliation. YouthUnited@Winnipeg brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous university students to work and learn in Winnipeg's inner-city and North End communities, to help dispel the misperceptions about the inner-city and North End that continue to create an unhealthy divide in our city, a divide that contributes to the perpetuation of racism.

Students will work four days per week with an inner-city community-based organization to expose them to community-led strategies that are effective in creating positive change.

Aligned with the themes of reconciliation, and breaking barriers and building bridges, students will learn about our challenges and various ways that we can respond. They will be introduced to relevant theories and practices including theories explaining intergenerational, geographically concentrated poverty, urban and neighbourhood development, and community practice theories. They will learn about strategies centered on citizen mobilization, engagement and empowerment, and multi-sectoral collaboration. Most importantly, students will learn to connect these theories with their work in the inner-city, using strategies and tools that can improve communities from within as well as building bridges across the divides.

YouthUnited@Winnipeg will conclude with an all-day student conference to be held in mid-September at Merchants Corner. The student-led conference will be open to community members, UWinnipeg faculty and students, and inner-city high school students, so that they and others who are interested can learn about the YouthUnited@Winnipeg summer work/study program, and about the practice of reconciliation in Winnipeg's inner-city and North End communities.

The Youth United course has been developed by Dr. Shauna MacKinnon, associate professor, Urban and Inner-City Studies, UWinnipeg. Dr. MacKinnon has an intimate knowledge of Winnipeg's inner city, and has published widely on various aspects of Winnipeg's inner city. The program is funded by the City of Winnipeg.

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Urban and Inner-City Studies is an interdisciplinary major concerned with the examination of the city as a dynamic environment. Our unique location on Selkirk Avenue serves as a gateway for North End residents to enter UWinnipeg and as a place for the larger UWinnipeg student body to connect to and learn from the North End community. The program combines a traditional urban studies focus with courses that examine various aspects of the inner-city, such as the urban Indigenous experience, the immigrant and refugee experience, and the role of women.

Find out more at: <http://uwinnipeg.ca/urban-inner-city-studies/index.html>