Playwright and producer Sylvia Grills notes that *We without You* is not only a play, but also a public sociology event. This play uses true lived experience at the fore in order to address anti-racism, race, ethnicity, and gender and sexuality as they manifest in individual encounters with the rainbow community. Based on their fieldwork, Sylvia created five composite characters that are in conversation with and at times against each other. Their stories highlight real tensions and celebrations that exist in queer politics and queer life. I had the pleasure of sitting down with Sylvia in order to learn more.

**TA:** At the time of writing *We without You* has already had a performance in Toronto. Congratulations! How have audiences responded so far? Have you been surprised? Tell us about that.

**SG:** Our audience in Toronto responded really positively! A few people said the performance was heavy but that *We without You* tells real stories that reflected their own lives. There was nothing really surprising, but the comments that focused on theater production rather than the content were interesting. Presenting research findings through a theater performance enabled people to engage with my work on a personal level.

**TA:** As academics we tend to use the experiences of people as mere objects of analysis in order to tell greater stories about society (what it does, what it ought to do, who it serves, etc.) What do you think gets lost here in our attempts for 'objective' research? How does *We without You* fill these gaps?

**SG:** I usually rely on context-sensitive qualitative methods. I like semi-structured interviews, material feminisms, anti-racism and intersectional queer theory because they are frameworks and methods that situate me within the research. I think trying to be objective can remove peoples’ experiences from research, which is a big part of the social. When we do research we are not often able to share our work directly with people we worked with or see how our findings might be used. The play has been a great way to combine situated knowledges and people’s lived experiences with research and community engagement.

**TA:** Was it difficult to create these composite characters based on your fieldwork?

**SG:** It was difficult, but looking for commonalities in responses helped me analyze my data. The lines had to work together as though they came from one person. I revised the script many times! I was unable to cast people in two different roles, one for an Indigenous actor and one for a Middle Eastern man because of actor availability issues. There are some important stories that aren’t represented. However, the racial and ethnic identities of the characters are central to their experiences in the rainbow community and those identities were important in casting decisions.

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**Reviews:** “Absolutely amazing!” “I learned a lot about the rainbow community.” “It helps to know I’m not alone.” “Fascinating and path-breaking.” “Thanks for making this show happen!”
We without You – A Play, a Project, a Phenomenon… (cont’d)

Interview with Playwright & Producer Sylvia Grills by Tyler Anderson

TA: In appeals to universalist politics, you often hear more sentimental language about how society needs to do away with labels. How we’d all benefit from seeing one another as ‘people’ first, and people in boxes second. What would you, or even the characters in this show, say about that?

SG: In We without You we talk a lot about how labels are both confining and liberating. I think labeling can help people articulate their sense of self and sometimes that self is stable. However, we should try to remember that the words we use to describe ourselves can shift in relation to social contexts and how we understand ourselves. One of the issues we address in We without You is that our rainbow communities could be more accepting of sexual and gender fluidity and the different ways people describe themselves.

TA: Thanks so much for spending time with us today, Sylvia. One more question to leave us with. If you had one hope for how this show is received/a reason for why people absolutely need to see it, what would that be?

SG: I would like people to understand that the opinions and experiences in We without You are real and they say a lot about our communities. People should see the play because it might give them a few things to reflect on and it has already helped some audience members feel seen, heard, and appreciated.

QSEC’s New Outreach, Logo & Facebook Page

Commentary by Carrick Chatham Irwin, Undergraduate, Sociology

As the Queen’s Sociology Equity Committee (QSEC) broadens its horizons by reaching out to the general community about issues of equity, diversity and inclusion, it was important for us to have a logo that represented our community involvement. While the QSEC began over 10 years ago, many still do not know about it or its purpose. To address some of these challenges, the QSEC wants to engage with the campus community in a new way. A new logo, a new Facebook page (created by Leah Riley) and a dedicated social media coordinator will help the QSEC develop its community-based outreach.

I’m the designer of the logo. I chose the purple colour in the logo because I felt it to be disarming and associated with compassion and empathy. While the colours for the words ‘equity, diversity, inclusion’ were chosen at random, they represent the diversity of cultures, religions and ethnic backgrounds of the people who are not only a part of our committee but of our community. The blue background with the map of the world is meant to convey a sense of unity; we may be local in our scope at Queen’s University but our cause is global. The decisions we make as students and faculty here at Queen’s should be seen as part of a global struggle for peace, justice and equity.
It is with great honour that we were invited to attend the first meeting of the Kahswenhtha Indigenous Knowledge Initiative (KIKI) for the 2018/2019 academic year. The meeting was attended by a diverse range of people both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, all with unique reasons for being there. There were educators wanting to create inclusive curriculums, individuals wanting to build their own knowledge, as well as individuals interested in sharing their own learning with others. KIKI runs in partnership with the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives at Queen’s University. The Initiative’s mission statement places emphasis on “meaningful change and building better relationships” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. This mission is supported by their overall goals to “… amplify the visibility of Indigenous communities and knowledges, raise awareness of Indigenous issues, and incorporate Indigenous ceremonies and practices into community events.”

