

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

By Mireille Massue

A friend and I decided to take a day trip to see the **Petroglyphs**, one of the largest known concentrations of **aboriginal rock carvings** in Canada, located in Peterborough, Ontario. While we were looking at a particular engraving, one of the tour guides joined us. What was fascinating about the conversation, out of a single line, a story was told.

Designs and **patterns** of these visual images were forms of **symbolic communication**. Today, our need to communicate with symbols and visual images continue. Symbols allow us to have a shared language to explain the meaning of mathematical equations, religion and where the bathrooms are around the world. The most important thing is that symbols represent a universal language that allows all of us to communicate from a position of strength.

Visual images play an important part in the way we learn. The shapes, colours, depths, proportion, use of space, borders, dominant image all have impact in the way we think and feel. One such **visual tool** is called a **graphic organizer**.

A **graphic organizer** is a one page visual outline for people to fill in with related ideas and information. The **benefits** of graphic organizers is to reinforce the important information and concepts in an easy to learn manner, tap into ones own creativity and clarify thinking.

Graphic organizers allow everyone to work in their own learning style at least part of the time. These graphical teaching tools aid in understanding the mixtures of preferences and strenghts of **learning styles** such as **Multiple Intelligences** and **VAK** (Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic.) Through pattern recognition, themes and association **visual learners** can see where the information is and how it's connected; **auditory learners** can teach others by sharing what they've learned through their interpretations of the patterns in the visual image and **kinesthetic learners** can create a visual interpretation of the information presented.

There is an immense amount of information on **Graphic Organizers**, **Visual Communication**, and **Visual Literacy** on the Internet. **Search engines** can help you find the resources you need. Two search engines I use along with **Google** (<http://www.google.com>) are **Ask** (<http://www.ask.com>) and **Katoo** (<http://www.kartoo.com>) When you type in a keyword like "visual literacy" in ask.com, it provides you with suggested search terms. Kartoo is a visual meta-search engine with a highly visual interface. The main screen allows you to browse quickly through a number of images with minimal paging while on the left side of the screen presents a list of topics and keywords

Specific **keywords** and **search terms** are essential. Some terms you may want to use: visual literacy; visual communication; graphic organizers; visual templates, printable templates; business graphic software; graphic organizers for math, arts, language, writing, vocabulary, critical thinking, science; types of graphic organizers, story maps, venn diagrams, cause and effect, flowcharts, mindmaps; thinking maps; graphic guides; graphic coaching tools; graphic organizers for kids, and printable graphic organizers.

Two **software programs** I use that give me the flexibility of creating graphic organizers from scratch and provide templates for immediate use are **SmartDraw** (<http://www.smartdraw.com>) and **Mindmanager from Mindjet** (<http://www.mindjet.com/us> .) For the most part **SmartDraw** is very easy to learn, use and do. You can choose to create your own visual graphic and there are plenty of templates like flowcharts, bar graphs, forms, calendars, mindmaps and even floor plans if you're not into creating from scratch. SmartDraws web site includes types of business graphics with a definition and an explanation of how it is used. **Mindmanager from Mindjet** appears in the **The Centre for Learning and Performance Technologies Top 100 Tools** (<http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/recommended/toolbox.html>) Mindmanager is excellent to use for brainstorming, time management and project management.

Templates save you time. They are already created for you to use. All you have to do is fill in the blanks. **The Critical Thinking Company** (<http://www.criticalthinking.com>) offer reproducible graphic organizers for writing, language, arts, social studies, math, and science. Check out the title **Organizing Thinking Book** by **Sandra Parks** and **Howard Black**. You can get these templates in either book or CD format. For **Microsoft Office** users, there are quite a few templates for Word, PowerPoint, Microsoft Publisher and Excel (<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates>)

There are plenty of **printable templates** you can download free of charge. You may need Adobe Reader (<http://www.adobe.com/products/reader>) to open them. Here are a few links that offer graphic organizers for free.

