

The Young Parents' Program and why community groups should make their own media

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This season the [Young Parents' Program](#) of [Head & Hands](#) returned to do another Digital Literacy Project session. Previously we have worked with the Young Parents' Program on two sessions of digital photography and photo manipulation, designing and producing two beautiful full colour [photo 'zines](#).

This time around, the participants were excited to try something new. We decided to work with video and after exploring a variety of examples of short videos, the group decided to make a documentary video about the Young Parents' Program itself.

At the Digital Literacy Project, we love doing video with community groups. It is particularly exciting when a group decides to use video to create awareness about their program. Videos help community organizations recruit volunteers, do outreach and educate the broader public, but they are also an opportunity for participants to share what they find personally valuable about their program. Not only do participants become more comfortable with digital tools, we learn more about the community organization through the voices of its participants.

Several of the groups that we have worked with, including the Young Parents' Program, have had the experience of being the subject of a video or media piece. When a community group is represented by others some of the important nuances can be left out. During our video workshop we discussed the participants' recent experience of being interviewed by the mainstream media, the purpose of that piece and the messages it focussed on. We then set out to planning the purpose and message of their own video, and how, if different, it could better reflect their experiences with the program.

When the participants of a community group are driving the message we understand what they value in their program, and the results are often surprising. The Young Parent's program has many levels to their mandate, with complexities and important nuances to its services. Its participants represent the diversity of the community the program serves. Video brings us into their world and different aspects of the program may be emphasized in unexpected ways. They may want to show levity or the value some of the simple gestures or they may want to create detailed descriptions of all the facets of a program. Working with the Young Parents' Program, we saw how it was important to the participants to make sure everyone looks good and feels comfortable with how their represented.

Many of the activities needed for working on a video, such as interviewing skills, finding locations to filming and editing the final video, give the group the space to actually reflect on their participation. It can be an opportunity to take another look at what kind of program they are involved with and a chance to acknowledge what works and what does not work. The audience views a first-hand perspective of the program, and in our experience as workshop facilitators, this is often the most optimistic point of view, helping us all to learn something.

We look forward to seeing more videos from the Young Parents' Program. The more media they self-produce, the stronger their skills and their message will become.

We are very pleased to share the excellent work of the Young Parents Program. Please check out 'Parenting is a Rocking Party - since 1988'.