This past academic year, KIKI partnered with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Principal’s Office to host “Leaves of Change: Reconciliation to ReconciliACTION” as part of the Principal’s annual summer barbecue. It was at this event where a Reconciliation Tree was created. Attendees were asked to write their thoughts about, and their hopes and dreams for reconciliation on a leaf. In the context of this activity, reconciliation means to restore relationships between Indigenous and the settler communities. KIKI hopes to reprise similar activities and collect these leaves on a monthly or yearly basis in order to assess progression and thoughts on reconciliation and Indigenous knowledge at Queen’s. They hope that individuals will commit to making meaningful change, as well as understanding the active responsibilities that we have in our own reconciliatory efforts.

The 20th Annual Symposium on Indigenous Knowledge: Understanding Treaties and Treaty Making occurred November 9th and 10th, 2018 at Queen’s University. This symposium took place during Treaty Recognition Week and focused on sharing knowledge and the ridding of misconceptions about treaties and treaty making. This event was free to attend, and was a great opportunity for students and faculty, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to learn in an environment that centred inclusivity and respect for Indigenous protocols.

Another recent event of interest to KIKI was the Negotiating Ownership and Control Workshop that took place on the 9th of November, 2018. The event sought to “foster a research training environment that is founded on ethical and responsible conduct of Indigenous research.” Topics of ownership and control were covered through Indigenous perspectives, and the event featured a keynote speaker, presentations, and group discussions.

KIKI is also working with social media to direct people to sources to learn more about their group and Indigenous culture, and spread the word about upcoming events. In the future, they hope to use their social media presence to find other groups on and off campus with whom to collaborate. They believe that combining research and knowledge with other groups will enhance their ability to spread knowledge and reach a wider audience.

Aligning with KIKI’s desire to spread knowledge about Indigenous issues as well as the interests of the educators who attended the meeting to incorporate Indigenous culture into their syllabi, Queen’s has hired Ian Fanning as the Educational Developer Indigenous Curriculum and Ways of Knowing. One of his tasks is to integrate informed Indigenous knowledge into curriculums.

If you are interested in getting involved with the Kahswenhtha Indigenous Knowledge Initiative then please visit or contact:

**Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre**

144 & 146 Barrie Street  
Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3J9  
E-mail kikiqueensu@gmail.com
"Queen’s University is situated on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territory." We often hear this acknowledgement, but what does it mean to you? It is important to acknowledge the history of the land on which the university is situated. It is an attempt to pay respect to the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee People past and present. However, just listening to the acknowledgement without pausing to reflect is hollow…at least for me…a descendant of colonial settlers.

To better understand Queen’s acknowledgement, I attended three Indigenous Curricula workshops in Summer 2018. These workshops were offered by the Queen’s Centre for Teaching and Learning, and developed by their new Indigenous Educational Developer, Dr. Ian Fanning. During these workshops, I met Judi Montgomery an Indigenous elder. Judi asked the attendees, “How does the ‘Land’ play a role in your daily life?” This was a difficult question for the workshop attendees to answer. Some responded with an environmentalist perspective, “It is important to save and protect the land from harm.” Other attendees responded, “I should take more time to consider and appreciate the land…stop and smell the roses.” Judi responded, “The ‘Land’ acts to give my life meaning” and she eluded that the Land is not a thing it is an active participant in people’s daily lives.

The ‘Land’ is an actor. Judi’s message resonated with me. As a person who uses a wheelchair for mobility, I am directly affected by the land. The accessible route on campus is usually twice as long as the direct route between point A and B. There are few flat areas on Queen’s campus. Most campus locations are either uphill or downhill which provides fun and challenges for wheelchair users. Riding in a manual wheelchair, you feel the thrill of speeding downhill, but also every slope change, bump and crack in your path. Cracks are especially hazardous because they can cause a wheelchair to tip over. The ‘Land’ determines the wheelchair user’s path. As result, students living with disabilities often pick longer routes across campus to avoid such hazards…things that most people do not even notice.

However, I do take the time to notice the land’s beauty and especially the old trees on campus. We tend to go about our day focusing on what we need to do, but we rarely consider how the ‘Land’ acts upon our lives. Without the acts of the ‘Land,’ we would not have food to eat, water to drink, air to breath or scenery to inspire our spirits. We cannot change what happened in the past to the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee people, but according to Dr. Fanning and Judi we can reflect on how the ‘Land’ is meaningful. When you hear the Queen’s Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee acknowledgement pause for a moment and consider how the ‘Land’ is an actor in your daily life. A small gesture that gives an Indigenous acknowledgement more meaning.