

The Northern Lights Method

Practical companion: a community photography starter kit

Start with curiosity. Build one skill. Give participants control over what they make and share.

This companion expands Dre Erwin's existing 2026 blueprint into activities a school, library or community host can use. The core stays the same: technical grounding, an intentional mission, curation and reflection, and an optional shared circle.

Stage	What the facilitator does
1. Technical grounding	Teach one useful skill and give time to try it.
2. Intentional mission	Offer a simple prompt with room for each participant's choice.
3. Curation and reflection	Let participants choose their images and describe them in their own words.
4. Shared circle	Offer a respectful gallery walk or conversation; passing is welcome.

For youth and mixed-age groups

Adapt the language, session length and equipment for the group. Educators and local community facilitators choose what fits. Children can draw or use a shared camera with an adult.

Purpose and boundaries

The activities support opportunities for creativity, reflection and connection. This is a non-clinical learning resource, not a therapy qualification or a substitute for health care. Participants are never asked to disclose trauma.

[Original two-page blueprint](#)

[Club enquiries and resources](#)

Run your first session

A 60-minute plan with a daylight or indoor photo mission

Minutes	Plan
0-5	Welcome; explain the route, equipment, choices and image-sharing preferences.
5-15	Teach one skill. Show two examples and let participants practise.
15-35	Complete one photo prompt in the approved space. Staff supervise the group.
35-45	Each participant chooses one image or drawing and adds a title.
45-55	Optional sharing circle. Ask what the creator noticed; listen without interpreting.
55-60	Save the image privately, check out with the group and choose the next prompt.

Equipment that fits your setting

- Begin with available phones, tablets or shared cameras. A drawing option means a device is never a barrier.
- For a larger club, the original blueprint suggests 5-10 durable DSLR or mirrorless cameras. Build toward that as resources allow.
- Use individual folders or SD cards with the host's storage controls, chargers, a screen for review and a simple sign-out sheet.

Before the group arrives

Confirm staff supervision, an accessible space, approved boundaries, weather alternatives and who manages stored images. Choose a local contact for support if a participant becomes distressed. Follow the host's existing safeguarding and emergency procedures.

A steady opening

"You choose what you photograph and what you share. You can use a camera, draw or work with a buddy. We will ask about the picture you made, and you can pass."

Activity 1: Find the light

20-30 minutes | Focus and exposure

Find a small place where light changes what you notice.

Make the image

- Look for a window, reflection or patch of daylight. Stay on the approved route.
- Photograph the same subject from two safe positions. Tap or adjust focus if your device permits.
- Choose one photo. Notice how the light changes the mood or detail.

Reflect - optional

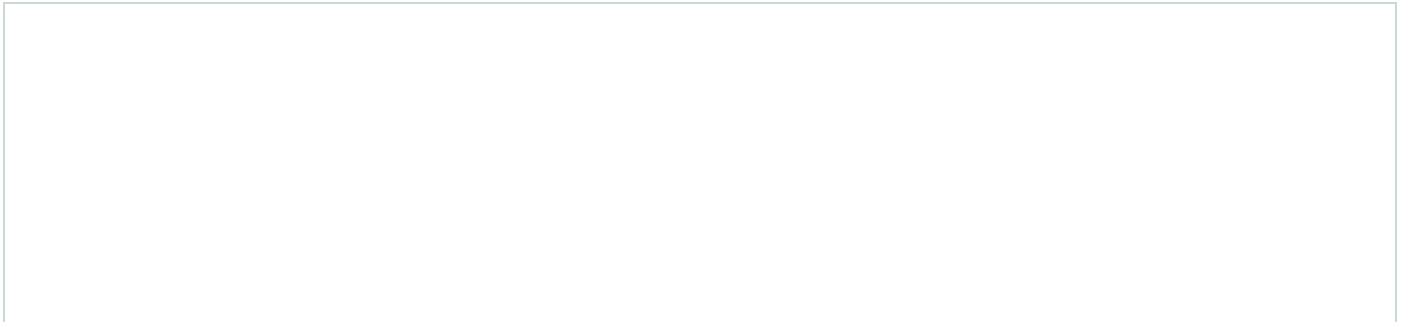
- What did the light reveal?
- What made you choose this version?

Adapt it

Use a torch indoors, a reflective object or a drawing. Never point a lens directly at the sun.

My photo title: _____

A sketch or notes about my image:



I would like to: keep this private / share within the group / discuss a display.

Activity 2: Something I appreciate

20-30 minutes | One clear subject

Photograph an everyday object or place you appreciate.

Make the image

- Pick a subject you are comfortable discussing. It can be a tree, favourite colour or useful object.
- Take a wide view, then move closer if it is safe.
- Choose a frame that helps another person notice what you noticed.

Reflect - optional

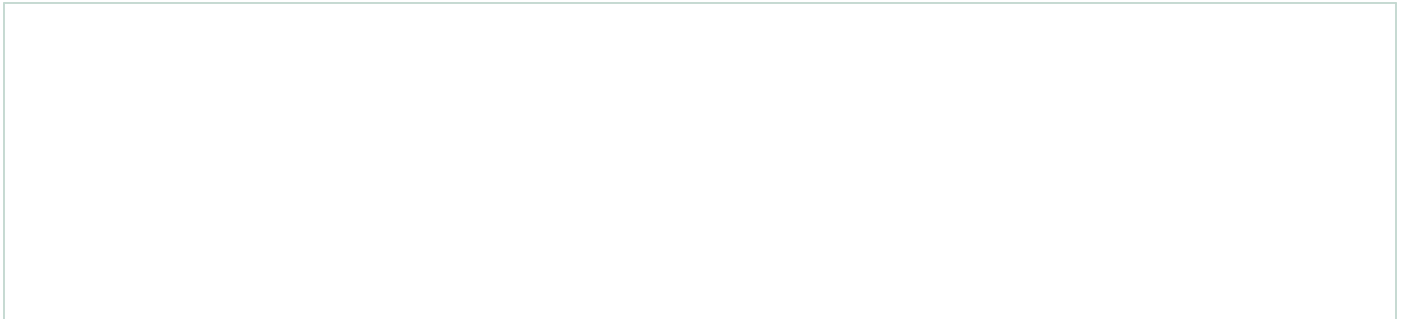
- What do you appreciate about it?
- What would you name the photo?

Adapt it

Bring a familiar object into the room or sketch it. No personal or family story is required.

My photo title: _____

A sketch or notes about my image:



I would like to: keep this private / share within the group / discuss a display.

Activity 3: A new perspective

20-30 minutes | Angle and composition

Show the same ordinary subject in two different ways.

Make the image

- Choose a safe subject that everyone can reach.
- Take two views: from the side, from seated height, or with a different background.
- Compare the frames. Decide which version tells your story most clearly.

Reflect - optional

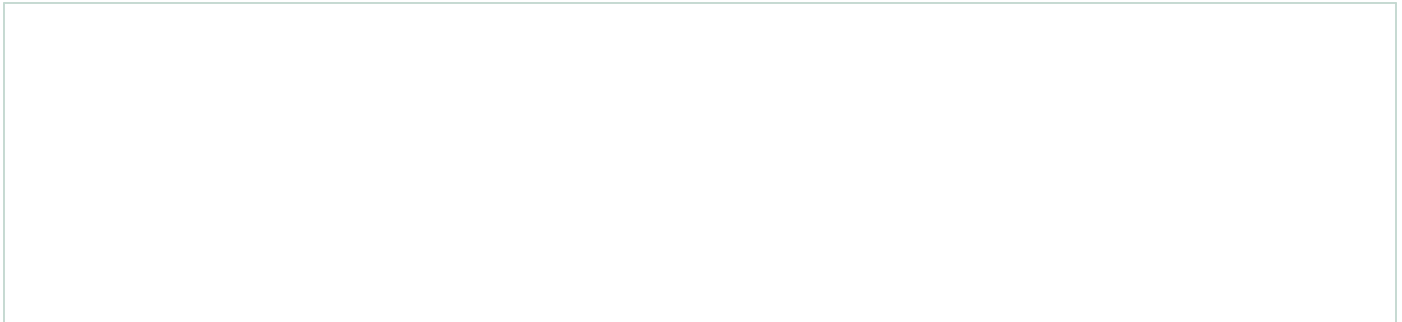
- What changed when you changed your view?
- Which detail did you miss the first time?

