

Choose Your Own Campus
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CHOOSE YOUR OWN CAMPUS – Project Write-up

CONCEPT

Inspired by similar pieces written by UBC Creative Writing Students and produced/installed by the Vancouver Public Space Network, the Choose Your Own Campus (CYOC) installation is a “Choose Your Own Adventure” style story consisting of twenty-two short chapters each mounted at a unique location on campus. Readers of the story begin their adventure at a designated “START” location (installed in front of the UBC bookstore), and are directed to the various chapters around campus (dependent on the choices they make).

INSTALLATIONS

Each of the twenty-two chapters has been printed on a metal sign made from recycled/re-purposed highway signs. These chapter signs have been cut to approximately the size of a parking enforcement sign, and installed around campus, generally on lightpoles (with a few exceptions).

The creative component of each sign is one chapter of text (between approximately 150 and 400 words). The story launches from an initial narrative point of seeking friends/relationships on campus and progresses down various intersecting story paths.

Each install site includes standard header text providing a brief summary of the project (and directing readers to the first installment), and, depending on the chapter, either directions to the next chapter of the story or notification that the reader has reached a dead end.

OBJECTIVES

This project had three major objectives:

- 1) *Showing off campus, and fostering campus community*

This objective was twofold. Numerous people involved in the development stage of this project related how they have experienced a tendency to isolate themselves in their own corner of campus. This was further confirmed by my own experience and that of other creative writing MFA

students, who tend to trod a path between the bus loop and Buchanan buildings and then back again, without experiencing much of campus.

In and of this, I wanted to highlight some of the major attractions present on UBC campus. CYOC chapters are located near the Nitobe Memorial Garden, Beaty Biodiversity Museum, and First Nations Longhouse, to name a few. I also wanted to spread chapters out, not permitting readers to limit themselves to one physical area of campus. Chapters are spread from as far northwest as the Asian Centre to as far southeast as the Woodward Instructional Resources Centre, and dispersed in between.

2) Getting UBC citizens to look at campus afresh

While searching for potential install sites, I found I was repeatedly surprised by the hidden parts of campus just slightly off the beaten path: gardens and benches and plaques which a person could walk within twenty feet of and never register as even existing. I wanted to highlight some of this campus history and geography that a person could otherwise very likely miss.

Green spaces by the Neville Scarfe and Geography buildings fall near but not on main pedestrian paths, and would not normally be visited unless needing to enter that building, yet offer immediate respites from the busy-ness of campus. The chapter near the Buchanan buildings mentions an old plaque which has been swallowed up by the tree it dedicates. A chapter on Main Mall and Memorial Road highlights an art installation nearby. Each of these chapters was written with the hope that readers would look with fresh insight at a campus they thought they already knew.

3) Bring creative writing to other parts of campus

Visual art is quite common to see and interact with, but it is somewhat rarer to interact with a literary installation. Part of this project was an attempt to bring literary installations to various portions of campus. Additionally: art is often done for other artists (ie. theatre for theatre folks, writing for other writers, etc), and this sometimes exclude the general populace. The target

audience of this story was a student who has come to UBC to study and is feeling a bit out of place.

This target audience attempts to cross race, gender, and sexual orientation, and merely seeks to interact with those who are looking to find like minds at UBC.