Engaging Children in Neighbourhood Planning Informs Prioritized Investment in a Local Play Space to Increase Access to Play

Laura Ryan, MSW *Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton*
Sharon Mackinnon, BNSc RN PHN *City of Hamilton*
Janet Loebach, PhD *Thrive Design Consulting*

IPA World Conference 2017
Land Acknowledgement

- We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the Treaty 7 territory and the traditional territory of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Nakoda (Stoney), and Tsuut'ina.
- We would also like to acknowledge that the land which we will be talking about today, is the traditional territory of the Haudensaunee and Anishnaabeg. The territory is the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is directly adjacent to Haldimand Treaty territory.
I believe in statehood, countryhood, cityhood and neighborhood!
Photovoice

“Photovoice is a participatory action research strategy which can contribute to youth mobilization for community change”

Wang, 2006, p. 147
Goals of Photovoice

1) to enable people to record and reflect on strengths and concerns

2) to promote critical group discussion

3) to influence change makers
Who was involved

- Public Health Services and Community & Emergency Services
- Social Planning & Research Council
- McMaster University School of Nursing
- 2 Elementary Schools
- Montcalm Community House
- 1 Community Developer and 1 Public Health Nurse
- 8 McMaster Nursing students
- ~45 participants (age 4-14 years)
Framework: Wang’s Photovoice Process

1. Select and recruit a target audience of policy makers or community leaders.
2. Recruit a group of Photovoice participants.
3. Introduce the Photovoice methodology to participants, and facilitate group discussion about cameras, power and ethics.
4. Obtain informed consent.
5. Pose initial themes for taking pictures.
6. Distribute cameras to participants and review how to use the camera.
7. Provide time for participants to take pictures.
8. Meet to discuss photographs and identify themes.
9. Plan with participants a format to share photographs and stories with policy makers or community leaders.

Process

• Mapped assets and needs
• Took photos and identified themes
• Did a visioning exercise
• Identified and prioritized action items
• Shared photos and stories with decision makers and community
• Ideas to action
Improve traffic around schools

“Someone slipped and was nearly hit but most people drive cautiously because it is so busy. Because of all the traffic, a recent accident occurred. It happened outside of Westwood Elementary School while a mother was dropping off her child. A 6-year old boy was hit and stuck between 2 cars.” Megan, 12.
“Lots of green trees”

“Nature is beautiful. Parks attract wildlife”
Crime Happens Here

“I saw people doing drugs in this forest.”
Outcomes

• Knowledge transfer, participants shared with:
  ▪ Student peers; school staff; neighbourhood leaders; parents/caregivers; elected officials & civil service

• Leadership development:
  ▪ Advocacy skills for participants
  ▪ Mentorship, health promotion and SDOH for nursing students
Presented a funding opportunity (consultation and capital)

Opportunity to leverage other resources: funding; partners; relevant initiatives; data from Photovoice.

Allowed for finding out what the community wanted in Captain Cornelius Park: it brought out our dreamers and our protectors.
Rolston Youth Engagement Strategy

- Children & youth one of the largest users of community green spaces & parks

- Before making improvements to the park → need to understand needs & activities of youth:
  - how and why they use (or don’t use) the forest park
  - changes that would most increase their usage
  - changes that would improve their experience of the park

- Engaging youth in decision-making can also be a powerful stewardship tool
Youth Engagement Workshops

• Workshops with 4 neighbourhood schools → 100+ students, Grades 2-8

• Workshop Structure
  a. Group discussions to understand their current use and experience (positive & negative)
  b. Forest Mapping Exercise → positioned youth as co-researchers
  c. Big Idea Blitz

• Results from activities were shared back with the Community Advisory Group & Consulting Team
How do Rolston youth feel about the forest? Experience it?

on the positive side …

- feels peaceful; quiet
- great shortcut
- fun to explore
- provides shelter & shade
- experience of nature
How do Rolston youth feel about the forest? Experience it?

but on the negative side …

- garbage & graffiti feels uncomfortable, unsafe
- older teens make us uncomfortable
- angry that others don't care for the forest
- rumours about bad things happening in the forest → drugs, drinking, smoking, fires
- can get lost, disoriented easily
- uneven, rocky, narrow paths can make it difficult to walk, bike
Forest Mapping Exercise

