

## Why Documentation is Important

In thinking about maintaining our history, we must consider ways of doing so that will ensure it's not distorted or erased—that it *will* be written down. One way to do this is to document it ourselves and provide venues to share it in our own voices. Many Pan-Valley Institute participants feel they have lost their histories and identities, particularly indigenous Mexican immigrants and others with a history of colonization. Providing a way for them to reflect on their past can help them recover it, and is largely what popular education is about: finding ways to recover our histories and overcome communication barriers.

This tool provides various methods for accomplishing this.

**Oral History:** Oral history is a living way of documenting peoples' stories and histories. In 2000, a group of indigenous Latina women and Southeast Asian refugees wanted to tell their stories from their own perspectives. The Pan-Valley Institute gave them the tools to publish a calendar and a memory book. We've gone on to provide various story-telling mediums to youths and, most recently, to Syrian refugees.

**Theater:** The Pan-Valley Institute has presented various plays that tell the stories of immigrant activists, and through the Tamejavi Cultural Organizing Fellowship Program, engaged a group of indigenous youths in a play to tell the story of the Zapoteco community.

**Art/Creative Expression:** Using art to tell stories, build awareness, and to reclaim history and identity has proven successful at the Pan-Valley Institute.

**Timeline:** A timeline that includes all relevant aspects of life of all the groups within a community is another way of documenting our stories. A social history timeline that includes contributions of different groups within the community helps frame that community's social history.

**Media/Alternate Forms:** Many stories have traditionally been documented through television, newspapers and other media sources. Other less known forms of documentation include *corridos*, which, within Latin culture, were songs that told stories. Hip-hop and rap are also used as forms of cultural storytelling. The significance of these



### Principles

- The process should humanize and dignify peoples' stories



### Tips

- Respect the ownership of the story
- Make sure people feel comfortable with the venue in which they are asked to tell their story

### References

- The Theory Behind Our Work booklet
- Communications and Documentation tools



forms of documentation is that they refer to specific stories or situations, making them more real and less abstract.

### **Challenges of Documenting Our History**

There are many challenges that arise when documenting a people's history, one being the cultural bias about what the concept of documentation means. For example, there was a situation in which people were trying to take photographs of a group of Native Americans whose numbers had dwindled near the point of extinction. The response of the Native Americans was: "You are not preserving anything by taking our pictures."

In another incident, a group of women consented to have their stories documented through oral history. The writers changed the women's names, leading the women to believe their stories were being stolen. They had believed the stories would be used for a purpose other than to simply document their struggles, so the situation left them feeling offended.

# Visual Documentation Check-List

This tool provides a check-list to follow if you are documenting an event on your own.

## Documenting

- Being on time is very important. This gives you the chance to check the logistics and see what the lighting situation looks like, which will determine whether or not you'll need to adjust lighting or have your flash ready.
- Introduce yourself to the organizers and make them feel at ease with the documentation process.
- Arriving before the public helps attendees get used to having a camera present. Abruptly showing up after the event starts could make people feel nervous and result in them being distracted.
- Always be respectful. The event/meeting is not happening for your camera; you are there to record the event. Don't distract the participants and organizers; they shouldn't be aware of your presence. Designate areas where you can document without blocking people's view.
- When videotaping a meeting or lecture, it is highly recommended to use a tripod. It can get very tiring to hand-hold a camera for a long period of time. If it's a festival, handholding is acceptable if it's required for you to move around; however, it's typically more professional to use a tripod.
- You don't have to document the entire meeting. You should know in advance the key moments to document, so between those times, you can stop recording to save space and not over do it with the footage. But with that being said, remain on stand-by and don't leave the area. Being near the action gives you the chance to record any unexpected moments that you or the organizers hadn't predicted.
- Never take a picture of someone who doesn't want to be photographed.
- Flash photography may not be allowed in many situations. If it's a musical performance or dance, talk to the organizer and the performers about whether the use of flash is acceptable. The same goes with a conference, presentation or meeting. Even if flash is allowed, it should be used covertly as to not distract the participants.



### Principles

- We provide people with the tools to tell their own stories

### Tips

- If possible, have release forms available in different languages
- If your budget allows, hire expert photographers and videographers instead of using volunteers

### References

- The Theory Behind Our Work booklet
- Using Visual Communication to Promote Your Event and Why Documentation is Important tools



- For the majority of event coverage situations, it's advisable to wear black.
- Pre-plan taking a group photo. Think of a simple location with few distractions in the background and good lighting. Group shots can be stressful, so have an idea of how many people will be in the photo, think about how to pose and group them, and make sure no is blocked. Be careful with clothing colors as well; you don't want to group together three people who are all wearing black shirts as they might blend together. What's important is keeping the photo clear and making sure it's about the people.
- Don't over shoot, and really pay attention to what you are capturing. Having too many unnecessary photos and videos can be frustrating when it comes to editing after the event.

