



Image Credit: Adam Donnelly / CFJC Today

OVERDOSE STORY MAPPING

By Dylana Kneeshaw

Research team behind Overdose in the Trades exhibit aims to build framework for drug awareness credential

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KAMLOOPS — Thompson Rivers University’s Trades and Technology building has a new display adorning the hallway, featuring stories — often untold — about the widespread impacts of substance use within the trades.

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“It’s a big problem,” says Jason Schapansky, who is one of the project’s researchers, linking the team to the trades with his expertise as an electrician and TRU instructor. “It’s something that we don’t talk about in the trades. We don’t talk about it at work. Bring it up in a classroom and the classroom stays silent. I brought it up this morning in a classroom, and the classroom stayed silent until I really drove them to start talking about it.”

The [Overdose in the Trades art exhibition](#) uses a process known as cultural story mapping to showcase the experiences of students and working professionals in the trades.

Participants were asked to depict their experiences with substance use and the overdose crisis in a visual medium, then interviewed by the research team about the experiences they had chosen to draw or display.

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Jays Matonovich is an undergraduate student in the Arts faculty and joined the research team for this exhibition. Speaking with *CFJC* from the halls of TRU’s Trades building, Matonovich says her knowledge about the overdose crisis has grown after getting involved in this work.

“Right now, we’re mapping the impact of the drug overdose crisis and how it’s impacting people in trades. Originally, it was focused on men in trades, so looking at just their perspective, and now we’re trying to look at it from a woman’s perspective, as everyone’s voice matters.”

Powerful images convey the stories of people who fall within a demographic impacted more than others by drug toxicity and opioid use.

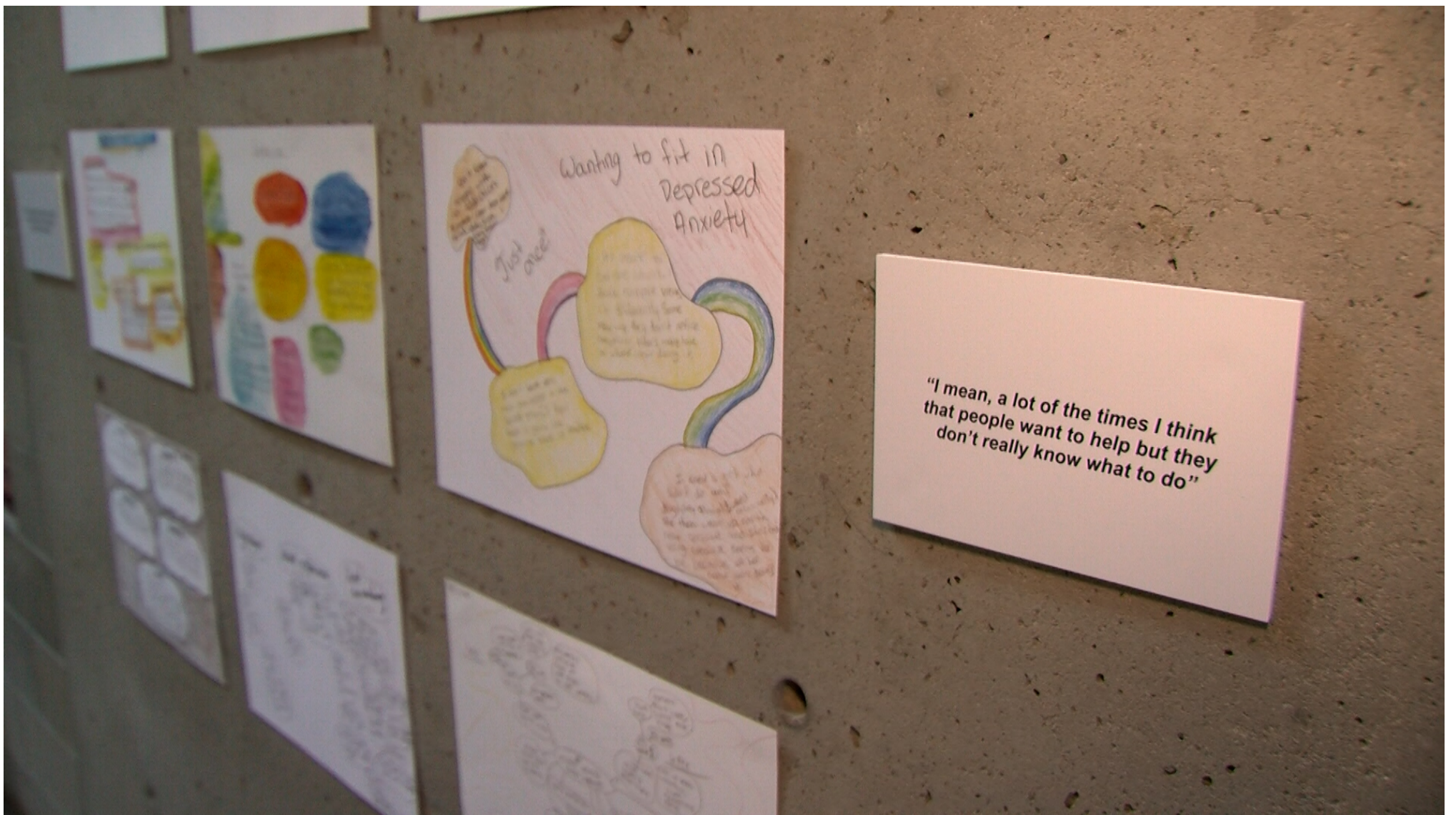


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Lana Fine is pursuing her Masters degree in the Human Rights and Social Justice program, and says her interest in the field made this project a perfect fit. Fine has previous job experience working directly with people who use substances.

"I was really surprised by the ability of the artwork that people were able to produce. What the different story maps were depicting was a little bit different than what I did expect and what comes out of just a drawing was incredible."

Principal investigator Dr. Will Garrett-Petts says cultural story mapping is a useful way to give people a platform to fully express an idea or experience.

"This privileges individual experiences and individual voices," he said.

Out of this collection, the research team aims to develop a micro-credential to incorporate into trades education and job training.

"That means that every year, 1,500 students who graduate from TRU will have had that kind of awareness training before they go out into the workplace," adds Garrett-Petts.

As someone who works directly with people out on job sites and in school, Schapansky is a big advocate for furthering the education aspect of the project.

"I want to not only bring it into the classrooms, but we've got a micro-credential that we're working on which I want to make as important as FoodSafe in a restaurant," he stresses. "I want to make it so that when you get a job on any site anywhere, that part of your training could be an online course on drug awareness, addiction and help."

This iteration of the display will only be set up for a few days, but there are plans to use portions of it at future trades shows and other events, all in hopes of informing future trades professionals and the public about the people who are affected.

"You talk to any one person individually and you will find that they have a story," adds Schapansky.

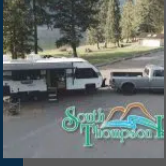
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