



Promoting positive opinion about refugees: Sharing stories

There are many ways of sharing stories: posters, anecdotes included in speeches or published materials, videos shared online or through social media, among other ways. Taking stories to local media can often be an effective way of reaching thousands of people.

Focus your energies on where you have opportunities to reach your audience. There is little point spending a lot of time developing materials if few people are going to see them.

Depending on how you plan to share the stories, the points below may or may not be relevant.

Story Collection

Start by gathering the elements you need to tell great stories. Below are a list of questions to help prompt your story collection and writing.

Important note: Not everyone wants to have their experiences or pictures shared with broader audiences. We need to be sensitive to this and avoid making anyone feel that they are under pressure to agree to share their story.

a. Strategies for successful story collection

Here are a few strategies to collect stories in your community, your sponsorship group or organization. You may already have a process in place, in which case, that's great! These are suggestions to start you off:

- Make an announcement! Let your colleagues, friends, families, church, community members know that you're collecting stories. Be clear why you are asking them to identify stories.
- If people express interest in sharing their stories, meet directly with them. Explain clearly why you are collecting stories and how and where the stories and photos might be shared.
- Prepare a Consent Form (see model below). Review the consent form with the person carefully and encourage them to ask any questions.
- If the participants have agreed to share their stories and have photos taken for the portraits, remind them the day of your meeting. Alternatively, ask them to provide photos they would like to use.
- Prepare a list of open-ended questions you would like to ask them. Record direct quotes to get their perspectives! You can use the list of questions, below.

b. Tips for preparing questions

What are the steps to good storytelling? Here are some questions to ask yourself, colleagues, group members, and community members.

- Who is the story about? Who are the main characters? Do you know them directly or is this through your group / organization / friend?
- What were the circumstance that brought them to your community? For now, remind yourself whether this person or family arrived as GAR, PSR, Refugee Claimant. If this story is about the community volunteers or private sponsors, make a note about that.
- If this is a story about people who are supporting refugees, how did that support start? What inspired it or what was the first community activity?
- What has this person / group / family brought to your community?
 - If the story is about newcomer refugees or people who arrived as refugees many years ago, it can be as delightful as “Adiam provides critical nursing care in one of Calgary’s busiest hospitals, treating children in the intensive care unit.”
 - If this story is about community volunteers or sponsors, what has their involvement meant to them?
- How is your community better as a result?
- What would this person / group, neighbours, employers, teachers, etc. say about them (real life quote if possible)?
- What is the situation today?
- What can we learn from this story? What opportunities do we have to support this person’s work in the community?
- How does this story fit into one of the key messages?

c. Sharing stories

Once you’ve brainstormed and listed some stories and the main elements you’d like to share, **you may need to distill the stories into brief points (e.g. if you are developing a poster)**. Here are a few questions to help get to the heart of the stories:

- Who is in the story? Where does the story begin? For example, if someone who arrived as a refugee is sharing the story, and they are a nurse, doctor or in the medical profession now, the story could begin with the moment they were inspired to take up the profession, rather than when they arrived in Canada.
- What is the greater truth we want to tell about ourselves and our communities?

Adapted from *Welcoming America, Reframing Refugees Messaging toolkit*.

d. Where can you share portraits?

- Newsletters in print and digital
- Congregation Bulletin / newsletters

- Submit to relevant publications
- Presentations in print or digital

e. With whom and where to share portraits

- Your organization, between members of your sponsorship group, with your place of worship, other community partners and agencies, public libraries, or other public displays, ie; city hall, community centres
- Who else has overlapping messages of inclusivity?
 - Approaching local immigrant employment councils and offering them materials
 - Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) and other community partners
 - Business partners
- Do you, friends or family have employee public awareness programs at your office? Many corporate employers, such as credit unions and banks have diversity and inclusion days or offer special programs for newcomer refugees and immigrants to set-up accounts. You can offer these materials to the employees.

Story Inspirations from Canada and CCR Members

Hassan (Vancouver, BC)

The owner of a home renovations business in Syria, Hasan arrived on the west-coast of Canada, eager to rebuild a life with his family. He's now launched a Flooring and Tiling business in BC, where Hasan and his team help others in his community renovate and build their dream homes.

*Story inspiration from the [BC Refugee Hub](#)

“ Anybody looking for work, I try to help them...I feel so happy because everyone who needs help, I can help them. ”

Hassan

Chefs of Tayybeh (Vancouver, BC)

The all-female team of Chefs at Tayybeh started their full-service catering company with a sold-out pop-up dinner in Vancouver. Arriving from Syria just few years ago, they met one another on Canada's west-coast while working to rebuild their families lives in their new communities.

*Story inspiration from the [BC Refugee Hub](#)

“ Success means many things: finishing university, learning the language...we're offering this food that people love and ask for! ”

Chefs of Tayybeh

Model consent form

[Name of organization]

Consent for use of story/photograph/video-recording

Purpose

[Name of organization] is working to promote positive public opinion about refugees by presenting publicly the stories and faces of individuals. The goal is to put human faces on the realities of refugees and to make the public in Canada more knowledgeable about all the ways that people who arrive as refugees contribute to communities economically, culturally, and socially.

Conditions of participation

Participation is entirely voluntary.

[Outline how the stories /photos /videos will be collected, reviewed with the individuals and shared publicly (in print, online, in posters, on social media). Include information on how long they will be available publicly, if possible.]

If you have any questions, we encourage you to ask them before signing the consent.

Consent

In signing this document:

- I give permission for the interview, photos and/or videos taken of me to be used by [Name of organization] in its materials.
- I understand that the materials may be distributed to the general public.
- I understand that the photos may be posted on the internet and used as part of a public awareness campaign.

I have read the information above and I understand it fully. I freely give my consent to participating according to these conditions.

FIRST NAME : _____ LAST NAME: _____

I also consent to my first name being used.

I would like the following fictitious first name to be used: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

EMAIL and PHONE NUMBER: _____

DATE _____

Questions? Contact: