



Collaborative Story-Gathering Template

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Introduction

This is an intersectionality and equity-based story-gathering template. It outlines a facilitated process to share and document insights and stories among people committed to collaborative, equitable and inclusive leadership, specifically in the context of partnerships and networks.

Background

The Collaborative Story-Gathering Template was developed as part of the Collaborative Leadership in Practice (CLiP) project. For more information and resources about CLiP, visit www.clip-lcp.org

The project recognized that research and resources about collaborative leadership can perpetuate an inequitable status quo when they speak for and not from the voices of folks who have lived experiences of marginalization. As such, valuing a story-based approach was a way for us to address and change this power dynamic. By story-sharing and story-gathering throughout the project within contexts of open dialogue about equity and power relationships, and by locating ourselves in the work, we attempted to work in a way that more strongly favours and builds collaboration, equity and anti-oppression.

This template was developed and used within the project for story-gathering sessions that sought to honour and learn from the experiences of both individuals and collaborative groups committed to healthy partnerships and equitable leadership building. On the CLiP project website, you can read stories and reflections from a story-gathering session held with community partners of the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI).

Audience

The template can be used by members of any group, partnership or network and by community-based researchers working in collaboration with them.

Purpose

This template outlines a process to invite and facilitate people to share stories which locate their experiences and insights within intersecting social structures, in order to cultivate co-learning and unlearning and to strengthen our capacity (understanding, skills and personal connections) for collaborative, equitable and anti-oppressive leadership.

How and when to use this template

Stories are the foundation of how we receive, learn, and share our understandings of the world.¹ They are typically how we communicate and relate with individuals, groups and communities.

Storytelling within teams, groups, community meetings or organizations supports co-learning and connection with each other, around any topic, towards more effective collective work for social change.

While story-sharing and story-gathering can be used in various ways, this process template puts emphasis on:

- centering stories as legitimate forms of knowledge;
- affirming the self as powerful even within structural systems of power;
- fostering more lateral relationships by connecting and reconnecting from a place which honours each person's diverse social location and lived experience; and
- better understanding what works, what doesn't work and how better to work together for collaborative, equitable and inclusive leadership.

When preparing to facilitate a story-gathering session following or adapted from this template, answer the following questions with approaches that enhance the objectives listed above.

- Which co-facilitators can best establish a welcoming and anti-oppressive space?
- What location is both convenient and comfortable for those who may feel marginalized?
- What timeslot is best (and does the session length need to be adapted)?
- What supportive resources are necessary (to ensure accessibility and inclusion)?

The process described in this template may be used in the early stages of a group/partnership or (as in the work of CLiP) to affirm and learn with members of an existing group/partnership.

Tips for using this template

- It is very important that the group commits to creating a safe, accessible and trauma-informed space which is supportive of honest and candid sharing. Review what risks participants may feel and seek ways to address them.
- Feel free to adapt this template for related purposes including: a narrative and/or creative approach to evaluation, a guided process of community-building, a motivational approach to individual and collective healing, and much more.

¹ *Strong Helpers' Teachings* by Cyndy Baskin (2016) & *Story Proof: The Science Behind the Startling Power of Story* by Kendell Haven (2007)

Process design for 2 hour story-gathering session

Session Objective: share and document insights and stories from people who practice Collaborative, Equitable and Inclusive Leadership – specifically in the context of partnerships and networks.

What to expect at the Story-Gathering Session...

- We will explore: What does it mean to bring an equity lens to our partnership efforts? What have we done differently (even in small ways) to center the experiences and decision-making of equity seeking groups within our partnerships?
- We will document: stories, images and words that reflect an anti-oppression/equity approach to partnership work.
- We will co-create: a paper quilt which highlights the key themes emerging from our stories.
- A bit like a focus group - but more collaborative and creative!

