
Looking Out / Looking In *Women, Poverty, and Public Policy*

“Looking Out/Looking In”

Low income women are often subject to scrutiny and surveillance by others. In this project, we were *behind* the lens, not *under* the lens. We looked in at our own experiences and out at the world from our own perspectives. We look out for all the obstacles that come from living in poverty and we look for all the good things that keep us going. We encourage people in communities to look out for each other, by developing just policies and treating everyone with dignity and respect. We are looking for change and hoping to make a difference.

Looking for an Integrated Strategy to End Poverty

Our goal in this project is to use our words and photographs to raise public awareness and influence public policies to reduce poverty and improve the conditions of women’s lives.

Saskatoon Photovoice Photographers

- Butterfly Russell*
- Elaine Gamble
- Lynn*
- Moe S.*
- Smith
- Dawn McGraw*
- Genevieve Jones*
- Mary Jane*
- Nadia
- Virginia Beebe

*Some of the women have chosen pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

Saskatoon Photovoice Committee

- Vanessa Charles, Saskatoon Antipoverty Coalition
- Debbie Frost, National Antipoverty Organization
- Kathryn Green, University of Saskatchewan – Community Health & Epidemiology
- Lorraine Marquies, Saskatoon Health Region
- Carolyn Rogers, Saskatoon Antipoverty Coalition
- Kay Willson, Prairie Women’s Health Centre of Excellence

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Being in Poverty Hurts!

Genevive Jones*



The pain and stress affect all areas of one's life. It is often acted out in destructive ways including: inability to trust and build support—friends or community programs, etc.—through addictions, child abuse of all kinds, and/or spouse abuse.

It's Like You're Handicapped

Elaine Gamble



This is a picture of my daughter's prosthetic limb. It helps her overcome her limitations. When you're living in poverty it is like you are handicapped because there are so many restrictions, so many limitations.

Someone can go in the store and buy a magazine or a shirt that they need for their kid. They can go ahead and buy it, but you can't, because you have to think about other things. You have to think, 'Well, if I buy that, then I can't pay my phone bill. If I buy that, then I can't get this for my kid.' You're always shortchanging. Sometimes my daughter needs something at school—a book fair or school function. She can't go or participate because I had to buy Pampers or wipes for the baby instead.

Vacation?!

Genevieve Jones*



Places like this— McNally Robinson, the public libraries, the Mendel and other art galleries, the University Geology Building—are my usual vacation spots. And closer to home when I'm not feeling well. Out of city, or province, or country are not things I have money for, unless I choose not to eat properly, or make other such sacrifices.

“Feeling good about yourself is essential to feeling good about life, but sometimes people are forced to do things that take away from their self-respect”

Nadia



One day I saw someone approach this garbage can, take out a discarded bag and eat the garbage inside. I was shocked, and embarrassed for the person. I had never seen anyone eat from a garbage can before. I live in poverty but I have not yet been hungry enough or desperate enough to eat from a garbage can. I thought about how quickly and easily a person's life circumstances can change to where any one of us could be forced to find our lunch in this way. There are people in the world who, every day, are forced to do such a thing. How good is that for one's self-respect?

Inside Out/Walking Around Naked

Lynn



As a person who has had to rely on social programs all my life, I feel like public property with no privacy and the freedom - to create my own identity and participate equally in society - taken away.

All I Want for Christmas is to Participate

Lynn



I'm not able to buy a present for a niece or nephew and I also don't get any presents because people don't want to make me feel bad or obligated to buy something for them.

It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Lynn



Why Are We Not Allowed to Know Our Rights

Dawn McGraw



Bad Weather

Elaine Gamble



This is a picture of me driving out to my reserve to try to get financial aid because my power and my rent was due. My husband lost his job and we're having a really hard financial time. I had to take my kids on the highway in this kind of weather because if I didn't, my power was going to get cut off and I wasn't going to have a place to live with my children.

It was a gamble to go out because I wasn't guaranteed anything, and, in fact, I didn't receive anything.

Suicide Prevention

Lynn



I live alone and often suffer from depression and yet I am not allowed enough money to feed and care for my 'antidepressant.' If I commit suicide, who will take care of her?

The Empty Shopping Cart

Butterfly Russell*



To me the empty shopping cart is symbolic. A shopping cart should be full of groceries and have a little kid bouncing up and down in the seat. But for many, every time they look at a grocery cart they feel guilty because they don't have enough money to fill it up with groceries. And the other thing I think when I look at a grocery cart is, 'Thank God I'm not the one who's got all my worldly possessions in it.' Or I could be wandering up and down back alleys picking up pop bottles. So the shopping cart has a lot of meanings.

Feed or Bleed

Lynn*



The choice is clear. If I don't eat – no one will know. If I don't buy sanitary supplies – everyone will know. I already use \$110 toward extra rent money needed, out of the \$210 that I have to live on.

Getting to the Bus Stop

Butterfly Russell*



This is outside my apartment block and I stuck my cane in there because I wanted that to be part of the picture. Unfortunately I can't afford to run a car and so I have to walk up to the bus stop all year round. And in weather conditions like that, the bus stop may as well be two miles away because I feel that I can't get there. I am scared of falling. I just wish that I had a car.

Black Mould

Dawn McGraw*



I have black mould in my basement. I have tried to clean it regularly with bleach. It keeps coming back; it's spreading. I have told them this is not healthy for my children. I have a very damp basement so I am not surprised. My house is very old. My landlord takes forever to come in and fix things—things that are a danger and put my children at risk.

My Journey

Virginia Beebe



This is like a path, a journey — the journey I have been on since I became a teen parent. Always searching for ways to break out of that box, break out of that system, and to be who I was inside and not what everyone would tell me I was.

Self Portrait

Virginia Beebe



I am in a transition period. I am going to convocate from university soon. I do not believe I could be sitting here today without the support network that I experienced at my high school, Nutana Collegiate. They approached with a wraparound philosophy to give every opportunity to that child to open that door, and to support them when they walk through that door. They have been key to my story.

“You Can Tie My Hands but you Can’t Kill My Spirit”

Butterfly Russell



My hands are holding my assistance cheque, tied, and a lit candle represents my spirit. I think that says it all. I feel that my hands are tied when I am on assistance but I am at the point in my life where I just cannot afford to let it get me

down. I've been through depression and upset and I'm just not going to let it happen anymore. And so the candle may flicker once in a while but its going to continue burning as long as I have any say. And Government does tie your hands. Bureaucracy ties your hands. Poverty ties your hands.

Happy Times

Moe S.



I have come from a lot of different places behind me and I try to live every moment as much as I can. This is one of my happy times. The school is a real important place in our family. It really brought us home. And our events are so much like a family get-together. It is really important to me to have that.