



The Learning Circles Project: *The Circles*

Snapshots of Urban Learning Circles

by Guy Ewing

As the Researchers scanned the urban environment, they were told of a variety of learning circles. The issues addressed by these learning circles are as various as peoples' interests and needs. At community health centres, we encountered learning circles focus on a range of health issues: diet, diabetes, women's issues. At neighbourhood centres, we encountered grandparenting groups and groups of the parents of teenagers suspended from school. Some of these groups formed within projects (which have now ended). A project called the Asset Mapping Research Project, hosted by the Toronto Christian Resource Centre, trained homeless people in the Regent Park area of Toronto to research the assets of homeless people, particularly their assets as potential employees of the companies involved in the redevelopment of Regent Park. The participants were trained to gather, collect and analyse survey data, collected through individual interviews. As the project developed, the participants met as a learning circle to share and develop their knowledge. Another project, Community Education for Action and Community Leadership (CEACL), hosted by the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre in Toronto, also created a group which, over time, began to function as a learning circle addressing community issues. So the learning circles described in the narratives are only an indication of the kinds of learning circles that exist in urban communities in Canada. Look for groups and organizations with a community focus and a commitment to learning and you will find learning circles. They may not be called "learning circles", but their values and practices will match those described on this website, in the Values and Practices section and in the narratives.