Detailed Story-Gathering Session Agenda Template

Time	Activity	Details and Key questions	Documentation
2pm (15min)	Icebreaker and Introductions	Invite each person to share: a) My name b) My pronoun ² c) Which animal am I most like in a group, and why.	
2:15 (15min)	Consent process,	If documentation will be taken, read and gather informed consent and photo permissions forms. a) Do you have any further questions about what we are doing today, and how we will document and share [if at all] the discussions and stories from this session? b) Do you have any concerns? c) Do you consent to participate?	Informed consent handout. Photo permission form.
2:30 (5 min)	Agenda review	Review agenda and invite any questions	
2:35 (15min)	Comfort Guidelines w/ talking piece	Pass a talking piece and invite each person to share while recording on a flipchart: - “What will support me to feel comfortable to participate openly during this session?” Review the list and invite further reflections, additions or edits.	On flipchart
2:50 (10min)	Pair sharing	Reflective Question (post on a flipchart for all to see): - What is different about working with others (partnership) in ways that centers the voices (experiences) and decision-making of justice-	None

² For information about preferred gender pronouns (PGPs) and how to invite people to share pronouns in a go-around, see Creating Trans*-Inclusive Classrooms <http://feminist.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/FGSS-Trans-Inclusive-Classrooms-2.pdf>

		<p>seeking (equity-seeking) groups? In pairs, share a story from your own experience that illustrates these differences. Note: differences may be large-scale and/or in the smaller details – highlight whatever you found to be most important.</p>	
3:00	BREAK		
3:10 (30min)	Story-time w/ talking piece	<p>Share a story from your personal experience that illustrates what is different about a partnership that centers the experiences and decision-making of equity-seeking groups do differently?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start by telling us a bit about yourself, your role. • Don't rush the details of the story. 	<p>Documentation is optional. Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No documentation (just everybody listens!) - Pass around a tape recorder, and invite people to turn it on if they want a recording <i>in their own words</i>. - A notetaker records on a laptop.
2:40 (5min)	Story appreciations	Quick go-around on feelings and/or appreciations	None
3:15 (25min)	Paper quilt³	<p>Reflective question: What actions support sharing of voices and decisions? Related things to reflect on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the ups and downs of doing this kind of partnership work? - What supported change/success at the beginning? What supported change/success when you faced challenges along the way? <p>Invite people to reflect on their own, based on their experience and the stories shared, then to share their thoughts in groups of 2-3 people, then to draw paper quilt squares. Then facilitate the sharing and posting of the squares, followed by discussion (as time permits).</p>	<p>Option to flipchart or transcribe the descriptions people share while posting their squares.</p> <p>Flipchart any final analysis discussion.</p> <p>Photograph the final paper quilt.</p>
3:55 (5min)	Check-out	What am I taking away from this session?	None

³ See facilitation guide for a Paper Quilt and analysis process in [The Power of Reflection](#) (HC Link, 2016)

Adapt the *sample informed consent handout* below to reflect the process and documentation you plan:

Sample - Informed Consent Handout

CLiP Story-Gathering Session

Why are we doing this story-gathering session?

Many people involved in partnerships and networks with a commitment to equitable co-leadership have not had the time, or the resources, to share their experiences widely. We recognize how busy you are with the important work that you are doing in your local communities!

The CLiP project was created to facilitate the sharing of your experiences and insights across Ontario. We want to leverage your *practice-based knowledge*, along with insights and tools from published articles and resources we are gathering, to help others who want to deepen their understanding, develop their skills, and strengthen their networks to nurture more collaborative, equitable and inclusive partnerships.

CLiP's story-gathering sessions will contribute to this. CLiP will publish individual stories on our website, in publications and at learning events. We will also look for insights and themes across the story-gathering sessions and use these to inform the development of useful tools and templates about collaborative and equitable leadership.

We hope that this session will inspire you to continue sharing your stories locally and provincially. If you agree, we would also like to welcome you to share your stories as a speaker at one of CLiP's upcoming webinars or in-person learning events.

Who is leading the CLiP project?

Health Nexus and the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) are pleased to partner on this two-year bilingual project. Both organizations work provincially and have extensive experience in partnership work. With CLiP, we are deepening our commitment and our capacity to support non-profits (ourselves included) to integrate anti-oppression and decolonising frameworks into both organizational structures and partnership work.

What will happen during the session?

