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**Y Stories: An analysis of storytelling at the Kamloops Community YMCA-  
YWCA**

Title Page by

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

Stories have been used since the start of civilization to communicate information. Humans have long shared stories about who they are and where they come from, but it is only in recent decades that stories have been used effectively by organizations like businesses and non-profits. This project's client, the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA (Y), uses stories for the purpose of communicating what they do to members of the broader public through applications including, but not limited to grant applications, social media posts, and public presentations. The organization has identified the opportunity to use stories more effectively as a way of promoting the organization and building a greater sense of community with the surrounding municipality. Since existing research shows that stories can be used to increase donations, improve communications, and build community, the Y wants to look at ways to incorporate stories into more aspects of the organization.

The Kamloops Y is part of a larger well-known group of non-profit organizations that span Canada and the world. While the parent organization is over a century old, the Y has only been in Kamloops for four decades. At the Kamloops locations, the non-profit oversees eight programs that include fitness services, child care, employment services, and a women's shelter.

### **Aims and Objectives**

This project aimed to identify how stories are being used within the Kamloops Y presently and how the organization might look at improving that use. Specifically, the project set out to answer the following research questions:

1. How can the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA improve the use of storytelling in the organization?
2. How is storytelling being used at the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA as a tool to connect with Kamloops community?
3. How could the organization increase storytelling capacity within its staff?
4. How can the YMCA-YWCA use storytelling as a community development tool?

### **Methodology and Methods**

The project uses a feminist-informed participatory action research approach. It employed a review of the literature, an online questionnaire, and a focus group as main research methods. The majority of the senior leaders within the Y are women and this methodology aimed to support female perspectives in creating a space where all participants could speak their views freely. Additionally, this methodology supports a critical department of the Y, the women's shelter, which successfully operates from an intersectional feminist framework.

The literature review drew from a number of sources from industry, business, and academia looking at a range of applications of stories across society and within organizations. To provide context into the uses of stories, it looked at storytelling, organizational storytelling, storytelling in community development context, and ethical implications and critiques of storytelling.

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The online questionnaire provided participants with an opportunity to identify the organization's current applications of stories. As part of this questionnaire, participants were asked to express interest in being part of a follow-up focus group that would explore the topic in a deeper manner.

The focus group reflected upon the consolidated results of the online questionnaire which were used to help inform and direct the subsequent in-depth discussion. Focus group participants discussed ideas about actions the Y could take to increase staff capacity relating to storytelling and about how the organization can use storytelling as a community development tool.

## **Key Findings**

**Literature Review:** The literature review found that storytelling has a long documented history of playing a critical role in human communications and societal structures (Gottschall, 2012). Stories have evolved from a solely oral practice to one that is documented in many forms from the written word to digital media content (Isbouts & Ohler, 2012; Lambert, 2013). Additionally, conventional understandings of stories now include organizational stories – these are narratives which help communicate messages within and about the organization. Stories are seen a key to keeping organizations functioning and are seen by many academics as important in developing many arenas of organizational life including leadership, fundraising, capacity development, and community outreach. Storytelling within a community development context has most often looked at stories that are fictional in nature rather than retelling of past events. There is limited research relating to the use of true stories to develop community within non-profits. The literature shows that stories have also been used as a way to better understand the affects of individuals' lived experiences and articulate how power structures impact people differently based on their intersections of privilege or lack of privilege. However, stories are not without their critics. Many academics have highlighted the ethical implications of sharing stories without full and informed consent, while others have talked about how a focus certain kinds of narratives skew perceptions of issues (Carter, 2008; Yow, 1995, 1997).

**Online Questionnaire:** The online questionnaire set out to primarily answer the second research question and provide a rough baseline that helped inform the discussion relating to the project's latter two research questions. The online questionnaire showed that participants overwhelmingly see the value of using stories within the Y, but the responses showed a variety of knowledge levels when it comes to how to identify stories and where to use them. While there are some senior leaders and departments that use stories professionally on a daily basis, there are others who rarely use stories. This diversity in how stories are used lead to participants expressing a range in comfort levels in identifying and incorporating stories into their professional practices. Participants also believed there was room for improvement when it comes to how front-line staff recognize and share stories about the Y and they identified a number of barriers that are preventing the effective sharing of stories including organizational structure, lack of time, resources, and training. While participants believe stories play a role in connecting the Y to the broader community, most participants felt the Y could be doing more when it comes to using stories to develop a sense of community.

**Focus Group:** The focus group identified a number of ways the Y could increase storytelling capacity amongst staff and use stories as a community development tool. Participants suggested that capacity could be increased through staff training and through the incorporation of stories

within policies and practices of the Y (i.e. staff orientations and as case studies included within specific policy documents). However, they felt that in order to make a shift in organizational culture towards being a storytelling organization, there needs to be buy-in from all levels of staff, in particular senior leaders. They felt that while senior leaders set the tone and direction for Y employees, front-line staff should be consulted in any discussion that affects them to ensure that planned changes are doable. Additionally, the Y is in a unique position where some departments operate from an intersectional feminist framework, this is knowledge that could be expanded and if possible, applied to storytelling practices within the organization. When it came to the discussion around community development, it was clear that participants felt there was a strong, positive culture that exists within the Y staff and community. However, they felt that there were spaces where stories could be used to take a more proactive approach to reaching out to new communities. The main suggestions were to create new groups within the Y where people could be brought together based on shared experiences and that the Y could use stories as examples to show outside groups what services the Y provides and how those groups could benefit from them. Overall, the focus group identified both practical and conceptual uses of storytelling within the Y and showed excitement for the prospect of finding ways to include stories through the organization.

## **Conclusions**

This project aims to provide information and suggestions to help the Kamloops Y increase the use of storytelling within the organization. Beyond providing a detailed review of existing literature, this project provides concrete suggestions from the research participants into how the Y can begin incorporating stories into the organization's policies and practices.

However, the findings of this project should be taken within the specific context of the research. It is a point-in-time study looking at one key group of participants within one organization. While the findings may be interesting and applicable to other organizations, they should be considered as limited in their transferability. To further build upon the findings of this project, the Y should consider future research into the applications of storytelling within different user groups at the Y including, but not limited to volunteers, front-line staff, and Y members.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and the context provided by the literature review, a number of recommendations are being provided to the Y. These have been conceptualised with consideration to the Y's vision, relative organizational capacity, feasibility and sustainability:

### **Short-term:**

1. Conduct a storytelling audit
2. Create a storytelling/engagement committee
3. Incorporate the gathering of stories into existing and future opportunities

### **Intermediate-term:**

4. Train leadership and staff
5. Develop infrastructure for effective knowledge transfer
6. Take a proactive approach to developing relationships with the broader community

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**Long-term:**

7. Create and recruit a director of storytelling
8. Conduct evaluations of storytelling practices

It is hoped that this project will provide a starting point for the Y to begin to incorporate stories throughout its organization as a way to strengthen the Y's culture and create community inside and outside of the organization. The findings and recommendations aim to help provide context and direction for the Y to begin taking steps towards becoming a storytelling organization.

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## 1.0 Introduction

For generations, people have used stories to communicate emotions, information, and experiences (Andrews, Hull, & Donahue, 2009; Lugmayr, Sutinen, & Suhonen, 2017; Pstross, Talmage, & Knopf, 2014). Hustedde (1998) defines stories as “how we organize our thoughts and experiences and how we share them with others. They tell us who the community is and what it is not” (p. 157). By sharing stories, people are able to make sense of what surrounds them and interpret those events (Gabriel, 2000, p. 18). Storytelling is not limited to individuals; organizations including businesses and non-profits have tapped into storytelling as a way to enhance communications with their staff and the broader public (Bianchi, 2005; Forman, 2013b, 2013a; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Heyman, 1994). These organizational stories can capture attention on issues that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Since the early 2000’s, the Internet has led to the creation of a new platform for storytelling – social media. The proliferation of sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram has shifted the way people get the information that shapes their daily lives (Lomborg, 2017, p. 7) and has created increasing need for organizations to understand how to mobilize storytelling in order to reach people in the spaces where they are spending their time (Linke & Oliveira, 2015, p. 306). This project explores how one non-profit, the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA (Y) can enhance its storytelling capacity in order to take advantage of increased opportunities and venues to develop their connection to the broader geographic community through sharing stories about the organization, its programs, and impacts. The research targets the whole organization pulling insights and participants from all of the Y’s departments including its fitness programs, children’s resources, and women’s shelter.

As part of this project, participants were involved in defining key terms which are used throughout this report. Stories can be thought of as narratives that help people better understand their world along with the behaviours and experiences they encounter. Storytelling is used to communicate those understandings and insights to others. An organizational story is any story relating to the Y including any department, program, staff member, volunteer, or member of the public who has been impacted by the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA. Front-line staff are any Y staff member who does not hold a leadership role and who has direct contact with Y clients or members of the public.

### 1.1 Defining the Problem

The challenge of identifying stories has been recognized by Y leadership as an on-going issue that is present throughout the organization (M. Walker, personal communication, Oct. 30, 2017). Though storytelling can be a powerful tool for organizations, the Kamloops Y could improve its ability to capitalize on these opportunities by training front-line staff to identify stories that are relevant to the public and to the organization by developing a culture that supports organizational storytelling (M. Walker, personal communication, Oct. 30, 2017). This research will seek to assess the non-profit’s use of stories and look at ways to increase that capacity while getting staff buy-in to the idea. An example of how the Y is currently using stories to build relationships with the broader community of Kamloops is through posters on the doors of washroom stalls. One such poster shares the story of a mother who was terrified of swimming, but now plans to learn to swim after putting her children in swimming lessons at the Y (YMCA-YWCA, n.d., “Courage

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starts here”). These stories help the broader community understand not only what the Y does, but how it influences people’s lives. This in turn develops the reputation of the organization (Michel & Rieunier, 2012, p. 701). Therefore, when fewer stories are gathered, there are fewer opportunities to develop public’s connection to the Y. That affects the Y’s long-term success because it directly impacts the number of people who access the Y’s programs, who informally promote the organization, and who make donations to the organization (Merchant et al., 2010, p. 754, M. Walker, personal communication, Oct. 30, 2017).

Fortunately, the Y has complete control when it comes to increasing training and knowledge around storytelling and as such, policies and practices can be implemented to close this gap. In the past, management at the Y have attempted to address this gap by speaking directly to front-line staff and explaining what they are looking for in stories while attempting to show the importance of stories that encapsulate the mission and values of the Y by designating these stories as “mission moments”. These informal conversations did not result in more stories being shared with managers at the Y. This is why the organization wants to take a more formal approach to storytelling within the Y by talking with managers and senior leaders about how they are training staff to think about stories and what steps can be done to increase staff’s ability to identify and share “mission moments” (M. Walker, personal communication, Oct. 30, 2017).

Much of the existing literature on storytelling privileges the voices and perspectives of men (Cameron, 2012; Kopp, Nikolovska, Desiderio, & Guterman, 2011; Little & Froggett, 2009; Lugmayr et al., 2017; Snowden, 2014). By including voices of participants who operate from a feminist framework, this research aims to increase the diversity of perspectives engaging in the academic discussion on storytelling. Ideally, the project will be used to influence policy and practice to enhance the storytelling culture within the Y.

## **1.2 Project Client**

The YMCA was founded in London, England in 1844 by George Williams in response to what he saw as the unhealthy social conditions created by the Industrial Revolution. The organization grew quickly and by 1851, the first YMCA opened in North America in Montreal (YMCA Canada, 2017b). The YWCA began operating in Canada 149 years ago. Since then, it has acted as an organization that advocates to reduce the injustices faced by women including access to childcare, housing, and education (YWCA Canada, 2019a). It is seen as one of the most established women’s organizations in the country and operates in more than 400 communities Canada wide (Status of Women Canada, 2019). The YWCA Canada supports 300,000 women and girls annually (YWCA Canada, 2019b) while YMCA Canada served more than 2.5 million Canadians last year (YMCA Canada, 2019). YMCA Canada has continued to expand and now has 47 location across Canada with numerous programs including fitness, childcare, and employment services (YMCA Canada, 2018). In most recent 2017 annual report, the national non-profit generated \$12,273,692 in revenue while spending \$13,833,509 on expenses (YMCA Canada, 2017a). It describes its purpose as promoting spirit, mind, and body through increasing personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and through developing people’s sense of responsibility to communities locally and globally (YMCA Canada, 2019).

In Kamloops, the organization started as a YWCA in 1964 and grew to include YMCA services in the following decade (M. Walker, personal communication, Apr. 29, 2019). The current aim

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of the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA is to build community through creating a “genuine, welcoming, hopeful place that is nurturing and fun” (Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA, 2017a). The organization oversees eight programs, including fitness services, childcare, youth programming, and a women’s shelter with related family supports (Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA, 2017c). It employs 135 people including a CEO, four general managers and 23 senior leaders who hold a diversity of roles within the organization (M. Walker, personal communication, Mar. 22, 2018). The non-denominational charity had 18,500 people participate in Y programs in 2018 and had a total budget of \$3,641,000 (Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA, 2018). It has numerous platforms to share stories including social media, posters, and advertisements (M. Walker, personal communication, Oct. 30, 2017).

### **1.3 Project Objectives and Research Questions**

The Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA has identified the need to better utilize storytelling (M. Walker, personal communication, Oct. 30, 2017). As such, the objective of this project is to analyze how it is currently using storytelling to connect with the geographical community of Kamloops and increase staff knowledge and utilization of storytelling. The research questions driving this project are:

- How can the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA improve the use of storytelling in the organization?
- How is storytelling being used at the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA as a tool to connect with Kamloops community?
- How could the organization increase storytelling capacity within its staff?
- How can the YMCA-YWCA use storytelling as a community development tool?

### **1.4 Background**

One pertinent aspect of the Y is that its women’s shelter operates from intersectional feminist framework, which the organization defines as encompassing gender-based analyses while considering social structures and power relations (Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA, personal communication, 2017). Intersectional theory acknowledges that individuals have diverse, layered aspects to their identities and the combination of these identities should not be seen as “additively increasing one’s burden but instead as producing substantively distinct experiences” (Symington, 2004, p. 2). In practice, this means Y staff are encouraged to look at how gender affects their decisions (Hall, 2005, p. 8) while considering their own backgrounds in order to identify areas of privilege like race, socioeconomic status, and education so as to create a caring and compassionate space while ensuring the services being provided at the shelter do not further marginalize the women accessing the shelter (Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA, personal communication, 2017).

The women’s shelter seeks to use this critical analysis of its service delivery as a way to be more inclusive (Violence Against Women Intervention and Support Services, 2017, p. 4). By using this framework, staff are better able to understand the range of experiences that people have and how different people are affected differently by institutions such as governments, universities, and non-profits. This allows for the identification of systemic discrimination that may be unintentionally excluding groups or individuals (Symington, 2004, p. 2). Intersectionality will be

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especially pertinent when it comes to identifying and communicating stories. People's individual contexts and experiences affects how they recognize relevant and compelling stories while those choices are also being shaped by larger societal narratives (Cameron, 2012, p. 574). Staff will need to be aware that sharing personal stories will have different impacts on different people. For example, a First Nations woman accessing the women's shelter will likely be impacted in a much different way through sharing her story than a white, middle-class woman accessing the Y's fitness programming. These power imbalances should be considered when it comes to identifying stories so that staff can avoid the potential of exploiting people through publicising their stories or experiences (Corbett, Francis, & Chapman, 2007; Frisby & Maguire, 2009).

There are more than 1,000 non-profits within Kamloops (Thompson Nicola Cariboo United Way, 2015) and more than 20,000 organizations provincially (Imagine Canada, 2005, p. 1) – Some of which apply for the same funding as the Y. Therefore, stories play an important role in catching the attention of funders and the public. Research shows that individuals do limited research into organizations when making the decision on where to donate, meaning stories play a role in increasing brand recognition. The importance of storytelling as a source of potential funding could affect how senior leaders conceptualize stories (Isserman & Markusen, 2013, p 119).

## **1.5 Deliverables**

The main deliverable of this project will be a report aimed at the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA's leadership team. Though it may be distributed to the organization's front-line staff, the main goal is to inform the Y's policies and the practices of people who will be training current and future hires. Through participating in this project, the Y will gain a better understanding of how their current leadership team perceives the role and importance of stories, how they are communicating that value to their front-line staff, and how organizational stories are being shared. The research will yield statistical information about storytelling that can be used as a baseline should the organization decide to survey its leadership team about storytelling at a future date. It will also result in the creation of recommendations about how the Y could increase capacity to identify and use of organizational stories. Participants were also asked what they envision in terms of a storytelling tool that could be used within the Y. Non-profits often lack the resources to be able to fund research such as this project. As such, it represents a chance for the Kamloops Y to more deeply explore an area which it has identified as needing improvement while not requiring it to find additional funding to support that work.

## **1.6 Organization of Report**

This report begins with an overview of the project. Chapter 2 will discuss the methodology employed in this research and the methods used to gather data. This section will be followed by a literature review which will look at organizational communication techniques with a focus on storytelling. It will give an overview of how stories have been used within organizations in the past and will look at current approaches. The review will also explore the potential community development applications of storytelling along with criticisms and ethical considerations relating to storytelling. Chapter 4 will outline the findings of the project. A discussion and analysis of those findings will be the subject of chapter 5. Chapter 6, Recommendations, will include suggestions on how the organization could work towards the incorporating more storytelling

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practices within the Y. Finally, the conclusion chapter will summarize the key lessons from the project and will suggest potential directions that the Y could explore if it were to continue to research organizational storytelling.

## 2.0 Methodology and Methods

This project used mixed-methods research strategy (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn, 2013, p. 205), bringing together qualitative and quantitative research techniques to explore how storytelling can be used to communicate the impacts of the Kamloops Community YMCA YWCA to both staff and the broader public with the aim of improving overall organizational storytelling capacity to increasing recruitment, membership, and donations. The following section outlines the methodology of the project and its methods including information about participants and procedures. It goes on to look at how data was analysed and addresses the project's limitations.

### 2.1 Methodology

Feminist-informed participatory action research methodology formed the backbone of this project. Participatory action research (PAR) is premised on the idea that research is a process done with participants rather than on participants. Berg and Lune (2017) explain that this methodology is best used when the researcher aims to work with stakeholders to help them discover information and co-create potential solutions rather than doing research aimed at making comparisons or studying a situation, event, or phenomenon (p. 141). To do this, the methodology requires participants to play a role throughout the research process, from identifying questions to the dissemination of data (pp. 137-140). This approach can be seen as a way to create shared ownership over the findings with the “the ultimate goal of PAR [being] action and positive change” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000 as cited in Darroch & Giles, 2014, p. 23). Darroch and Giles (2014) argue that feminist theories have a significant influence on PAR as the methodology seeks to counter traditionally white, male, and Western ways of understanding knowledge and engaging communities (p. 23). By using a feminist-informed approach, this research sought to take into account historical gender imbalances by meeting participants where they are at and honouring their perspectives and backgrounds (Corbett et al., 2007, p. 85). The participatory action aspect means that the participants were responsible for formulating the criteria of what constitutes a story and how the organization will look at identifying and applying stories (Hall, 2005; Hustedde, 1998). This methodology was chosen to build upon the existing organizational culture present at the Y while at the same time attempting to create more inclusive academic research.

