

Advisory Committee to "This Ability Media Project"
Comments from the meeting of April 27, 2005 at BACI

Attendees: Nellie, Ginger, Michelle and her Mother, Vickie, Gerry, Jack, Tanya, Brian, Richard, Shannon, Tracy, Lawrence, Susanna, Alex, Marlene, Katie, Lorna, Chris

After everyone was introduced, Lorna Boschman presented some possible directions for the filming, now that the media group has been meeting regularly for several months. The project could be a documentary, a website or a series of Public Service Announcements (PSAs). A six-minute roughly edited VHS tape of recent footage was presented to the Advisory Committee.

Could self-advocates within the media workshop direct their own videos? How can the workshop create a situation where self-advocates have creative control of their own projects? Will these projects explore citizenship, whether directly or indirectly or should there be an additional video that is focused on the citizenship dialogue?

A parent invited us to film her daughter and friends at a social gathering. Chris Tanner will arrange the filming time. Almost all of the members of the media workshop were present and they expressed interest in working on their own video or web projects, in addition to meeting with the group every Monday. Their ideas for filming each video will be developed further with assistance from Lorna and Chris. We will start filming at Myles of Beans (with a media member) in the first week of May.

It is important to think about who decides what the videos are presenting. Who is making the creative decisions about what goes into the video? What does it mean to be a director and to have "creative control" of a project? The project might take form as a documentary or as a website or as a combination, but most important is that the voices of people with disabilities are heard (and that they have creative control). Can we move away from videos that merely observe people with disabilities to ones that give an inside perspective on the human experience of disability?

Several people suggested that we continue to explore the theme "Citizenship is..." in a way that is centred on the contributions of a person with a disability. Who are their relationships with and how do they connect with and influence others in the community? At Artists Helping Artists (AHA!), what are the contributions that the non-disabled participants are experiencing? What is the best way to show these relationships and contributions, which may be subtle and not easy to express? Who is telling the story? Who is the story being told to? Who is the audience?

It is important to keep going with the process, because the most personal and intimate moments might happen at the most unexpected times. The project is on track as far as gaining trust within the group and with Chris and Lorna, which enables everyone to move more comfortably into making individual projects. Now we need to identify which stories people want to share and how the stories fit with the project.

Continuing with the quest for stories and the question of citizenship people from the media film crew posed the question "Citizenship is..." to the general public at Loughheed Town Centre during the Festival of Volunteers on April 30, 2005. Our media journal was filled with many rich responses:

Friendship, Respect, Hospitality, Helping each other, Being Helpful, Belonging, Responsibility for oneself and more so for the community, Proud, Fair play, Involvement, Multiculturalism, Diversity, Having a Voice, Healthcare, Taking care of our seniors, Participating my time and energy, Freedom, Being Kind to other, Telling my story, Community means Family, Not being alone, Harmony, Consideration for others and the environment, Belonging to a Country, Right and Responsibility to fully participate in each ones community, Getting to know one another, Loving people for who they are not what they do or their race, Freedom of expression, Respecting one another, Peace worldwide and respect for everyone and everything.

Our quest continues.....