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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING GUIDES ON THE LEGACY OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS



These guides are produced as a part of a grant awarded to the Oral History Centre at the University of Winnipeg by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. The Foundation's mandate is to provide resources to address the unresolved trauma experienced by residential school Survivors, their families and communities. The Foundation helps Survivors and their families to speak about their experiences on the legacy of residential schools and to be heard. Digital storytelling encourages understanding about the residential school legacy and contributes to healing for Survivors, their families and communities.

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GUIDE 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON THE LEGACY OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

nindibaajimomin

**Creating and Sharing Digital Stories
on the Legacy of Residential Schools**

Guides to Support Healing Across the Generations | 2014

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*“WOMEN NEED TO come back to the drum.
This will help them in their healing. We need
to believe that her heartbeat will be the healing
energy that will help our families and Mother
Earth to heal.”*

(Claudette Lizette Michell, 2010)

This project is dedicated in memory of our dear friend and sister digital storyteller, Claudette Michell (1966 – 2012), Rattle That Glows in the Dark and Turtle Shooting Star Woman. Claudette was a supportive, resilient and beautiful woman who touched the lives of everyone who knew her, with her wise and powerful words and the healing energy that she carried with her drum. Claudette, like all of the teachable moments she shared with us, will be forever remembered with love, honour and respect.

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It takes a tremendous amount of courage and strength to publicly speak about our personal experiences, especially ones that are so close to our hearts. To all of these storytellers, Miigwetch.

An extra special thank you is extended to the six kiskinohamâtôtâpânâsk storytellers for their work toward increasing awareness around the intergenerational effects of residential schools and promoting intergenerational reconciliation and healing.

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Our appreciation extends to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, in particular the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, who has been a great supporter for our work on the intergenerational experiences of residential schools.

Thank you to Lisa Murdock who graciously agreed to author these guides and to those who have assisted in the translation of our work into Cree and Ojibway, including Diana Steinhauer, Steve Andres, Jason Parenteau and Neil McLeod.

These guides are part of the nindibaaJimomin: Creating and Sharing Digital Stories on the Legacy of Residential Schools project, which have all been made possible through funding received by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.



INTRODUCTION

Prior to the 1990s, open talk about children's experiences at Indian residential schools was an exceptionally rare occurrence. The silence surrounding the legacy of residential schools was broken, however, in 1991. With an entire nation watching and listening, national Aboriginal leader Phil Fontaine took a courageous first step forward and called attention to the abuses he endured while attending residential school. This brave and powerful public disclosure proved to be an epic revelation that

would forever change the course of history for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada.

The ripple effects of the residential school system are being felt by present generations of Aboriginal peoples. While knowledge about the effects of residential schools on survivors is mounting, little is known about the intergenerational effects of the schools on children and grandchildren of survivors (Stout and Peters, 2011).

These digital storytelling project guides were developed in response to an identified need to explore the intergenerational effects of residential schools on children of survivors. They are intended to show First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and communities how to conduct digital storytelling projects with children of residential school survivors.

These guides are grounded in the belief that digital storytelling can be a profoundly healing process. They are meant to be used for digital storytelling projects involving small groups of participants.

While the aim of these guides is to provide children of survivors with a forum in which to share their experiences and tell their stories about the legacy and intergenerational effects of residential schools, they may be adapted and used for projects involving residential school survivors.

The information contained in these guides was adapted and compiled from the research proposals, final reports, project notes and presentation documents from the three digital storytelling projects that explored the intergenerational effects of residential schools.

It includes quotes and insightful considerations from the women and men who participated in their respective digital storytelling projects, and then gathered as a group when the projects had ended, to talk about their lessons learned and reflect upon their digital storytelling journeys. The results of this discussion, along with the many conversations that took place in and around the different chapters of each of the projects over the past three years helped to formulate the subject matter and organization of these guides:

“It’s about bringing more awareness around the degree of the intergenerational effects ... I used to be the first one to say, years ago, well I didn’t go to residential school, so I was never affected. Until I actually started to sit down and look at my family, and look at the generations. It’s like, ‘Wait a minute.’ There’s something that’s still happened here. It’s not something that I could claim directly, but it’s that family link ... you’re still carrying that forward into the next generations.”

What is Digital Storytelling?

Oral tradition, the passing of knowledge from one generation to the next by speaking, is a valuable way for Aboriginal peoples, and all cultures, to learn about their life, their culture and their history.

4 Digital storytelling, the art of combining oral tradition with digital technology, is a community-based, learner-centred approach to generating knowledge. It involves using computer software to create a 3-5 minute video to illustrate a personal story.

By blending voice-recorded, first-person narratives with a collection of still images, video clips, music and sound effects to create meaningful stories that are powerful, compelling and emotionally engaging, digital storytelling can be an effective tool to educate people about the history, life experiences and unique perspectives of Aboriginal peoples and communities.

Digital storytelling first emerged as a grassroots movement in the early 1990s, when digital technology started to increase in popularity and decrease in price.

By creating education and awareness around particular issues, digital storytelling has been used to disrupt narratives of Canadian history, recognize injustice, celebrate resistance, and influence social change for the betterment of Aboriginal peoples.

It has been used to demystify stereotyped representations about Aboriginal peoples; to address health, social and environmental concerns; and to restore and reclaim our unique and varied cultures, languages and histories (Dion, 2004; nDigiDreams, 2013).

Limitations and Advantages of Digital Storytelling

One of the limitations to digital storytelling involves technology. Even in the best of times, technical glitches with computers, recording devices, image projectors and other technological equipment will happen.

Likewise, the internet may present a few challenges for digital storytellers, particularly in rural and remote communities where internet access is intermittently available, if at all. Limited and interrupted internet access can present problems for storytellers who want to review and download programs and other project related materials from the internet.

Digital storytelling does require the use of technology to produce digital stories. As such, video storytellers will require a basic understanding of how computers work and general knowledge about performing basic computer operations, such as opening, saving and transferring electronic data files.



“THERE’S ALWAYS GOING to be issues with technology. So, it’s never going to be perfect ... It’s the process of doing the project that’s important and, of course, doing the digital story, because it’s everyone’s creation. But we’re not going to reach perfection because of technology.”

Despite the technological limitations associated with digital storytelling, there are several advantages to using modern technology for telling stories.

One major advantage is the potential to reach broad audiences, many of whom may be hindered by written materials, in relatively short periods of time. Through the use of multi-media sources such as radio,

television and the world-wide web, the visual and audio stories that are created through digital storytelling can be shared far and wide, instantly and simultaneously.

Modern technology increasingly is being used to capture the attention of younger generations who tend to rely on social media as part of their daily routine. When used in a positive manner with good intentions, digital storytelling can have a powerful impact in terms of messaging.

“In each of the projects, we’ve had different technological issues ... With [the second] group, we had no audio person ... But [the first and third] groups had audio technicians, sound rooms ... Most communities won’t have a sound room and can’t do all the jazzy things that go on with a technician.”

Digital storytelling is extremely versatile. It can be done in either video or audio format; it can be done anywhere where there is access to digital technology, including at home, at work or at school, and even



6 on a hand-held device; and it can be used to reach people of all ages, social groups, and languages.

Perhaps the most important aspect of digital storytelling, at least for residential school survivors and their children, is the healing that happens while going through the digital storytelling process. With the proper emotional and cultural supports in place, digital storytelling can contribute to personal healing and intergenerational reconciliation.

Digital Storytelling and Intergenerational Reconciliation

Researchers and communities are increasingly recognizing the healing properties of storytelling, for both individuals and groups. Sharing stories

with others is not only about sharing personal experiences and lessons learned; it is about sharing hope. Storytelling is part of the healing journey, and it can influence self-esteem, self-confidence and personal growth (Acoose *et al.*, 2009; Anderson, 2004; Gray *et al.*, 2010; nDigiDreams, 2013).

When grounded in oral tradition and Indigenous history, digital storytelling has the power to lead to individual and collective healing. It is a culturally appropriate, safe and effective way to collect and share Aboriginal traditional knowledge, and more importantly, to lift the burden of silence surrounding the legacy of residential schools. Through the act of remembering and the re-telling of stories associated with residential schools, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples can embrace their traditions, tell their

stories, and re-right Canadian history. They can explore, express and better understand the ways in which the multi and intergenerational effects of residential schools pass through survivors and children of survivors, many of whom are parents and grandparents themselves, and affect not only parenting and coping, but also the ways in which they exercise resiliency (Stout *et al.*, 2012).

Digital storytelling presents an opportunity for Aboriginal peoples and communities to continue sharing their unique learning and understanding about how their inherent means of being and practicing has been disrupted by residential schools, and how Aboriginal peoples are now reclaiming their oral histories and storytelling (Stout *et al.*, 2012).

7 Oral storytelling is a respected means of knowledge transmission in many Indigenous cultures. As such, digital storytelling resonates with Aboriginal peoples and communities as an effective means of intergenerational healing and reconciliation. It instigates a journey toward reclaiming and remembering our traditional relationships to ensure that the next generations do not forget about the legacy and intergenerational effects of residential schools, but can move forward and discontinue the many forms of silences (Stout *et al.*, 2012).



“When we saw our videos up there for the first time, you realize just how powerful, how big of an impact those stories have. I don’t know if any of us had any dry eyes.”

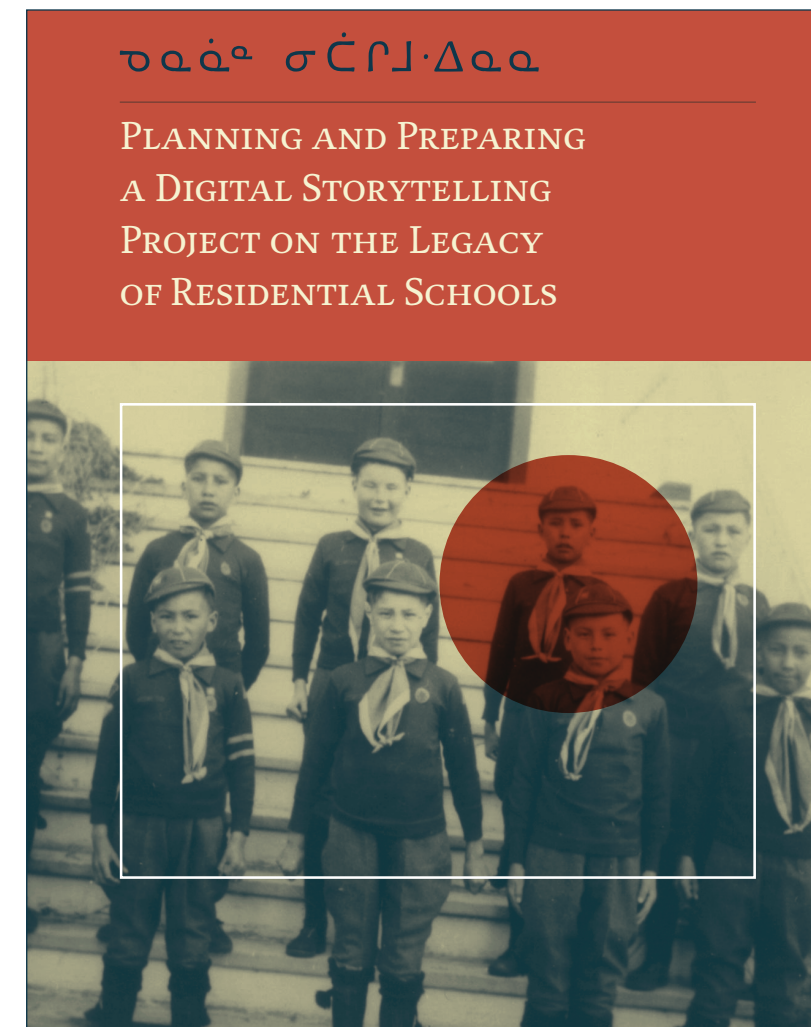
OVERVIEW OF GUIDES

GUIDE 2

Planning and Preparing a Digital Storytelling Project on the Legacy of Residential Schools

This guide offers insightful information about planning a digital storytelling project and preparing for the creation of digital stories to express ideas and experiences about the legacy and intergenerational effects of residential schools. The idea of facilitating a learning circle to

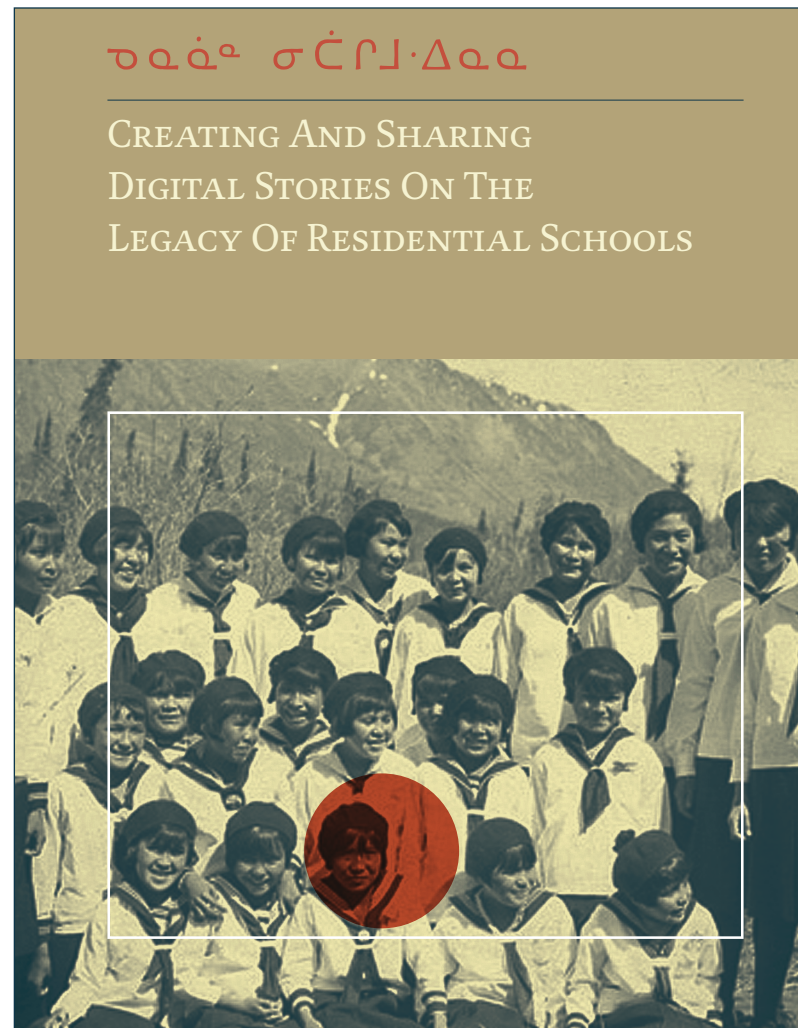
generate knowledge and to get project participants started on defining their stories is discussed. Also discussed in this guide are key considerations for project facilitators who are planning to embark on digital storytelling as a small group project.



Creating and Sharing Digital Stories on the Legacy of Residential Schools

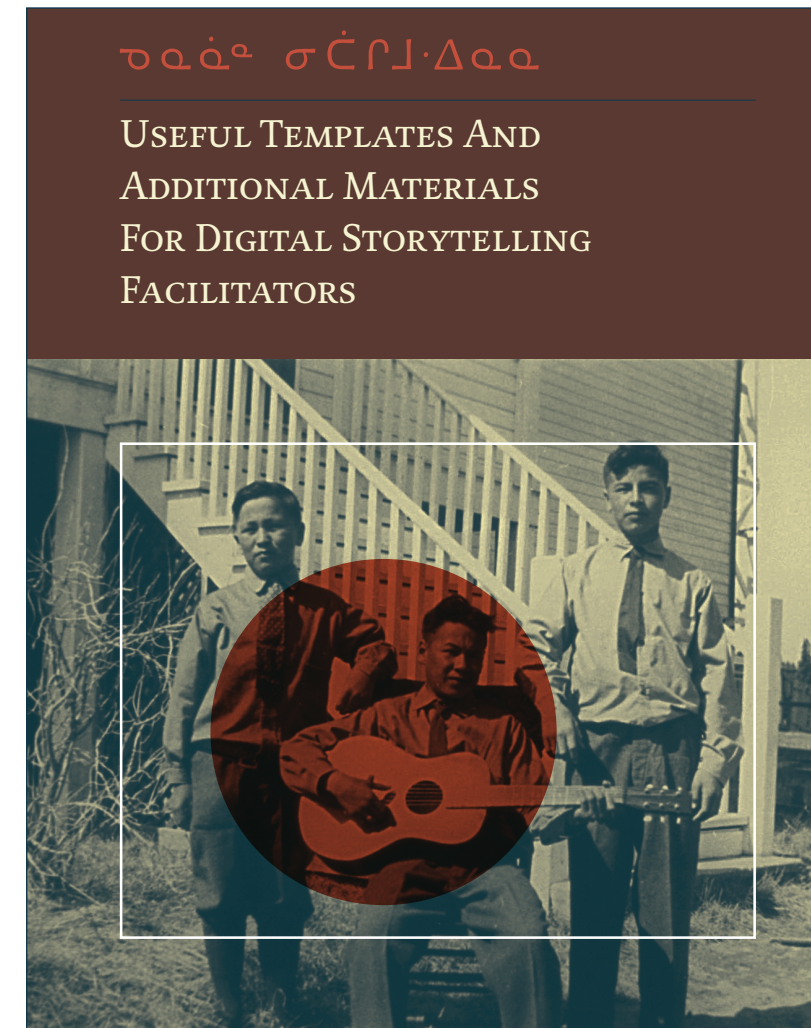
This guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the **Guide 5: Overview of Digital Storytelling Tools and Techniques** that is included in the toolkit. Together, these two pieces furnish participants with adequate skills, comfort and

