ENVS 1200.06: Taking Action – Engaging People and the Environment

Assignment 2: A Campus Tour Reflection – Manifestations and Challenges of Dominant Stories on the York University Campus

Due date: 2 November 2017

A central feature in ENVS 1200 is the use of stories or narratives. Thomas King has taught us about two radically different creation stories, a Christian one represented by Genesis and a First Nations one illustrated by Sky Woman. William Cronon has instructed us that the history of the Dustbowl on the Prairies in the 1930s looks different depending on who tells the story. Storytellers of the Dustbowl select different plots, beginnings, middles, and ends, include and exclude specific actors, and use declensionist (moving from good to bad), progressive (moving from bad to good), and New Deal (moving from good to bad to good with the help of government experts) narratives. Meanwhile, Cronon points out that these narratives ignore any mention of First Nations peoples, peoples who have their own stories to tell. The campus tour has similarly tried to convey that there are different stories to tell, conversations to be had, and solutions to be sought, about everyday features and issues on the campus, such as those related to indigenous peoples’ presence on campus (the Tipi and the House of Great Peace), the provision of student, faculty and staff security (the safety phone at Central Square), the protection of native species (the HNES Native Species Garden), the management of a woodlot (the Michael Boyer Woodlot), and the accommodation of public demonstrations (Vari Hall). Professor Sandberg also lectured about the history of the planning of the campus generally and stormwater management specifically (Stong Pond).

For your campus tour write-up, use the course readings, the lectures on the neoliberal university and the York campus, the Alternative Campus Tour website, other relevant literature, your own experience, the site for which you were a tour guide, other sites from the campus tour, and sites on campus that you come up with yourself to illustrate the presence of different and competing stories on the campus. Tell us how dominant stories are manifested and challenged. Tell us how these stories may inspire and inform different types of action. It is up to you how to choose and balance the sources and the coverage of various concepts and issues in your reflection. The essay should be between 800-1000 words and be properly referenced in APA format.

Grading rubric (15%)

Ability to articulate and contrast different stories about the campus 5%

Quality of empirical support 3%

Ability to be innovative, analytical and move beyond description 2%

Quality of writing (grammar and spelling) 3%

Relevance of references 1%

Accuracy in referencing 1%