



Sharing Local Knowledge through Pictures and Stories

Background

This project helped researchers understand how residents of Medicine Hat and Redcliff saw their communities' built environment. This project looked at features in Medicine Hat and Redcliff 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. Residents then 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

Eight people participated in the project from Medicine Hat and Redcliff (four from Medicine Hat and four from Redcliff). Photo-takers were recruited through posters, e-mail and word-of-mouth by other community members. There were five female and three male photo-takers ranging in age from 15 to over 65. The researchers tried to make sure that all residents of Medicine Hat and Redcliff had the chance to be a part of the project. Despite this, the group of photo-takers interviewed represented only a small range of community residents.



This is a picture of a greenhouse, and I took it because there are a lot of them in Redcliff. You can go there and purchase vegetables very cheap. I had never accessed them directly before because I wasn't sure if I could. So I think that this sign helped because then I knew that I could just go in. It might be a concern that people don't know the process and don't know what to do, or maybe even that they sell to the public, and so don't access them.

I took this picture just to show that we don't have an actual bus system in Redcliff. If you don't have a vehicle, you don't qualify for special transit, can't afford a taxi, you are stuck in Redcliff. A bus would help me because I would be able to come into town, go to the gym if I needed to, go to a bigger grocery store if I needed to. You know, do those things that I maybe can't do within my own community.





This old bridge has an extremely narrow path which is quite scary when biking and there is a truck going about 80 or 90 kph inches away from you. There needs to be a designated pedestrian bridge across the South Saskatchewan River for cyclists and pedestrians. An ideal place would be from the Strathcona Park or Lions park over the Police Point Park, because this would facilitate cycling for transportation. Red Deer has three such bridges, Edmonton five, Lethbridge one, Calgary nine and more on the way. Medicine Hat none!

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 the summaries for their photos and provide input. These summaries were used (with permission from the photo-takers) 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 other community members gain insight into the Medicine Hat and Redcliff communities.



This is the Family Leisure Centre. It has water slides, weight rooms, a rink, and an arts and crafts facility in it. They all also have a hot tub and steam room. It is a useful spot for the community, and it is affordable. Lots of kids in the community make use of the facility.

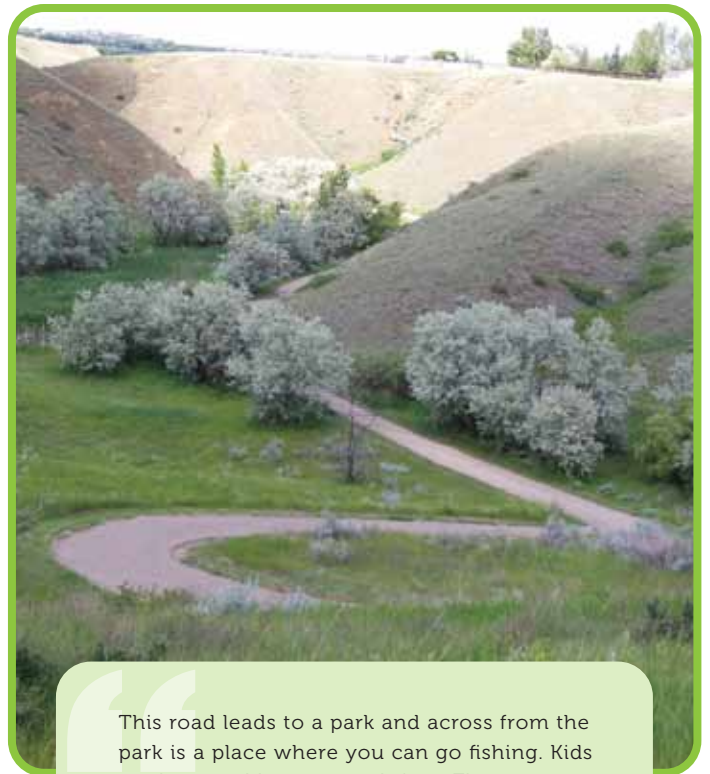


Overview of the Photo-takers' Stories

Generally, all photo-takers reported that the communities were pleasant, safe places to live and places where they enjoyed a good quality of life. More specifically, photo-takers from Redcliff expressed a strong sense of community. Residents felt that the small town provided them with a sense of safety and familiarity with other community members. In Medicine Hat, photo-takers expressed that the community was an excellent place to live and that community ties in Medicine Hat seemed to be more family-based. Many photo-takers suggested that extended family members are a large part of their social network. Other Medicine Hat residents also expressed a strong sense of community spirit. Photo-takers talked about a number of different things when describing their community. The key topics are highlighted below:

- community geography and climate;
- community economy;
- car culture;
- accessing local destinations;
- walking through the community;
- Redcliff library;
- popular forms of physical activity;
- multi-use trails;
- parks and green spaces;
- community recreation facilities;
- greenhouses;
- grocery stores;
- fast food restaurants; and,
- community gardens and Good Food Box program.

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



This road leads to a park and across from the park is a place where you can go fishing. Kids go there and have a good time. There are no community issues to bring up about the park. Medicine Hat is an excellent place to live and you have no problems finding a place to exercise... there is always something to do.



This is a path in the neighbourhood, which is wide enough for two to walk side by side. However, there are no trees lining the path so when it is hot, it becomes unbearable to walk there.



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.



This is a picture of the walking trails by the river. It has benches for people to sit when they get tired.

This is the Redcliff Aquatic Center. I usually take my son there. They have swim lessons available. It is accessible and it is located opposite to the BMX track.

