

Collective Storytelling Harvest

Art Hive Symposium 2014*

Bringing stories to life through a collective story harvest process is a way of increasing the learning in our communities. It builds our capacity for listening and group learning. This is an ideal way to surface many insights, innovations, and “ah-ha's” that exist beneath the surface of our stories and to take our learning to a deeper level – both for those telling and those listening. As a participatory process it creates a strong connection and shared understanding for those involved.

During the Art Hive Symposium we asked pre-selected storytellers to respond to this invitation: We would like your story about participating, running, supporting, or dreaming of an art hive. Not a presentation – really just a story inspired by art hives.

From Amanda Fenton's "[Storytelling Collective Story Harvest To Go](#)" Guide: A number of stories are shared in small groups and we work with a set of specific themes to harvest each story. Each of the participants either harvests one of the themes or is a witness during the storytelling and then shares back to the storyteller and small group. Finally, we come together to converge our learnings across all the stories.

Storytellers:

- Rosemary Reilly, Applied Human Sciences, Concordia University
- Stephen Huddart, McConnell Foundation
- Jean Tait, Art Can Heal
- Stephen Legari, La Ruche d'Art
- Rachel Chainey, Coop Le Milieu
- Tanya Brann-Barrett, Communications, Cape Breton University

Themes (listening “lenses”):

- Diversity and creativity in finances and models
- Space, materials, and policies
- Practices of inclusion
- Opportunity, surprise, and magic
- Learning
- Principles and subtleties
- The whole story



Sensemaking across themes

Learning

Reflect: make learning visible.	site of learning. Diversity of voices.
Process + outcome -- allows the invisible to be more visible.	Nature of space itself: food, comfort, mismatched chairs.
Closure - physically, your body needs this.	Be open to experience.
Put lid on the jar!	Be willing to be vulnerable, afraid.
Re-ordering helps us integrate what just went on.	Skill share.
Together -- continuing to build community.	Trust what arises, what you can give.
Commonality of experience, even indifferences.	Learning comes through immersion.
Duality of artist and facilitator roles.	Autonomy -- trust that people have what they need when they come in.
Start of from personal experience and reach beyond.	Inclusivity is sought (?) and never really happens.
Element of hospitality.	Constantly evolving, depends on who comes through the door.
All different kinds of people are at home.	Has to be room for people gather/make for their own sense of purpose.
Home/place.	Don't have to make people happy.
Materials. Embody the principles of the work.	Modeling has to be genuine: offered uniquely.
Materials are a collection of things that aren't pristine.	Ebb+flow participation - notions of safety + belonging in flux.
Personal transformation experiences. Needs a	

Diversity and Creativity in Finances and Models

Funding didn't necessarily come up.	financial resources.
Youth in rural communities & art -- there is no 'right' model because always many differences.	Without community investment, no success. What does your community have to offer?
Model based around archives.	Discover common threads in your resources.
Flexibility - important.	Monetization doesn't have to be 'bad'.
Donated Supplies.	Arts based research -- merging academic and 'store-front' learning.
Funded by Canadian Funding Agency. Grants.	Research important to sustain the work.
Finding people and supplies never an issue.	Merging research & practice.
Co-op model - revenue & sustainability.	
Community resources as important as	

Practice of inclusion

Messy comfort.	Connection to neighborhood and resources.
It's a process.	Mutual support.
Acknowledging.	Deepening communities.
Involving all senses.	_____ is evolving process.
Breaking boundaries.	Sense of home.
Through space too community.	Sharing food - safety.
Accessibility.	I belong here.
Place is safe.	

Magic

Found objects w/ meaning synchronicity -- drop hints.

Native person singing was moved -- overcome obstacles!

Of native people + their stories + symbolism + as white child felt the loss of this -- art brings it back (communication, feeling, connection).

The expert comes when the time is right.

Community from people. Change + new understanding. Respect.

Having faith that things will work out.

Holding with an open palm. Snake reminds us to go to uncomfortable places to transform.

Synchronicity -- Janis as a teacher. Her 1st experience. Shared here in a new way. Putting intentions out.

Empty shops, greedy landlords, transform ideas by bringing.

Working in circles with book. Making connections.

The SOUL in all things.

Invest in art flow - curiosity, not predictability. "Curiosity is the currency".

Uncomfortable in a place of new ventures -- animated setting.

Collector of stories "Day of the dead".

2 worlds coming together. How?

"We are all the same because we are all different".

Connections between individuals. We're actually engaged.

When we share a part of ourselves -- inspires people -- ripple effect.

15 - 30 year olds. Youth + disconnection.

Surprise! Bees in their holding patterns.

Look! + excitement. Different visions shows opportunities for dialogue.

N.S. Mill towns / rural countryside -- disconnect.

Engagement.

Principles and subtleties

Low space for flow, like a ship, living entity.

Sometimes things are missing.

Need isn't always obvious, not always easy to articulate, but once it comes together...needs time... space as entity... promotes curiosity.

Curiosity is welcoming.

Develop relationship to 'space'.

Space is multidimensional.

Saying 'hello' to space.

Space for emotion/container for...

SPIRITUAL SPACE. Relationship space.

Hospitality - "buzzing" for access / host at door.

What the space teaches about ourselves.

Locked spaces.

Can there be a shift in how it's done so that it (the space) can be welcoming for the hive?

Food in the space.

Dealing with homelessness, see them as an artist before their social problem.

Language itself propels the problem.

Facilitator, open lines and communication.

Operated a hive in backyard.

No overt advertising.

Subtle networking.

Beehive, a form that constantly changes.

Models are perfect in their own ways.

Direction - towards positivism.

Space reflects the environment where it sits.

Space reflects the environment where it sits.

Resources of people.

Who comes? Not needing to know the individual story.

Collective anonymity.

Beehive as metaphor.

Collective autonomy.

Space, materials, and policies

“Don’t ask, you don’t get, or never know”.
Public spaces - holistic space, mismatched furniture. Involve family + friends.
Connected - inclusivity - intergenerational.
Partnerships.
Pot-latch - exchanges (participatory)
Give-away.
Symbolic objects.
Rituals.
Freecycle - yahoo group.
Circular economy.

The Whole Story

Welcoming nature.
New filter.
Different person in the space.
Family like.
Space familiar + fresh at same time with changes.
Invigorating.
Physical touchpoint of flow of giving.
Become something collectively + individually.
Responsible for space + each other.
flow/circularity
Find the art is data mind.
Become alive. See beyond data and metrics.
Feeling.
Things happening before notice happening.

Exchanges of material. Abundance.
Storage problem.
Resources: ask participants to contribute (ex. elastics - styrofoam cups, etc.)
“making something from nothing” - mona - making use of the smallest things.
Space is/can be a relational space.
Publicity - Facebook, family and friends.
Start small.
Cart.
Pop-up art hive.

Abundance - gifts, food, energy, sharing.
It grows in own way.
Beyond any one way.
Seeding.
Time. Start with pictures we have to work through.
Poem.
\$ then food. Connection better.
Intention - synchronicity.
Historical photos.
Sacredness.
Hosts.
Leaving place.
Instincts.
Food + welcoming.



**Compiled by Elizabeth Hunt and Ezra Bridgman (percolab) from the notes of participants at the 2014 Art Hive Symposium. Photos by Kim Auclair. Creative Commons.*