

PHOTOVOICE-A TOOL FOR EMPOWERMENT

What is Photovoice?

- A participatory research method where individuals use photography to capture their experiences and share their stories
- It empowers participants to document and communicate their perspectives through images and accompanying narratives

Why is this important for newcomers to Canada?

- Photography and storytelling are valued recreation activities and offer newcomers to Canada the chance to build a sense of belonging and connection by focusing attention on everyday enjoyable activities while also providing the opportunity to learn and share across cultures. (Lauckner et al.)
- One of the main teachings of Ted Aoki, found in Curriculum in a New Key, is the idea of "curriculum-as-lived" (Aoki, 2004).
- Photovoice connects with curriculum-as-lived:
 - A focus on real world experiences, interactions, and cultural contexts in learning
 - Incorporates students' personal histories, backgrounds and realities
 - Tasks are more meaningful and connect to their unique needs

Lived Curriculum Use in Adult EAL Classrooms

In an adult English as an additional language (EAL) classroom, photovoice can be a powerful tool to:

- **Enhance Language Skills:** Encourage students to describe their photos and share their stories, improving their speaking, writing, and vocabulary.
- **Promote Cultural Exchange:** Allow students to showcase their backgrounds and experiences, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures.
- **Boost Confidence:** Empower learners by giving them a voice and a platform to share their unique perspectives.
- **Encourage Collaboration:** Facilitate group discussions and projects, building a supportive learning community.

Photovoice can transform the EAL classroom into a dynamic and inclusive space where adult learners engage deeply with both language and their own lived experiences.

Example from a LINC class



Each year this LINC class participates in the Moose Hide Campaign Walk against violence. They recorded their reflections of the experience with photovoice.



This LINC class photovoice project focused on individual level intervention - photovoice which promotes change within the participants themselves (Strack et al.)

Social Ecological Model

Class Observations

When photovoice activities were used with LINC 5 students on class field trips:

- Students became more engaged in their surroundings
- Students sought to take images that stood out and held meaning for them
- Though students were asked to take pictures of things and not people, many could not help but include each other in the shots
- When posting their best photos, some students added additional images from the web to enhance their ideas
- When writing their reflections, many students commented on not only how the field trip made them feel, but also on how certain aspects of the trip reminded them of their past experiences in their original countries

How has it been used with marginalized groups?

Hope In Shadows Calendar Project

- **Engagement:** Up to 150 community members from Downtown Eastside (DTES) participate in a photo contest.
- **Materials:** Participants receive a theme, disposable camera, and training on obtaining consent from photo subjects.
- **Activity:** They take photos over 5 days, capturing their daily lives.
- **Purpose:**
 - **Challenge Stereotypes:** Despite poverty and marginalization, the media often overlooks the full story of these communities.
 - **Showcase True Essence:** Hope in Shadows displays photos that highlight the real, positive aspects of marginalized communities with care and love.
 - **Empowerment:** Participants reclaim their image by sharing their authentic experiences through photography.

The Photovoice Project

- The Photovoice Project focuses on supporting students' holistic well-being—emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically.
- It highlights the importance of student voice, self-worth, and creating safe environments for them to express themselves.
- Indigenous students were invited to share their perspectives on health and well-being through photos.
- The project aims to give students a platform to explore their identity, culture, and mental health, empowering them to express their unique experiences and shape their future confidently.

Resources

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- Socio-ecological Model (Adapted from: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, www.healthypeople.gov/2020/law-and-healthpolicy-social-ecological-model-graphic)

Authors

Jo-Ann Dykstra, LINC Coordinator
Tiffany Kearns, LINC PBLA Lead

Affiliation

School District 43, Coquitlam BC,
Continuing Education

