

‘Capturing Capricious Communities’

## Place-based Community Education and Digital Art Practices from Early to Senior Years

The idea of “community” has inspired the thinking of art educators, professional artists, and visual art theorists. Why is “community” so inspiring and so important to those involved in the visual arts? Dissanayake (1991) in her seminal book, *“What is Art For?”* examines human societies from prehistoric times to today and argues that art is not only created to explore and express the individual soul but community and culture as well. Indeed, she reasons that the development of community is one of the keys to the very survival of art. Inspired by Dissanayake, Anderson & Milbrandt (2002) claim that community is vital to the very nature of teaching *art for life*. Individual beliefs should be used to create and shape shared group understandings. This can lead, they reason, to the promotion of cultural understanding, development of multiple narratives, and fostering of diverse societal perspectives using visual imagery (p. 232). In short, studying community enables us to express our individual stories, hear varied voices, and use these to form a comprehension of our collective human soul (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2002; Clark, 1999). Thus, gaining understandings of community not only inspires self-expression, and provides us with insights about ourselves and our world, but also shapes our collective identities (Graham, 2007). In this paper I will discuss research focused on digitally supported community-based learning through art by outlining my research project within the Winnipeg community entitled *Capturing Capricious Communities*.

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## Community-Based Learning

Many art education theorists claim that art should be studied outside the narrow confines of the school and art room. Peter London (1994) advocates the idea that students should break down the walls of their school classroom to create and understand art within the context of the world they experience. His approach develops stronger liaisons between visual art learning and children's lives to formulate a '*community-based art education approach*' (CBAE). This harkens back to the renowned educator, John Dewey (1938), who famously made a case that education should be premised upon the lived experience of learners within communities (p. 89). He writes that teachers,

...should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worth while. Traditional education did not have to face this problem; it could systematically dodge this responsibility. The school environment of desks, blackboards, a small school yard was supposed to suffice. There was no demand that the teacher should become intimately acquainted with the condition of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc. in order to utilize them as educational resources. A system of education based upon the necessary connection of education with experience must, on the contrary, if faithful to its principle, take these things constantly into account. (Dewey, 1938, p. 40)

Art educators have been involved in numerous community-based projects extending from Melvin Haggerty during the Great Depression (Freedman, 1989) to Elizabeth Delacruz (2009a, 2009b) <sup>1</sup>.

*'Capturing Capricious Communities'* is a community project that is student-centered, utilizing direct computer hardware and software access, developing student learning, collaboration with peers, co-learning with teachers, and sometimes cultivating a role reversal so that students not only teach their peers but their teachers as well. Thus, in these community projects educators sometimes handed the "reigns" to their students so their pupils teach the class. This project was designed in virtual classrooms to be learner-centered, empowering to teachers and students with the aim of enabling students to construct personal meanings, develop broader societal understandings, and collaborate within community based exhibition sites and with artists working in the field. This special project merged educational technology <sup>2</sup> and community based learning together in art classrooms

## Description of the Project

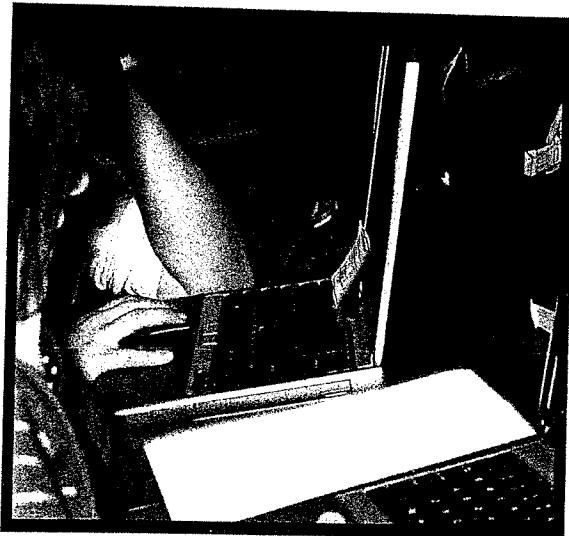
*'Capturing Capricious Communities'* is a longitudinal research study which took place during the fourth year of a five-year research project. The intent of this project was to support and train art educators in Winnipeg, Canada involving close to five hundred students, a visual arts consultant, Krista Grant, and six teachers <sup>3</sup> within early, middle and secondary schools. (All participants, schools, and the school board are given pseudonyms).

The main research question asked: How can one effectively integrate technology in teacher-participants' classroom practice in order to make learning relevant, significant, and exciting for teachers and their students? The specific part of the study, *'Capturing Capricious Communities'* took place between 2007 and 2008. We turned to this theme of community because we believed it would be meaningful but still broad enough for teachers to approach this topic in a variety of individualistic, personal, and distinct ways enabling educators to draw upon their own backgrounds, skills and experiences <sup>4</sup>. In titling this research project, we wanted to move beyond the staid notion of 'community' as a rigidly planned and ordered group. To capture the imagination of students and teachers, the adjective *capricious* was chosen to indicate that communities can also be erratic, whimsical, variable, changeable and somewhat unpredictable.

