Using photovoice methods to explore housing and living conditions in Cree communities and Sudbury

by

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WHERE: Room B-8032, Willet Green Miller Building, Laurentian University
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PRESENTATION SUMMARY

This presentation compares living and housing conditions in Sudbury and two First Nations communities in northeastern Ontario—Constance Lake and Fort Albany. Constance Lake is located on the Northern Trans-Canada highway. Fort Albany is located within the James Bay lowlands in a subarctic climate zone and accessible primarily by air or by ice road during the winter. Homeless and precariously housed people in these three communities were provided with cameras in order to allow them to speak, through their photographs, about their living circumstances. Each photograph tells its own story about couch surfing, sleeping rough, overcrowding, and problematic housing. In recorded interviews, the participants discussed the ideas behind their photographs allowing for comparisons of the varied meanings of homelessness or precarious housing. Photographs and interviews from the participants have been compared to explore similarities in housing issues related to eight themes. The preliminary findings show that the same housing issues impact on people in First Nations communities and those living in extreme poverty in Sudbury. This presentation provides an overview of the eight housing issues and discusses how photovoice methods can become a tool in the struggle for social justice by revealing problematic, hidden aspects of housing. Plans are being formulated to create a travelling exhibit that aims to sensitise people to the living conditions of poor and homeless people in northeastern Ontario and to spur social change.

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