

Storytelling and Belonging: Building Visibility of Calgary's Francophone Community

Sabine Lecorre-Moore

University of Calgary

sabine.lecorremoore@ucalgary.ca

This poster presents a thesis research-creation project examining how arts-based research can support Franco-Calgarian identity and cohesion within a minority-language urban context. Anchored in the history of Rouleauville, Calgary's former Francophone settlement, the project explores how contemporary community members negotiate belonging in a city where Francophone presence remains underrepresented. The poster introduces the project's methodological approach and projected artistic outcomes.

The research integrates visual art practice, participatory storytelling, photography, and textile processes as modes of inquiry. Community members will be invited to contribute portraits and personal reflections connected to language, migration, memory, and place. These contributions are conceived as collaborative knowledge-making rather than extractive data collection (Wang et al., 2017; Ingram, 2024). The collected materials will inform the creation of a large-scale textile artwork forming the central element of a site-specific exhibition at the Docteur Rouleau Residence. Selected works will be archived and later presented through a travelling exhibition. Situated within a transdisciplinary framework bridging anthropology and visual arts, the project positions research-creation as a spatial and cultural act that reasserts Franco-Calgarian presence within Calgary's urban narrative (Huot et al., 2025; Strand et al., 2024).

References

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- Wang, Q., Coemans, S., Siegesmund, R., & Hannes, K. (2017). Arts-based methods in socially engaged research practice: A classification framework. *Art/Research International*, 2(2), 5–31.

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Sabine Lecorre-Moore
Faculty of Graduate Studies



Project Context

Calgary's Francophone community has been shaped by early settlement and successive waves of immigration. While this diversity continues to renew the community, it also brings challenges related to cultural visibility, language shift, and fragmentation.

- Despite a long-standing presence, Franco-Albertan voices remain underrepresented in dominant narratives of the city and province. As a result, Francophone histories, places, and everyday experiences are often overlooked within Calgary's public and cultural landscape.
- This research examines how Francophone communities navigate visibility and belonging within a predominantly anglophone urban context.

Approach and Methodology

This project uses a transdisciplinary, arts-based research approach that brings together visual art, anthropology, storytelling, and community participation.

- Community members are invited to contribute images, stories, and reflections connected to place, memory, and identity. These contributions are developed through participatory art-making activities.
- Artistic creation functions both as a way of generating knowledge and as a public form of exchange. Rather than collecting stories as extractive data, the research prioritizes collaboration, reflexivity, and shared authorship throughout the process.

Project Approach

"This project uses participatory art and storytelling to anchor the Francophone community within Calgary's urban landscape, one shared portrait at a time."

Francophone community members are invited to share stories connected to place, memory, and everyday life in Calgary. Through photography, video, drawing, and short written reflections, participants contribute lived experiences rooted in their relationship to the city.

Art-making becomes both a research process and a public gesture. Rather than extracting stories as data, the project creates shared spaces where participants can see themselves represented within a collective narrative.

This collaborative process is grounded in dialogue and creative exchange.



Outcomes, Impact and Knowledge Sharing

Artistic Outcomes

This research culminates in a site-specific exhibition that brings Francophone stories into public view. The exhibition integrates:

- Photographic and narrative portraits
- Art installation created by the artist/ researcher
- Visual interventions extending into public space

Designed for the Docteur Rouleau Residence and its surroundings, the exhibition activates both the building and the urban landscape, inviting intentional visitors and passers-by to encounter Francophone histories and lived experiences.



Impact and Knowledge Sharing

- Participant engagement in art-making
- Exhibition attendance and public interaction
- Written reflections collected in a guest book
- Digital dissemination and archival preservation
- Creative outputs are archived to ensure long-term accessibility.



Contact Information
Sabine.lecorre-moore@ucalgary.ca