<http://www.carla.umn.edu/cobalrt/modules/strategies/gorganizers/PROTO/overview.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graphic_organizer ;
http://www.educationoasis.com/curriculum/graphic_organizers.htm
http://www.edhelper.com/teachers/graphic_organizers.htm
http://its.leesummit.k12.mo.us/graphic_organizers.htm ;
<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/graphicorganizers>
<http://www.pgcps.pg.k12.md.us/~elc/dolgraphicorg02.html>
<http://www.thinkport.org/Technology/template.tp>
<http://www.eduscapes.com/tap/topic73.htm>
<http://freeology.com/graphicorgs/index.php>
<http://www.openc.k12.or.us/reaching/tag/pdf/graphicorganizers.pdf>
<http://collaboratory.nunet.net/nssd112/oakterrace/imc/big6.html>
<http://www97.intel.com/en/ProjectDesign/InstructionalStrategies/GraphicOrganizers/>

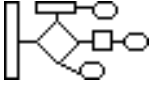

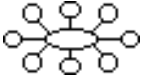
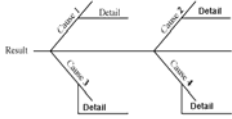
Books from **Suzanne Turners Tools for Success – A Manager’s Guide** from McGraw Hill; 2002 (<http://www.mcgraw-hill.com>) has over 90 tools such as learning styles, mindmaps, flowcharts to help you identify what tools to use in which situation. **David Hyerle** has two great books both by the Association for Supervision & Curriculum (<http://www.ascd.org>) **Visual Tools for Constructing Knowledge** and **A Field Guide to Using Visual Tools**. You may also want to check his web site (<http://www.mapthemind.com>) for his explanation of what he calls **thinking maps**. Any book by **Tony Buzan** will be worth your while. His latest book by Gower Publishing (www.gowerpub.com) is called **GrassRoots Leaders: The BrainSmart Revolution in Business**. **Visual Thinking: Tools for Mapping Your Ideas**; Crown House publishing, 2005 (<http://www.randomhouse.com/crown>) by **Nancy Margulies** and **Christine Valenza** has removed the “I can’t draw” excuse. The authors show you how you can create pictures from circles, squares and lines. Check **online book sites** for books on **reproducible graphic organizers, visual communication, thinking skills and visual literacy**.

Graphic Facilitators or **Graphic Recorders** are like scribes from days of old. Through their visual drawings they help people **SEE** what they mean. People can come together to make decisions faster and have a point of reference for further dialogue. **Graphic Facilitation Blog** at <http://graphicfacilitation.blogs.com> has more information on this visual way of engaging people in learning. Download a catalogue from **The Grove Consultants International** (<http://www.grove.com>) and watch an example of how graphic facilitation is done http://www.grove.com/learning_center/resources_video.html

What I have learnt from **Global Learning**, is that **simple is better** and the **world of high tech** is useless in remote areas of the world. With markers and flipchart paper or even using a stick on the ground, we can all draw pictures. It all starts with a single line.

A **Line** is a simple yet powerful visual tool that can make our thinking visible. It can be used as an essential element for motion across space. Draw an **arrow** and you have given the line direction. Lines can be shaped into various forms such as circles, squares rectangles and triangles. With **circles**, you can draw a face, a globe, a circumference, a stool, a clock. You can place a **dot** in the center of a page with the idea of filling your canvas with potential and opportunities. **Squares** allow you to draw the body of a figure, a calendar, a window to the world and a table used for community building.

Connecting information with symbols we get a variety of ways to **describe, compare/contrast, evaluate, classify, analyze**, and make **decisions** regarding our information. Here are a couple of examples:

	<p>Flowcharts: combine squares, lines, triangles and circles you get a diagrammatic representation that illustrates the sequence of operations to be performed and highlights the bottlenecks or inefficiencies where the process can be streamlined or improved.</p>
	<p>Venn Diagrams: combine two or more overlapping circles. Venn Diagrams are useful for examining similarities and differences in stories, conflict resolution.</p>
	<p>Mindmaps are made up of circles and extended lines. They help you explore an idea and organize thoughts that are relevant to a central topic.</p>
	<p>Fishbone Diagrams is a visual illustration that shows the relationship between a topic and the various factors related to it. Sometimes called cause-and-effect diagrams when they are used to represent a group of factors or causes that come together to influence some result or effect. .</p>

Pictures create a **visual language** that connects us to the world we live in. No matter what the skill, everyone can participate. Together we can share our stories through our experiences, all by starting with a **single line**.