Group 1: Environmental Sustainability
The students on this project (Abigail Picyk, Maxyne Friesen and Corey Edwards) interviewed Rochelle Owen, a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology here at Guelph; Andrew Vincent, a Director of the Guelph Gun and Rod Club; and Latitia Scarr, Spokesperson for the Coalition of Drug Control. They learned that UBC has recently constructed a building, the Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability, that actually reduces the amount of energy used on campus. Dalhousie is constructing buildings with green roofs and carrying out retrofits of older buildings. It also has a Student Sustainability Office that runs numerous Green events on campus including the residence-based Eco-Olympics. The University of Guelph, has also done extensive retrofits and is exploring the possibility of alternative energy sources. They conclude that universities are in a unique position to push forward environmental sustainability by accessing the enthusiasm of students, while also drawing on the extensive research done at universities on these issues.

Group 2: Immigration
The students on this project (Bonnie Nethery and Kaylee Press) asked recent immigrants to Canada, and the children of immigrants to Canada, what the immigration experience had been like for their families. People spoke about what they liked about Canada (the freedom, the politeness of Canadians), and what they didn’t like (adjusting to a new culture was sometimes difficult, getting their schooling and credentials recognized could be hard, and of course, not everyone was a big fan of the weather!) They concluded that while the adjustment to Canada could be difficult, the immigrants they spoke to were happy with their decision to immigrate. A second project on this theme, by Steven Shory, interviewed Guelph professor Edward Koning, about his work on the immigrant experience in Canada, Sweden and the Netherlands. Koning argues that Canada has done a better job than the two European countries in making immigrants feel welcome, although he also pointed out that recent policy changes have made Canada less welcoming to refugees.

Group 3: Gun Control
The students on this project (Adam Currie, Lucas Zarnett and Harris Shenstone) interviewed Bill O’Grady, a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology here at Guelph; Andrew Vincent, a Director of the Guelph Gun and Rod Club; and Latitia Scarr, Spokesperson for the Coalition of Drug Control. O’Grady spoke about the social response to the killing of Jordan Manners in Toronto in 2008, and the media response to school shootings. At the Guelph Gun and Rod Club, Vincent argued that the long-gun registry did very little to cut down on gun-related violence, while Scarr argued that the number of people killed by guns dropped substantially after the long-gun registry was introduced. The students themselves disagreed on what Canadian policy should be: Lucas and Harris argued that strict guns laws kept guns out of the hands of criminals, while Adam was undecided, feeling that guns provided people with a way to protect themselves.

Group 4: University Tuition
The students on this project (Eli Cote, Sean Ryan and Daniel Hall) investigated the impact of the rising price of tuition on undergraduate students. Eli interviewed Guelph Professor Linda Mahood, who as both a teacher and a mother, expressed concern about the large amount of debt students were assuming, and argued that parents should be taking a more active stance on this issue. Dan interviewed Drew Garvie, Commissioner of Communications and Corporate Affairs at the CSA. Drew provided figures about how rapidly tuition had increased, and argued that education needs to be seen as a public good. Sean spoke to various students on campus to find out how they were paying their tuition fees. The students concluded that high tuition is placing an unfair burden on their generation and discouraged people from pursuing higher education.

Group 5: Teacher’s Strike
The students on this project (Lauren Akey, Sophie Armstrong and Brittany Vanword) interviewed high school and elementary students and teachers to find out how they felt about Bill 115 (the government legislation which prohibited teachers from striking and cut their sick days), and the subsequent decision by public school teachers to stop doing extracurricular activities. They heard from people on both sides of the issue, and the students themselves were left with mixed feelings about the job action: Sophie came down strongly on the side of the teachers, as she felt that their rights had been unfairly taken away by Bill 115, but Lauren and Brittany were more concerned about the students whose enjoyment of school was lessened by the fact that they could not engage in clubs and sports.

Group 6: First Nations Issues
The students on this project (Samantha Roth, Tate Rapoport, and Michael Tweedley) explored the challenges and opportunities facing First Nations people in Canada. Tate interviewed Cara Wehkamp, the manager of the Aboriginal Resource Centre at Guelph, who spoke out the difficulties First Nations students faced in acquiring a top-rate education and discussed the sometimes dismal living conditions that people faced living on reserves. Samantha interviewed Catherine Carstairs on the history of the treaties, the Indian Act and residential schools. Michael spoke to aboriginal students about their experiences. They hoped that their interviews cast light on the role the government has played in creating difficult circumstances for many aboriginal people.

Being Canadian examined contemporary Canadian political issues. The final project was a radio documentary, produced in collaboration with the excellent folks at CFRU – Kelly Jones, Peter Bradley and Bryan Webb.