### 2.2 Methods

The methods in this project included two main ways of gathering data: an online questionnaire and focus groups. Methods flow out of the methodology meaning that these techniques were chosen because they enabled spaces for participants to guide the focus of the project. The project built upon existing academic feminist traditions by assessing potential ethical issues in the questionnaire questions. It looked specifically at the language being used to ensure that it is inclusive and respectful of participants (Hester & Donovan, 2009; Quina et al., 1999). In order to include participants throughout the process (Berg & Lune, 2017, p. 139), a small selection of potential participants, excluding the project's client, were asked to participate in a discussion that lasted just under an hour on the themes of the online questionnaire. They considered proposed questions and discussed their relevance to the organization, this project's research questions, and participants' needs. This exercise provided a space for potential participants of the project's questionnaire and focus group to raise any concerns and ideas that may have been missed.

Questionnaire questions then were reviewed with both the client and project supervisor to ensure they were clear in their meaning and reflective of the methodology and organizational framework. The researcher worked with the client to identify this project's focus on the need to increase storytelling capacity within the organization. Participants were viewed as co-creators of the solutions proposed through the focus group, which reinforces the participatory aspect of the methodology (Hall, 2005, p. 11). Additionally though the focus group was facilitated by the researcher, participants had the opportunity to co-create ground rules for the behaviour of the group as well as lead the direction of the discussions. The participatory methodology allowed for a generative approach to knowledge that acknowledges that the participants are the experts in their organization and allowed space for the solutions to be developed through discussion rather than imposed by an outside researcher (Pstross et al., 2014, p. 526) while still providing space for the researcher to act as a catalyst for change (Bergdall, 2001, p. 3).

## 2.3 Participants

The project used a purposeful homogenous sampling strategy (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn, 2013, p. 209) meaning that the perspective of one stakeholder group was focused on for the research. In this case, project participants were drawn from the Y's 28 senior leaders. This is a pre-established group that existed in the organization prior to the start of this project. At the time of the research, these participants held a diversity of roles within the organization, but were selected as they were identified by the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA as being essential to the functioning of the Y, given their strong understanding of the organization's goals, their capacity to train front-line staff, and their ability to directly influence policy and practice (M. Walker, personal communication, Nov. 14, 2017).

Of the 28 senior leaders, three were men and 25 were women. Two people in the group were visible minorities. The group included the YMCA-YWCA's CEO, its four general managers, 16 directors and seven key staff members. Three of the key staff members held administrative positions (M. Walker, personal communication, Apr. 24, 2018). Of this group, seven were involved in the first focus group. Next, 15 participants elected to participate in the online questionnaire and six were involved in the follow-up focus group. The responses of one of the questionnaire participants were excluded as incomplete. Participants were given the option in the questionnaire and in the second focus group to allow their answers to be attributed to them by name. Information and answer attributed to the remaining participants were anonymized in the final report.

## 2.4 Procedures

**Focus group 1:** The researcher arranged with the client to meet with a group of at least five potential participants to discuss the themes of the online questionnaire and potential questionnaire questions. This informal discussion provided a space for input from potential participants while identifying any gaps that may have existed within the questionnaire questions (see Appendix 9.1 for the final online questionnaire). This discussion was held at the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA's Jon Todd site on September 13, 2018 and took approximately an hour. It was held following a monthly staff meeting for the senior leaders. The principal researcher was introduced to the group and all potential participants were given the opportunity to choose whether or not to participate. The client and other general managers were asked not to

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attend the discussion to remove any potential perception that participation was in anyway expected or required as part of their work duties. The role of this focus group was to ensure that potential participants had the opportunity to be involved with the creation of the questionnaire questions to support the project's methodology.

**Questionnaire:** Once the online questionnaire was finalized, the project's client, Michele Walker sent out three emails to the senior leaders with a link to the questionnaire and additional information about the project including the researcher's contact information. Two reminder emails were sent out seven and 12 days after the first email to encourage further participant engagement. The questionnaire was open for a two-week period. However, following the conclusion of that timeframe, it was decided to reopen the questionnaire for a second two-week period to increase the response rate. During the second period, participants were contacted by the client once via email with a link to the questionnaire. Participants were asked as part of the questionnaire, to indicate their interest in participating in a follow-up focus group. They were also informed in the email from the client and via posters in the staff room that they had the option contact the researcher directly if they want to participate in a focus group.

The questionnaire was conducted between September 28, 2018 and October 12, 2018 and was reopened from October 26, 2018 until November 9, 2018. Project participants were given access to an online questionnaire and were able to request a paper version if desired. The questionnaire included scaled questions with a Likert-type numerical ranking (McDavid et al., 2013, p. 170), a modified version of Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) capacity inventory, along with open-ended questions. These were aimed at assessing their capacities around communication and storytelling (see Appendix 9.1 for the final online questionnaire). In order to support the project's methodology, it asked people to identify any potential gaps they see in their knowledge and to share any reflections they may have heard from staff they supervise. The questionnaire was intended to provide a baseline for the researcher and in turn, the participants of the focus group. As part of the questionnaire, participants were invited to further participate in the project in the form of a focus group.

**Focus group 2:** The second focus group was held on-site at the Jon Todd location of the Kamloops Y. It was conducted on November 21, 2018. The focus group consisted of six people, composed of a purposeful sample drawn from the pool of questionnaire participants. Facilitated by the researcher, the focus group relied on interactions between participants to gain deeper understandings of storytelling and to democratize the research process (Salmon, 2007, p. 986). Open-ended questions and discussions that occur within a focus group provide qualitative insights into people's experiences and emotions (Patton, 2015). The organization's senior leaders worked together not only to discuss how stories are being used, but they discussed concrete actions which could be considered by the organization to increase understanding and ability when it comes to identifying and telling stories (see Appendix 9.2 for an outline of the focus groups' activities).

## 2.5 Data Analysis

Responses from the questionnaire's scaled questions and modified capacity inventory were tabulated and converted into percentages and graphical representations in advance of the second focus group. 15 participants completed the online questionnaire. While participants were allowed

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to skip questionnaire questions, one set of participant responses was excluded because only one question was completed. The 14 remaining respondents represented a 50 percent response rate. All questionnaires were completed online and participants were given paid work time and resources to complete the questionnaire. While most of the questions were completed by all participants, some participants skipped a few of the ranked questions and none of the short answer questions were completed by all of the 14 respondents. However, the data does show representative trends in how participants value storytelling and approach its use within their workplace.

Ranked questions were grouped together based on related content and each of the response categories (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) were given a unique colour to represent that category within the bar graph. The graphs show the number of participants who chose that category as well as showing the percentage of participant response. Both were included to increase readability of the graphs as percentages have been found by some people to be easier to understand than indicating the number of responses (Evergreen, 2014). In some of the responses, participants indicated that they either did not know or that the question was not applicable to their job. The researcher chose to use bar graphs of the ranked responses rather than showing the ranked averages of each question because the weighted average did not include participants who indicated they did not know or that the question was not applicable, which artificially inflated the averages. This information was shared with the second round of focus group participants through the form of digital PowerPoint slides. Charts and graphs allowed project participants to better understand the initial statistical findings (Krause & O'Connell, 2012, p. 8). The aim of providing this information to focus group participants was so they would better be able to understand the organization's current context in order to guide the direction they envisioned the Y going when developing recommendations to increase organizational storytelling capacity. These representations have also been included in the findings section of this report. By including quantitative data, the organization can develop a baseline and potential measures which could be used to explain to current and future funders what the organization is aiming to accomplish by using stories. This could in turn improve the power imbalance between funders and non-profits (Stoecker, 2007, p. 100). The Y already uses statistics to demonstrate the impact the organization has in the community and this method of data analysis supports existing processes (Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA, 2016)

In addition to tabulating the questionnaire results, the researcher gathered data based on focus groups' discussion. Audio recordings of the focus groups were transcribed and that data was used to identify key themes and supporting quotes (McDavid et al., 2013, pp. 213-214). 44 categories were identified with an aim of saturating each category. After initial categories were created, the researcher reviewed each category to ensure there was no duplication of category content and that each category presented unique and relevant content to inform the research questions (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2006). These categories were summarized into themes and were compared to the questionnaire results. They were used to support the recommendations co-created by the participants and the researcher into how storytelling capacity could be increase within the Y.

## **2.6 Project Limitations and Delimitations**

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As this project drew participants from leadership positions, they are not reflective of the overall staff demographics in terms of education, race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. This potentially affected how they perceive storytelling compared to others within the organization. People who hold power and privilege often dictate the stories that are predominant in society, sometimes to the detriment of alternative narratives that are more representative of traditionally marginalized groups like women and minorities (Wånggren, 2016, p. 401). A similar situation could arise when implementing the findings within the Y if people in leadership positions do not encourage a diversity of stories to be shared by front-line staff and patrons. Additionally, people may self-censor or make alterations when it comes to sharing stories that do not conform to the status quo. This could result in stories that are more likely to represent societal expectations than the realities of what actually occurred (Yanos & Hopper, 2008, p. 230).

Given the project's time constraints, this project only represents a snapshot of the organization at a certain time and from certain staff who were employed during that time. It cannot be reflective of all members of the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA staff team or reflect the organization over time. These factors limited the number perspectives included in the project and likely resulted in current or potential applications of storytelling being missed. This project sought to account for this through its methods by meeting with some potential participants to help develop the online questionnaire's themes and questions, by providing open-ended questionnaire questions, and through the discussions within the focus group; however, the researcher acknowledges that limited time and resources impacted the depth of data gathered in this project.

## 3.0 Literature Review

### 3.1 Introduction

This literature review focuses on four main areas relevant to this project: storytelling, organizational storytelling, storytelling in community development context, and ethical implications and critiques of storytelling. The first section defines storytelling and explores its uses in human culture and societies. The second section looks at organizational storytelling, exploring the applications of stories within business and non-profit sectors with specific focus on fundraising, capacity building, and leadership. The third section looks at community development and storytelling by providing some of the relevant background needed to explain how stories are used in the field, delving into their role in enhancing community connection, increasing people's capacity to engage successfully, and introducing people to new ideas. This section concludes with an exploration of how storytelling has been used to share the voices of people who may have been historically silenced paying particular attention to aspects of race and gender. The final section of the literature review looks at ethical considerations and critiques of storytelling relating to the process of gathering and sharing people's narratives. Given the extensive body of literature that exists on storytelling, this review focuses on the literature and research that is most relevant to this project. These four sections situate the terminology used in the project and ground the findings in the existing uses of storytelling within organizations. Since this project focuses on a non-profit which aims to create a sense of community, it was important for this review to include an exploration into how storytelling has been used in the field of community development. By concluding with a critique of storytelling, readers will be better able to understand the appropriate applications of storytelling if they are considering applying these findings to other organizations outside the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA. The aim of this review is to provide context into how storytelling can be used as a tool to connect with community and how organizations like the Y are utilizing stories to build upon existing practices.

### 3.2 Storytelling

Storytelling has a history dating back as long as humans have existed. Isbouts and Ohler (2012) attest that proof of early storytelling can be found in cave paintings from the 11th millennium B.C.E and since then, there continues to be a rich record of human narrative that exists through art, text, and oral traditions (pp. 2-4). There are numerous definitions of what a story is (Andrews et al., 2009; A. D. Brown, Gabriel, & Gherardi, 2009; Chen, 2012; Czarniawska, 1998; Hustedde, 1998; Kurtz, 2014; Lugmayr et al., 2017; Simmons, 2007; Swap, Leonard, Shields, & Abrams, 2001) but many definitions share commonalities with Aristotle's well-known definition requiring stories to have beginning, middle, and end which include the development of a character and plot (Butcher, 1902, p. 27). Ewick & Silbey (1995) explains that a story must at least have these three elements:

First, a narrative relies on some form of selective appropriation of past events and characters. Second, within a narrative the events must be temporally ordered... Third, the events and characters must be related to one another and to some overarching structure, often in the context of an opposition or struggle (p. 200).

Choy (2017) builds upon that definition by adding that stories must be authentic and strategic, meaning the story shows something about the person telling the story which elicits emotion and allows the listener to relate to the story in order to prompt some form of action. This project will draw from those definitions and propose that stories can be thought as narratives that help people better understand their world along with the behaviours and experiences they encounter. Storytelling is used to communicate those understandings and insights to others. Additionally, this paper will follow the lead of Brown et al. (2009) and will not differentiate between the term story and narrative as there are no true rules to differentiate between the two (p. 234). The literature on storytelling is consistent in describing stories as a key part of the human experience and one that endures across time, space, and culture (Bublitz et al., 2016; Isbouts & Ohler, 2012; Linabary, Krishna, & Connaughton, 2017; O'Neil, 2002). Gottschall (2012) posits that humans are storytelling animals and as such, have become desensitized to their presence in every aspect of how we live and what we do. In effect, he believes that stories are essentially how we communicate, how we make sense of the world, and how we share that understanding with others. Stories allow people to reinforce norms and behaviours to shape a common culture (p. 137) while also functioning as maps to allow people to understand what is expected of them and how they should behave (Wilkins, 1984, pp. 43-44).

As storytelling has transformed, it has moved from a largely oral practice to one that is both written and spoken on a number of platforms. The advent of the printing press was able to open up the written word to the masses starting in the mid-1800's and thus allowed more people access to storytelling as a written medium. Radio, television, and the Internet all continue to feature stories as a significant part of their content (Isbouts & Ohler, 2012). Digital stories have opened up possibilities for nearly anyone to become a published storyteller through the advent of social media (Lambert, 2013). However, stories continue to be most commonly found within the oral traditions of organizations and communities (Boje, 1991).

In Snowden's (2014) definition of organizational storytelling, he writes that stories have always been used within organizations, but it was in the 1990's that the organizational storytelling took off as part of the development of knowledge management. It was during that time that groups like the British Broadcasting Corporation and United States military began to capture personal stories as a way to record knowledge for future generations. For example, journalists were brought into NASA to interview retiring employees in order to document their experiences and catalog that knowledge so it could be accessed by future generations (p. 2). The use of stories has grown from that point. Currently, stories are being used across many disciplines such as health care, business, sociology, marketing, and management where stories have been applied in many different applications including, but not limited to relationship development, training, education, and sales (Dixon, n.d.; Fox, Gillis, Anderson, & Lordly, 2017; Gilliam & Flaherty, 2015; Wånggren, 2016).

### **3.3 Organizational Storytelling**

Storytelling has made huge gains in popularity as a tool to communicate messages within organizations and it has been argued stories are critical in keeping organizations functioning successfully (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1975). Narratives exist in all aspects of an organization (Armstrong, 1992; Boje, 1991; Rhodes & Brown, 2005), with some organizational stories being

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selected and others avoided (Izak, Hitchin, & Anderson, 2015). These stories can be seen as being unique to each organization and its culture; however, Martin, Feldman, Hatch, and Sitkin (1983) looked at themes found within stories told in organizations and found that there were commonalities. They identified seven types of categories: Stories that humanize the boss, stories about whether employees can rise in the organization, stories that relate to what results in firings, stories about the support employees get when they relocate communities, stories around how bosses deal with people's mistakes and finally, stories about how organizations deal with challenges (pp. 442-444). These seven types of story serve to address concerns that employees might have about how the organization functions. The researchers found that while the stories themselves might be distinctive, the themes were not (pp. 451-452).

One of the first people to look at stories as they are being told in an organization was Boje (1991). With the exception of Smircich (1983), Boje found that previous research had separated the stories from their context though having the stories recalled after the fact in a setting outside of the organization (Martin, 1982; Martin et al., 1983; Wilkins, 1984). By looking at how stories were used and shared in a large office supply company, he found that context mattered when it came to how people made sense of a situation. The stories that were told throughout the organization differed dramatically with different explanations of actions being shared with different people based on their roles and relationships. Who is telling the story and who is listening to the story is critical to how the story is told and what information is included, often with stories being abridged to account for shared context. This results in stories which can be seen as having multiple authors who co-create the narrative through their joint experiences (Boje, 1991; Ewick & Silbey, 1995). Through the recounting of these different versions of a story, an institutional memory is created which informs people's actions and choices. Gabriel (1991) found it does not matter if the story does not represent the events as they happened – they function as reconstructions of events which aim to convey information (p. 441). As such, stories end up being more critical to the organization than facts (Boje, 1991, pp. 106-107).

O'Neil (2002) agrees that while an “organizational story may lack accuracy... it does not lack meaning to the recipients” (p. 6). Therefore, changes or additions to a story reflect important information about the message that the person telling the story is trying to convey. He identifies four kinds of organizational stories: epic stories, script stories, descriptive stories, and anecdotal stories. Each have different combinations of high or low engagement and high or low relevance for the organization with the most long-lasting kind of story being epic stories, which are both interesting and fulfill an organizational need to communicate information whereas the descriptive story is the least likely to last over time, being low in interest and organizational value (pp. 11-13).

Organizational stories can give unique insights into the interpersonal dynamics that exist within an organization and show how organizational issues are viewed by employees. While they do not provide facts, they “enrich, enhance and infuse facts with meaning” (Gabriel, 1998, p. 136). This means that organizational stories can add great context as they can act a tool for teaching and learning and express unconscious wishes and desires (p. 138). All organizations have stories that essentially form folklore about the organization, however, individuals vary greatly in their willingness or ability to share stories (Gabriel, 2000, pp. 22-23). In situations where a significant event has happened within an organization, Gabriel found that different people attach different

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meanings to that event in their efforts to make sense of what has happened and why (pp. 33-34). Stories “take us directly to those events and experiences that generate strong emotions” (p. 240) and that allows people to form connections and create meaning.

Not all organizations are equal when it comes to creating space for people to tell stories. While many organizations attempt to use stories to communicate key messages about their operations internally and externally, Kurtz (2014) believes that “[a]ll communities and organizations share stories, but some share more than others” (p. 82) and the places that have more stories being told are also more likely to be seen as communities people want to be part of. She writes that people should be asking themselves if people in their organization are free to tell stories and whether they do it accurately, respectfully, and habitually. She believes that in organizations with a storytelling culture, people should be able to think of at least a handful of organizational stories off the top of their heads (p. 76). Organizations also need to be clear on what they are hoping to accomplish through their stories. Denning (2004b) warns that a well-told story might not actually be the best story for the situation. He gives the example of an effective presentation he had given where he presented a short scenario in which he asked the audience to imagine an alternate, more effective future. Denning (2004b) then went on to explain how after he consulted with a professional storyteller, he added in more detail but it resulted in a story that was ultimately less effective because it distracted audiences from the vision the story was trying to create (pp. 1-2). Out of this insight, Denning created seven different categories of organizational story based on the aim of the story: stories that spark action, communicate who the storyteller is, transmit values, foster collaboration, tame rumours, share knowledge, and led people into the future (p. 5). By tactically sharing specific stories that give enough information without overwhelming people, the “right story at the right time” (p. 7) can be essential in helping people successfully lead. He applies these seven categories of storytelling in a business context to show how different kinds of stories can be used to accomplish different aims and increase the functionality and profitability of a business (Denning, 2004a).

### **3.3 Organizational Storytelling in Businesses**

Stories have extensive applications within the business community: they can be used by individuals or by leaders to more clearly articulate what they are hoping to achieve (Boje, Rosile, Saylor, & Saylor, 2015; Heyman, 1994), shift a situation to dispel rumors or quell resistance (Auvinen, Lämsä, Sintonen, & Takala, 2013; Denning, 2004b, 2004a, 2005), stand out from competitors (Forman, 2013b), create behavioural and ethical standards (Poulton, 2005; Rhodes, Pullen, & Clegg, 2010), or communicate information about a crisis situation (Kopp et al., 2011).

Much of the literature has some practical applications, with advice for managers (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1975; O’Neil, 2002; Swap et al., 2001; Wilkins, 1984). This is because storytelling can work as a way for organizations to communicate knowledge that does not translate well in formal training settings. By using stories as examples, people are able to gain a short-hand for institutional and personal implicit knowledge as stories are easier for people to visualize and are therefore, easier for people to remember (Armstrong, 1992; Bolman & Deal, 2013). Through a combination of mentorship and storytelling, managers can transfer difficult to communicate tacit knowledge with more success. Conversely, stories can also work against positive change by propagating beliefs and experiences that are no longer true within the organizational culture.

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Therefore, leaders need to be alert to the stories that staff are telling about the organization in order to manage unintended consequences of leaving those stories unchecked (Swap et al., 2001).

Researchers suggest that stories are often used by sales people (Gilliam & Flaherty, 2015) and public relations people (Kent, 2015), but everyone from front-line workers to CEO's can apply the benefits of sharing information through memorable stories (Forman, 2013b; Simmons, 2007). However, these stories will not be successful unless they are based on a foundation of authenticity; basically a premise of "tell the truth... [and] prove it with action" (Forman, 2013, p. 24). This will not only build depth in an organization, but it will break down silos as more people within the business understand the reasoning behind what they are doing (p. 207).

### **3.3 Organizational Storytelling in Non-profits**

Storytelling has similar applications within non-profits as it does in business, only non-profits have more stakeholders to navigate (Morris, Webb, & Franklin, 2011, p. 951). Those often include the board of directors, funding organizations like government or foundations, regulatory bodies, staff, clients (Van Brackle, 2011, pp. 5-6), and in some cases, the broader community. Given the diversity of groups that non-profits are trying to connect with, there are many different potential applications for storytelling including marketing, branding, fundraising, providing measures of accountability, and increasing community connection and donations (Chen, 2012; Dessart, 2018; Merchant et al., 2010; Vence, 2008; Walsh, 2016; Ye, Teng, Yu, & Wang, 2015).

Dixon (n.d.) found that as of the start of 2014, "there were more than 140,000 books on the topic available at Amazon.com; more than 9,300 Google search results devoted to non-profit storytelling specifically, and—at peak times—upwards of 60 tweets an hour using the hashtag #storytelling" (p. 4). Since then, storytelling resources aimed at non-profits has continued to show up in a wide variety of blogs, reports, websites, and books (Campbell, 2016; Chase Lockshin, 2016; Chase, 2015; Choy, 2017; Dessart, 2018; Dixon, n.d.; Kavanagh, 2018; King, 2014; Soucy, 2017; The Bridgespan Group, n.d.).

Telling stories is framed as a way for non-profits to connect with audiences through being memorable. By sharing case studies of clients, staff at non-profits can show the public the impact of their organization and its programs in a way that is more understandable than statistics (Bianchi, 2005). Popular literature is full of concrete how-to's for non-profits to tell stories. Common themes include looking across the organization for story ideas, describing the people featured in the story with detail or getting those people to tell the story themselves, using multiple types of media to tell the story, providing a concrete solution to the problem presented in the story, and clarifying the call to action into something easy for people to agree to (Aaker, Smith, & Singer, 2011; Campbell, 2016; Chase, 2015; Harrison, Beckwith, Harrison, & Halligan, 2013; Soucy, 2017; Walsh, 2016).

Stories can be used for more than just increasing public understanding and engagement with an organization. Some non-profits have used stories to help people reimagining their organization and its strategic direction as the process provides a venue to showcase more diverse perspectives and ultimately, increase staff buy-in during organizational change (Tyler, 2015, pp. 334-337).

However, organizations can face barriers when trying to get employees to embrace storytelling. Chase Lockshin (2016) proposes four main reasons why non-profits struggle to collect relevant stories: firstly, staff do not understand what makes a good story, secondly, non-profit leaders do not embrace storytelling, thirdly, stories are not told consistently so people within the organization do not build habits that support storytelling, and finally, staff do not know what kinds of stories the organization wants to find and share (pp. 97-98). She proposes these issues can be addressed through developing a plan that identifies what kinds of stories the organization needs and support that plan with infrastructure, training, and support. In a digital context, people working within non-profits can be reluctant to use storytelling because they feel that by sharing information online could open the organization up to potential criticism or violate confidentiality. Because of this, some staff may feel telling stories online is not worth the work (Campbell, 2017, p. 24). Yet Campbell (2017) suggests that mindset needs to shift as members of the public are not obligated to give to non-profits; they have to want to donate and stories can be a compelling way to capture that attention.

### **3.3 Organizational Storytelling in Fundraising for Non-profits**

96 percent of non-profits have identified that storytelling plays a role in their organizational communications and 90 percent say they believe the organization will increase their use of storytelling in the coming years (Dixon, n.d., p. 4). A shift towards becoming a non-profit with a storytelling culture can be tied to the power stories have in keeping people engaged (Dixon, 2014). Merchant, Ford, & Sargeant (2010) found by triggering emotional responses, stories can yield donations because the donors are able to feel they provide some resolution to the often sad story by giving money or support that will help provide a happy ending. By using stories, they found that non-profits can create new opportunities to gain donations. Stories are also tied to how people perceive a non-profit's brand and brand image has been connected to people's decision to give time and money (Michel & Rieunier, 2012). Ye et al.(2015) found that people who are of a higher societal status connected more with appeals that focus on the benefits to the donor rather than the recipient where as people of lower societal status were more likely to give when stories "emphasize either immediate benefits to others or future benefits to donors" (p. 485). By keeping the target demographic in mind when choosing a story, non-profits can more effectively use storytelling to tap into donors.

### **3.3 Developing Organizational Storytelling Capacity within Non-profits**

When done well, storytelling has the power to transform an organization, but there needs to be an investment by an organization to build up people's storytelling capacity. Larger non-profits are often more able to tell stories about their organization because they have the capacity to "manage their image, story, and relationships" (Isserman & Markusen, 2013, p. 128). Organizations can begin to work on enhancing their ability to tell stories first by helping all levels of staff develop an appreciation for stories and second, by putting in the infrastructure needed to support the creation of stories. That can be done in a number of ways including, but not limited to, creating a team of people within the organization that have skills in storytelling and media gathering, assigning or hiring a person to act as a focal point for stories within the organization, or having a team or individual who works with outside companies to produce stories (Dixon, 2014, p. 3). By having storytelling champions who gather a portfolio of relevant accurate stories, non-profits can build towards organizational outcomes like increasing the number of donations and volunteers,

or creating policy changes among other possibilities (Bublitz et al., 2016, p. 242-243). It is important to recognize that storytelling is like any other skill – people need training and time to develop their capacity (Dixon, n.d., pp. 52-53). The upside of this is that everyone has the ability to become a better storyteller and can learn to apply their skills in ways that benefit the non-profit (J. S. Brown, 2005, p. 87).

Identifying individual stories is important for engaging people in an organization's mission, but non-profits can go further by creating a "metanarrative", essentially "when these stories are linked to a broader, over-arching mission-focused story about the [social impact organization] and why it exists" (Bublitz et al., 2016, p. 240). All stories should fit within the larger vision of the social mission and key stories need to be rooted in a brand that encapsulates a sense of a non-profit's past, present, and future (p. 241-242). Within both small and large organizational stories, people should be at the heart of the narrative since humans connect to other people and that bridge elicits emotion and action (Biesenbach, 2015). In tapping into authentic organizational stories, non-profits and their leadership teams can work toward targeted change both inside and outside of their organizations (Bublitz et al., 2016, p. 245).

### **3.3 Organizational Storytelling and Leadership**

Leadership can be defined as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Ricketts, n.d., p. 1). Stories have been found to do this as they have a "powerful way of making outsiders feel like insiders" (Boal & Schultz, 2007, p. 419). As such, leaders can create many opportunities to use stories to their advantage. They can be used by leaders to help guide staff through change or crises (Boal & Schultz, 2007; Kopp et al., 2011) and they help employees feel more comfortable within more stable times by establishing norms and creating a shared vision (Katzman, 2012). Stories break through people's rational minds and connect with them on an emotional level so by using stories, leaders can help people become receptive to new ideas (Mládková, 2013).

Simmons (2007) puts forward a model with six types of stories that leaders can use when aiming to accomplish a strategic objective through storytelling. Those types are: stories to explain who the leader is, to explain why the leader is here, to teach, to communicate a vision, to show value in action, and to demonstrate that the leader knows what the listener is thinking (p. 23). By being thoughtful about the aims of what the story being told is trying to accomplish – whether it is to build trust, educate, or reassure – leaders and managers can start to identify relevant stories for each of the six categories and go on to use those stories to enhance their reputation and capacity. Stories can be especially key when a new leader is joining an organization. New leaders can share stories to explain who they are without directly stating it – by giving examples of past actions, leaders can show rather than tell. However, this has to be done authentically and with an understanding of the target audience's interests (Denning, 2005). Leaders of organizations can also start to develop a set of stories that explain the basic experience of an organization and ensure that any new stories fit within the existing organizational narratives by regularly interviewing existing employees to gather stories about the organization (Thier, 2018, p. 11). Leaders can choose stories that focus on either positive or negative events, where the positive stories focus successful situations and negative stories focus on what can be learned from past mistakes (Denning, 2004b; Mládková, 2013). Stories can also be presented from the perspectives of different people within the same narrative. When doing this, it is nearly impossible to come

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away only seeing one view – this creates spaces for voices that have been traditionally marginalized to be recognized within the narrative (Boje, Rosile, Saylor, & Saylor, 2015, p. 349). This can be done by asking people within an organization to participate in a role playing situation where they act out a story. Boje et al. (2015) suggest this can give people throughout all levels of an organization a chance to explain their motivations and evaluate bias in a low-risk situation (p. 358).

However, leaders need to be aware that not all stories are “equally useful” (Ann & Carr, 2011, p. 308). Employees can push back against stories that are poorly told. Three areas where leaders often make mistakes when telling stories about change are: when the story does not meet the audience’s needs in terms of speaking to their values, when the story includes anecdotes or messages that do not seem to connect into a logical narrative, or when the story does not fit with known realities (Randall & Harms, 2011, pp. 21-22). Sims, Huxham, and Beech (2009) looked at what people take away from presentations and found that people tend to find stories with too much context boring, but that people do tend to remember personal stories, often to the exclusion of the actual point of the presentation (p. 385). Stories can also contradict desired organizational narratives by showing sexist, racist, or discriminatory views – these kinds of stories have the potential to do more harm than good and leaders should be cautious about telling stories which may work against organizational values (Auvinen et al., 2013, pp. 510-511). Additionally, people may not actually understand what makes a good leadership story which can result in people telling stories that do not create the desired impact (Cleverley-Thompson, 2018). However, these potential pitfalls can be avoided through training and strategic use of stories that takes into account the audience, the purpose, and the flow (Randall & Harms, 2011).

Overall, stories act as a way for leaders to communicate culture, explain motivations, gain insights about organizational problems, train new employees, communicate a vision, set ethical standards of behaviour, build trust in leadership and the organization, recognize stakeholders, and increase engagement and productivity (Armstrong, 1992; Auvinen et al., 2013; Billings, Karren Kowalski, & Kowalski, 2015; Driscoll & Mckee, 2007; Groyberg & Slind, 2012; Hutchinson, 2018; Wright & Dziak, 2016). By taking time to develop stories about their organizations, leaders can stand out from their competition and capture attention in a crowded marketplace (Cronin, 2018, p. 58)

This first section of the literature review has provided an overview of some of the key applications of storytelling including their ability to create shared understandings, communicate knowledge, develop organizational culture and norms, increase donations, and enhance leadership capacity. By looking at storytelling within businesses and non-profits, the preceding section of the literature review has shown how other organizations might look at uses of storytelling and adapt them within their unique context. An understanding of the different categories and applications of organizational storytelling provides a starting point for staff at Kamloops Y to identify categories of relevant stories and begin to utilize stories in ways that include, but are not limited to, growing membership, recruiting donors, and engaging the community. The following section will discuss the role of community development and how stories can be used by organizations play a crucial role in enhancing community capacity.

### **3.4 Community Development**

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Community development is a wide-ranging field with multi-disciplinary applications (Bergdall, 2003; Flicker, Savan, McMcgrath, Kolenda, & Mildenberger, 2008; Hochachka, 2005; Ife, 2013; Theodori, 2005). It is seen as the combination of the concepts of community and development (Cavaye, n.d., p. 1). Community is a term that means different things to different people – communities can be grouped by physical geography, areas of interest, shared circumstance (Fraser, 2005), or by professional practice (National Council of Non-profits, n.d.). One definition is that community development is the “improvement of the condition of a particular area or community, [especially] with regard to health, housing, education, etc.” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1893), but for this project, community development will be seen as a field that:

promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, equality, economic opportunity and social justice, through the organization, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings (National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals, 2014, para. 1).

This definition supports the existing mission of the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA in that it reflects the organization’s desire to be an inclusive community hub that fosters a healthy community through improving people’s physical, emotional, and social lives (Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA, 2017b).

There is no set process for community development, but it is rooted in the idea that increasing a community’s capacity will result in that community being better able to make decisions about what it needs (Cavaye, n.d., p. 2). It can be seen as existing in the “efforts of people and not necessarily in goal achievement” (Theodori, 2005, p. 666). Through these efforts, social capital can be created. Putnam (2007) defines social capital as “social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness” (p. 137) or basically, the relationships people can draw upon when they need something like a favour or a personal connection. Working in conjunction with social capital is the concept of social anchors, which are “any institution... that acts as a support for the development and maintenance of social capital and social networks” (Clopton & Finch, 2011, p. 70) – providing physical places within a community where people can come together and form relationships and connect with others (Putnam, 1995, 2007). This means the Y can look at the social networks that surround it in order to guide leadership decisions and focus on strategies that are most likely to resonate with the people who are anchored around the organization (Clopton & Finch, 2011, p. 81).

The Kamloops YMCA-YWCA has the opportunity to strengthen its role as a social anchor by incorporating aspects of asset-based community development (ABCD). ABCD is rooted in the idea that a sustainable community already has the knowledge it needs to start tackling issues that exist within the community (Bergdall, 2003, p. 1). By including staff and other people connected to the Y in discussions about organizational challenges, the Y opens up opportunities to use internal knowledge to identify solutions that would not have been identified by an outside expert (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Within the employees of the Y, senior leaders are uniquely positioned as knowledge holders – they interact not only with members of the Kamloops community, but also with their staff. As such, the Y’s senior leaders have the potential of

gathering both information and organizational stories from a diversity of sources that can be used to offer deeper insights into how the Y can engage and enhance the Kamloops community.

### **3.4 Storytelling and community development**

Storytelling has been used extensively throughout the field of community development. The review aims to give a sample of how storytelling has been applied in a community development context and zooms in on examples of research looking at organizational stories.

Hustedde (1998) defines stories as “how we organize our thoughts and experiences and how we share them with others. They tell us who the community is and what it is not” (p. 157). He argues that stories create a more soulful community development process because stories allow for the mind to slow down and let “the story [sink] beneath the skin into the soul” (p. 157). He makes the case that every culture has a belief in a soul, but that concept is often ignored within a community development context, leading researchers to forget the mission of their work. Hustedde believes storytelling is one way to connect people to the heart and soul of their community development work because stories can motivate people to change by building real understanding of what is happening around them. However, Hustedde also identifies that stories within a community tend to focus on “one group at the expense of others” (p. 158). This means that community developers need to be mindful of creating a space where it is safe for all groups to share their stories – doing that he argues is a “soulful act” (p. 158).

Much work has been done into the idea of storytelling neighbourhoods in a community development context (Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei, 2001; Jung, Toriumi, & Mizukoshi, 2013; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006; Nah, Namkoong, Chen, & Hustedde, 2016). Since 2001, researchers have been looking into neighbourhoods in Los Angeles and have been working out “the communication process through which people go from being occupants of a house to being members of a neighbourhood” (Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei, 2001, p. 394). Kim and Ball-Rokeach (2006) argue that people need to be connected with opportunities to tell stories individually and to live in an area where stories are shared (p. 413). They found that non-profits and grassroots groups are more likely to create social capital, develop civic skills, and increase political self-esteem when the organizations act as storytellers for the area and people they serve (p. 414).

Many community development efforts look at the application of fictional stories like myths or fairytales as a way to bring people together (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007; Horsely, 2007; Houston et al., 2011; Larkey, Lopez, Minnal, & Gonzalez, 2009; LeBron et al., 2014). For example, LeBron et al. (2014) looked how a community-base participatory research approach could incorporate storytelling into an existing program, in this case a walking group. They identified that fictional stories can help communicate context to people in a way that can adapt to the situation and cultural context (pp. 477-478). As part of this study, the researchers looked at 32-week-long walking group that used storytelling as a way to introduce the themes and goals the group was trying to accomplish when it came to increasing social support for being physically active over time (p. 479). Their work supported other health related research (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007; Houston et al., 2011; Larkey et al., 2009) that found that stories were effective as a way of introducing people to concepts in an engaging way. In these projects, the stories were

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not based on real events, but rather were used as a fictional starting point to discuss ideas. They found that the real strength of this technique was that stories could be adapted to reflect what was needed in terms of content and form while engaging people in a way they appeared to enjoy. As such, fictional stories should be considered as a possible tool for future projects that aim at increasing health equity (p. 483).

While there is plentiful research on community development and storytelling, there is limited academic work looking into organizational stories and community development. However, Little & Froggett (2009) investigated storytelling at a community living centre and in a community project. They found that storytelling was a way to transmit cultural information while allowing for more complex views of people's motivations (p. 459). Conventional story narratives often depict a hero who goes through a period of struggle in which that character experiences personal growth. However in the two cases looked at by the researchers, they found that the narrative of "individual strength in the face of adversity" (p. 459) was challenged and in turn showed the level of complexity that exists within both the narrators and the audience members. They found that the stories that community members shared often did not neatly resolve themselves. One case featured in the paper looked at a local community centre which used an arts-based approach within its programming. The researchers looked at the story of one of the centre's volunteers, "Nell". Her story was reproduced in two ways, one as told by a researcher who heard the story from the volunteer directly as part of an interview and another version where the storyteller had no direct relationship with the researcher or the volunteer (p. 465). What they found was when the person retelling the story had a personal connection to the story's lead character, the story ends up being based on the listener's experience of the story – thus showing how storytelling is a process that comes out of moments and emotional associations between the listener and teller (p. 468). Ultimately, the researchers found that both projects generated an inclusive view of the community because they showed how alternative narratives can exist in the same space. This means that stories can help people challenge conventional narratives that lead to social conformism and oppression of those who do not fit within expected story arcs (p. 470). The paper concludes with the idea that storytelling can be used by researchers to take a culturally egalitarian approach to the knowledge they gather as it can help them resist temptations to make generalizations or simplifications, preventing what the authors call "reductive analysis" (p. 471). As such, stories can help to show the complexity of people and their experiences of the world.

Rossetti and Wall (2017) looked at two case studies of social improvement projects in the United Kingdom. In one of the cases, people experiencing mental health challenges were involved in sharing stories as part of a project designed to educate and increase empathy. In that example, they found that over time the sharing of stories within the organization resulted in many positive effects including that stories:

set the scene for creative team working; encouraged innovative working; created a sense of community in the team; changes in team experience of itself; changes in behaviour as a team leader and manager; legitimised new ways of reporting incidents; using narrative to support staff in an incident risk review process/ handling difficult emotions/staff well-being; encouraged use of anecdotal evidence to inform higher level management; and significant changes in team practices (p. 174).

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Beyond this, there was an increase in trust between clients and their health care teams which was seen as part of helping the project create a more positive organizational culture (p. 175). In the second case, stories were used to improve education, training, policy development, and community engagement. Rossetti and Wall found that everyone involved with that project felt there was an improvement in how they as staff interacted with clients (p. 176). The lesson from these two case studies was that stories have a substantive capacity to create organizational and community change as it can educate staff on new policies and redefine interpersonal relationships especially relating to service providers and users (p. 177). Also key within the practice of community development is the acknowledgement that some voices are privileged over others. However, stories have been found to be a tool to counteract that inequity by providing counter-narratives to contradict existing stereotypes (Wånggren, 2016).

### **3.4 Storytelling and intersectionality**

The Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA operates in part from an intersectional feminist framework. Therefore, it is important for this literature review to provide an overview of that context and how it applies to the sharing of stories. This section shows how storytelling has been used as a way to articulate unique personal experiences, create new cultural standards, and build shared understanding between groups. This research project aims to establish how storytelling can be used as a community development tool and as such, should take into account the diversity of perspectives that exist within a community by creating spaces to value perspectives that have been historically oppressed. By providing a background and context within which to situate this research, organizational leaders will be better able to tailor this project's findings to their own workplace culture and practices.

Intersectionality is a concept rooted in feminist theory (Carastathis, 2014). The methodology builds from the “premise that people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and the operation of structures of power” (p. 2). In essence, it means that when identities such as race, age, socio-economic status, gender, geography, or sexuality are combined, it is not just an additive process, but rather it produces “substantively distinct experiences” (Symington, 2004, p. 2) which impact individuals' experiences of discrimination and oppression (Yardley, 2015). As such, there needs to be an acknowledgement of the multiplicity of human experience (Cooper, 2016). This is an idea which appeals to many people as it helps to provide “an account of our brokenness, an explanation of the reasons for pain, a saving story accompanied by strong ethical imperatives, and hope for the future” (Corey, 2017, p. 29).

However, Corey goes on to point out that the advocates for intersectionality need to be cautious not to make the same mistakes they fault others for – classifying “people in terms of names and characteristics that they often have not chosen, and then write them off as enemies” (p. 31). This knowledge can be applied when looking at storytelling in a community development context as it encourages a deeper explanation of people's motivations and discourages the generalizations which treat people as members of a monolithic group (Frederick, 2014). Stories create spaces for “people of color to counter White supremacy and privilege the voices of people of color” (Bowleg, 2012, p. 1271). Narrative allows the focus to shift from the historically privileged by giving insights into alternative experiences. In looking at an oral storytelling project featuring Bengali women in Birmingham, England, Horsely (2007) found that stories can bridge cultures

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and build people's networks through creating shared experiences and language. She believes that the use of storytelling can be a successful tool for community development within community projects since she saw that the women were empowered during the process of telling stories while at the same time gaining confidence and self-awareness (p. 268).

Stories also allow spaces for people to hold multiple identities, some of which might not line up with normative expectations. This fact has implications for community organizations. Historically, organizations have focused on a shared sense of culture which brings a group together; however, that glosses over the power imbalances that may exist within a group. By bringing in stories, organizations are better able to understand their members' sense of self and engage in conversations that reflect that multiplicity (Su, 2010). Non-profits can tap into stories to identify counter-narratives that are working against the culture that an organization is trying to foster. They can also provide a way for members to demand accountability when it comes to how an organization is functioning (Chen, 2012). Storytelling can also establish organizational norms, create a space for people to discuss the ideas they see as guiding principles (Chen, 2016, p. 79) as well as help people redefine their relationship with the larger world. Piersol and Timmerman (2017) sum it up as such; "[s]torytelling provides the freedom to make connections creatively, and gives writers/speakers the chance to begin with their own experience" (p. 14).

An understanding of intersectional theory provides a critical grounding for this project as the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA works with people who hold multiple identities, including those who may experience direct discrimination and oppression because of their need to access YMCA-YWCA programs like the women's shelter or employment services. As such, to properly articulate these people's stories, senior leaders and Y staff need to acknowledge of the diversity of human experience and how that impacts the generalizability of people's stories.

### **3.5 Ethical Implications and Critiques of Storytelling**

The very nature of storytelling has ethical implications because it can be approached from many different angles. Boyce (1996) suggests that while storytelling can be a participatory and co-creative activity, it can also be a tool that controls and emancipates (p. 21). This means that stories can be used to reinforce systems, some of which can be positive and others negative. She goes on to write that researchers may end up identifying stories within organizations that support the perspective of management and that this means that people gathering stories need to think deeply about what role stories have in "renewal, participation and democracy in organizations" (p. 21).

Stories also have the potential to silence voices and experiences on the periphery of an organization through assuming that the mainstream interpretation of a story is how everyone within that organization perceives that story. Another concern is that people gathering stories may unintentionally align themselves with the management of an organization, thus limiting what stories are looked for and where (Boyce, 1996, p. 20). Boyce notes organizational storytelling and its study should be viewed as interdisciplinary in nature and that researchers should not ignore the study of storytelling that has gone on outside of the study of organizational storytelling. Alvesson (2003) suggest there is doubt about how people create stories within an interview because situations are often ambiguous and people are attempting to make sense of a situation without having full context. There is also the risk that people will present stories that

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promote the interests of the storyteller or the storyteller's group (p. 15). This can also present itself when interviewees try to tell the "right" (p. 19) kind of story, in other words, people attempt to tailor their responses to give the person who is gathering the stories the kind of story they believe that person is looking for. However, stories can also be seen as empowering because they do allow people to choose what parts of a person's story he or she choose to include and as such, increases a person's agency (Ritivoi, 2009, p. 27).

Leaders can also manipulate storytelling for their own ends. Auvinen et al. (2013) found that there are leaders who manipulate stories in four different ways: "humorous, pseudo-participative, seductive and pseudo-empathetic" (p. 428). The primary justification leaders gave for why these stories were changed or fabricated was that the results of the story lead to a positive outcome for the leader, listener, or organization. Auvinen et al. also point out it would be unrealistic to believe that only managers are manipulating their employees and they postulate that the manipulation goes multiple ways (pp. 428-429). This means that stories should be looked at critically to assess whether they are being altered in a way that affects the authenticity of the story. Miczo (2003) considers power and status as being issues that cannot be ignored during an interview as even vulnerable narrators have the power to manipulate stories they tell thus affecting the perception of those stories (p. 487).

The person gathering a story also bears some responsibility to the person telling the story. In the field of oral history research, which relies heavily on interviews for information, there are clear rules for how the person gathering a story should act. Yow (1995) lists the American Historical Association's view on how interviewers should conduct themselves: "[t]he interviewer should guard against possible social injury to or exploitation of interviewees and should conduct interviews with respect for human dignity" (p. 51). This should be considered for people who are hoping to gather organizational stories as well. There are potentials for stories to have unanticipated consequences for the person featured in the story, especially if they are already potentially vulnerable. She warns that there are situations where people give consent to sharing a story without fully understanding the ramifications. In this case, she believes it is key for the person doing the interview to go over the information within the story and explain potential consequences to the person who is telling the original story (p. 59).

Carter (2008) looks at the stories that arise from interviewing medical patients. He writes about the increasing focus on bad news stories and cautions against people who seek out stories which focus solely on the negative. He raises concerns that by focusing on the bad things, listeners will tune out. He believes that more positive stories may be similarly compelling to a negative narrative. Additionally, he suggests the person who is hearing the story has an ethical responsibility to consider the context that surrounds the storyteller (pp. 1068-1069). Similarly, Wenger and Snyder (2000) suggest that people should not go about just gathering particular stories, even when those stories are compelling because they may not be representative of the larger context (p. 145). To do this, it is important to make a meaningful connection with the storyteller, understand people's potential fragility while at the same time remembering there will likely be mistakes made in the process of gathering stories that will have to be accounted for and corrected at a later date (Sheftel & Zembrzycki, 2010, p. 209). Meretoja (2018) believes storytelling is so "ethically loaded" (p. 27) because stories shape how we exist in the world and what we believe to be possible in terms of what people are able to think, feel, and imagine (p.

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16). Each interpretation of a story is moderated by an individual's own experience resulting in overlapping and co-existing interpretations of stories (pp. 7 & 130). This means while stories can create new understandings, they can also reinforce stereotypes (p. 112), which can lead to both the creation of both inclusive and discriminatory spaces within a community (p. 121). She goes on to talk about how narrative can actually get in the way of peoples understanding of an issue because focusing in on a compelling story can come at the "expense of multi-faceted analyses of complicated social issues" (p. 106) – effectively oversimplifying the issue by narrowing in on a case study that may not be representative of the overall problem the story is seeking to illuminate. Ultimately, the key to behaving ethically when gathering stories is to remember that people should be represented not just as a collection of stories, but as humans.

The literature shows storytelling can be seen as a large part of how humans communicate and therefore, can be found in nearly every aspect of interpersonal interactions (Snowden, 2014, p. 2). Academics have found that stories can help to inform how non-profits and businesses can transmit information, navigate crises, quell rumors, humanize leaders, and convey organizational visions for the future among other functions. Leaders can use stories to help them connect with other people inside of and outside of the organization. Non-profits can also use stories to help build brand recognition and increase donations of time and money. By increasing people's knowledge of a non-profit, there can also be an increase in the feeling of community. Storytelling has been used throughout the fields of community development to build understanding and connection between diverse groups. Stories can also help to show people's personal experiences and the intersections of characteristics like race and gender. Furthermore, organizations need to be aware of the possible ethical ramifications of storytelling especially when the storyteller may not be the person who experienced the story or in situations where the long-term ramifications of having a personal story in the public sphere may not be clear.

While there are many applications of storytelling across many different fields, this project seeks to narrow in on organizational stories and how people can be involved with the identification of true relevant stories in order to increase relationships and interpersonal connections, to increase donations of time or money, and to improve boarder understanding of what an organization offers a community. When organizations like the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA are able to look at the role of storytelling and its applications, they will better be able to increase staff capacity to identify and use stories that share insights and context in order to demonstrate the non-profit's impacts.

## **4.0 Findings: Online Questionnaire and Focus Group**

The following section includes the findings of the online questionnaire followed by the results of the follow-up focus group. The online questionnaire aimed to establish a baseline of how storytelling is currently being used within the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA. Results were tabulated into graphs, which were made available to the focus group participants. The focus group built on this baseline and discussed how the Y could improve storytelling capacity within its staff and how stories could be used as a community development tool.

### **4.1 Online Questionnaire**

The questions posed in the online questionnaire addressed the project's second research question and establishing a rough baseline of how storytelling is being used at the Y. The findings from the online questionnaire are based on the responses of 14 participants. Participants were also given the opportunity to add additional comments to support their ranked responses. Some of these comments have been included to support the findings of each section. The responses were grouped into the following sections: organizational story functions, story culture, storytelling capacity, and community engagement.

#### **4.1 Organizational Story Functions**

Participants were asked how the Y uses stories both in ranked and short-answer questions. The responses showed that participants had a variety of understandings of where stories were being used within the organization. In the short-answer questions, participants identified that stories were used in fundraising, grant writing, marketing, community connection, connecting with staff and volunteers, and as a way to improve workflow. Most identified that storytelling plays role in connecting with the community; however, no one participant identified all of these uses for storytelling within the organization. Within the ranked questions, most participants believed stories were being used during staff meetings and at public speaking events, but were less clear about the role stories played in other applications within the Y (see Figure 1).

Participants have varied knowledge of how stories are used within the Y

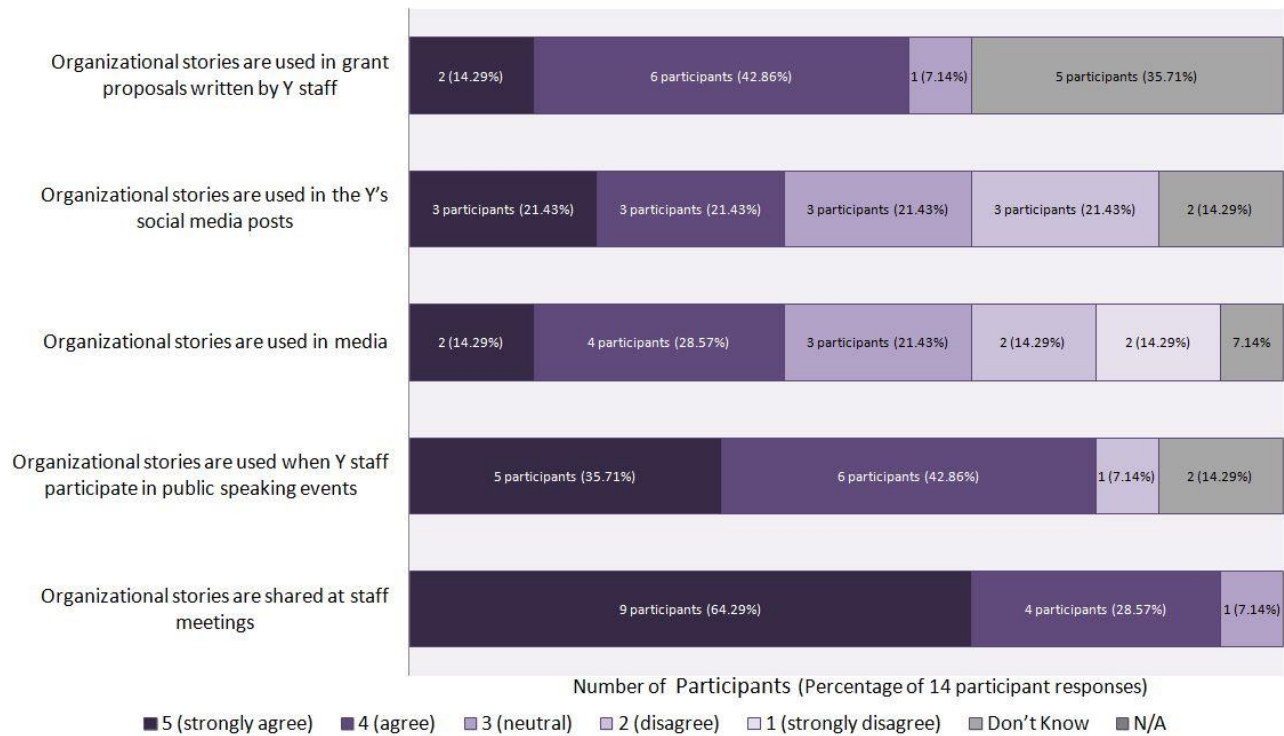
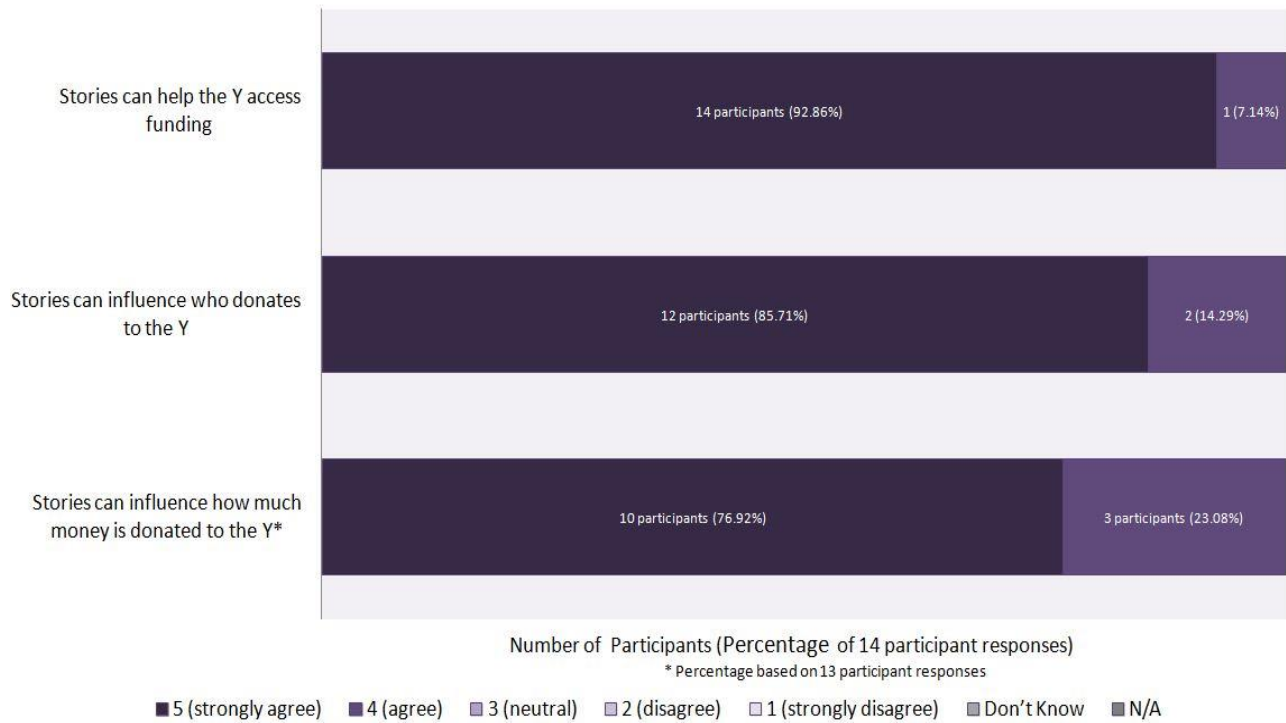


FIGURE 1: STORY FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE Y

However, one area of clear consensus within the ranked responses was the role of stories in fundraising. All of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that stories affect not only who donates, but how much money an individual decides to donate to an organization (see Figure 2).

**Participants overwhelmingly believe stories play a key role in fund acquisition**

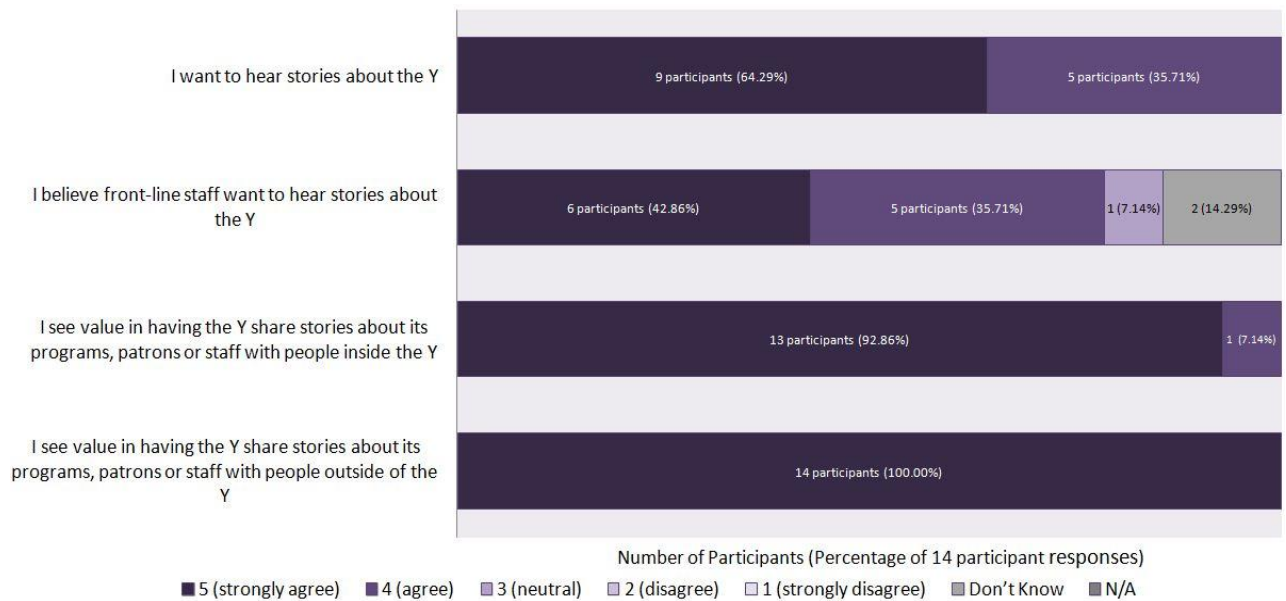


**FIGURE 2: IMPACT OF STORYTELLING ON FUNDRAISING**

### 4.1 Story Culture

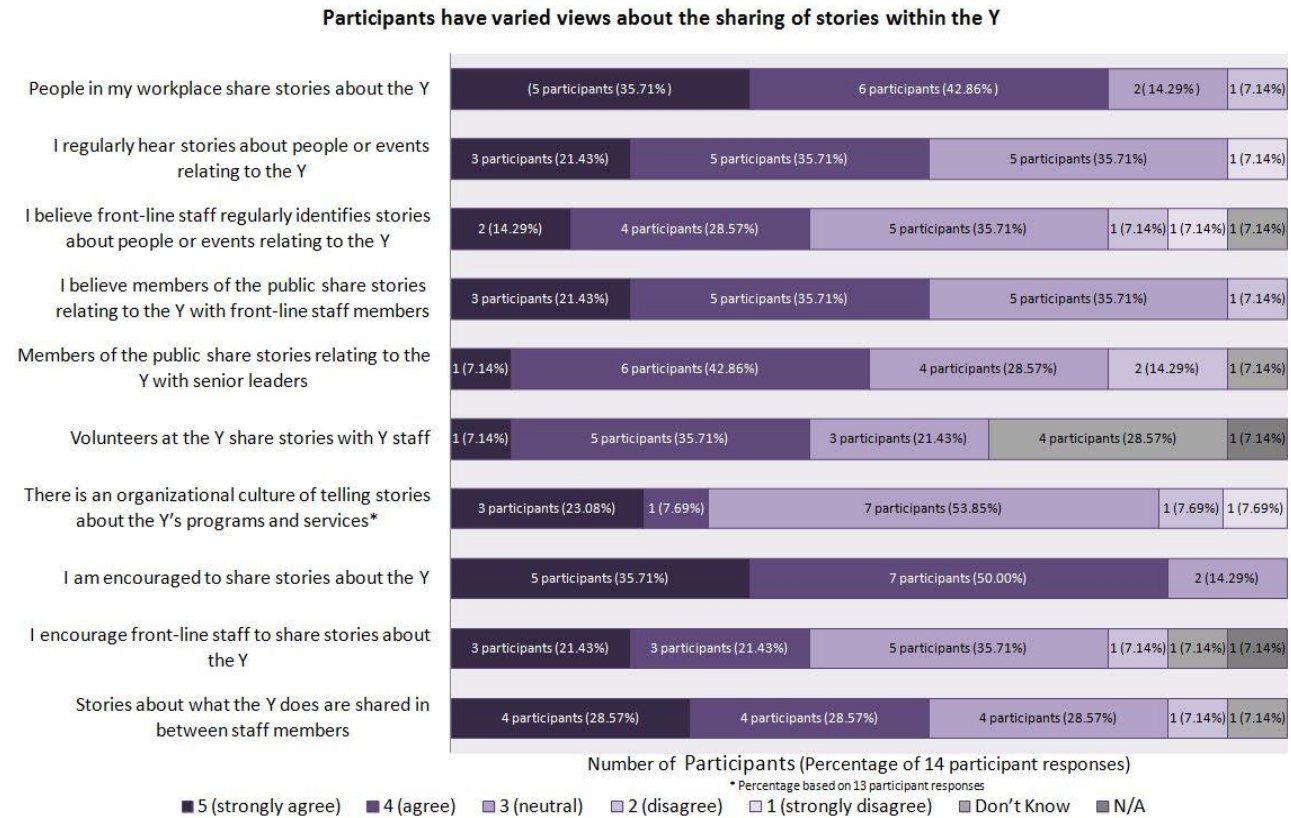
The online questionnaire found the vast majority of participants strongly agreed that there is value in sharing stories with people inside and outside of the Y and that they and their staff by and large want to hear stories about the organization (see Figure 3).

**Most participants want to see the sharing of stories within the Y**



**FIGURE 3: PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PRACTICE OF STORYTELLING**

Participants had mixed experiences of how often they heard stories or experienced the sharing of stories between staff and members of the public and/or volunteers. While most senior leaders indicated they were encouraged to share stories, not all participants believed this culture made its way to front-line staff (see Figure 4). There are also gaps in knowledge relating to the sharing of stories, with the largest gap relating to whether volunteers share stories with staff.



**FIGURE 4: ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES AROUND SHARING STORIES**

Participants were asked how often they identify stories. The responses were mixed – two of the participants indicated they identified stories on a regular basis, but the rest of the responding participants indicated that they identified stories much less frequently. Nearly half of the participants said they identified stories on a monthly basis, with some indicating this was done in advance of the monthly senior leaders meeting, where people are asked to share short stories that encapsulate the mission of the Y. Participant Jenna Nickle wrote:

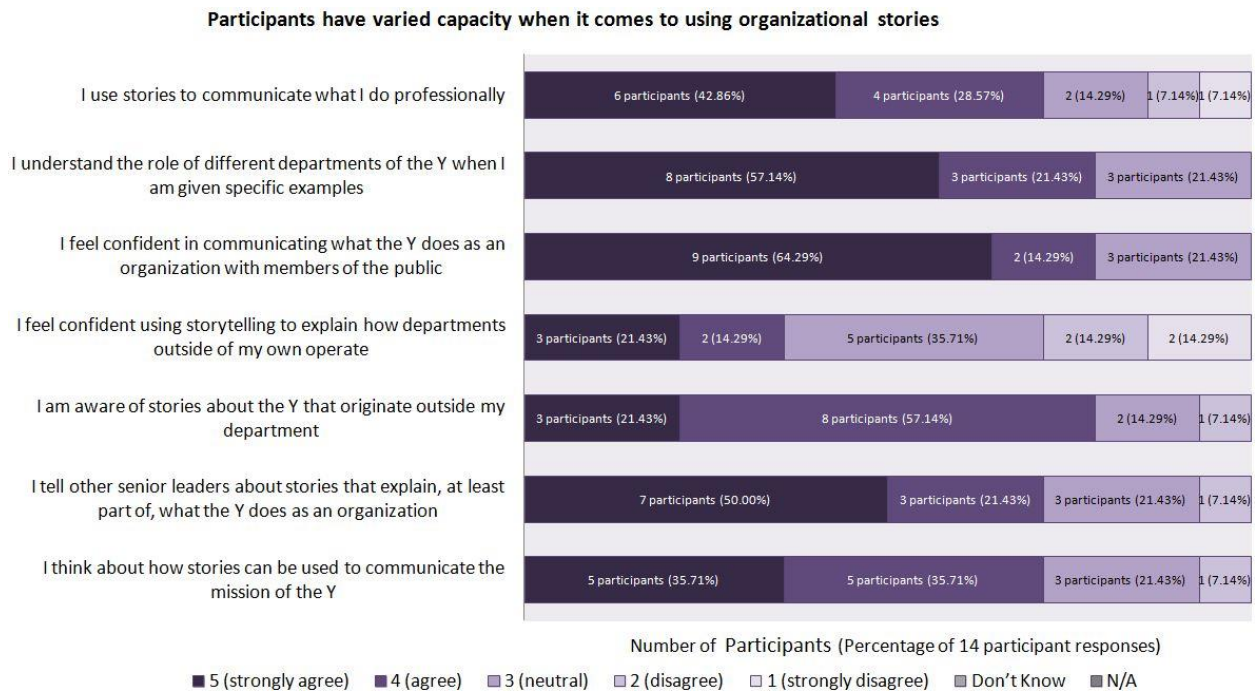
We are required to provide one to the senior leader team monthly. However, there are no time lines for front line staff to identify or hear about organizational stories. Additionally there is [sic] no time lines for members of the public to identify or hear about organization stories.

When it came how often participants saw or heard about front-line staff identifying stories, the results were more varied. Some of the participants indicated that the staff they interacted with identified stories on a regular basis where others wrote that they infrequently saw front-line staff identify stories.

## 4.1 Storytelling Capacity

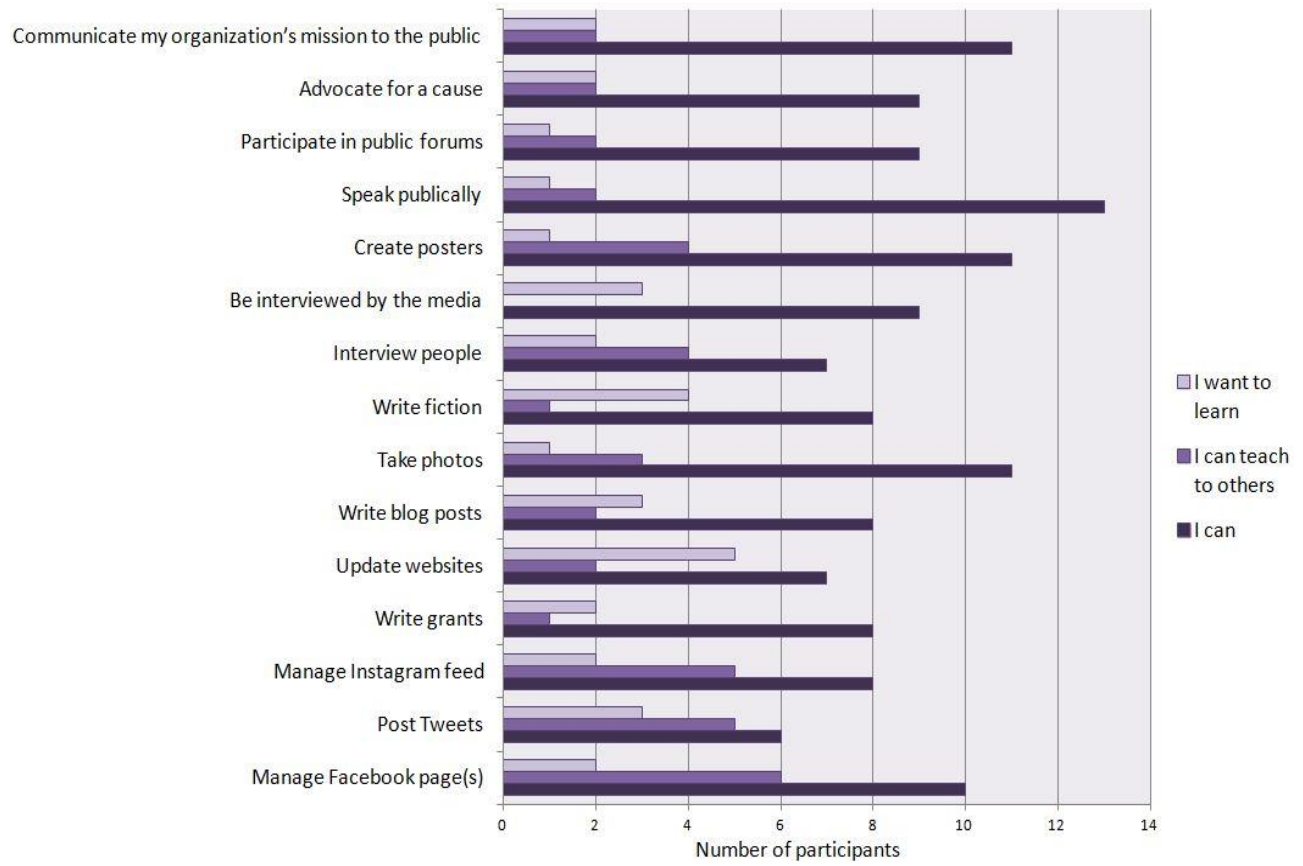
Participants expressed a wide variety of perspectives when it came to the identification and use of stories in a professional context. In response to a short-answer question, some participants said they identified stories by looking at how impacted the storyteller was by the experience whereas others looked for positive experiences or whether the story matched the goals of the organization. While more than half of participants said they used stories to communicate what they do at work, others did not (see Figure 5). There was also mixed confidence levels amongst participants about their ability to use stories to explain what the Y does, with even fewer participants expressing confidence in using stories to talk about departments outside of their own. This can be seen in a quote from female participant 10. She wrote that:

Within the building that I work in, and departments I interact with, yes, I can communicate that quite well with the public. I lack in knowledge of other departments that we may not interact with on a daily basis, or know all of the components to their jobs/portfolios/days.



**FIGURE 5: SENIOR LEADERSHIPS' STORYTELLING CAPACITY**

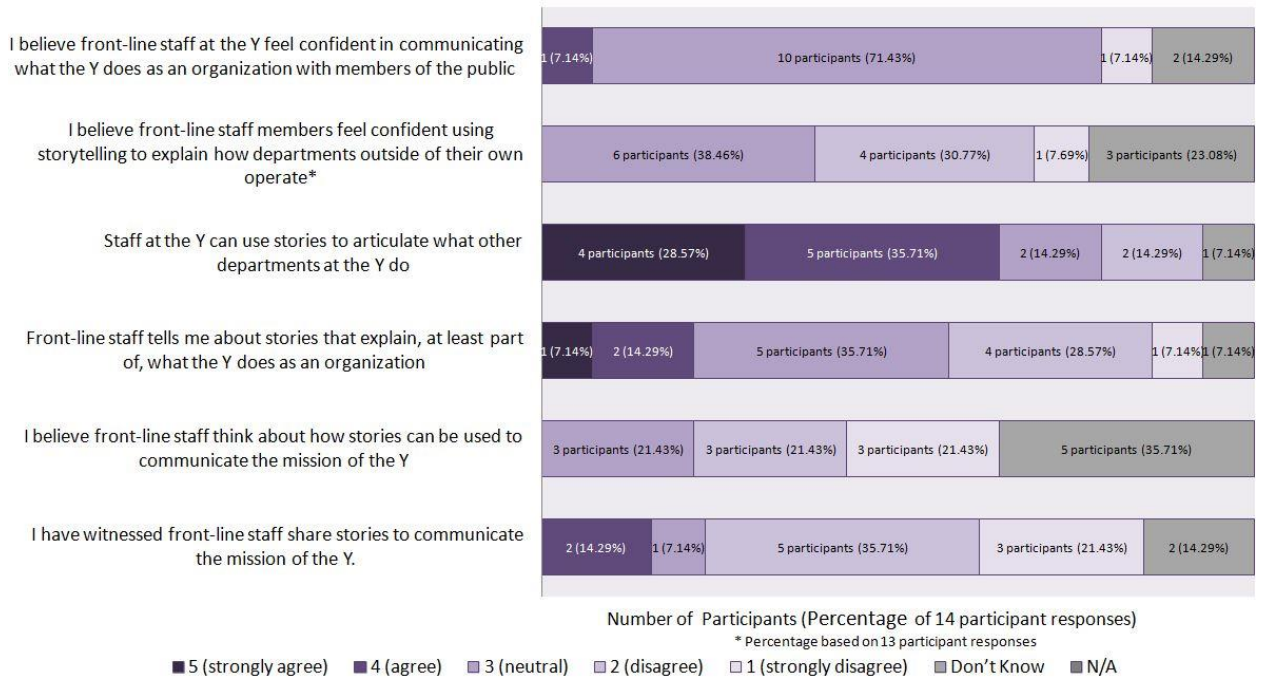
Additionally, participants expressed varied abilities in using stories and their related tools and outlets. In a skills inventory (see Figure 6), most of the participants expressed competency when it came to activities they could already do rather than indicate their interest in teaching others or learning the skill. The majority of participants said they could speak publicly and most indicated they could take photos, communicate their organization's mission, and manage some aspects of social media. Participants expressed varied abilities when it came to other skills.



**FIGURE 6: SKILLS INVENTORY**

While more than half of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that they used stories and were confident doing it professionally (see Figure 5), participants were less sure about the capacity of front-line staff to use stories as part of their roles within the Y (see Figure 7). Over half the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they had seen front-line staff use stories to communicate the mission of the Y. However, this question set yielded the most consistent ‘Don’t Know’ responses from participants, which indicates a gap in knowledge on the part of the participants in relation to how front-line staff engage with stories.

**Most participants feel front-line staff have room for improvement when it comes to storytelling**



**FIGURE 7: FRONT-LINE STAFF'S STORYTELLING CAPACITY**

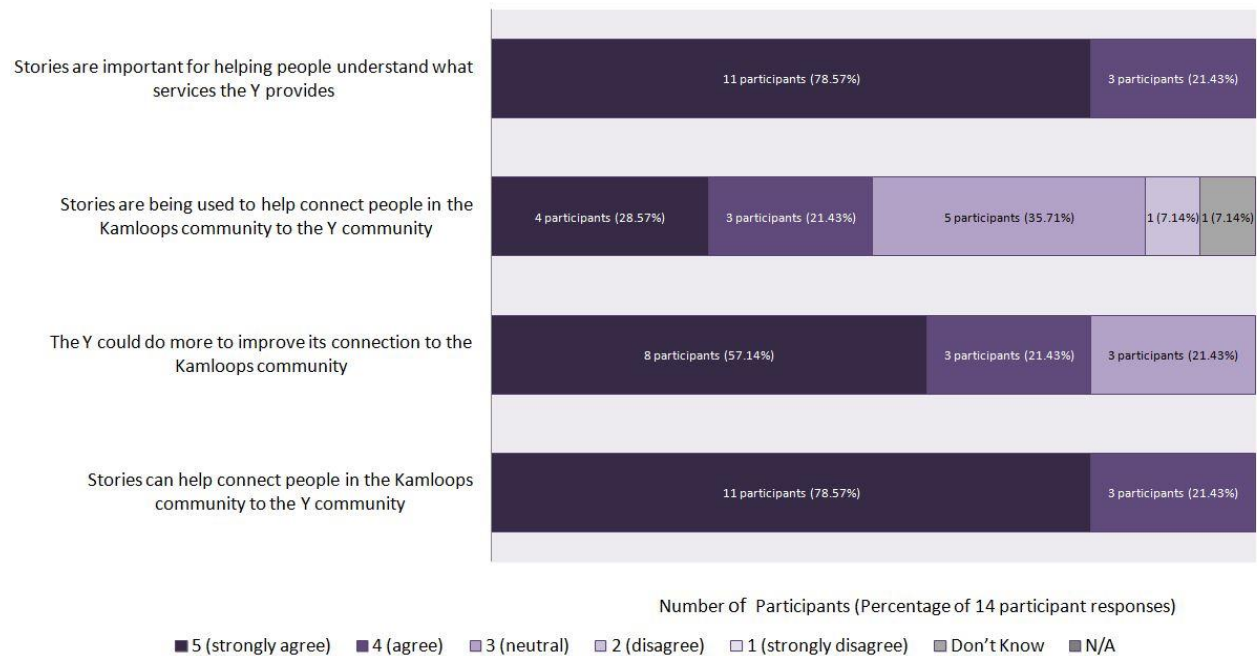
When it came to training, most participants had not received any specific training in the use of stories in a professional context. While three of the participants indicated they had received some training, no formal storytelling training had been provided to front-line staff at the Y. However, six of the 14 participants opted not to answer the short-answer question relating to their own training and eight skipped the question about providing story-related training to front-line staff. It is not clear from the data why participants would have skipped these questions or whether the decision indicates that participants had not received or provided training.

In the form of two short-answer questions, participants were asked first about what gaps they having in their own knowledge of storytelling and second, about what barriers exist that prevent the sharing of stories. The individual gaps in knowledge could be broken down into three categories: accurate identification, successful sharing, and proper utilization of stories. Many of the participants indicated there was a gap in relation to how they identify stories, whether it is through their own knowledge or because of the flow of information between different departments and different levels of staff. Within their short-answer responses to the question on knowledge gaps, one participant expressed discomfort with public speaking and five participants expressed that more could be done within the organization to improve the identification and use of stories. When it came to barriers to finding and using stories within the organization, participants identified a diversity of factors. These included the lack of time, resources, knowledge, and education. Participants also flagged issues surrounding confidentiality, people's confidence in telling stories, the large size of the organization, and ineffective transfer of stories from those who know the stories to those who need to know the stories.

**4.1 Community Engagement**

While participants acknowledge there are barriers to the effective sharing of stories within the Y, most agree that stories play a role in connecting to the broader community (see Figure 8). All the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that stories help people understand the services the Y provides and that stories help people connect with the Y. However, participants were less sure about whether stories were being used to connect the Kamloops community to the Y community and more than three quarters of participants believed the Y could be doing more to improve its connection to the broader Kamloops community.

**Most participants believe stories have a role in connecting the Y to the broader community**



**FIGURE 8: COMMUNITY CONNECTION USING STORIES**

## 4.2 Focus Group

The results of the online questionnaire were aimed at establishing how storytelling is being used at the Y as a tool to connect with the community. The focus group built on these findings, with the goal of looking beyond the current use of storytelling to how the Y could increase storytelling capacity within its staff and how storytelling could be used to further develop community. A summary of the questionnaire responses was presented to the focus group in advance of the discussion. Though the findings were not directly discussed, they were used as reference points that provided direction for the questions that participants were asked during the focus group discussion (see Appendix 9.2). The focus group questions were broken into two sections based on the project's research questions: the first looked at how to develop storytelling capacity and the second looked at community development. Participants were also asked to define two specific terms which were used throughout the discussion: capacity and community development. Within the following section, capacity can be seen as an individual's ability to do something or the amount of that something that person is able to do and community development is defined as a collaboration of like-minded people who are working together towards a common goal.

## 4.2 How to Develop Storytelling Capacity within the Y's Staff

The focus group was first asked to share a story about the Y and explain why it was impactful. The purpose of this was to develop rapport within the group while identifying what factors the group identified as important to them. Throughout this part of the discussion, participants talked about the existing culture of the Y as a welcoming place both for staff and for the community. One of the participants shared her own story of working at the Y – she told the group, she was over 300 pounds when she started working at the Y and it was through encouragement by a co-worker that she began working out. For her, this allowed her to build confidence as well as provided her a way to connect to members of the Y in similar situations. All of the six focus group participants expressed positive feelings about the organization and its friendly, supportive, and non-competitive culture. They indicated this culture extends beyond internal staff relationships to how staff treat members of the public. One participant summed it up as such: “it doesn't matter what desk you come to for what you are looking for, you're going to be helped” (Maureen Doll, Nov. 21, 2018).

Participants also believe that there was a rich culture that exists within the people to attend the Y. Program client, Michele Walker shared a story of her mother and how the community has supported her mother through an illness. She told the group:

[M]y, um, aunt and uncle and my mom when she was healthy enough would go to the better bones class and since my mom hasn't been well enough to go, she still gets get-well cards, thinking-of-you cards, people ask about her in the class. Like it's a fitness class; what place has that type of community for a fitness class? So you really see that connection that happens, um, and particularly for seniors who sometimes are on their own. That's, to me, that's just super cool (Michele Walker, Nov. 21, 2018).

## 4.2 Storytelling Capacity within Senior Leaders

Based on the desire for increased storytelling capacity shown through the results of the online questionnaire, the researcher asked participants how they felt that senior leaders could improve the use of storytelling within the Y. While the participants of the focus group were all members of the Y senior leadership team, their discussion identified that senior leaders are not a homogenous group and do not share equal confidence in the sharing of stories. Two of the participants mentioned that it may not be clear to front-line staff that senior leaders want to hear stories or that stories are useful to the organization. One participant said:

[W]e need to believe in the importance of [storytelling] so that when our staff come to us and they are unsure or they don't know what to do, we don't just go, 'nah, it's not really that important', right, because I feel like that would be really easy to do if you don't understand how to do something, right, so if we are demonstrating the importance of those stories, and collecting those stories, and using those stories then it actually can become a part of just our staff culture (Female Participant 7, Nov. 21, 2018).

Participants indicated that a shift towards becoming a storytelling organization needs to start with the senior leaders and it would be through their development of policy and infrastructure that front-line staff would be exposed to the practice of identifying and sharing stories. These

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changes could include, but are not limited to, developing a regular email asking for stories, a physical box to collect stories, an online survey where staff can submit stories, or a log-book. However, one participant flagged senior leader workload as a potential issue, as while there are actions they can take to increase storytelling within the organization; they may not always have the time and resources to do so.

## 4.2 Integration of Stories into the Y

In addition to being asked about storytelling capacity of senior leaders, the participants were also asked what front-line staff could do to increase their capacity and what ethical issues need to be considered in the process. The following insights were consolidated out of all three questions.

All but one of the focus group participants mentioned the need for storytelling training at some point during the discussion. There was an acknowledgement that training would benefit staff, especially front-line staff. One participant talked about her own experience with storytelling training at another YMCA in Canada. She told the group “[n]ow, I can identify what a story is and how to piece it together, but it was that education piece that really made a difference” (Jenna Nickle, Nov. 21, 2018). As part of the discussion on training, participants shared that they believed the overall understanding and retention of organizational practices and policies is lower than it could be. Participants suggested that stories could be included within initial staff orientations and incorporated into policy documents as examples. They believed this would not only make policies more interesting, but would also increase comprehension of the information. However in order to include stories in training and policy, stories need to be identified. Participants discussed that having access to stories was a significant barrier to the sharing of stories. Because many of the senior leaders do not work directly with Y members, program participants, the public, or volunteers, they are reliant on others to share stories of impact with them. This can pose a problem if front-line staff are not able to identify what makes a relevant organizational story, hence, the need for storytelling training.

One of the largest knowledge gaps identified in the discussion was that many of the staff, including senior leaders, have a limited understanding of the workings of departments outside of their own. One participant who had worked in a number of different roles said that while she understands the broader context of what the Y does now, she had not had that understanding in previous roles. She told the group:

[I]t was really interesting for me because I, coming from a position of having some idea of what the Y was, but not really understanding that, especially as a child because my mom worked here, um, to working at the front-desk where I have, um, sort of like a jack-of-all-trades, but I don't really understand a lot of what's going on, it's like I understand all these things, but I don't really understand how they work together, to my current position where I am lucky enough and I think fortunate in that the way that I get to see the Y is not a way that a lot of other people in our organization get to see the Y because I have connections to every department so it's like I have a very fully formed understanding now of how our organization works (Female Participant 7, Nov. 21, 2018).

Participants identified that departmental silos affect how information is shared, and therefore, staff's ability to support the organization. One participant gave the example of a story mapping

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template provided by the YMCA in Vancouver that was sent to one department, but not to the organization as a whole. She identified that when she received the tool, it did not occur to her to share it with others until the focus group discussion. Participants discussed the potential value of developing systems that would allow departments to better communicate with each other.

While all areas where staff interacted with the public were flagged as potential sources for stories, participants expressed that member appreciation days were especially valuable as a way to identify stories. One participant explained her experience at a recent member appreciation day:

I stood behind a table. I didn't even have my lanyard on and people just wanted to tell me every story ... they come up and over a cookie, they just want to start talking to you so I found that was interesting because they trust that whoever that person is, they have no understanding, they didn't ask anything about me or what I do, nothing – they just saw me as part of a family of the Y so that they could have the freedom to tell me what they needed to tell me (Female Participant 9, Nov. 21, 2018).

Participants also indicated the sharing of stories could be carried through to front-desk staff who interact with the public on a regular basis and might be exposed to interesting stories through the course of their work. It was suggested that perhaps there should be story boxes either for staff or the public to contribute stories or perhaps a computer survey to easily record people's stories or online polls administered through social media. Participants identified that not only are members of the Y's programs a source for stories, but so too are staff and volunteers.

In addition to the challenges of accessing stories, participants also discussed the lack of knowledge of appropriate policies and protocols around confidentiality and permissions that are needed to gather relevant stories in a usable, ethical way. Participants mentioned on several occasions that while these policies may pose some challenges to sharing certain stories like those of women fleeing violence, they should still seek to share those stories as they are some of the most compelling and personally impactful. One participant noted that story release forms could be developed in order to ensure that individuals understand that their story will be shared publically.

When it came to changes that directly impact front-line staff, participants indicated there needs to be consultation with the end users. They thought that this would not only increase buy-in to a cultural shift, but could also lead to insightful strategies and better feedback. One participant noted:

[W]e should be consulting [front-line staff] on what will work well for them because if we just go in and put something in place, they might not do it because it might not work well for their schedule and for their shift (Jenna Nickle, Nov, 21, 2018).

Front-line staff could be asked to give suggestions, develop new storytelling tools and techniques, and create and participate in an engagement/storytelling committee of interested staff from all of the Y departments. This could also lead to the creation of storytelling champions who would support the practice of storytelling within the Y. A number of participants expressed that they would benefit from the creation of a director of storytelling who could help gather and

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distribute organizational stories and build a storytelling culture. One participant expressed that sharing of stories should become “not something you have to do, it’s something you want to do” (Jenna Nickle, Nov, 21, 2018).

## 4.2 Storytelling as a Community Development Tool

The focus group was asked first about how stories could be used to develop a sense of community and then how the Y could use stories to create community.

It can be said that the current culture in the Y contributes to the existing sense of community. One participant talked her experience hearing member stories and how she was “just like, filled back up and I’m just like, ‘wow, this is a great place’” (Female Participant 9, Nov. 21, 2018). While participants expressed while they were very good at getting their messages out to people who are already members of the Y, they were less successful at building relationships with the external community. Another issue they raised was that while some people might access one of the Y’s programs, there are challenges to getting those people to continue attending once the program ends or getting them to use other Y services.

Participants identified that having stories to share with the public can be important tool for front-line staff to use to build a sense of connection. One participant had shared her own story of weight loss at the Y and said that:

[W]e want to be able to have those stories to share with other people because again, going back to what I was staying about my story, like I needed somebody to come and be like, ‘hey, you know what, it’s not actually that bad, like you just got to do this and it’s so easy’ so, like, now I know when other people come in and they go, like, ‘oh, I’m really nervous about it.’ I go, ‘you know what? So was I and it’s totally fine.’ Right, like, people want that because it helps them connect with us better (Female Participant 7, Nov. 21, 2018).

Participants also indicated that a barrier to engagement was the fact that the Y is not actively going out into the community to recruit new members and there are limits to the number of people who walk in off the street to take part in programs. Additionally, participants expressed that there were limited opportunities for staff to share stories about the Y and its programs unless they held a role that specifically includes narrative elements through activities like fundraising. They remarked that it was important that people understand that the Y provides more than just physical fitness programs because they felt that they were providing services to help people in all aspects of their lives.

Since participants indicated that the Y could do a better job of bringing people into the Y, one participant suggested that they could do an inventory of the Y’s programs and look outwards at the community to match up the existing services with the needs of the different communities. By sharing stories about the Y’s different services through platforms like marketing materials, participants remarked that more people could be recruited the Y as they would better understand the larger scope of what the organization does. One participant suggested that having stories on hand at public events would help to keep people engaged with Y staff long enough to hear a more in-depth profile of the organization.

As part of the discussion on developing community through stories, participants talked about the smaller size of the community of Kamloops and how that meant that the organization already had existing relationships with groups like the media. A number of participants talked about how they could utilize community ties by getting people who have stories about the Y to share those stories with their friends and community so “they could be our storytellers” (Female Participant 9, Nov. 21, 2018). Participants did identify that this could already be happening, but that currently, the Y has no way to know if it is. Another suggestion was that the Y could create spaces where people with similar stories could come together in order to create “a community within a community” (Female Participant 10, Nov. 21, 2018). Though the example was given for weight loss, participants indicated this could be done for many other groups who have shared experiences. There was also a belief from participants that if some members shared stories about the Y, other people would identify where their own stories overlapped and connections could be built in that way.

While participants said they could be doing a better job at telling everyone’s stories, they specifically mentioned that they should be doing more to reach people who believe the Y is just a gym and to connect with more marginalized groups like the transgender community. One participant noted that even though certain kinds of stories aren’t being shared for good reasons, they still need a way to proactively reach out to more vulnerable communities and let them know there are services that might meet their needs and stories are one way to do that.

When it came to developing a tool for sharing stories, participants were clear on the fact that it would have to be more than one tool in order to meet the diversity of departmental needs. Rather than a single tool, it was suggested that a “[k]ind of a scaffolding” (Female Participant 7, Nov. 21, 2018) be set up with tools that build upon each other. As such, no model or template was created as a part of the focus group.

### **4.3 Summary**

The online questionnaire found that participants overwhelmingly see the value of using stories within the Y, but there is a variety of knowledge levels within staff when it comes to how to identify stories and where to use them. When it comes to gaps in individual knowledge, participants found there were issues largely with the identification and utilization of stories. More broadly, participants believed the effective sharing of stories is limited by a lack of time, resources, and knowledge. The structure of the Y was also identified as a barrier because of the size of the organization, and the way departments are laid out as largely separate from one another. Overall, participants believed stories play a role in connecting the Y to the broader community, but most participants indicated the Y could be doing more when it comes to using stories to develop community.

Within the focus groups, participants expressed that senior leaders need to increase their own storytelling capacity and investment in becoming a storytelling organization before making changes on a front-line level. Participants remarked there needs to be authentic buy-in from all levels of the organization and this could be done by giving people education, time, resources, and leadership opportunities. Participants commented that staff were not going to take on storytelling

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on their own time and as such, there needs to be policies implemented to support the gathering, recording, and sharing of stories in ways that work for each department and their unique needs. When it comes to developing community at the Y, participants were quick to note that there is a strong existing culture that supports staff, program participants, and Y members. However, participants said more could be done to reach out to the broader community through proactively connecting with external groups and by creating new groups of people with shared experiences. Though participants believed that there are spaces for improvement in the sharing of stories, they also indicated there is interest from the participants and staff within the Y to become a storytelling organization.

## **5.0 Discussion, Analysis, and Strategic Implications**

This section is guided by the project's four research questions and compares the findings to the existing research. It explores the six major themes that emerged out of the research (organizational support, story types, purposeful uses of storytelling, barriers to storytelling, ethical considerations, and community development) and their strategic implications of the findings for the Kamloops Y.

### **5.1 Use of Storytelling at the Kamloops Y**

The second research question looks at how is storytelling being used at the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA as a tool to connect with Kamloops community? From both the responses from the online questionnaire and the discussion within the focus group, it is clear that there is a wide range of how stories are being used. While participants did not categorize stories according to specific themes as some researchers have in the past (Denning, 2004a; Martin et al., 1983), they echoed what other researchers found in terms of identifying many of the practical application of stories including marketing, fundraising, and outreach (Chen, 2012; Dessart, 2018; Merchant et al., 2010; Vence, 2008; Walsh, 2016; Ye et al., 2015). Although some people were more comfortable using stories professionally, there did not seem to be one person or group of people who champion storytelling within the organization. A storytelling champion was identified in the literature review as being key in the adoption of a storytelling culture within an organization (Bublitz et al., 2016). Since there is no one within the Y that is championing the use of stories, the organization's ability to the use of stories as a tool is limited. This is in part because there is no one who is suggesting new ways to incorporate stories and as such, stories tend to be relegated to their more conventional uses such as marketing materials. That said, there was a willingness from participants to apply storytelling in more innovative ways including in policies, orientation, training, and in hiring processes.

### **5.2 Storytelling Capacity**

The third research question asked how the organization could increase storytelling capacity within its staff, which is an organizational goal of the Y. It was clear from the discussion in the second focus group that participants believed there were a number of ways to increase staff capacity – at the forefront was education and training (Chase Lockshin, 2016; Dixon, n.d.). However, training is not enough on its own; storytelling needs to be embraced by the organizations leaders and stories need told consistently (Chase Lockshin, 2016). The findings from the second focus group suggest that this can be done through identifying champions who can support storytelling and changing policies and practices to incorporate stories. This means that in order to increase storytelling capacity at the Y, the organization needs to make changes throughout its operations and carry those practices to the broader community outside of the Y.

### **5.3 Community Development and Storytelling**

The final research question focused on how storytelling could be used as a community development tool by the Y. The literature shows that stories can not only help increase donations to a non-profit (Merchant et al., 2010), but can also increase social capital and civic skills (Kim

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& Ball-Rokeach, 2006). Within the second focus group discussion, much of the conversation focused on how to provide people in the community with the supports they need to fill service gaps. This focus is not particularly surprising when looked at within the context for the Y's existing mission to be a healthy, supportive, and connective place in the community (Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA, 2017b) and speaks to the strength of the existing culture and values supported by the senior leaders in the Y. The focus group offered a number of specific and practical suggestions of what the Y could be doing to develop community within the Y and Kamloops more broadly. This helps to build upon the existing literature since there is little when it comes to practical suggestions on how to develop community within non-profits through the use of storytelling. By providing ideas like using stories to connect with outside community groups and creating groups at the Y based on shared stories, the findings provide insights into how storytelling could be used proactively. These applications could help to provide a more nuanced approach to community outreach when combined with existing research relating to stories' ability to convey personal and cultural insights (Little & Froggett, 2009).

#### **5.4 Intersectional Feminist Framework**

While this project aimed to approach storytelling through an intersectional feminist framework, it became clear almost immediately that this was an overly ambitious goal. Participants within both focus groups were all female and all of a Caucasian appearance. According to the 2016 census data, Kamloops' population of people identifying as visible minorities is just under eight percent (Statistics Canada, 2016). As such, while the participants are relatively reflective of the overall community, there are still perspectives that are likely not reflected within the participants' perceptions of stories and their potential applications. However, the Y is presented with a unique opportunity to include policies that will ensure that the voices of people with a diversity of backgrounds are represented within its organizational stories as the Y's women's shelter and its related programs already use an intersectional feminist framework to inform their practices. This framework could also be used and applied to storytelling practices within the Y while drawing upon existing literature that demonstrates the oppressive and discriminatory potential of stories (Alvesson, 2003; Boyce, 1996). However, before an intersectional feminist framework can be applied to storytelling, it is important that Y staff develop a baseline of knowledge relating to general storytelling. This could be done by first providing training about storytelling and then providing an advanced training session that would include education about the existing intersectional feminist framework and discussions around how this framework could be applied to the Y's storytelling practices. Once a strong knowledge base of storytelling and intersectional feminist practice has been built up within the Y, then the organization can begin to look at combining the two. The Y could do this through enlisting the help of the storytelling champions to help provide ongoing internal training and guidance. That said, the organization needs to ensure that all of the stories are gathered ethically and with the full and informed consent and this needs to be done from the initial implementation of any storytelling practices or policies.

#### **5.5 Research Highlights and Strategic Implications**

Within the findings, six major areas of interest emerged in relation to storytelling: organizational support, story types, uses of storytelling, barriers to storytelling, ethical considerations, and community development. While there are other areas of overlap between the literature review

and the field research, these are the most relevant for the Y to consider. The following paragraphs will look at each area and explore some of the strategic implications for the Y. Table 1 provides a summary of the highlights (commonalities are italicized, and points of key importance are bolded). The points of key importance were chosen because of the degree of engagement that participants in the second focus group had towards the idea, which supports the participatory nature of this project’s methodology. Since this project is based on the assumption that participants are best positioned to see what ideas will work and have value for the Y, it made sense to focus on concepts that participants expressed interest in during the discussion.

<b>Highlights</b>	<b>Literature review</b>	<b>Online Questionnaire/ Focus Group</b>
<u>Organizational Support</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Buy-in from leadership</i></li> <li>● <i>Storytelling champions</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Buy-in from leadership</i></li> <li>● <i>Storytelling champions</i></li> <li>● <b>Buy-in from front-line staff</b></li> <li>● Existing support of the concept of storytelling</li> <li>● Inclusion of storytelling into policy and practice</li> <li>● Prioritization of storytelling as a worthwhile organizational tool</li> </ul>
<u>Story Types</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Stories that share knowledge</i></li> <li>● Stories that humanize the boss</li> <li>● Stories about whether employees can rise in the organization</li> <li>● Stories that relate to what results in firings</li> <li>● Stories about the support employees get when they relocate communities</li> <li>● Stories around how bosses deal with people’s mistakes</li> <li>● Stories about how organizations deal with challenges</li> <li>● Stories that add meaning to organizational experiences</li> <li>● Stories that spark action</li> <li>● Stories that communicate who the storyteller is</li> <li>● Stories that transmit values</li> <li>● Stories that foster collaboration</li> <li>● Stories that tame rumors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Stories that share knowledge</i></li> <li>● Stories that explain what services the Y provides</li> <li>● Stories that explain how people are personally impacted by the Y and its services</li> <li>● Stories about people at the Y</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories that led people into the future</li> </ul>	
<u>Purposeful Uses of Storytelling</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fundraising</i></li> <li>• <i>Marketing</i></li> <li>• <i>Community connection</i></li> <li>• <b>Increase knowledge retention</b></li> <li>• Breakdown silos</li> <li>• Branding</li> <li>• Providing measures of accountability</li> <li>• Reimagining an organization and its strategic direction</li> <li>• Creation of metanarratives</li> <li>• Set ethical standards</li> <li>• Build trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fundraising</i></li> <li>• <i>Marketing</i></li> <li>• <i>Community connection</i></li> <li>• <b>Increase knowledge retention</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff orientation</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff training</b></li> <li>• Explain what the organization does</li> <li>• Grant writing</li> <li>• Connecting with staff and volunteers</li> <li>• Workflow improvement tool</li> <li>• Job interviews</li> </ul>
<u>Barriers to Storytelling</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Staff do not understand what makes a good story</i></li> <li>• <i>Staff do not know what kinds of stories the organization wants to find and share</i></li> <li>• <b><i>Non-profit leaders do not embrace storytelling</i></b></li> <li>• Stories are not told consistently so people within the organization do not build habits that support storytelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Staff do not understand what makes a good story</i></li> <li>• <i>Staff do not know what kinds of stories the organization wants to find and share</i></li> <li>• <b><i>Non-profit leaders do not embrace storytelling</i></b></li> <li>• <b>Siloed organizational structure</b></li> <li>• Limited time</li> <li>• Lack of training</li> <li>• Workload</li> <li>• Organizational size</li> <li>• People’s lack of storytelling confidence</li> <li>• Ineffective systems to share stories</li> </ul>
<u>Ethical Considerations</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Consent</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Confidentiality</i></b></li> <li>• <b>Social injury resulting from sharing a story</b></li> <li>• Reinforcement of negative norms</li> <li>• Privileging the stories of certain people</li> <li>• Alignment of stories to meet management expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Consent</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Confidentiality</i></b></li> <li>• <b>Privacy</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of self-interests</li> <li>• Manipulation of story content</li> </ul>	
<u>Community Development</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Create social capital</i></li> <li>• Increased frequency of storytelling increases people’s want to be part of that community</li> <li>• Inclusion of outside groups</li> <li>• Communicate and create shared norms</li> <li>• Create spaces for diverse perspectives</li> <li>• Develop civic skills</li> <li>• Increase political self-esteem for individuals</li> <li>• Transmit cultural information</li> <li>• Challenge oppressive narratives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Create social capital</i></li> <li>• <b>Increase understanding of organizational purpose and services</b></li> <li>• <b>Development of new communities within the Y</b></li> <li>• <b>Enhancement of relationships with groups outside of the Y</b></li> <li>• Growth of Y membership</li> </ul>

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF COMMON AND DIVERGING RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

**Organizational Support:** There is existing support for storytelling within the Y. All the participants expressed a belief that stories are important and can play a role in bettering the organization. Both lines of enquiry showed there was value in storytelling within organizations and communities, but not all individuals within an organization have equal ability or confidence to use stories as an organizational tool (Kurtz, 2014). In order to successfully use stories within an organization, there needs to be both buy-in from leadership and front-line staff. Storytelling champions need to be put in place to take ideas and communicate those to the rest of the organization including leadership, but the leadership needs to support those ideas and include them throughout the organization’s policies and practices. This needs to be coupled with staff consultation, education, and training so that staff understand what is being asked of them while increasing organizational support for the practice (Chase Lockshin, 2016; Dixon, n.d.).

**Story Types:** Through the second focus group discussion, it became clear that participants were not categorizing stories into defined types as many academics have done (Denning, 2004b; Martin et al., 1983). Participants seemed to be using stories intuitively by drawing on their own experiences rather than research. As such the story types identified by the participants were almost completely different than those identified by academics. Participants of the focus group never directly named different categories of stories and it was only through looking at the examples of stories that participants provided that themes emerged. For example, one participant shared the story of a Y member who transformed himself physically and emotionally through working out at the gym. This story showed how that there are stories that share the impact of programs and stories that talk about different services. Since it does not appear that Y staff are using existing academic story types to organize their stories (see Table 1), senior staff at the Y have an opportunity to use these categories to start sorting the stories they do have to best take advantage of diversity of functions stories can play within an organization. By seeing that there are story types that help staff better understand how an organization operates and addresses

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challenges (Martin et al., 1983) and how stories can be used to spark change and communicate a vision for an organization's future (Denning, 2004b), leadership can use stories to intentionally create changes internally and externally. However within this, it is important not to oversimplify people's stories in order to slot them into pre-existing categories of stories – the Y's leadership needs to be mindful that each story represents a person with a unique context that needs to be respected and accounted for in the retelling of the story. By including this perspective in all training related to story types, the Y can lay down a limited framework that will ideally help support intersectional feminist practices.

**Purposeful Uses of Stories:** While the literature identifies a wide range of how stories can be used within an organization, both the literature review and participants indicated that stories could be used in fundraising and marketing and that stories provide a way to increase feelings of community connection (Jacobwith, n.d.; Merchant et al., 2010; Stevens, 2018). However, one of the most relevant of the findings was the identification by focus group participants that stories could be used in hiring, orientation, and training to increase the retention of key information (Gabriel, 1991, 1998; O'Neil, 2002). By including stories in these introductory activities, the Y will do two things: first, it will make the information more memorable because it is more interesting and easier to visualize (Armstrong, 1992; Sims et al., 2009) and second, it will introduce the idea that the Y uses stories straight from the moment that a staff member is hired. In bringing in exposure to storytelling early on, new hires are more likely to buy into the idea that stories are useful and that finding and sharing them has benefit to the organization.

**Barriers to Storytelling:** Both the literature review and comments from participants revealed there are barriers that can limit the practice of storytelling within an organization – staff do not understand what they are being asked to find when they are told to identify and share stories nor do they understand what makes a story worth sharing (Chase Lockshin, 2016). When coupled with reluctance from leaders to use stories, these factors can be huge limiters in how much an organization shares stories. All of these issues exist within the Y, but can be largely addressed through training. Therefore, what needs to be focused on is the existing organizational structure which effectively silos each department (Forman, 2013, p. 203). Because staff members rarely have opportunities to meet and engage with people outside their own departments, it is unlikely that staff members truly understand what other departments do, let alone have the knowledge to share explanatory stories about those departments.

**Ethical Considerations:** Storytelling can be seen as being “ethically loaded” (Meretoja, 2018, p. 27) and the participants of this project's second focus group agreed. They wanted to make sure that the sharing of stories honoured people's need for privacy and confidentiality where appropriate. They indicated there should be clear processes to get consent from the person sharing the story. This is especially critical given that some Y departments operate using an intersectional feminist framework, and other departments do not. This means some staff will have a greater understanding of the innate power imbalances that can exist when someone is being asked to share their story especially if they are being asked by a representative of an organization that provides them needed services (Corbett et al., 2007; Frisby & Maguire, 2009). As such, the Y needs to develop clear policies relating to storytelling and consent so that all departments, regardless of their operational framework, can tell stories respectfully, thoughtfully, and ethically.

**Community Development:** Stories have deep roots within human societies and as such are key to the creation of culture and community (Gottschall, 2012). The sharing of stories can be used to create relationships and grow social capital (Matthews & Sunderland, 2017, p. 128). Focus group participants suggested the Y should take a proactive approach to community development. By looking to create new communities by linking people with shared stories and reaching out to groups of people outside of the Y to let them know about Y services, the organization can direct the opportunities for creating community rather than just allowing the creation of community to happen organically through people's participation in programming.

## 5.6 Summary

While the findings showed many aspects of how storytelling can be used within organizations like the Kamloops Y, there were a number of highlights that emerged from the research. First, while stories are being used right now within the Y, there are opportunities to increase staff knowledge about the types of stories that exist and how the Y could use those stories to illustrate specific organizational information by incorporating stories into policies as written examples and as a part of organizational practices like orientation and training. Second, while some people have a high capacity to find and share stories, there are others who do not. Training and education can help all staff members understand the usefulness of storytelling as an organizational tool and feel more comfortable with its use. Future capacity development initiatives could draw on lessons from existing applications of the feminist intersectional framework used by the women's shelter and its related programs. This presents an opportunity to the organization when it comes to telling reflective community stories. As such, the inclusion of this framework into storytelling practices should be revisited at a future date. Third, the current structure of the Y limits how stories and resources are shared across departments. Fourth, there are ethical considerations when it comes to sharing people's stories and these should be reflected in the gathering and application of stories. Finally, stories present an opportunity to the Y to develop community inside and outside of the organization. The following section will look at potential actions the organization can take in order to include storytelling within the organization.

## 6.0 Recommendations

This section provides the Kamloops Y with short, medium, and long-term recommendations that are aimed to incorporate the practices of storytelling throughout the organization. Two of the central research questions that this project looked at are: how the Kamloops Y can increase storytelling capacity within its staff and how the Y can use storytelling as a community development tool. As this project's methodology is participatory in nature, much of the recommendations in this section stem from points made by participants throughout the process – particularly within the second focus group. Suggestions made during the field research were considered and compared to existing literature to identify which ideas fit with the Y's vision and are feasible and sustainable given the organization's current capacity. The recommendations stemming from this study have been identified while considering the following criteria:

- **Vision:** The actions support the Y's existing vision of a healthy, connected, engaged, and supported community (Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA, 2017b).
- **Feasibility:** The actions can be implemented with relative ease.
- **Sustainability:** The actions can be maintained over time.
- **Relative organizational capacity:** The actions are likely to receive support from leadership, resources for new infrastructure, staff time to implement new practices, and other needed supports.

All of the recommendations will require the allocation of varying degrees of financial and staff resources. As such, the benefits of implementing the recommendations should be weighed against cost and feasibility. Participants throughout this research project mentioned that the Y faces challenges when it comes to having sufficient funding and time to implement new initiatives. To account for that, the recommendations are structured according to short, medium, and long-term options and the Y has the ability to choose to implement the changes that it sees as more doable first and then revisit more resource-intensive recommendations in the future.

### 6.1 Short-term Recommendations

These recommendations are aimed at implementation within the first six-months after the organization approves and agrees with this project's report.

#### 1. Conduct a storytelling audit

The first task should be to look more deeply at where stories are being used and how often they are being shared. While this project provides an overview of how stories are being used more generally, a point-in-time audit of the Y's platforms will give a more detailed assessment of current practices. This should include a look at the organization's website, social media, media interviews, paid advertisements, activity guides, posters, and any other spaces where the Y could connect with the public. To save resources, an audit could be completed through the work of an intern under observation by the Y's communications team.

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supports the Y’s vision through increasing the organization’s understanding of how the public engages and connects with the Y.</li> <li>- Requires a one-time investment of resources making it relatively sustainable.</li> <li>- Sets up a base-line of information, which will help support further evaluation (see the long-term recommendations section).</li> <li>- Establishes a process of auditing media which can be repeated in future years if needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires investment of already limited organizational capacity.</li> <li>- Poses feasibility challenges since an audit will require staff time in an organization where workload has already been identified as a barrier to storytelling.</li> </ul>
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## 2. Create a storytelling/engagement committee

Both the literature and participants suggested that having people who will champion the practice and benefits of storytelling are key to storytelling being used successfully within an organization. The existing communications team could be involved in creating a storytelling/engagement committee. Ideally, that committee should include people from all levels of the Y from leadership to front-line staff. This would support the Y’s vision of increasing connection and support along with developing storytelling champions, garnering diverse perspectives, and strengthening networks within the Y. It also will create a structure to generate ideas for how storytelling can be used within the organization and create systems to support storytelling practices. These could include, but are not limited to, developing a story database, creating story boxes or other venues where people could suggest stories, and incorporating stories into existing policy documents, training, and orientations. They would also ensure processes are in place to guarantee stories will be gathered ethically. It would be worthwhile to consider incorporating members of the Y and program participants into the committee at a later date.

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supports the Y’s vision of increasing a sense of connection and engagement internally.</li> <li>- Offers relatively feasible implementation process as the Y has existing meeting infrastructure and a culture that supports committee work.</li> <li>- Provides a relatively sustainable process as long as the committee is championed and enthusiasm is maintained over time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risks organizational capacity due to burnout and pre-existing time and resource demands.</li> <li>- Requires a chairperson who is able to keep the committee on focus in regards to the purpose and goals of the committee.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develops internal capacity and provides leadership opportunities for all levels of staff.</li> </ul>	
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### 3. Incorporate the gathering of stories into existing and future opportunities

There is a potential of gathering stories any time members of the public interact with staff. The organization should look specifically at interactions that occur during social events like member appreciation days and as part of day-to-day interactions that could include, but are not limited to fitness classes, customer service questions, and location tours. Therefore, the organization should work to tap into these interactions in order to meet the organization’s need for stories. For events, it could be possible to assign a specific staff member who would be responsible for gathering stories from individuals. For daily practices, front-line staff could be incentivized to share stories with leadership by providing rewards that could include draws for prizes or vacation days. While staff may not meet these targets, it could keep the idea of storytelling top of mind and reaffirm that stories are something that is needed and valued within the organization. These stories could then be incorporated throughout the organization in applications like job interview questions, policy documents, staff training, or illustrative conversations. Beyond incorporating stories into existing policy documents and practices, the organization should look at how they can incorporate stories into any new service or program. This will make the use of stories more intentional and over time, it will work towards building an organizational culture where stories are second nature for all levels of staff.

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases opportunities to enhance engagement and connection with the community thus supporting the Y’s vision.</li> <li>- Develops internal capacity and encourages new ways of thinking about the Y and its community impacts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires significant investment of organizational capacity to review and update existing processes.</li> <li>- Requires changes to many organizational practices which reduces the feasibility of the recommendation.</li> <li>- Requires sufficient buy-in of storytelling practices within leadership and staff to be sustainable over time.</li> <li>- Requires the allocation of specific amounts of time to gather and include stories so people do not feel their pre-existing work is negatively impacted.</li> </ul>

## 6.2 Intermediate Recommendations

Participants identified that the somewhat siloed nature of departments limits the sharing of information and stories. Therefore, the following recommendations are aimed at increasing the

relationships and sense of community that exist within the Y. These recommendations could take up to two years to accomplish given the organizational investment that may need to take place.