Adapt it

Rotate an object or use two drawings instead of changing physical position.

My photo title: _____

A sketch or notes about my image:



I would like to: keep this private / share within the group / discuss a display.

Activity 4: My community in three frames

30-45 minutes | Photo storytelling

Make a three-photo story about a place you know.

Make the image

- Choose one setting: an approved walking route, classroom or community room.
- Make a beginning, middle and ending using objects or places.
- Arrange the photos and add a short caption or spoken description.

Reflect - optional

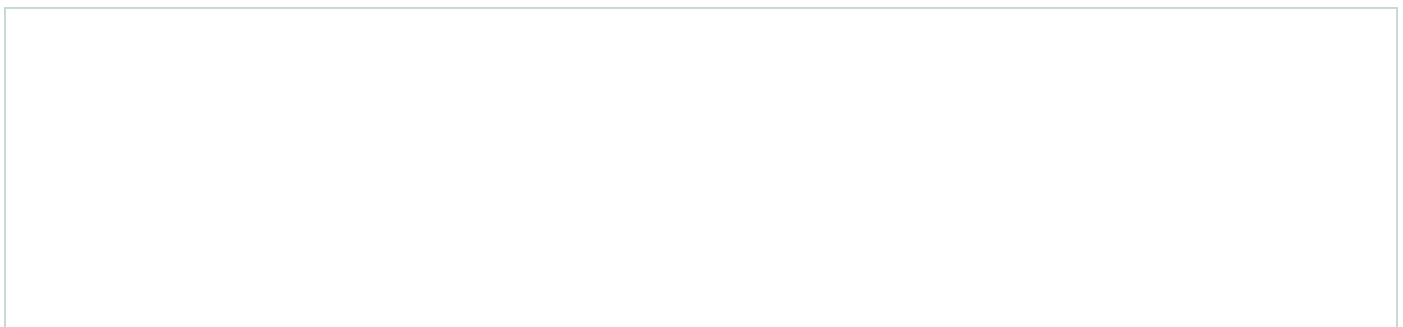
- What would you like someone else to notice about this place?
- What is the story in your sequence?

Adapt it

Use indoor objects or drawings. Photograph cultural places, objects or practices only with local guidance and permission.

My photo title: _____

A sketch or notes about my image:



I would like to: keep this private / share within the group / discuss a display.

Activity 5: A photo to return to

20-30 minutes | Selection and captions

Choose an image that reminds you of a place, interest or moment you value.

Make the image

- Review your own images, or create a new one during the session.
- Select one you are happy to keep. A simple object or landscape is enough.
- Give it a title and decide whether to keep it private, share in the group or display it with permission.

Reflect - optional

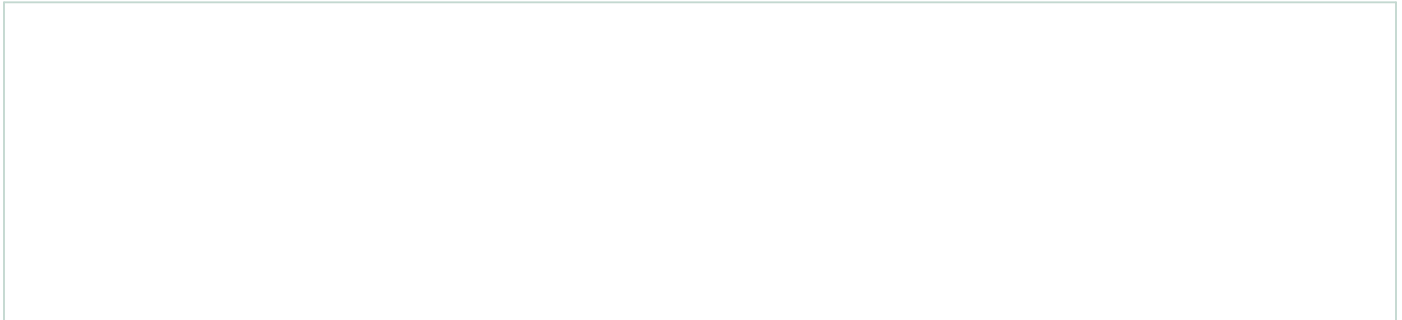
- What do you want to remember when you see this image?
- Where would you like to keep it?