To launch the project teachers were given the following description:

Each school community has its unique identity. It is forged from its beginnings: its past histories, its architecture, its imitable locality, its ever-changing neighborhoods, and the many people who have lived experiences and who graduated leaving remnants and shadows behind. This distinctiveness is formed by the present: by educators, students and administrators who shape an identity constantly in flux and currently vibrant. Each school has a unique presence that students will be given the opportunity to capture and visually represent from their own perspective. A unique project at the early, middle, and senior years will be developed in which students can explore and capture and shape their capricious community visually. All teachers involved in this project can explore the concepts of school community using multimodal educational approaches including traditional, integrated, and digital texts. (Black, 2007a, p.1)

The Visual Art Consultant, Krista Grant, and I purposely left the description open in order to provide all educators involved the opportunity to formulate their own personal curricula within the context provided.



Technological training and support was an integral part of 'Capturing Capricious Communities'. Just as contemporary artists are using new media to support their art making process, we wanted teachers to be instructed in and supported by technology. Four workshops and two teacher sharing sessions occurred. Working on a PC platform mandated by the Prince John School Board, teachers participated in software workshop training given by board technology specialists. Software training included Microsoft Photo Story, Microsoft Movie Maker and Adobe Photoshop Elements—all technology specifically mandated for use by the board's Technology Department as well as all schools within the Prince John School Board. We decided to utilize these user-friendly software applications which were already installed on all the schools' computers for this did not require a high learning curve: time and ease of use were of utmost importance to teachers. Moreover, teachers were encouraged to bring one or two students to participate in the workshops. The intent of having students participate was that the youths could then teach their peers and support their teachers in using technology in day-to-day classrooms situations.

Curriculum was developed both for the purpose of use in the training sessions and for use in classrooms based upon teachers' personal interests, individual ideas, and backgrounds. Just as John Dewey advises to base learning on students' own personal lived experiences, this project was based on the belief that teachers should be allowed to shape art education curricula on educators' own lived experiences, strengths, skills, and knowledge (1938). Additionally, providing a rich learning experience for the educators involved would in turn help teachers shape meaningful and relevant curricula for their own students. To this end, our first step was to help foster the teachers' awareness of the rich complexity surrounding the theme of community, including local, and global communities; repressed and silenced communities; as well as lost and reclaimed communities. Not only can one visually describe one's understanding of a community, but one can also express the ways in which community affects us. Therefore,

we discussed and showed the work of professional artists who were exhibiting community based thematic art within the Winnipeg area.

Initially, in the spring of 2007, teachers viewed the art of Canadian artist, Don Gill who created a conceptually based new media work called *Erratic Space* shown at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. His work provided inspiration at the initial stages of this project. Over the month of his residency at the gallery, Gill's ongoing process involved a day-by-day creative compilation of art that illuminated his vision of the visual identity of Winnipeg<sup>5</sup>. Gill's work included ongoing newspaper articles, conversations with 'Winnipeggers,' evolving photographic wall displays, scrapbooks, and videos of his community walks. With the teachers we discussed Gill's investigations of himself as a voyageur travelling in—for him—new territories; explorations as a tourist gathering works about public terrain as social histories and political spaces; and as a peripatetic artist creating artwork of these places as visual identities. Walking into the large gallery dedicated to his work we confronted a medley of traditional and new media art dedicated to the city as an artwork with ongoing evolving displays of photographs, maps, newspapers, written texts by Gill, and journal images and articles as well as video compilations of Gill's walks during spring and summer of 2007. Audience in Gill's work directly impacted upon the art in process. On a daily basis Gill included people's responses by posting them on the gallery walls so that viewers' response helped shape the art.

During the training time for this research, Winnipeg had numerous exhibits about the impact of place, landscapes, and communities upon individuals. An Andy Warhol exhibition, 'Warhol Larger than Life,' took place at the Winnipeg Art Gallery where the curator documented ways that the communities in which Warhol had lived impacted his early to late career development. Most notable was Warhol's art film compilation shot during the 1960's and screened in a recurring loop. This film included people who spent time in his studio, called "The Factory", who formed an influential counter-culture of New York artists, musicians, intellectuals, celebrities, bohemians, and wealthy socialites. At the same time as Warhol's exhibit, the University of Winnipeg exhibited a show in their 'Gallery 103' based on alumni notions of home and place. We viewed artists including Paul Robles who created intricate, delicate lace-like origami paper cut imagery of prairie landscapes. He explores what he terms, 'placelessness' particularly examining complications of cultural fragmentation as a result of his Canadian/Asian heritage. Concurrently, the much respected local *PLUG In Institute of Contemporary Art* held a show entitled 'Scratching the Surface: Post-Prairie Landscape' featuring works from emerging new media artists like Collin Zipp and veterans like Robert Pasternak who focus on the social, cultural and physical 'face' of Winnipeg and the prairies. Wanda Koop's works were particularly prominent: her still, serene, colour-saturated cityscape paintings, comprised of natural and technological frictions, create cultural constructions shaped by past recollections and desire. Teachers involved in our project were shown

images from these galleries and the artists' works were discussed so that the educators could be inspired by modern and contemporary practice so important to the art making and curricula shaping process (Bates, 2000; Gude, 2009). This added greatly to our understanding of how to approach the topic of communities: as a straightforward depiction of a group of people; as a group of people shaping culture; as a means to explore other sub-themes relating to community such as memory and longing; and as a way to explore how community affects one's own background complexities. We wanted to address Gude's observation that, "In recent decades, art teachers have been increasingly stymied by formalist curriculum that is out-of-sync with today's students and today's cultural avant-garde" (2007, p.15). Delecruz (2009b) argues that a teacher's job is to find significant connections to what our youth hold important and to make that the content worthy of examination, exploration and learning. The training sessions, designed to open up the idea of community and suggest digital technologies as a means for creative response, served to inspire the curriculum design of the participating teachers who set out to motivate their students in '*Capturing Capricious Communities*'. Digital technologies were an artful vehicle for the theme. Students were expected to use traditional art media and to use these to shape new media works about community. Thus, ideas explored in traditional media, and indeed, even the traditional art, were incorporated into digital videos, photographs, and mixed digital media.

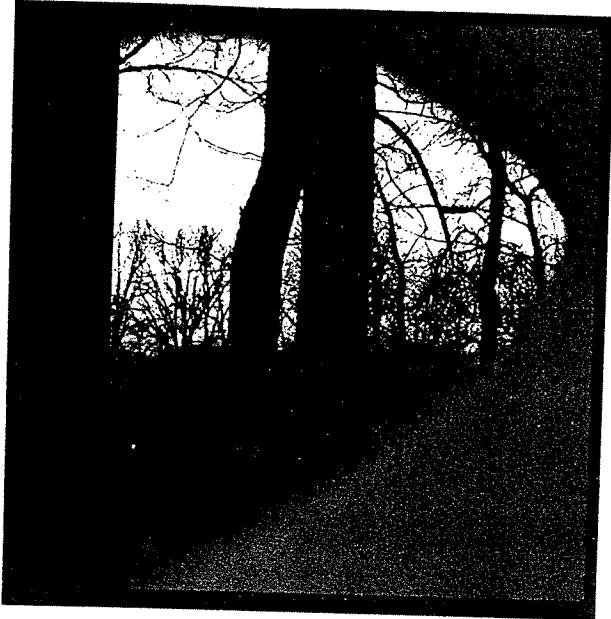
### ***Capturing Capricious Communities: Teachers' Projects***

Four teachers from four different schools were given planning time to develop their individualistic approaches to the topic of community. The project was open-ended. Educators decided upon (a) their own individualized thematic approach; (b) connections to other projects across curricula areas (if they so desired); and (c) links to community artists working within the field. All educators involved were told that it was not the technology but rather the theme of community that should drive the project. Students from the four schools began developing ideas in their journals, experimenting with a variety of media - both traditional and digital - and recording their findings. Youths were given access to still cameras, videocameras, PC computers, and PC software. Field trips were planned and some classes took walking tours to record their experiences in sketchbooks and through the collection of still and video imagery within the Winnipeg community. Teachers' various diverse approaches are discussed below.

#### **Early Years: Environmental Explorations**

Sheila Hilton is a teacher of a split grade three-four class. In order to teach her pupils about environmental sustainability she applied for and was awarded a substantial grant from a provincial hydro company. She was initially inspired by a community venture entitled "*Save the Seine River Project*," concerning the restoration of a local river area near her school, located at the southern tip of Winnipeg close to the Perimeter Highway which demarcates the city from its rural farmlands. Her keen interest in environmental issues had also been developed through observing suburban housing slowly erode previously undeveloped terrain, including the destruction of picturesque parklands, natural ravines, and a large lush forest. Ms. Hilton envisioned a direct relationship between classroom teachings about nature and the environment and the ongoing very visible change of the community in which her students reside.



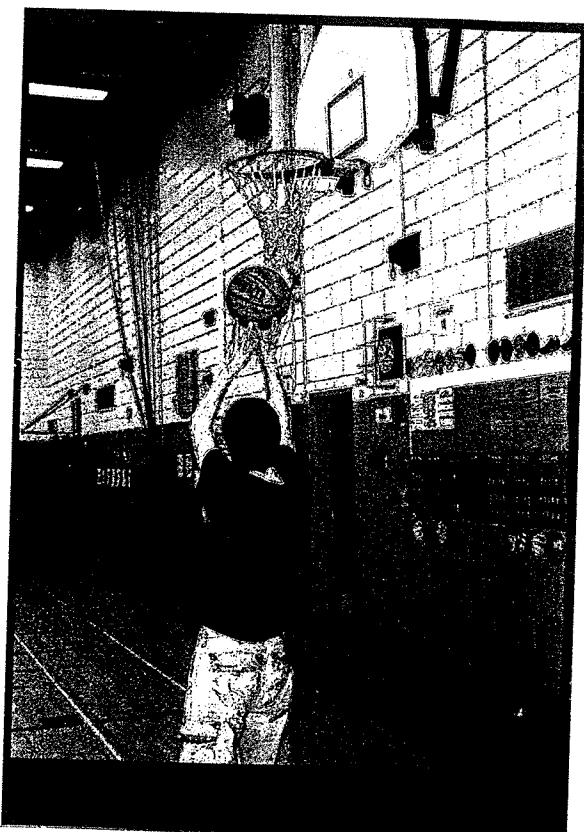


Integral to the students' work was a trip to the Seine River area in each of the four seasons throughout the school year: late summer, fall, winter and late spring. Sixty-five children from three classes participated in these excursions, walking when the weather was clement and snowshoeing in Winnipeg's winter, when its temperatures can drop as low as -50 celsius. Along the Seine River children viewed bird sanctuaries, a variety of trees, animals, and insects, and a tree that was carved by expert woodcarvers which the students fondly named '*Woody*'. They graphed their findings, created charts based upon the information they found about animals, insects, pollution levels, and the housing development. Typical questions Ms. Hilton asked her students before the field trips were, 'How do animals survive in a -45 degree wind chill? Have more homes been built on the natural site since last September? What happens to the animals when the houses are built? How polluted is the water? How many kinds of trees are in the forest? Can you name some of them?'

During the fieldtrips, pupils documented the natural habitat through taking videocamera and still camera footage, sketching, and gathering water samples to test. During the middle of the year, halfway through the project, the students made a book collage addressing what happens when so called 'progress,' in this case suburban development, destroys natural habitats. One child wrote, 'When I go back to the river I want to see how *Woody* looks, I want to see the deer, and see the river. I wonder if it's frozen solid until spring or when the ice will melt -- I want to know what the animals do' (D. Litchen, personal communication, April 19, 2008).

Ms. Hilton had four computers set up in the back of the room. Students who were trained in the teacher workshops taught their peers how to use the software. Pupils scanned their drawings and collage works, learned how to digitally alter their photographs, and make videos. Ms. Hilton also asked children to write poetry as an expression of their views on environmental sustainability. For the final project students made a video documentary that combined written text they had created in fictional or poetic form with still and moving imagery using Photo Story or Movie Maker. Thus, for the culminating work, children used photographs, video footage, text, digitalized sketches and sound to create a digital artwork.

The community project she developed was cross-integrated between visual art, science, and English. Topics she explored were social and environmental with many continuing throughout the year. Guest speakers, particularly senior citizens, were invited to visit Ms. Hilton's class in order to describe their memories of the Seine community before the massive housing development began. Building contractors were also asked to speak about their initiatives to protect animal habitats and members of the local environmental Seine community group talked to the children about their aims. For science, Ms. Hilton had children develop and maintain aquariums within the classroom. Students also documented and created charts on pollution levels at various points in the river throughout the year. They studied water shed protection, erosion, freshwater environments, and ecosystems including habitat loss and wildlife protection. For English, children read literature, particularly fiction and poems that were based on environmental themes to support their investigations and inspire their own creative work such as short stories about an animal or plant trying to survive. In visual art, children drew on an ongoing basis documenting their findings in a year-long journal. They created photographs using digital cameras, digitally altered these images, videotaped, and created a multimodal digital final large work combining text, sounds and still and moving imagery.



For Ms. Hilton's pupils, being outdoors in ravines was not part of their everyday experience. Despite this, she perceived that these excursions became very special and memorable to her students. The "Seine River Watershed Project" experience was extremely valuable because it taught her students to observe and respect nature within their immediate community. Most importantly, Ms. Hilton perceives that an environmental awareness and appreciation of nature remains within her students' consciousness. She argues that this has not only become part of her students' understanding of their own community within which they live, but also has become part of their broader understanding of their world. As in social reconstruction theory (Stuhr, 1994), Ms. Hilton believes her teaching will encourage her children to take action to invoke change and educate people about environmental issues.

