Stories of [Be]Longing Digital Storytelling

Barrie

Stories of [Be]Longing is a digital storytelling project that works with youth in and from foster care to share their experiences in short films.

The filmmakers, aged 12-30, create three-minute films about their experiences in foster care, or with their birth families, with customary care, adoption, kinship care, or aging out of care.

What is Digital Storytelling?

People have always told stories - to entertain, to teach, to persuade and to record history. First Nations people have a long tradition of using stories to teach, and to pass down knowledge. Digital storytelling is just a modern form of this age-old practice, using computer-based tools to tell multi-media stories. We work with a combination of photographs and video, music, recorded voices, and/or animation, to help participants at our workshop make films about some aspect of their lives as they relate to the child welfare system and the importance of having permanent (forever) families.

Digital storytelling combines the oral tradition of storytelling with the visual and sound capabilities of digital media.

In adoption and child welfare practices, digital storytelling is a particularly good tool because it is creative, accessible, and fun. You can use digital storytelling with all age groups. We work primarily with youth and young adults from 12 to 30, but we're also beginning to work with adoptive parents and social workers. Creating digital stories engages and builds an emotional connection with youth, and with the audiences to which they show the films. For the youth, it's also a healing process. Everyone who makes a story gets a copy of it, and can share it as they choose.

Why are these Digital Stories important?

Digital storytelling is a form of narrative therapy. It helps participants build a connection with each other, as they make the films, and with their audiences, as they show them. Creating these stories harnesses the power of the arts to bolster wellness.

Led by youth themselves, the project enables them to develop practical recording, writing, editing and presentation skills. At the same time, participants develop emotional and advocacy tools. They decide if they want to show their stories publicly, who they want to show their stories to, and how they want to use them. Many youth decide they want to show their stories to make changes to the foster care system.

In the workshops where children and youth have created these digital stories to illustrate messages about their need to belong, the importance of permanency, and what it's like to grow up in foster care, they also learn how to use personal stories to explore identity and social inclusion.

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