

Unlocking the Power of Story: Connect, Engage, and Share

Endow Manitoba Conference Session, April 25, 2026 with Sarah Leeson-Klym

Elements of Story

- Character(s) - Connect with the main character
- Plot - The action where the character faces Challenge, makes a Choice, experiences the Outcome
- Imagery - The story moments. This is the time and place, emotion, senses, and sources of hope that make the story more evocative.

Tell Me About A Moment...

Use this prompt to develop a story moment. Ask these questions to make it more compelling:

- DETAILS: What did you see, hear, smell, touch? Where were you, who was with you?
- ACTION: What were you doing?
- EMOTION: What were you feeling?
- MEANING: Why did you pick this moment?

Story-Catching Questions

Going deeper:

- What are you most proud of?
- What gives your work meaning?
- What values does that experience connect with?

Stretch the imagination

- What would be missing if our organization didn't exist?
- If money was unlimited, how would we spend it?
- Imagine your vision (your hoped-for future). Paint me a picture of what it's like.

Listening for the challenge - choice - outcome, prompting the story moments.

- Can you take me to a moment when that happened? Who was there, what was happening?
- Who believed in you to make that change happen?
- What's different now compared to be before?

Ethical Storytelling

Three questions to ask yourself as you listen to and share stories.

- Who does the story belong to and do we have permission to tell it?
- How are we going to use the story, does the story owner know this?
- Are we telling the whole story? (Prompt: Does the story give the character agency? Is your / your organization's role in the story authentic?)

Resources to learn more

- TED Talks on Stories:
https://www.ted.com/playlists/756/why_do_we_tell_stories
- The Power of Story. This article and the work of Leading Change Network and Marshall Ganz strongly influenced the session content.
<https://commonslibrary.org/the-power-of-story-the-story-of-self-us-and-now/>
- Cate Friesen, local storytelling superhero.
<https://www.thestorysource.ca/>

Curious about other ways we can incorporate story in our work?

- Narrative Inquiry, for community engagement and research.
 - Participatory Narrative Inquiry:
<https://www.workingwithstories.org/>
 - Jean Clandinin, leading narrative inquiry researcher
https://youtu.be/RnaTBqapMrE?si=5Dz-0E_bb2iQzoHR
- Public Narrative and Story-Based Change for advocacy and systems change.
 - Leading Change Network:
https://leadingchangenetwork.org/resource-center/?practice=public_narrative
 - Centre for Story-Based Change:
<https://www.storybasedstrategy.org/what-is-storybased-strategy>
- Story methods for evaluation.
 - Storytelling Evaluation:
<https://www.storytellingevaluation.co.uk/>
 - Personal Stories:
<https://www.betterevaluation.org/index%20e.php/methods-approaches/methods/personal-stories>
 - Most Significant Change:
<https://www.mande.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2005/MSCGuide.pdf>