#### 4. Train leadership and staff

Storytelling training was identified by participants as an area where there was room for growth. It was also seen as key in helping staff understand more broadly the applications and relevance of storytelling within a non-profit organization. Therefore, training should be provided first to people in leadership positions and to people working to champion storytelling within the organization – this will ensure that leadership supports the practice of storytelling and can convey that message to all levels of the organization. The Y could employ consultants that specialize in storytelling to provide this training. Once senior leaders receive training, it should be provided to all front-line staff through internal and/or external training opportunities. Additionally, staff training would ideally include foundational education on the Y's current intersectional feminist framework with the aim of building an awareness of privilege and inequity into the mindset and processes connected to gathering organizational stories.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Supports the Y's vision through increasing support, connection and engagement within the Y staff</li><li>- Increases internal capacity</li><li>- Supports the Y's pre-existing practices of training staff, which increases feasibility of implementation.</li><li>- Potentially helps retain core staff</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Require a substantive investment of funding as training can be costly and takes staff out of the organizational rotation.</li><li>- Potentially limits overall feasibility of introducing storytelling practices because of the extended timelines required to find additional funding.</li><li>- Poses the risk of creating differing levels of investment and storytelling capacity within the Y's staff because of staggered training requirements.</li></ul>

#### 5. Develop infrastructure for effective knowledge transfer

Participants identified that there were storytelling tools and practices that were being used by some departments and not others. The Y could develop systems for effective sharing of tools and practices across all areas of the Y. This could be done through shared documents or online databases, but it could be as simple as having a physical or digital binder of tools that is shared and updated by all departments. The knowledge transfer should not be limited to just the Y in Kamloops – if possible, staff members at the Kamloops Y should reach out to YMCA and YWCA's across the province and to the Canadian parent organization to ensure that any successful tools and best practices from other Y's are being shared with the Kamloops Y. The Y should try to develop opportunities for staff from other departments to interact and engage with each other. This could be done within the previously mentioned storytelling/engagement committee or within staff meetings, training, or even social events hosted by the organization.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supports the Y’s vision through increasing connections within the Y’s staff.</li> <li>- Increases internal capacity through improving information flow and ideally staff engagement.</li> <li>- Provides varied organizational options, which increase feasibility as employees can chose the nature of the changes they implement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires support from senior leaders in policy and practice if knowledge transfers are to be sustained over time.</li> <li>- Requires investment of organizational capacity in the form of time and resources for regular check-ins between departments and other branches of the parent organization.</li> </ul>

## 6. Take a proactive approach to developing relationships with the broader community

The findings show that the Y already has a strong work culture, but participants identified a number of ways that the organization could work to create a greater sense of community. Those included creating groups that would be based around bringing people with shared stories together and by proactively reaching out to external community groups using stories to explain the services and supports that the Y offers. These suggestions should be acted on that they would not only bring new people into the Y, but would also work towards creating knowledge and goodwill within the broader community in regards to the Y.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supports the existing vision of the Y through increasing connection and engagement.</li> <li>- Mirrors existing programming within the Y, which increases the feasibility of the recommendation.</li> <li>- Potentially increases organizational capacity through developing partnerships with outside individuals and groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires the staff to buy into new processes in order to allow long-term sustainability.</li> <li>- Requires an investment of organizational capacity of time and space.</li> </ul>

### 6.3 Long-term Recommendations

Long-term recommendations could take upwards of two years to implement depending on other factors influencing the organization.

## 7. Create and recruit a director of storytelling

The effective gathering and sharing of stories takes time and resources. While an organization can develop strategies to tell stories, it is easiest when there is someone assigned that specific job. A number of focus group participants suggested they would benefit from having a director of storytelling. By creating a position dedicated to

storytelling, that organization can ensure that there will be a point person who has the skills needed to support the use of stories throughout the organization. Given the ambitious nature of this recommendation, the Y may want to consider an alternative arrangement in which the Y creates a hybrid role where the duties of the director of storytelling would be merged with another existing role.

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supports Y’s vision of increasing engagement and connection with both the internal and external communities.</li> <li>- Increases organizational capacity by providing a co-coordinator of stories and practices who will a champion of the idea overall.</li> <li>- Increases sustainability and feasibility of all other recommendations by providing someone who can work to support training, increase buy-in, develop organizational practices, and enhance proper community connection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires a high investment of organizational capacity in the form of staff required to generate and maintain a funding stream to support the new position.</li> <li>- Poses challenges in terms of the feasibility of implementation as it requires changes to the organizational staff structure.</li> </ul>

## 8. Conduct evaluations of storytelling practices

The Y should look to conduct regular evaluations of storytelling practices. Questionnaires and focus groups similar to the ones used in this project could be completed with a diversity of groups connected to the organization. Within the Y, front-line staff, volunteers, and members would all provide relevant information that could help to guide the use of storytelling within the organization. This data would go beyond an audit of where stories are being used and would look at what the use of organizational stories was accomplishing with the organization. It could be gathered bi-yearly in order to give a sense of how particular groups’ views of storytelling are changing over time. The use of a feminist methodology should be considered for future research as there is a diversity of backgrounds within Y members and volunteers. As such, it is important to ensure recruitment of participants actively encourages the voices of all participants, not just those in majority groups.

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases community connection and engagement with storytelling in alignment with Y values.</li> <li>- Improves sustainability of other storytelling practices.</li> <li>- Provides metrics to measure success and investment of organizational capacity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires allocation resources to be feasible and sustainable.</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Potentially improves organizational capacity by showing staff what storytelling practices are meeting with success and what can be improved.</li></ul>	
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## 7.0 Conclusion

Stories can be found nearly all aspects of human society (Gottschall, 2012). As seen in the literature review, there is extensive academic work on storytelling within non-profit organizations and storytelling within a community development context. However, the review revealed there is still space for research when it comes to the use of storytelling by non-profits to build a greater sense of community. This project contributes to the literature by making practical suggestions about how storytelling can be applied within a specific non-profit organization and how that non-profit can use narrative to enhance a sense of community internally and externally.

This is a point-in-time research project that looks only at one select group of participants connected to the Y. As such, its findings should not be seen as particularly transferable beyond this organization at this specific point in time. It does open up areas of further research relating to the intersection of non-profit storytelling and its application in community development. Given the appropriate resources, similar research could be conducted again in the future with other storytelling groups connected to the Kamloops Y including front-line staff, Y members, volunteers, and the public. This would give deeper context into the use of storytelling and could prove to be a fertile setting for suggestions when it comes to how stories could be applied within the Y as a community development tool. It would also be ideal to look at attitudes and practices before any storytelling training was provided and then at a point six months after the training to see whether training does in fact change people's practices and attitudes towards storytelling.

This project has sought to give a sense of how stories are being used at the Y, how the organization could increase storytelling capacity within its staff, and how it can use storytelling as a community development tool. The literature review and research findings provide context as well as specific applications of how storytelling can be incorporated within the Y. Through the recommendations, the Y is now in a position to take actions to increase the use of stories which will in turn support the organization in gaining more donations, building community, and increasing understanding about the impacts of the organization and its programs – all of which will ideally work towards making the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA more sustainable over time.

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## 9.0 Appendices

### 9.1 Online Questionnaire

#### **Y Stories: An analysis of storytelling at the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA**

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Y Stories: An analysis of storytelling at the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA that is being conducted by Jenifer Norwell.

Jenifer Norwell is a graduate student in the Master's of Arts in Community Development in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email at jnorwell@uvic.ca or by phone at 250-319-6212.

The client for this project is Michele Walker, the general manager for the YMCA-YWCA's Violence Against Women Intervention and Support Services. She is representing the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA as an organization.

Jenifer is conducting this research as part of the requirements for her Master's degree of Arts in Community Development. The research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Astrid Pérez Piñán. You may contact Jenifer's supervisor by email at: perezpin@uvic.ca

#### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research project is increase the ability of staff to identify and share stories about the organization that help to explain what the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA does. Since the organization has identified the need to better utilize storytelling, the objective of this project is to use techniques of community-based research to analyze how it is currently using organizational storytelling to connect with the geographical community of Kamloops and increase staff knowledge and utilization of storytelling. The research questions driving this project are:

- How is storytelling being used at the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA as a tool to connect with Kamloops community?
- How could the organization increase storytelling capacity within its staff?
- How can the YMCA-YWCA use storytelling as a community development tool?

#### **Importance of this Research**

Research of this type is important because it supports the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA in its efforts to enhance its connecting to the surrounding geographical community of Kamloops, which supports its community through creating welcoming spaces in Kamloops. It helps to establish the long-term success of the organization as stories can be used to secure funding and increase use of the Y's services and programs.

This research builds upon existing research on the uses of storytelling in non-profits by focusing on one such organization situated in mid-sized Canadian city. It will aim to show how community-based research techniques can be used to enable organizations to establish their own

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processes around finding and identifying relevant stories that capture their organization's mission.

### **Participants Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are one of 28 senior leader identified by the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA as individuals who are knowledgeable about the organization and work directly with front-line staff.

### **What is involved**

You are asked to fill out a survey with scaled questions, a skills inventory and a list short answer questions. This should take between 15-30 minutes.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the potential disruption of your work schedule or the delay in the completion of some of your work-related tasks.

### **Risks**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this survey.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include an increase understanding of the role of storytelling as a way to develop connection to a geographical community.

This project will increase the knowledge around how small to medium sized non-profits can develop ways to enhance front-line staff capacity to find and identify stories that help to capture the mission of those organizations.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study and your data from the online survey was submitted anonymously, it will be used in statistics or graphical representations of those statistics.

### **Researcher's Relationship with Participants**

The researcher may have a relationship to some potential participants as YMCA-YWCA member-YMCA-YWCA staff. The client supervises a number of potential participants through her role as one of the general managers at the Y.

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Participation is voluntary and there is no obligation to participate and your decision will not affect your relationship with your employer or with the researcher. Your participation will not affect your employment, or standing within the organization.

### **Anonymity**

This survey will be anonymous as long as you do not include your name or contact information in the survey.

### **Confidentiality**

This project may not be confidential since the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA is a smaller organization and someone may be able to identify your responses to the open-questions given the context of the comment and your role within the organization.

You may also choose to have your responses attributed to you by name. If you choose to do this, your survey responses will not be confidential.

Your identity, participation, or responses will not be shared the project's client. However, if you choose to have your name used in the final report in relation to your responses , the client will be able to see any of your responses that are included in the final report.

You will be asked not to name third parties in your survey responses. If your responses use the names of people or organizations or if it becomes clear who the identity of any third parties in the responses are, your responses will be fully anonymized in the final report. This will be done by removing any names and by removing parts of the response which identify any third parties. If it is not possible to remove parts of the response, the whole response will be excluded from the final report.

Digital data will be stored in password protected computer files. Paper surveys will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. All information gathered will be stored in a secure location off site and will not be made accessible to the client or project participants.

### **Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways on the University of Victoria's website, as part of the researcher's defense of the project, and will be distributed digitally to Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA management and any project participant to request a copy. There is also limited potential that the final project could be published academically or discussed in general terms with members of the media.

### **Disposal of Data**

Data from this study will be disposed of within a year of the project's completion. Digital information will be deleted and any paper copies will be shredded.

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## Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include the researcher or supervisor using the information on the top of page 1. If you have any questions about providing consent for this survey, you may contact the researcher and she will go through the form verbally and will provide additional details.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

By completing and submitting the questionnaire, **your free and informed consent to participate is implied** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

**Stories can be thought of as narratives that help people better understand their world along with the behaviours and experiences they encounter. Storytelling is used to communicate those understandings and insights to others.**

**An organizational story is any story relating to the Y including any department, program, staff member, volunteer, or member of the public who has been impacted by the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA (Y). Front-line staff are any Y staff member who does not hold a leadership role and who has direct contact with Y clients of members of the public.**

The following set of questions relate to your use and understanding of how storytelling is being used at the Y. As you read through these questions, please consider how they apply to you in your role at the Y, and, if applicable, your staff.

The survey will include a mix of scaled and short answer questions followed by a capacity inventory. For the scaled questions please choose the most appropriate answer to the statement, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is “Strongly Disagree” and 5 is “Strongly Agree.” You will also be provided with a space for optional comments if you would like to add additional thoughts. Please avoid using any examples that may identify individuals or third parties.

1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable	Don't know

<b>1. I want to hear stories about the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>2. I believe front-line staff want to hear stories about the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know

<b>3. People in my workplace share stories about the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>4. I see value in having the Y share stories about its programs, patrons or staff with people inside the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>5. I see value in having the Y share stories about its programs, patrons or staff with people outside of the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>6. I regularly hear stories about people or events relating to the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>7. I believe front-line staff regularly identifies stories about people or events relating to the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>8. I believe members of the public share stories connected to the Y with front-line staff members.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>9. Members of the public share stories connected to the Y with senior leaders.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>10. Volunteers at the Y share stories with Y staff.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know

11. How often do you identify organizational stories?

12. How often do you hear of or see front-line staff identifying and sharing organizational stories?

<b>13. I use stories to communicate what I do professionally.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>14. There is an organizational culture of telling stories about the Y's programs and services.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>15. I understand the role of different departments of the Y when I am given specific examples</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>16. I feel confident in communicating what the Y does as an organization with members of the public.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>17. I believe front-line staff at the Y feel confident in communicating what the Y does as an organization with members of the public.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>18. I feel confident using storytelling to explain how departments outside of my own operate.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>19. I believe front-line staff members feel confident using storytelling to explain how departments outside of their own operate.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know

<b>20. I am encouraged to share stories about the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>21. I encourage front-line staff to share stories about the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>22. Stories about what the Y does are shared in between staff members.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know

23. If applicable, please describe any training you have had for identifying organizational stories?

24. If applicable, please describe any training/ mentorship you have provided to front-line staff to help them identify organizational stories?

<b>25. Stories are important for helping people understand what the Y does.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>26. I am aware of stories about the Y that originate outside my department.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>27. Staff at the Y can use stories to articulate with other departments at the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>28. I tell my leadership team about stories that explain, at least part of, what the Y does.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>29. Front-line staff tells me about stories that explain, at least part of, what the Y does.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>30. I believe front-line staff think about how stories can be used to communicate the mission of the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>31. I have witnessed front-line staff share stories to communicate the mission of the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>32. I think about how stories can be used to communicate the mission of the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>33. Stories are being used to help connect people in the Kamloops community to the Y community.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>34. The Y could do more to improve its connection to the Kamloops community.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know

35. How do you identify a story that captures what the Y does as an organization?

36. What function(s) do you see stories fulfilling within the Y?

<b>37. Stories can help the Y access funding.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>38. Stories can influence who donates to the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>39. Stories can influence how much money is donated to the Y.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>40. Stories can help connect people in the Kamloops community to the Y community.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know

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<b>41. Organizational stories are used in grant proposals written by Y staff.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>42. Organizational stories are used in the Y's social media posts.</b>							
<b>43. Organizational stories are used in media interviews.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>44. Organizational stories are used when Y staff participate in public speaking events.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know
<b>45. Organizational stories are shared at staff meetings.</b>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know

46. What gaps do you see in your knowledge around storytelling?

47. What barriers do you believe exist that prevent the sharing of organizational stories at the Y?

Skills Inventory (check all that apply)			
Skill/Ability	I can	I can teach to others	I want to learn
Manage Facebook page(s)			
Post Tweets			
Manage Instagram feed			
Write grants			
Update websites			
Write blog posts			
Take photos			
Write fiction			
Interview people			
Be interviewed by the media			
Create posters			
Speak publically			
Participate in public forums			
Advocate for a cause			
Communicate my organization's mission to the public			
Other			

My gender is \_\_\_\_\_(optional):

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the study (fill out name below):

Yes No
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Name:

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I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the survey results (fill out name below):

Yes No
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Name:

Are you interested in participating in a follow-up focus group to discuss the role of organizational storytelling at the Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA and potentially develop guidelines of how front-line staff can identify relevant stories?

*(Note - If you provide your name and email, this survey and your responses will not be anonymous to the researcher. If you check, yes, your responses will not be linked to your identity in the final report nor will any information about your responses be shared with the client, Michele Walker, other general managers or the CEO of the Y.)*

Yes No
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Name:

Email:

Are you interested in receiving a digital copy of the final report when it is completed by the researcher?

Yes No
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Name:

Email:

## 9.2 Focus Group Outline

### Introductions:

In a circle, each person shares his/her name and one thing he/she wants the people in the group to know about him/her.

### Establish Group Ground Rules:

People are asked to suggest group ground rules. These might include but are not limited to, listen when people are talking, being respectful, being on time, and/or having fun. The group then votes on whether to adopt the ground rule using a show of hands. If a majority does not agree, the rules are revisited until a majority agrees with the rules.

### Summary of PowerPoint presentation of online questionnaire data:

Participants overwhelmingly see the value of using stories within the Y, but there is a variety of knowledge levels when it comes to how to identify stories and where to use them, with the exception of fundraising where participants agreed stories played an important role. Participants also believed there was room for improvement when it comes to how front-line staff identify and share stories about the Y. Participants believed stories played a role in connecting the Y to the broader community, but most people felt the Y could be doing more when it comes to using stories to develop community.

### **Focus Group Discussion Questions:**

(Bolded questions will be asked. Supplementary non-bolded questions will be used as prompts if needed.)

**1. Can you share a story about the Y and explain why it is impactful to you?**

**2. Collins Dictionary defines capacity as “your ability to do (something), or the amount of it that you are able to do it.” How does that fit with how your understanding of this idea?**

- What other factors affect person’s capacity?

**3. The online questionnaire showed that there was a desire to increase the use of stories at the Y. How do you think senior leaders could do that?**

**4. The questionnaire showed that participants thought front-line staff has room for improvement when it comes to finding and sharing stories about the Y. How do you think front-line staff could increase their storytelling capacity?**

- What training could be useful?
- What policies need to be in place?

**5. What ethical factors need to be considered when stories are being shared?**

- Whose stories are currently being told by the Kamloops Y?
- Whose stories are not being told?
- Why?
- How could that be changed?
- Should it be changed?

**6. Let’s define community development**

- What do you think having a shared definition could mean for senior leaders?
- How could it affect how you approach storytelling and community development?

**7. The questionnaire showed that though participants thought stories were important for connection with the community, most people thought the Y could be doing more to use stories to develop community. How can stories be used to develop a sense of community?**

**8. How could the Y use stories to create community?**

- How could that affect the impact the Y has in the community?

**9. If the Y had a tool that helped identify organizational stories, what would it look like?**

- Who would use it?
- How would it be structured?
- When would it be used?
- How would the gathering of stories be prioritized compared to other tasks?

**10. Focus group facilitator summarizes the main points of the discussion and then verifies with the group that this is accurate representation of the conversations and no key points have been missed.**

**11. Are you interested in receiving more information about the findings of this project? I can easily provide digital copies via email to anyone who wants one once the research is complete and I have defended my project.**