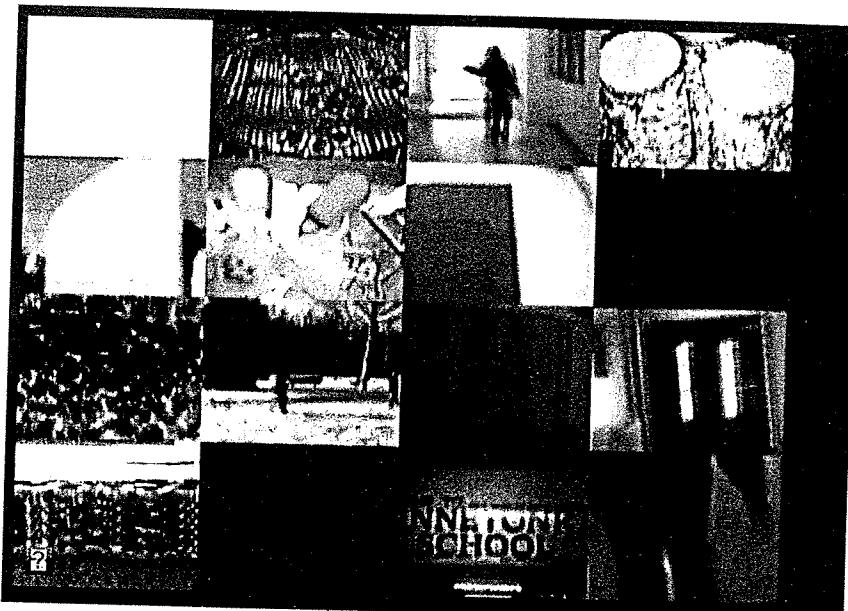
### Middle Years: Digital Quilts and Architectural Fantasies

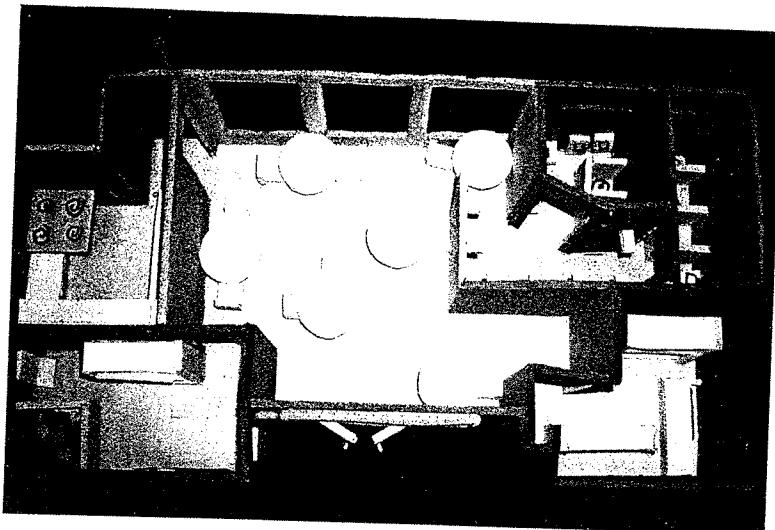
Hillary Falcon teaches a grade seven/eight split level class. For this project, the theme of community was related to the culture of their school. She asked the children to specifically examine what youths value about their community. Using their personal ideas, her students created a class artwork: a 'digital moving quilt' illustrating what they cherish about their school community.

The process took about six months to complete. Children began by analyzing the word "community," then proceeded to explore its personal meaning in relation to their school lives. This theme was studied using different media throughout the entire project.

All through the project children drew in their journals. Pupils began by analyzing signs as meaning makers, then designed their own signs and incorporated these with photos and text to create "community" traditional collages exploring issues such as friendship within their school. After this, students were asked to create digital photographs of items, people, and school scenes which they digitally altered with Adobe Photoshop Elements using computers housed in a separate computer lab. Through using the software tools and filters students were asked to enhance their message of what they value about their community.

Finally, to create the culminating class project, Ms. Falcon's pupils worked together and with a guest professional video artist, Collin Zipp (<http://www.collinzipp.info/>). He showed and discussed his artworks, talked about his videos as art forms, described video techniques he utilized, and the process he had undertaken in making his art. All of the children expressed surprise that video art existed—they were used to screen diets of television and Hollywood blockbusters. After this, students were asked to create a one-minute continuous art video exploring the same theme - depicting what they value within their school community -- using in-camera editing. They worked in pairs, first creating a storyboard and then videotaping. Collin used both the photographs students had previously taken and the one-minute videos compiled to create a new media artwork using sixteen split screens. This video called a community "Digital Quilt" was comprised of still and moving imagery in a picture frame using a sixteen-part grid (Refer to Collin Zipp's picture). As a result of this project Ms. Falcon's students were introduced to the 'world of video art.'





building's purpose: to train art students. Other structures he discussed included Toronto's Royal Bank Plaza which has its windows coated in twenty-four carat gold leaf, a blatant sign of wealth, power, and prestige. He asked students questions like, "How does architecture suit our needs? How does it reflect society's values?" Mr. Fry asked his students to create a model of an ideal fantasy structure. In other words he wanted students to imagine, design, and build a creative building.

The process of making the building began first with sketches. Mr. Fry discussed Bauhaus concepts such as '*form versus function*'. To do this, students had to begin the project by developing their ideas through sketching the exterior view of the building. Then they proceeded to draw a floor plan so that they could develop some of the necessary interior structural ideas before they began working three-dimensionally in sculptural form. Finally, using found objects, students constructed their buildings. While making the sculpture, they were asked to make digital video documentaries by recording the process of creating their fantasy structure. Hence, throughout the making of the artworks, children saved their sketches, took ongoing digital pictures, and digitally altered them. Using Photo Story, students completed a documentary about the process of making their imaginary fantasy buildings using photos, sketches and sound. Given more time, it would be a fitting extension to this project to have the class thoughtfully plan and combine each student's fantasy building to form a whimsical neighborhood thereby creating a class fantasy community sculpture.

#### **Senior Years: Examining Neighbourhoods, Interpreting Our Surroundings**

Sandy Doyle teaches grades nine through twelve in a Winnipeg high school. Her grade eleven students worked on her community project for four months, the focus being students' interpretations of the city of Winnipeg, the community in which they live.

Ms. Doyle launched her project by asking her students to scrutinize their surroundings, taking special notice of the city's architecture, nature, people, artwork, neighborhoods and mural work (Winnipeg has a notably large number of murals given its size). Ongoing sketches throughout the project were required of the students. Pupils explored notions of community in relation to their surroundings and worked to create a final video done individually or by groups of up to three students. The final assignment was to create a video using still photographs and/or combining moving video images together.

Like Ms. Falcon, David Fry teaches a grade seven/eight split-level class. His school was celebrating its centennial which was the catalyst spurring him to think about architecture in relation to community. The school's imminent year-long celebration caused him to ruminate upon its old architectural structure, one of the first schools built within the Winnipeg area.

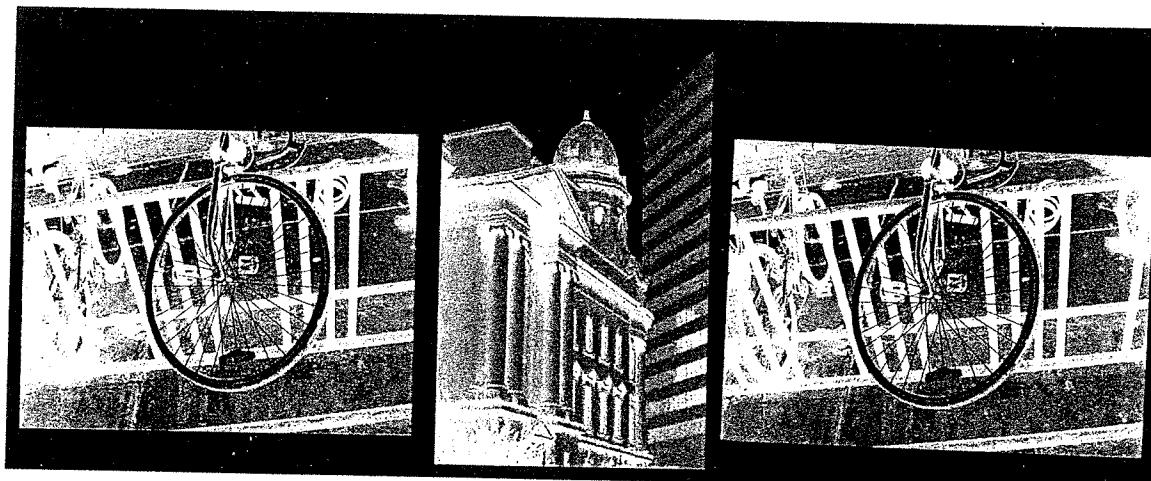
Initially, Mr. Fry showed students pictures of a variety of different architectural examples from around the world, including Will Alsop's Sharp Centre for Design in Toronto, known as the Ontario College of Art and Design. OCAD appears to be supported by large crayons which are aptly symbolic of the



Students were taught photographic theory including composition, camera angles, and lighting. They were asked to provide an analysis of five photographs in terms of composition, lighting, framing, and perspective. The class went on a field trip to examine art related to community issues at a local museum and galleries. Ms. Doyle said that visiting the exhibitions was inspirational for her students: they could see the diverse ways in which professional artists worked with the community theme. Notable were the artworks of Richard Hines who displayed ongoing colour photographs of his wife, and Solomon Nagler who explored issues of identity through his gritty, textured experimental landscape films. On their way to these venues her pupils took photographs of the various Winnipeg neighborhoods.

The final video project took some time to complete. Students were given videocameras and told to plan out their footage using sketches. They combined video footage with their photographs that were digitally altered. Ms. Doyle emphasized that she wanted a unified style and imagery in the video that helped to convey students' ideas. To make the digital videos, Ms. Doyle had access to computers through use of a lab on wheels that rolled into classrooms: she also utilized a computer lab housed within the school library. The

culminating event for the project was a screening of the videos in a class festival at the end of the school term. We invited my teacher candidates from the University of Manitoba in visual arts education at the senior level to attend the session: it was applicable to their program as they were also creating video art at that time. Ms. Doyle's students presented their work and discussed the topic and process to the teacher candidates during the festival. Interestingly, Ms. Doyle observed that her students who had not done well in her class previously made the most successful video works. She concluded that digital art allowed students who were constricted by art techniques but had talent in computer art to flourish. The teacher also indicated that some of these students were captivated and inspired using new media—their own cultural medium—to create their art. Using digital media, students' visual choices were rich, ranging from old-fashioned, monochromatic grainy video depicting traditional architecture of Winnipeg's Exchange District, and bright, colourful pop art photographic landscapes along Winnipeg's Red River (made famous by the continual flooding and by Louis Riel's settlement), to finely detailed digital media works of nature in ravine settings.



### Conclusion: Community as a Theme and Placed-based Education

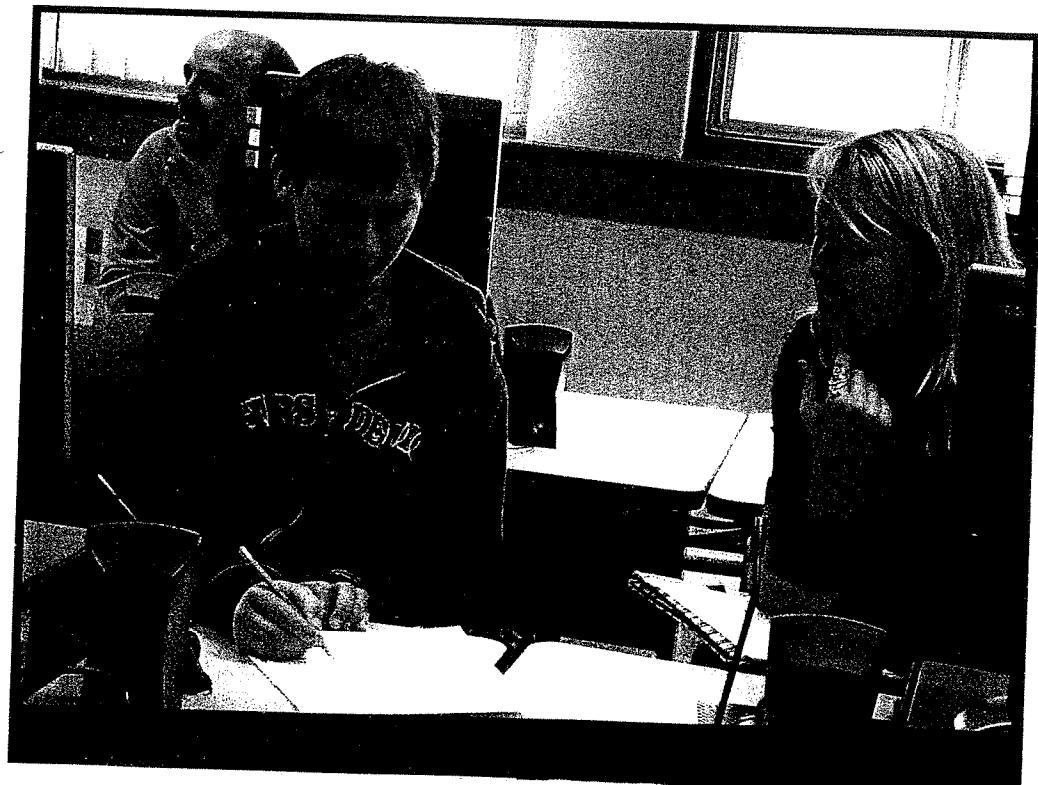
Educators and students who participated in '*Capturing Capricious Communities*' have used approaches similar to teachers involved in placed-based and community-based education practices. First, the teacher participants of this research have experience using the contemporary community art scene (Graham, 2007; Page et al., 2006) and in particular showing new media artists' works. For example, Sandy Doyle and her students visited art galleries to be informed and inspired by traditional and digital artists' works exploring a variety of community themes such as Wanda Koop, depicting cityscapes or like Paul Robles examining identities in relation to his community roots. In another instance, Hillary Falcon's students invited a new media guest artist to work with them. This fostered innovative ideas about using digital technologies in creative ways and exploring themes resourcefully and innovatively. Zipp talked about his exploration of perception and memory using new digital experimental video techniques and provided students with grounding in contemporary artistic thought and practice on community as a theme. It became apparent through their digital works that the children were influenced by Zipp to approach the notion of community in terms of ideas of memory and of ways in which they themselves and their friends shaped and influenced their own school community. Working with artists who use digital technologies, Page et al. (2006) contend, is key to engaging youths in notions of identity, particularly related to their own worlds, steeped in new media usage and influence.

Next, as a result of this community based approach, the boundaries between community and schools were frequently crossed, which caused a strengthening of students' comprehension of communities in which they live (Clark 1999; Graham, 2007; Smith, 2002). All the teachers involved, for instance, showed their students' art at a community wide venue in a local shopping mall at the end of the school year, inviting parents, relatives, and the community to view the exhibit. In this way, student isolation was addressed by fostering improved relationships between schools and the society in which youths live (Graham, 2002; Smith, 2002). The project began with visits to galleries or from an artist in their school, moved through a process of making art about the community, and ended with their work out in the community. In each case, that gathering designing and distribution of images was made accessible with the support of technology.

Additionally, it is claimed that place-based educators can work toward improving the lived experiences of students (Delacruz, 2009a, 2009b; Hiltunen, 2005; Smith 2002). With this study, this was most apparent in the case of the environmental approach of Sheila Hilton. She developed student environmental awareness and nurtured possible future activism. In another case, as a result of Sandy Doyle's successful video experience with her class, she became a key player in developing a board video festival the following year and hence shared her experiences, knowledge, and skills with thousands of students board wide.

Further, making community based art can often expand art making beyond the personal individual artwork to a collective vision such as in Ms. Falcon's digital quilt class project and Ms. Doyle's class video festival (Dewey, 1938; Graham, 2007; Smith, 2002). Community based art ends up becoming a social practice similar to that of professional artists such as the Winnipeg renowned group, The Royal Art Lodge, a collaboration of originally eight artists –now currently three-- whose various members create collective art. The group began in 1996 and met once a week during evenings to create simple works, mainly drawings and paintings, but expanded from there to include prints, digital installation and video works in which they tackled everyday themes both absurd, realistic, and humorous in day-to-day living. They selected key works to display at galleries. Similarly, a multitude of students creating one artwork invites collaborative, collective problem solving and active community involvement through the collective making and displaying of the student collective art.

Ultimately, and simply, place-based education should be based upon pupil's own personal interests and experiences (Graham, 2007; Smith, 2002). When Ms. Hilton's children examined the immediate destruction of the ravine surrounding their area; when Ms. Falcon students studied their school community; when Mr. Fry's students created their own whimsical buildings; and when Ms. Doyle's pupils investigated their city neighbourhoods they all learned that their communities and lived experiences were deserving of attention and creative response. Grounding education in students' everyday lived experiences can overcome the alienation of youth to our schools. By using students' own lived worlds, and by using digital media and discourses with which youths are so familiar, teachers involved in 'Capturing Capricious Communities' have made learning relevant, meaningful, and exciting for their students in their visual art classrooms.



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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Researchers and advocates of community-based learning argue that pedagogy and teaching practice should embrace school neighbourhoods and/or societies at large. Educators who take this stance range from the renowned, John Dewey (1938, p. 89) and his work at the University of Chicago, to Melvin Haggerty who was involved in the Owatonna Project of the 1930's (Freedman, 1989). It is also inclusive of traditional art practices by such art educators as John London (1994), Hiltunen (2005), and Stankiewicz (1998). Art education ventures like 'ProjectArts' provide examples of shared community-based learning practices from multiple sites, numerous art teachers and students in varied locations (Marché, 1998; Clark & Zimmerman, 2000). It extends not only to theories of "placed-based education" by Graham (2007) and Smith (2002) but also to more recent liaisons between community and new media art practices by Elizabeth Delacruz (2009a, 2009b) in the United States and Page, Herne, Dash, Charman, Atkinson, Adams, (2006) from the United Kingdom. In researching community-based practices, Page et al (2006) moved away from the older art education paradigms like discipline-based art education (DBAE) to begin to formulate a new model based on new media. The authors claim that similar to the artists of today, young learners are affected by contemporary global technologies. Just as professional artists find methods of communication and deal with notions of identity arising from their community experiences so do our youths. Thus, they argue --which is aligned to Delacruz's line of reasoning (2009a, 2009b) -- that using modern technologies to learn, create, and communicate is crucial for today's students (Page et al., 2006; Delacruz, 2009a, 2009b).

<sup>2</sup> There are many art educators who advocate for the teaching of digital technologies and multimodal literacies (Black, 2006, 2007, 2009; Delacruz, 2009a, 2009b; Duncum, 2004, 2009; Gregory; 2009; Jagodzinski, 2009; Page, Herne, Dash, Charman, Atkinson, & Adams, 2006). Gregory for example, recently wrote that technological integration is key for art educators and strongly advises teachers to abandon their podiums, turn off mind dulling PowerPoint presentations and, rather they should empower students through employment of constructivist, student-based pedagogy. Gregory points out that there is a vital need for art educators to develop creative ways of using digital technologies in art education (Gregory, 2009, p. 47).

<sup>3</sup> Even though 6 teachers were initially involved in the project only 4 participated during the 2007-2008 year as a result of one teacher taking a maternity leave, and another teacher being placed in a position outside of the field visual arts education.

<sup>4</sup> This idea of developing curricula based on teachers' interests, skills and knowledge is in direct opposition to standardized curricula imposed upon teachers as a result of the implementation of the "No Child Left Behind Act" in America. The negative result of this act's impact upon art education has been discussed (Sabol, 2010). It is time to give back to teachers the power to shape curricula.

<sup>5</sup> Gill's work has extended to the depiction of cities throughout the world. Winnipeg is but one example.

## Notes

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