### **Editing**

- Decide which of the many photographs you have taken will be included in the final product, selections those that will best benefit your project. Consider selecting photos to share with your participants.
- Know in advance what size and resolution photos should be delivered in. Most high-resolution JPEG images can have a Photoshop setting of 12. If the photos are of a project or portraits of participants, they can be saved as TIFF. Name all images with the event name.
- While you can take some time in editing the videos/photos, it's a good idea to send or upload a few images the day after the event. Social media moves quickly, so quickly selecting a few images for posting or for a thank you email can be a great asset.

### **Archiving**

- All media should be saved either on a disc or on to an external hard drive.
- Always include the original, un-edited images and the edited images in separate folders.

# Preparing to Visually Document Your Event

This tool provides steps for preparing to document your event.

## Why document your project or event?

- It's important to have a visual record of your work and events.
- The finished product can be used for telling your story, project reports, grant applications, promotional material, and even as a thank you gift to those who helped with the event.

## Pre-planning Check-list

- Documenting your project or event requires a lot of pre-planning and careful execution. This usually means knowing where the event is taking place, how many people will be attending and if assistance for documentation will be needed.
- Know in advance how much access you will have. Some venues have restrictions about filming, and certain cultural ceremonies might be sensitive to any form of documentation.
- Have release forms ready in advance and make sure you have plenty with you at the event.
- Consider how many people you need to have on hand to document your event. If it's short and taking place at one venue, one photographer and videographer should be enough. If it's an all-day event, it's advisable to have at least two photographers and two or three videographers.
- Have a plan and schedule prepared to give your photographers and videographers so that everyone is on the same page about what needs to be documented.
- Have an idea of what you plan to do with all the media prior to the event. If making a video, have in mind what's important to capture, what you want to highlight, and if you plan to include interviews, have a list of potential questions ready.
- It may be helpful to have a few signs at the entrance informing people that the event is being documented and by entering the venue, they are agreeing to be photographed or videotaped. Examples of how to do this can be found online.



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- With your end project in mind, decide what kind of media you want delivered. Some photographers won't mind giving you unedited raw files, especially if they are volunteers. More established photographers will only send edited photos, typically in JPEG format. You may have to pay more for raw files or higher resolution photos. The same is true for videographers; they will either send you files via the internet, or you can plan to have them downloaded to a laptop after the event. It's wise to discuss in advance how you will be using the footage and how you want it delivered.
- Make sure all batteries are fully charged. Carry extra batteries and memory cards.

# Using Visual Communication to Promote Your Event

This tool provides ideas to consider for developing materials to promote your work or an event you are planning.

## PACKAGING YOUR EVENT

### Pick a Name that Embodies Your Event

- Make a list of names or adjectives that describe your event. Considering feedback from both young and old people who are leaders in the field pertaining to your project, narrow down your list to the top three.
- Decide whether your audience will feel a sense of ownership in the name you select. Even though it's your project, the audience must connect to the idea of the project in order to support it.
- Consider context; i.e. cultural, community or regional significance whenever possible.
- Keep in mind that clever and meaningful names are more effective.
- Progress names can be made by creating a word that consists of multiple names/languages; i.e. use the same word but in two languages.

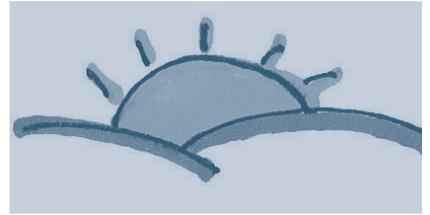
### The Use of Images, Colors and Typography

- Select images that have historic or cultural significance for your audience and that are relatable and easily identifiable
- Be mindful of the cultural significance of various colors; certain colors are taboo or can be associated with death, life, prosperity, etc.
- Fonts and graphics are their own language and will set the tone for your marketing materials; choose them wisely

## STEPS TO ENSURE SUCCESS

### Ask the Right Questions

- No one has all the answers; success comes from carefully thought out questions
- Have clear goals of what you hope to achieve and prepare questions that address impact and reactions
- Prepare additional questions that can be addressed if time allows



### Principles

- We give people the tools needed to make change in their communities

### Tips

- If you hire a graphic designer, make sure both you and the designer are clear on all steps suggested in this tool. Clearly communicate your expectation. You own the process, and having a good partnership with your graphic designer will put you on a path to success.

### References

- The Theory Behind Our Work booklet
- Using Visual Communication to Promote Your Event and Why Documentation is Important tools

### **Planning and Record Keeping**

- Keep a folder or small box in which to store event-related items, including print advertising, programs, clothing, hand-written notes, etc.
- File these items accordingly as you come across them as it will be harder to go back and track them down once the event is over

### **Utilize Your Networks and the Media**

- **Networks:** Your network is the people who are already doing work in your field; introduce your project to them and ask them to share it with their network  
*Examples: college clubs, local non-profits, church groups*
- **Media:** Using a PSA (public service announcement) or press release, publicize your event to local media outlets  
*Examples: minority radio stations, local TV news programs, city and government communications representatives*
- Distribute email blasts, flyers, postcards to potential attendees
- Utilize the power of social media: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can put your event in front of a large audience