

# Promoting Social and Civic Participation of Seniors Through a Digital Storytelling Project

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# Digital Storytelling

- An innovative story telling process which allows the storyteller to create a multimedia 2-3 minute video using narrative, photographs, video, music and sound effects
- This method has been used in a variety of contexts with storytellers of all ages
- Specific process/method for creating Digital Stories developed by the Centre for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California ([www.storycenter.org](http://www.storycenter.org))



# Yu Han's Story

# “Stories of Home”

- Project: a collaborative community development initiative which brought together older adults, service providers who serve culturally diverse older adults, university faculty and students in Calgary, Canada
- Challenge: Calgary is a demographically young city and the voices of older adults and their experiences/ issues are not often heard
- Goal: to promote awareness through Digital Stories of seniors' experiences/ issues related to “home”

# Stories of Home Project

- Project committee (7 older adults, 5 service providers & 2 faculty members) met every two to four weeks for a year
- Four components: (1) intergenerational workshop/course, (2) workshop with older adults assisting others, (3) stories created in older adults' homes, and (4) a public showing of 16 stories at a final event
- Diversity was a focus of recruitment: age (60-90 years), gender (6 males & 10 females) and culture (China 2, Korea 1, Philippines 1, Aboriginal Canadian 1)

# Social Participation

- Older adults were committee members planning a project and storytellers creating stories within a social context
- Opportunity for older adults to engage with each other and committee members from seniors serving agencies, the City and the University
- 11/16 stories were created in a group setting
- Outcomes: opportunities to collaborate, share ideas, make new connections, and learn about/respect diversity

# Social Participation

- Intergenerational connection of older adults with students
  - 7 older adults engaged with 8 undergraduate and graduate Faculty of Social Work students during a 3 day Digital Storytelling workshop/course
  - they all enjoyed working together during the storytelling workshop/course
  - the workshop provided opportunities to learn from and about each other
  - they wanted more time to get to know each other



# Civic Participation

- Volunteerism
  - 7 older adults volunteered their time over one year to develop the project
  - they comprised half of the committee and were vitally involved in all stages of the project
  - they also wanted to share what they learned with other older adults
  - those who had created their stories in an intergenerational setting then volunteered to share their learnings and help other older adults create stories in a second workshop
  - positive experience may promote further volunteerism



# Civic Participation

- Advocacy
  - Asked storytellers how will it help promote awareness?
    - sharing history, experiences and cultures; identifying issues specific to seniors; promoting age as a sense of inspiration rather than decline
  - Held a public viewing of the stories
  - Team has presented at various conferences
  - Project has been on a Chinese Canadian TV news channel and written about in the Calgary Herald newspaper
  - Some stories will be on partner agency website for public access
  - Empowerment of older adults involved in the project
  - May promote further advocacy work



# Summary

- project addresses two WHO Age-Friendly City subthemes: social participation and civic engagement
- provided an opportunity for older adults to participate in a social and educational activity which fostered connections between older adults, service providers and younger generation
- also provided volunteer opportunities for older adults to take on leaderships roles and engage in advocacy for older adult issues



# Stories of Home Project Partners

- Funded by New Horizons for Seniors, HRSDC, Government of Canada
- Partnership between
  - Calgary Family Services
  - LinkAGES
  - Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary
  - City of Calgary, Senior Services Division
  - Older adult committee members & storytellers
  - Faculty of Social Work students



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