



The Medium is the (Heritage) Message: Story Telling Tips

John MacFarlane (The Nauticlopedia)

1. Actively seek out and engage interesting people and work with them to capture their story.
2. Make sure that the 'co-operator' is happy with the final version of the story before it is 'published'.
3. Whenever possible link images to illustrate the story.
4. Do some fact checking to ensure that there is an acceptable level of accuracy.
5. Share the story as widely as possible.
6. Ensure that the story is 'archived' in a reliable long-term repository.

Andrew Farris (On This Spot)

1. Put local history in its historical context. Make history relevant to the modern reader by directly comparing events, lifestyles, and beliefs of the past to those we are accustomed to.

2. Put local history in its global context. Put local history in the context of global developments wherever possible, as this can put local history into new perspective and fire the imaginations of readers.

3. Avoid Parochialism. It is easy to get caught up in the minutiae of local history, listing pioneers, businesses, and commonplace events. To appeal to a wide audience, keep your writing tight and focus on that history that forwards the narrative.

4. Ask why whenever possible. Historic photographs are great for prompting people to ask why society was the way it was, and how it has changed. Use photos and other aids to get people asking why questions, then you have them engaged for when you answer.

5. Skimmers, dippers, and divers. It is important to structure the content so that it caters to people of all interest levels, and it can be helpful to think of readers as either skimmers, dippers, or divers. Use eye-catching graphics and hierarchically ordered text to ensure that those who skim the history, those who dip into it, and those who dive in head first, all come away from the experience with something.

Mark Forsythe (Ex-CBC Radio, BC Historical Federation)

1. Cut to the chase: be concise with your story.
2. Have a focus or key point (don't cram too much information in)
3. Easy to absorb: e.g. Make your language conversational, use compelling images
4. The story should spark some emotion or reaction. Not just dry facts.
5. Hold your audience. Why should they care? How does it affect them? How is it relevant?