Abstract

In this thesis, I look at storytelling as it relates to the ability to bridge understanding with others and how it fosters advocacy, agency and change. In 2013, I was the videographer/photographer to a New Westminster community initiative. Based on this experience of witnessing story and its effect on a community, I was inspired to explore social change and personal agency within storytelling. With the use of Narrative Portraiture as my writing method, the thesis follows six-storytelling journeys through the challenges of immigrating to a new land. While in the midst of witnessing these storied journeys with other community participants, I started to recognize a transformation in the community as well as myself.

This storytelling project became one component of a Welcoming and Inclusive New Westminster (WINS) initiative that explored a participatory action research (PAR) method as its knowledge acquisition. PAR utilizes a dialogic, recursive, reflective, and iterative approach to achieve change within practices whether individually or globally. Using the two different methodological approaches the reader will witness the journeys as experienced by others, amidst evolving social and personal changes.

Keywords: Immigration, storytelling, narrative portraiture, participatory action research, advocacy and agency, change