As an ice-breaker, we will generate a paper mosaic that reflects the unique motivation you bring to your shared partnership efforts.

Next, we will invite you to do give us some "bad advice". In a fun way, this will help us identify what can "get in the way of" or "set back" building inclusive and equitable collaborations when developing partnerships.

Finally, we will invite you to share stories that illustrate examples of what your partnership(s?) has done differently to address power imbalances and to bring marginalized groups into the centre of your collaborative leadership.

Are there any risks to participating?

We recognize that there are elements of risk for participants if your story has not been shared in your group before, and in particular if the person telling the story is a member of a marginalized community.

The CLiP project team also recognizes that:

- We all share a colonial context which continually reproduces systemic violence and oppression against members of marginalized communities; and
- Intersecting experiences of oppression (e.g. race and disability) often create situations of increased marginalization and vulnerability.

To minimize risk and to support members of marginalized communities, we will invite you to set comfort guidelines as a group at the beginning of the session. Also, you are not required to share any story and will always have the right to “pass”.

It is also possible that after sharing a story, a participant may experience challenging emotions. A community resource list is being given to all participants, as a support to those who may experience some distress after participating in the story gathering process.

Are there any benefits to participating?

We expect that the participatory nature of this session will leave you with a rich appreciation of the variety of perspectives within your partnership, more clarity about pitfalls to avoid, and deeper insights about your own strengths and successes as a partnership/network.

You may also benefit from knowing that your local experience is contributing to efforts to advance equity at a province-wide level.

Who will know what I said or did during the session?

The short answer to this question is: everyone. This is NOT an anonymous research activity or focus group. It is a story-gathering session. Although names will not be attached to the stories when they are published, many of the stories will be identifiable – especially to those people within your partnership and community. We will be seeking your final permission to share your story once we have transcribed and edited the stories, and you can request that your story be withdrawn at that time. Once you give permission to share your story, it will be shared widely and publicly through the internet and in resource documents.

What if I change my mind about participating in the session?

You always have the right to “pass” on answering a question, or to leave at any time. And you will not be pressured to tell us why.



Please note that we encourage you to ask questions if you are unclear or uncomfortable about anything.

What happens after the session?

We will document all the stories, and share them back with you individually to seek your approval to publish them. We will also analyze the results of all the story-gathering sessions we have completed with different partners and search for insights and patterns that can help us build new knowledge and resources to support collaborative equitable leadership.

Where can I get more information?

The lead contact for this story-gathering is Gillian Kranias at Health Nexus. You can reach Gillian at 1-800-397-9567 ext. 2247 or by email at g.kranias@healthnexus.ca

For more general information about the CLiP project, visit www.clip-lcp.org

Resources:

Alexander, Margaret (2008). *An Integrated Anti-Oppression Framework for Reviewing and Developing Policy: A Toolkit for Community Service Organizations*

<http://www.oaith.ca/assets/files/Publications/Intersectionality/integrated-tool-for-policy.pdf>

Crenshaw, Kimberle. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Colour

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039>

Fenton, Amanda (2013). *Collective Story Harvest: A quick reference guide to hosting a Collective Story Harvest.*

<http://amandafenton.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Collective-Story-Harvest-To-Go.pdf>

Kranias, Gillian (2016). *The Power of Reflection: An Introduction to Participatory Evaluation Techniques.*

HC Link <http://www.hclinkontario.ca/images/powerofreflection.pdf>

Marlowe, Jay (2010). *Using a narrative approach of double-listening in research contexts.*

http://www.narrativetherapycentre.com/Documents/Doublelistening_research_MARLOWE_J.pdf

North York Community House. *Digital Storytelling Guide* <http://www.nych.ca/perspectives/>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2014). *Ideas Into Action: Engaging in Courageous Conversations*

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/IdeasIntoActionBulletin2.pdf>

Reynolds, Vikki (2013). “‘Leaning In’ as Imperfect Allies in Community Work”. *Conflict and Narrative: Explorations in Theory and Practice*,1(1), pp.53-75. Retrieved from

<http://journals.gmu.edu/NandC/issue/1>