- Youth as co-researchers; helping to understand how the forest is currently used by community

- Small groups each investigated & mapped uses of the forest, as well as assets & challenges posed by the current environment; developed own legend based on priority issues
Forest Mapping Exercise

- Exercises also designed to allow youth to investigate possibilities for positive experiences & desirable activities ➔ *photo array of ideas to consider*
Big Idea Blitz

• Youth were challenged to consider 2 ‘Big Ideas’ for changing or improving the Forest → 1 for their age group, 1 for other community user group

• Each group had 20 minutes to sketch out their ‘Big Ideas’ on a large poster
Big Idea Blitz

• Groups then took turns delivering a 1 minute ‘Blitz Pitch’ to their peers

• Mapping findings and ideas discussed as a large group
Rolston youth most want to see …

spaces for eating with family & friends
more places to sit

clearer, wider, smoother, safer trails
  things to climb... trees, rocks, walls, logs, pyramid
  natural play huts, forts, or dens
  bike paths, park and ramps
  garbage/recycling receptacles & signage
  water features ... a pond, a stream, a waterfall
  play area with a nature theme (eg jumping stumps)
  swings and ladders hanging from the trees
  more small, open spaces or clearings
  more defined pathway
  treehouses or platforms, with bridges between trees
more flower and food gardens
  obstacle, ropes or parkour courses
  large group seating or amphitheatre
  signs to help orient to paths, exits
  art and sculpture
They considered needs of others in the community...

- play forts or treehouses, with seats nearby
- places for picnics; more places to sit
- orchard or community gardens
- smoother paths for strollers, walkers
- natural climbing structures; tire swings from trees

families, parents & younger kids

- smoother, wider paths for walking
- more places to sit and to rest along paths
- navigational signs
- signs with historical & other info about the forest
- flowers along trail edges; gardens

older adults or seniors
What do Rolston youth envision for the Forest?
Take-Aways
Youth are thoughtful and sophisticated, and under estimated.

“Sometimes the elderly people complain about the noisy Westmount High School students going to [Westmount Recreation Centre] to eat their lunch or use the recreation facilities.” Lasha, 12.
Take-Aways

1. Youth are thoughtful and sophisticated, and under estimated.
2. Caregiver’s for families with complex vulnerabilities support their children’s successes.
3. Credibility from nursing as a profession
   https://insightswest.com/news/nurses-doctors-and-scientists-are-canadas-most-respected-professionals/
4. Credibility of adult youth for adolescent youth
5. Purposive recruitment with community allies helped sustain participation
6. Get their hands dirty! Value of methods that get kids directly into the study environment
7. Permissions to share data and art → Commit to using their work to make the changes that they want, and share, share, share with change makers!
8. Celebrate
9. Relationships & partnerships drive opportunities
10. Youth leadership
Celebrate!
Relationships and partnerships drive opportunity
Youth Leadership

• Co-facilitation with teams of 4-5 students from the McMaster University School of Nursing.
• Reporting back to community (and blowing their minds!)
  o Schools
  o Community
  o City Council
  o Passive shows schools
  o Gallery shows at arts festival
• Demonstrating community leadership to their families
• Assisted with additional projects
  o Participants contributed to development of youth leadership course
  o Youth data used to inform development of capital projects, and participated in follow up consultation
    • AODA compliant hiking trail
    • Community garden
“Initiative to Fund Captain Cornelius Path within the Rolston Neighbourhood”

“youth voice... resulted in a desire to improve...access”

$50 000 x 2 years
Resources

- **Photovoice Toolkit:**
  https://d3fpllf1m7bbt3.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/media/browser/2015-03-06/neighbourhoodactionstrategyphotovoice/toolkit.pdf

- **Photovoice: Through the Lens - A case study:**
  http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/youthengage/article/view/22134

- **Rolston Neighbourhood Action Plan:**
  https://d3fpllf1m7bbt3.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/media/browser/2016-04-29/rolston-neighbourhood-action-plan.pdf


- **Westview students at General Issues Committee, City of Hamilton:**
  

- **Motion available in Hamilton City Council agenda, May 10, 2017:**
  https://www.hamilton.ca/council-committee/council-committee-meetings/city-council