**Ethical Considerations and Recommendations**

**For Researchers using PhotoVoice**

**(can also be applied to Cellphilming)**

The following information regarding the ethics of using Photovoice as a method was taken from:

https://foodarc.ca/makefoodmatter/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/VOICES\_PhotovoiceManual.pdf

Many thanks to Elizabeth Cooper for her input.

With Photovoice, there are two ethical considerations:  
1) for participants (those taking the photographs); and  
2) anyone whose private property or image may appear in the photograph taken by the participant (in this case, the “subject” of the photograph).

In a Photovoice project, the organizers, participants and facilitators must understand the ethics involved for both participants and potential subjects of the photographs. This involves thinking about some important areas of ethical consideration: privacy, and protection against use of a person’s likeness for commercial benefit.

**Ethics for Photovoice Participants (their participation)**

As always, you must ensure that all participants are fully informed about the project they are participating in and that they freely give their consent to do so. Please see the Informed Consent Form for Photovoice Participants for details. If participants are taking the photos on a personal device, it is vital that the participants understand that the photographs they take are theirs to keep. If a shared device is used, researchers should provide participants with a digital or printed copy of the photo or obtain the consent of the participant to relinquish their photo. Photovoice participants can decide how their photographs are used after they are taken. In addition, the participants have the right to remove any of the photos they contribute at any point during the project or until a deadline for withdrawal has been conveyed to them. Research team members must ask the participants for the use of the photos in the future.

**Ethics for Those in the Community (potential subjects of photographs)**

1. Privacy

Photovoice participants must respect the privacy of those in the community. This includes BOTH an individual’s private space, such as the inside or outside of a home or workspace, AND the individual’s privacy while in a public space. This means that Photovoice participants should get written permission or document verbal permission before taking a photograph of: an individual (where the person is the main focus of the photo) AND inside or outside private property (again, where the property is the main focus of the photo). This includes family members and applies to places we often think of as “public”, such as stores, but are really private. A participant is not required to get permission when taking a picture of a group of people where individual faces are not recognizable or if the photographer is taking a photo of something and a person just happens to walk into the shot. In such cases, photo editing should be used to blur the individuals’ face.

2. Protection Against the Use of a Person’s Likeness for Commercial Benefit

Photovoice participants have the option to lend (or allow their photos to be copied by the researchers) their photographs to the Photovoice research team for safekeeping or for reproduction. It is unethical to use the photos on promotional brochures or websites without the participant’s permission.

**Obtaining Informed Consent**

Obtaining informed consent means that all participants have been fully informed about the project prior to their participation, including: who is conducting the research; how any information will be used; any potential risks, discomforts, and benefits of participating; compensation; how and when they can withdraw their participation and; contact information for questions. As with all research studies, participants must be aware that they can withdraw from project at any point in time unless a deadline for withdrawal has been conveyed to them. Withdrawing from the Photovoice project means that photographs and their associated captions are removed from the project. If analysis occurs in a group format, participants need to be informed that their contribution to the analysis cannot be withdrawn from the study after the focus group is over as it forms part of the context for information provided by other participants.

During a Photovoice project, informed consent must be collected from participants at the time of recruitment (before or during the first meeting) and before subjects are photographed. Participants need to also make sure to get permission from a store/property owner to take photographs on private property. If not possible, researchers need to take steps to ensure the property is not identifiable.

Please familiarize yourself with the following three examples of statements to include on the Informed Consent form; you will need to adapt the forms for your specific project and familiarize Photovoice participants with all the forms and ensure they are comfortable them when they take any photographs.

**For Photovoice Participants:**

Please provide them with the project’s Informed Consent Form, and include

Form #1: Photovoice Photography General Release Statement (amended if needed).

**For Those in the Community:**

Please ensure the participant is aware of Form #2: Photovoice Photography Subject Consent Form and Form #3: Photovoice Private Property Photography Release Form

**Personal Safety**

Photovoice facilitators should discuss safety issues with participants before they enter the community to take photographs. This can often seem like “common sense,” but it is important that people know that their personal safety and those of individuals within the photo are more important than anything else. Participants should always use their judgment and never put themselves in risky situations; meaning don’t stand in the middle of the street for that “perfect” shot and be cautious about where you travel in the community, particularly by yourself, in the pursuit of a photo.

**Confidentiality**

The facilitator should explicitly tell the participants that all conversations and discussions that are a part of the Photovoice study must be kept confidential.

**Anonymity**

Sharing photographs of personal experiences can be emotional for some participants. At the beginning of the Photovoice project, facilitators are responsible for informing all participants that they are each responsible for sharing their photo and their experience with all other participants during the sharing and discussion session. Facilitators should provide participants with the option to be anonymous when it comes time to display/exhibit the photographs in a public space. Ultimately, the facilitators are responsible for protecting the identity of the participant(s), which means they may need to alter the project as necessary.

**Form #1: Photovoice Photography General Release Statement**

I give permission for the (PI’s name) to use my photographs developed during the (Title of Project; REB # ). They are free to use the photographs for project related reports, exhibits and presentations.

Signature:

Date:

**Form #2: Photovoice Photography Subject Consent Form (to be printed on University letterhead)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , give permission for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, acting on behalf of the (PI’s name and Title of Project), to take my photograph. By signing my name below, I understand and agree that unless otherwise stated in writing, (PI’s name) assumes that permission is granted to use my photographs for project related reports, exhibits, and presentations that are likely to result from this project (Project name). I understand that researchers, policy makers, students, and possibly people from my community will see my photo.

This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at (306-585-4775 or [research.ethics@uregina.ca](mailto:research.ethics@uregina.ca)). Out of town participants may call collect.

Signature:

Date:

If subject is a minor

Parental Consent: Name (printed):

Signature:

Date:

**Form #3: Photovoice Private Property Photography Release Form (to be printed on University letterhead)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ give permission for the individual \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, acting on behalf of (PI’s name), to take photograph(s) on my property for the purpose of the research project, (Project Name). By signing my name below, I understand that this photograph may be used at some point in the future for a public display.

This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at (306-585-4775 or [research.ethics@uregina.ca](mailto:research.ethics@uregina.ca)). Out of town participants may call collect.

Signed:

Date: