

## Introduction for MGMS story-teller involvement

Hello Fellow Story-tellers,

Thank you for nominating to be part of the MGMS project to develop a series of *'Stories from the Shed'*.

### **Timelines**

The project writers team has worked on around a dozen stories and **different formats** to develop what we believe is achievable within the **timeline** allocated to us by the grant. We need to have finished all cost activities such as commercial transcriptions, printing and mailing by the end of **September 2020**.

Our own efforts should be recorded in terms of **time** and **activity** undertaken so we can list this for an 'in-kind' cost consideration as part of the grant. For example, our experience shows a 3000 word story collected by interview, transcription and editing can take between 9 and 27 hours. A **cost matrix form** for recording this is available and should be used by both the *story-teller* and *interviewer/editor*.

### **About story-telling**

People tell stories for all sorts of reasons, and generally it enhances communication and fellowship between tellers and listeners. This project seeks to develop that.

*Story-tellers* have a **personal style**, usually, and this project does not seek to standardise the structure of a personal story, and as much as possible, the written story should usually reflect the teller's words and approach to their story. The **topic and length** of a story can vary between story-tellers, but a story that goes much beyond a twenty minute (or 3000 words) telling may need to be a couple of separate tales rather than one.

However, in **writing** a story-teller's tale, the immediate human feedback is not possible, so the story-teller cannot see when a bit of a story needs expanding to better give a **picture** of what is being spoken about, and when the teller needs to move on in order to keep **interest**. Humour helps, as does an interesting scenario. A **structured** and flowing *telling* and *writing* style with short paragraphs and mostly shorter sentences that *'show'* a verbal picture of the **'When, Where, What and Who'** can help, as can pictures.

**Links** between the listener and reader, who may not have experience of the setting of the story, can be helped by the story-teller showing how they felt at the time. Shared **human emotions and reactions** to a story's situation can help improve understanding and empathy through explaining, briefly usually, the **'Why and How'** someone felt, and not just the *'telling'* of the incident or event.

Some stories can go on to be part of a **larger project** for individual story-tellers and their families. This project also recognises that. The story will be available to the story-teller in a format, usually a **word-processing** file, that can be **edited** and **added to** by the story-teller or others later.

### **How do we gather the personal stories**

The *Story-teller* nominates whether they intend to contribute a **personal life history** sort of story, or an **incident or event story** they may have told before, but sometimes not. The important thing is that they have a story they believe they want to *'come out'*.

Usually, the *Story-teller* starts by preparing a set of dot-points or list of **key aspects** of their story that they can speak or write to in order to give the story some **structure** and reduce incidences of **meandering** off the story thread. Remember there is no listener in a written story to tell you when you have wandered off-topic.

Then the *Story-teller* and *Interviewer/coordinator/editor* negotiate how the story will be recorded. Generally, this has been in one of three ways:

1. At an agreed time allowing about an hour of time, the *Interviewer* and the *Story-teller* have a lead-in discussion that also includes agreement and familiarisation with any electronic recording being done. This is followed by the interviewer listening and making brief notes while the *Story-teller* tells their tale.
  - a. With the recording still 'on' the *Interviewer* then follows the story with a series of prompts that encourage the *Story-teller* to expand/recall/explain some aspects of their story. Don't be surprised if you are asked seemingly innocuous detail like, "What was the weather like?" or, "How did you feel about that?" That can be to get you to think more deeply about the situation and come out with more authentic detail, or simply to build a clearer visualisation and understanding of the situation.
  - b. When you both agree you have exhausted the details needed for the story, the *Interviewer* takes the material away for **processing** through transcription, editing, and returning a **draft** to you for further consideration, and perhaps more detail now that you have it in print before you. You may choose to add **pictures**, if you have them, to enhance the reader's appreciation of the tale.
  - c. Once the *Story-teller* agrees the text of the tale is as it should be, and any photos made available in digital form (often just by photographing on a mobile telephone and then emailing them so the attached file can be downloaded for editor insertion).
  - d. Follow-up contact may continue with the *project team persons* that take on the production work of the story for project publication.
2. This format generally suits folk who are **reflective thinkers** and like time to consider what they will say. At an agreed time allowing about an hour of time, the *Interviewer* and the *Story-teller* have a lead-in discussion that also includes agreement and familiarisation on what sort of story is to be undertaken, topics, access, and steps to achieve the story in print format. With some outline of the project story formats referred to above, and consideration of exemplar stories already done, the *Story-teller* agrees to work on producing written tale using a word-processing format, usually MS Word.
  - a. The editing and development that follows is usually a variation on the steps above.
3. The *Story-teller* has a **story already written**, and adapts it to the format of the project. This is done in consultation with the *project team contact persons*.
  - a. The editing and development that follows is usually a variation on the steps above.

### **Publication**

Once ready for publication and permissions recorded and filed, the draft document gets prepared for final publication and a final supervisory edit-check.

Files used in preparing the document will be collated into an electronic folder and presented to the *Story-teller* for their personal use and sharing with family and others as they wish. They may also wish to extend the project personally with, for instance, other family member stories.

It is anticipated the document will be available for print distribution with copies for the *story-teller* and *Shed*, as well as possibly promotional work with other community groups and schools.

A copy is also anticipated to be available on the MGMS website for access by MGMS members, families, and the wider community.