

Projections



a collaborative multi-media creative project between researchers from the Centre for Education and Research on Aging (CERA) and children, exploring questions arising from cross-generational beliefs about aging and dementia

S'eliyemetaxwtexw Art Gallery
University of the Fraser Valley
Room B136, B Building
3844 Kings Road, Abbotsford
Gallery hours:
12:00 pm – 5:00 pm, Mon. – Fri.
Oct. 18th – Nov. 4th, 2022

Projections is a creative research project that has unfolded in the context of another research initiative spearheaded by Dr. Shelley Canning. Titled *Understanding Student Attitudes to Support Education Promoting Ageing & Dementia Awareness*, this broader project, undertaken through UFV's Centre for Education on Research and Aging (CERA), folded in artist researcher Dr. Candace Couse (UFV), educator Elise St-Martin (School District #34), researchers Darren Blakeborough (UFV), and Joanne Brown (UFV), research assistants Zaira Ramirez (Visual Arts), Rosaley Klassen (Nursing), and Nicole Cusick (Nursing).

Primarily responding to the problem of stigma and discrimination against older adults and people living with dementia,¹ our work recognized that stigma related to ageing and dementia begins early, as children are influenced by familial, cultural, and broader societal beliefs and values. We were interested in what beliefs children hold, and how beliefs might differ across ages. *Projections* developed as a secondary project, following our interest in further exploring how values can be pictured, studied and utilized as relational devices. This drive materialized from an investment in the wealth of student creative projects that emerged from *Understanding Student Attitudes to Support Education Promoting Ageing & Dementia Awareness*, which gathered primary data using a mixture of applied qualitative and arts-based research methodologies in public elementary schools located on the territory of the Stó:lō people, the Semá:th and Mathxwí First Nation.

We had endeavoured to learn what school children picture, understand and believe about older people and people living with dementia to identify space where intergenerational programming can support children to develop more expansive, positive views of ageing and dementia. Thus, another offshoot of the original project involved developing and implementing a series of classroom lessons focused on ageing and dementia, targeting students in grade 3 and 4 classes. Through this work, we were made caretakers of hundreds of artifacts representing creative outputs. We saw an opportunity to expand on these objects of perception by creating a collaboration between artist practitioners, students, and researchers so we could enliven a public forum for seeing and thinking about the beliefs we encountered to encourage dialogue and mediation. We recognized that through the art experience, there is valuable space for cross-generational, cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary meaning-making.

¹ The World Health Organization identified discriminatory stereotypes and attitudes towards older adults a major health issue, calling for institutions and communities to commit to implementing Age-Friendly and Dementia-Friendly initiatives—World Health Organization. (2021). *Global Report on Ageism*, ISBN 978-92-4-001686-6

The exhibition represents the culmination of the collective work of all participants, artists, researchers, community partners and UFV students, all of whom are necessary authors of this work. We feel this exhibition is not in any way meant to enlighten or illuminate what it is like to be an older person or a person living with dementia. It is not a comment on ability or a proxy for lived experience. Instead, we see *Projections* as a richly interactive and engaging look at impressions – an archive of the beliefs and values held by students across several grades. The show is called *Projections*, both because images are projected and because it represents the impressions of children -- many or perhaps most of which have seeped in from broader social understandings. We think there is something very valuable in taking time to sit with projections that amplify sociocultural impressions of the world. The show, we hope, will carve out a self-reflexive experimental learning space that works to disentangle social perceptions from the actual lived experiences of older adults dealing with dementia – not because the real experiences are offered, but because they are not. They are profoundly absent.

We recognize that this project would be impossible without the collaborative lifeblood that made it possible. With sincerest thanks, we recognize the work and kindness of:

Organizations

Abbotsford Regional Hospital Rehab dept
Maplewood House LTC Home
Cottage-Worthington LTC Home

Departments

UFV Research Office
CHASI
SOCA

School District #34 and the Students

Therein

Jackson Elementary
Clearbrook Elementary
Eugene Reimer Middle School
W. J. Mouat Secondary

UFV Faculty & Staff

Aimee Brown (SOCA)
Alex Duff (SOCA)
Robin Pittman (SOCA)
Pat Taddy (SOCA)
Jennifer Chew (SOCA)
Arlene Haley (Nursing)

UFV Students

Rosaley Klassen
Nicole Cusick
Zaira Ramirez-Luis
Alanna Sydenham
Sidney Hoolsema

Community Partner

Dr. Jim Mann (Dementia Advocate and Person Living with Dementia)



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