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Journal for the Story Telling Project

Just a few insights as I went through the process of collecting stories:

It was an interesting adventure as I ended up learning a lot about the art of listening, seeking information and learning when my voice is needed. At times it was tough, as people did not want there stories recorded but wanted to tell their stories to someone. It made me realize that this project was about building a community and bringing people together through listening to each other…. ACTUALLY LISTENING. In a world where connections are becoming more and more about a keystroke on social media the ability to speak and listen is getting lost. I never knew the value of listening until I participated in this project. By doing this I built up skills in dealing with people in a different way. Be it connecting with them to set up meetings, then meeting with them to listen and during the listening learning to read body language or the silence to know when I need to speak or prompt for more. Recognizing when I need to stop and when I need to ask for help. After the meeting is over being able to look through the story and then break them down into categories and recognizing what can be used and what should be left out. Being able to piece the stories together in the best way possible so that is all makes sense while keeping the integrity of the story.

I spent a lot of hours researching and listening to other stories to ensure that I could collect the stories efficiently and correctly. I appreciate the meetings and check in’s as it kept me on track and allowed me to ask questions when I needed too. I also appreciated being paired with Michelle as it was a great fit and we worked well together. I look forward to working with her more in the future.

All in all I learned a lot while working on this project and will continue to learn as I move forward. This project has given me skills and tools that I can use in my everyday life and as I work towards becoming a teacher.

**A break down of time :**

Research and listening to other storie : 10 hours

Meetings, storytellers and mentour meetings: 20 hours

Collecting stories, even if they were not recorded: 20 hours(James Dean, Kelsi, Kurt, Christina)

Transposing the stories and categorizing them: 15 hours

Entry 1

Had my fist meeting with Robin and Mike to find out about the “Connections Art of Storytelling” directed study. I am excited and nervous about what I am going to be doing. I hope I can find some good people and get some good stories. I am thinking that I would like to get stories of inspiration and love. I know that there are a lot of heart tearing stories out there, which are very important in the process of healing and all that, but I would like to learn about the things that people have overcome and how it has changed them and their perspectives. Heidi mentioned that I should go and talk to James Dean as he has a lot of good stories to share. I have left him a Facebook message and now I shall wait.

I wish I had a little more information on what I am doing. It seems a little daunting to be sitting there and waiting to listen. I am excited to get this started and am full of ideas of the people I want to listen to and collect stories from. Kelsie, Pam, the inmates at the prison, James Dean, Tara Brown… just to name a few. It would be interesting to get Pam’s story as she is heading into the prison with me and I would like to get her input before she goes, after we have gone and then a few weeks later. On that note, being able to talk to the inmates would be pretty amazing. I am sure they will have some different sorts of stories to tell. The reason they are in prison, the things they are working on to change…

Kelsie is next on the list as she has overcome a lot in her life thus far. Drug addiction, rehab, dealing with many different things and yet staying strong to her struggle. She is an inspiration to many and her story needs to be told.

Tara Brown, author, mother, owner of the biggest dogs I have ever seen in my life. She has a lot of amazing stories to tell from her trips around the world both before writing her books and now that she is travelling as an author.

Lyn would be another good person to chat with; she has a lot of insight for the natural world. Knows a lot of history and has been all around Kamloops and beyond collecting data, collecting other stories and journaling in her field journal.

Well that about sums up my thoughts on the first meeting. I am excited to get started and get into the groove of things. I am a little unsure of being paired up as I feel like it may be a little intimidating to those who are telling the story. When I am dealing with the people I know I would rather be alone but when it comes to people I do not know it may work out better in teams… We shall see!

Entry 2

James Dean has finally gotten back to me and I will be meeting him this Friday. I am excited to see what he will have to say. So far I have spent hours talking to people, collecting ideas and researching different ideas, listening to pod casts, CBC radio, reading books. There are a lot of different way to collect stories from journalistic style of asking questions to just sitting and allowing the person to talk. While I am not sure on which method would work best, as it really depends on the person and being able to read the individual speaking, I am going to wait and see what happens. Let is be as organic as possible!!!

Entry 3

I have met with James Dean and I must say it was exhausting! Not in a bad way but in a good way. The kind of way where you know you have grown. One thing that really struck me during the storytelling is the fact that I never knew how much I do not listen. I mean really listen, no questions, and no thoughts of my own, just open my mind and listen. Sitting back and listening allowed James Dean to talk without thinking about what I was thinking….. I spent a lot of my time smiling and nodding, prodding the talking along with gestures, soft movements and silent encouragement. James Dean was a great person to start with as he had the ability to talk without needing me to say anything. We spent 3 hours, 1 hour just chatting and 2 hours story telling. My head was buzzing as I left the room, full of great visuals based off of what James had said. I left the meeting feeling that I had really learned about James, his poppa and grandma, mother, uncles and his culture. I have formed a new respect for who he is and have a new appreciation for his experiences. I am really glad he shared his stories and am very impressed with his strength, ability to let things go and his love of his people. I will begin to transpose the stories and placing them into categories tomorrow. Thus far I feel like there are at least 3 different categories: 1. Family 2. Culture 3. Public Speaking.

Things I would do differently:

* Get a room with less distractions: there is a little bit of background noise from people walking the hall and the fact that there is a wind tunnel noise when the door is closed prevents the door from being closed.
* If I am dealing with someone I do not know having a pre meeting would be beneficial
* Get the paperwork set up before we being so that we can spend more time on the stories
* Have tea, coffee, water available to set the tone of comfort

Entry 4

I have been transposing for hours. It is taking a lot longer then I expected but it is interesting to listen to the stories again. I feel like I am learning even more and the words are more meaningful. I like the fact I can put the stories into groups. One thing I noticed is the use of the term “White people”… I do not feel it can be used in the finished product but I did not want to change his story by asking him not to say it. This would not allow the story to be organic and I still have a lot to work with even if I take it out.

