



## Sharing Local Knowledge through Pictures and Stories

### Background

This project helped researchers understand how residents of Bonnyville saw their community's built environment. This project looked at features in Bonnyville that helped or prevented people from being physically active and eating healthy food. All of the pictures for this project were taken in the summer of 2009.

### Pictures are Worth a Thousand Words!

How did the researchers do this project? They asked residents to take photos of their community. Then residents told researchers why those photos helped to describe physical activity and healthy eating in their community. This kind of project is called photovoice.

### The Photo-takers

Seven people participated in the project from Bonnyville. Participants were recruited through posters, e-mail and word-of-mouth by other community members. Of the seven photo-takers, six were female and one was male. Their ages ranged from 16 to 89. Researchers tried to ensure that all residents of Bonnyville had the chance to be a part of the project. Despite this, the group of photo-takers interviewed represents only a small range of community residents.



This part of the trail system, along Lakeshore Drive, is a place where I frequently go for walks. I see a lot of people there exercising, like bicycling, rollerblading, or moms with their children in those little carts. I think it is an important place for people in Bonnyville; the smooth surface, the nice view, the grass and the lake encourage people to go out and exercise.

There are two farmers markets in town, one on Saturday and the other on Tuesday, and a lot of people go to both. I think organic foods are becoming more popular with the younger people. The location and the parking are not as convenient for the vendors or customers at the Centennial Centre farmers market.





Many of our sidewalks are broken and uneven with cracks and rough spots. This makes it difficult for people with walkers or canes and may cause them to fall. This is a really bad curb.

## The Photo-takers' Journey

- (1) Each of the photo-takers met with the researcher one-on-one to talk about their community.
- (2) The photo-takers were provided with digital cameras and were shown how to use them.
- (3) The photo-takers were given two weeks to take pictures. The pictures helped them talk about opportunities and barriers to physical activity and healthy eating in their community.
- (4) The pictures were printed.
- (5) Each of the photo-takers met one-on-one with the researcher. During this time, the photo-takers told their stories about each picture.

## Bringing it All Together

After photo-takers shared their community stories, summaries were created for the top five pictures from every photo-taker. All of the photo-takers had the chance to review their summaries. These summaries were used to create a presentation and a summary report to share with community members and local decision-makers. Residents and researchers hope that the pictures and stories will help others gain insight into the Bonnyville community. The stories and photos in the summary report are shared with permission from the photo-takers.



The Centennial Centre is a big focus of the community; a lot of people use it. People old and young go there for the gym, walking track, trade shows, dances, and the farmers' market. NAIT and Portage College offer classes there as well. The Centre doesn't have very good signage from the road and I found their website information a bit limited.



## Overview of the Photo-takers' Stories

Bonnyville was generally perceived by the photo-takers as a natural resource service center for the surrounding region. The oil and gas boom over the past decade was said to have spurred on tremendous growth in residential and commercial development. This has been paralleled by an increase in the population.

Overall, photo-takers talked about a number of different things when describing their community. The key topics are highlighted below:

- community with a large immigrant population;
- good community trail system;
- Moose Lake, Lakeshore Drive and Jessie Lake are valuable community resources;
- local library a positive community feature;
- large number of recreation facilities;
- Centennial Centre a valuable community resource;
- lots of opportunities for unstructured free play;
- grocery stores provide access to healthy foods;
- locally grown food is valued;
- predominant car culture in the community;
- graffiti, vandalism, drugs and gambling a concern for residents;
- large number of areas to walk in the community, but maintenance a concern; and,
- limited selection of restaurants and fast food places that offer healthy choices.

The full stories are available in the summary report. The summary report can be found on the DVD included with this package.



This is a neighborhood, probably 30 to 40 years old, where there are no sidewalks on either side of the street. Everyone has to walk on the road: school children, delivery people, and seniors. I don't know why they didn't build a sidewalk there.



The skateboard park surprised me because I didn't know we had one in town. It is a really nice facility and good exercise for the boys. I didn't see any signage directing people to the park but word-of-mouth is one of the best advertisements for something like this.



## Thank You!

The researchers and community stakeholders would like to thank all of the photo-takers for sharing their stories. Project participants took all of the pictures in this document and the summary report.



The location is not significant, what this represents is our community's, and probably all rural towns', car mentality. We get into our cars to go everywhere, just because, and drive two blocks. It is just crazy. This is not good for the community's health.

This is some asparagus from a local U-Pick garden in the area. They attend the local farmers market as well as having signs out on the highway to promote their garden. There is a total difference in the taste of anything we can grow here compared to anything brought in.