confidence to create their own digital stories and teach others how to create digital stories. While digital stories may take the form of audio or visual creations, the art of video storytelling is illustrated as an example.



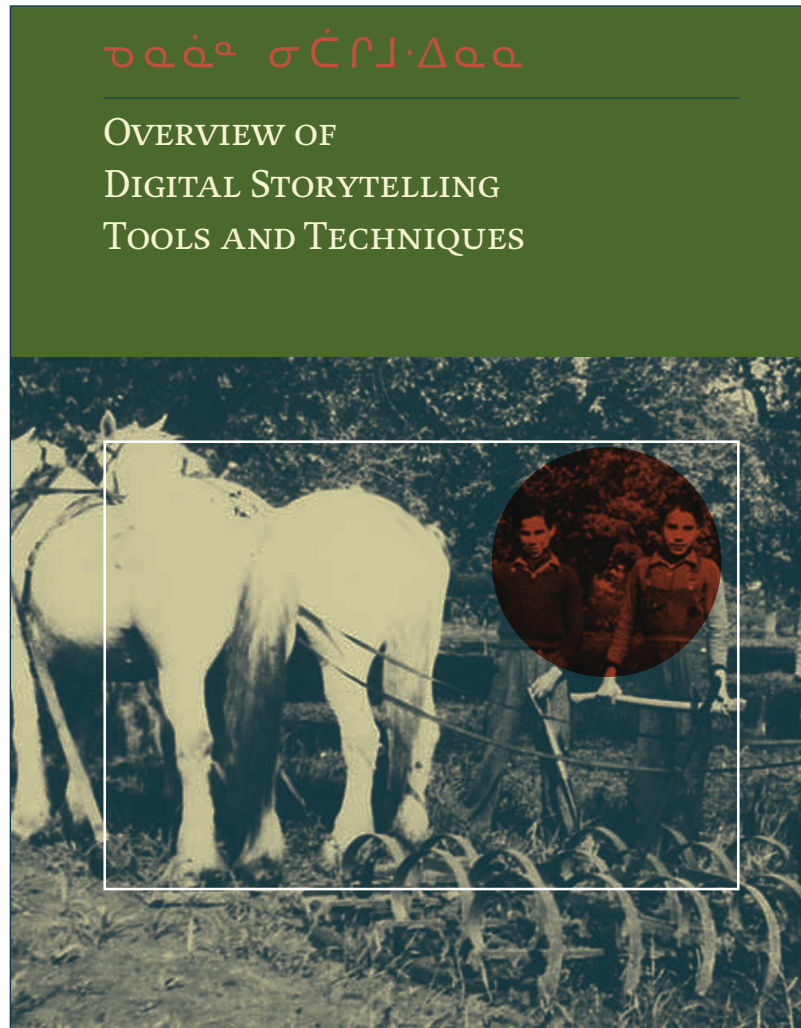
Logistics, Checklists, and Resources for Digital Storytelling Facilitators

This guide contains a series of helpful checklists and project templates that can be adapted and used when facilitating a digital storytelling group project.



Overview of Digital Storytelling Tools and Techniques

This guide provides tools for the development of digital stories, including an introduction to basic features of digital media software.



“I think the confusing part of all this, for survivors, is the hurt they carry. They don’t understand the feeling, and the hurt. They don’t know where they’re coming from and so they get confused about their feelings. But I’ve been able to figure that out, so it’s not confusing anymore. It’s not a big deal for me anymore ... for me, it all boils down to the kind of choices you make every day, to make a better life for yourself ... I want to get that across somehow. I want people to come to my level of understanding. And I think I can do that through a project like this.”