Entry 5

I have been to the prison and due to the confidentiality laws I am not able to get the stories from inmates. This makes me a little sad, as their stories are incredible. I will be meeting with Kelsie tomorrow to see if she would like to participate.

Entry 6

I spent a total of 6 hours with Kelsie and my head is spinning. She talked a lot about what she has gone through but has decided that at this time she is not waning to be on tape. It is a little disappointing to talk to someone for so many hours only to have him or her turn around and not want to participate. That being said I totally understand her changing her mind, as it is her story to tell. She went through a lot with her addiction and I will keep the lines of communication open on the off chance that one day she will want to talk.

During this meeting I learned a lot about separating myself from what she is going through or went through. I learned that this is her story and I need to give her the platform to speak. That being said I am pleased to know she is seeking help for what she is going through and has a lot of support. I have taken the websites and some names of the help she is getting so that if I encounter others who are suffering with similar issues or need help I will have the tools and ability to lead them to where they may be able to get help. Kelsie also offered to speak to any one I come across suffering with addiction, as it is part of her recovery and she is happy to help.

I am finding as I collect stories or reach out to people to get stories that this collecting is creating a community. A community of people giving and taking with words and friendship. Listening to someone’s story is an intimate thing as they are allowing you to know a piece of them. They are also allowing you to make a copy of that piece and have it forever. It is actually a very beautiful thing and I am very happy to be apart of it.

In regards to self-care, I am finding the story collection to be a tiring event but well worth it. It pushes me to think differently and be accepting of other people’s truths. It also forces me to take a back seat and not try to fix what I am hearing. For example listening to Kelsie I wanted to reach out and find solutions for her mental health and drug addiction. But that is not what I am there to do. I am there to listen and that is itself is helping as being able to speak is healing in itself.

Entry 7

Had a meeting today with Mike and Michelle. I am excited to be paired with her as we both seem easy going and up for the challenge. I am still unsure how it will work with two people collecting stories, as it feels intimidating, at least it would for me, but I am thankful to have a partner when dealing with people I do not know. I am going to try and get a hold of Christina, a woman Mike knows, to collect her stories with Michelle, as she wants to tell her story. I am a little nervous as I do not know her nor do I know what she wants to say. I will be emailing her as soon as I get her address….

I am also very excited about seeing Sugar Brown!!! I have been able to track down some of his music online and it sounds amazing. I also cannot wait to hear the story that Mike recorded as by the sounds of it; he is a super interesting character!!

Entry 8

I have emailed Christina and heard back very quickly that was nice. I will be meeting her this Thursday and Michelle will be there as well. Neither of us knows what to expect but are excited to be collecting this story. This is Michelle’s first collection so we have decided it would be good if we both just sat and listened. The meeting will be at my house, which is great and eliminates the sound issues I had in the classroom.

Entry 9

Today went well!!! We met with Christina and she has some great stories about her dreams. This meeting went very differently then I expected as I expected her stories to be different, an issue or something traumatic, but they were light and wonderful. I am very pleased with the fact that things went so well. We all got ourselves a tea, sat and chatted like old friends around the kitchen table. This worked very well as it was comfortable and you forgot the recorder was even there!

At the end of the meeting Michelle and I both talked about how great things went and the fact we want to meet with Christina again and collect more stories. She had a lot of interesting things to say as she had spent most of her life living and helping out people on the reservations. She also spent a lot of time collecting pictures and stories from people in her travels and used them to educate others on First Nations peoples. We are hoping that at some point this summer we will be able to see her slide show and listen to her teachings.

I also love the fact that Christina has pictures to go along with her stories. This allows for a visual along with the oral and really helps to drive her stories home making them remember able in a different way! I am excited to see the pictures paired with her podcast or on the website.

I still need to get her signatures on all the paperwork. All though I am sure the fact I got a verbal agreement is enough. I also need to go to her house this week and take a picture of her pictures.

Entry 10

I am meeting with Kurt today to collect his stories although I am getting the feeling he is going to Kelsie and not want it recorded…. We shall see.

I was correct. After a day of walking and talking he has decided to not tell his story on record as of yet. I did have the recorder going but he has asked me to delete it. His story is one of pain that has lead him to where he is today. Even though he is quite successful in life from the outside, he has a great job, a house and a family; he is stuck in his own head and not sure on how to deal with things. I am proud of his for being able to talk about what has been going on, as it seems that as he is speaking he is working it all out in his head. I have made the suggestion that he seeks professional help and offered to get in touch with Kelsie as her issues are similar to his. He is not ready for that step but has let me know he is seeing a counselor.

This story collection was tough as I wanted to help but cannot. Speaking about his past as a child and seeing how it connects and affects him, as an adult is a hard thing to listen too. His past is full of pain seeing how it affected him, as a child is devastating. It makes me connect his stories to those in the prison who had experiences starting as a child that lead them to the life of crime. It really makes me think of the connections of having a stable childhood or, if not, having the tools skills needed to get through what they went through.

In Kurt’s case he went through abandonment from his father, abuse from his stepfather, mental abuse, resulting in sever depression and anxiety. This anxiety leads him to drugs, which he has struggled with for 12 years. He almost died a few years ago from an overdose and still is struggling to not take drugs. This is all very hard for me to imagine as I do not struggle with his issues and yet I find myself, as usual, wanting to solve the issues. Again this is not my place and I can only do so much. I only hope in a year from now I will meet with him again and there will be more to his story and he will be in a better place. It is important to me to get these stories out as so many people are effected these same issues. If we are able to give a voice to others it will allow them to know that they are not alone and that there is hope. There is always hope.