Adapt it

A drawing, collage or spoken description works. Participants can decline the prompt or choose a neutral image.

My photo title: _____

A sketch or notes about my image:



I would like to: keep this private / share within the group / discuss a display.

Make participation welcoming

Facilitator checklist

- Offer choice in subject, equipment and sharing. Never rank photos by whose life story is most personal.
- Ask creators what their image means to them. Do not diagnose, interpret symbols or make clinical conclusions from a photograph.
- Use praise for effort and observation. Ask before offering technical criticism.
- Ask local hosts what cultural sites, objects or practices should not be photographed or shared. Do not invent Indigenous teachings or translations.
- Keep a supervised group on an approved daylight route. Night photography requires a separately planned activity with appropriate supervision, transport, weather and route arrangements.
- Provide seated options, buddies, drawing, indoor objects and extra time. Invite participants to describe access needs privately to the host.
- Use the host's support procedures if someone asks for help or becomes distressed. The photo activity is not a crisis intervention.
- Keep participant names and photographs private unless the appropriate permission has been recorded for the specific use.

Useful phrases

"What caught your attention?"

"Would you like to say more, or keep it as it is?"

"You can pass."

"What would you like others to know about this image?"

After each meeting

Record attendance, what worked, device issues and the next prompt. Invite anonymous feedback: Was it easy to join? Did you enjoy creating something? What should change next time?

Participation and image choices

Template for the host to review with its approved consent process

Host organization and facilitator: _____

Activity / date / location: _____

Participant name: _____

Parent / guardian, where required: _____

Reply contact: _____

Record each choice separately

☐ Yes ☐ No - Participation in the described activity.

☐ Yes ☐ No - Taking photographs that include this participant.

☐ Yes ☐ No - Sharing approved images inside the activity group.

☐ Yes ☐ No - Showing approved images at a named local display.

☐ Yes ☐ No - Publishing approved images on the specific channels written below.

Named display / channels: _____

Image credit / name preference: _____

Photos selected for sharing: _____

A participant can still join without agreeing to public image use. Permission for one use does not cover another use. The host records the agreed images, audience and channels and explains how to request a change for future use.

Participant agreement / signature: _____

Parent or guardian signature, if required: _____

Host acknowledgement and date: _____

Use the organization's approved permission, storage and safeguarding processes. This sheet records preferences and is not a replacement for those processes.

Keep the club going

A four-session pilot and a practical review

Session	Skill and prompt	Keep
1	Hold steady / Find the light	One titled image.
2	One clear subject / Something I appreciate	An image and one optional sentence.
3	Angle / A new perspective	Two frames to compare.
4	Sequence / My community in three frames	A small group gallery with agreed sharing choices.

Review with the local host

- How many participants returned, and what helped them join?
- Did everyone have a workable equipment or drawing option?
- Which prompts were enjoyable or uncomfortable? What should change?
- Can a local staff member lead the next session? What resources are needed?

Simple session record

Date and prompt: _____

Number attending / number returning: _____

Equipment or access issues: _____

Participant feedback (non-identifying): _____

Next facilitator / next date: _____

Share the learning

A short report can show participation, photographs created with permission and what the host learned. These are program observations; do not label them evidence of clinical treatment effects.

Credit and enquiries

Companion activities prepared for Dre Erwin Photography, October 2026. Core framework: Dre's Northern Lights Method blueprint. [View the original](#)
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