



Dignified Storytelling

INNOVATION LAB REPORT
FEBRUARY 2022

"A story can change the world"

-Dignified Storytelling Principle #10

PREPARED BY

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A MESSAGE

"...there is no ONE 'best' practice. Practices are constantly evolving, improving..."



It has been an absolute pleasure and privilege to host a rich community of national and global experts and aspiring storytellers at this year's SDG Innovation Lab. Speakers and facilitators taught us that while stories can and do have a powerful impact on identifying local priorities, inspiring grassroots action, and informing policy change, it is not just the 'story' that changes the world, but HOW the story is being told and WHY it's being told in the first place. If there's one key takeaway that I'd like to highlight around this theme of storytelling, it is that there is no ONE 'best' practice. Practices are constantly evolving, improving to be better, and when we start implementing those practices, that is what we call dignified storytelling.

*There's a wealth of knowledge and expertise that exists; we just need to tap into it, and a lot of that begins with **creating spaces** for people with knowledge and lived experiences to share.*

*For me, this year's lab was the first step in this storytelling journey, and I hope it was the same for many of you who attended. This visual report revisits some of the highlights from this year's lab and its qualitative successes measured by reach, diverse contributors, and genuine interest around the theme of storytelling. I encourage you all to refer to the resources at the end of this report as you continue along your own dignified storytelling journey, reflect on your current practices, and engage in processes of learning AND unlearning. The number and depth of reflections shared during and after the 2 days of engagement demonstrate the existing desire to learn more and foster creative, innovative, and caring spaces. Revisiting the theme of storytelling will be key in our sector's future work around **localization, anti-oppression, social justice, empowerment, and sustainability.***

With gratitude,

Ruzainah Hassim,
SDG Innovation Lab Coordinator, OCIC

2022 INNOVATION LAB AT A GLANCE



The SDG Innovation Lab was the 10th and last event that OCIC hosted in celebration of International Development Week (IDW) 2022. On February 11th and 12th, this year's virtual lab was centered around the theme of **Dignified Storytelling**: telling stories with **dignity, integrity, and respect** in the international cooperation sector. Over the course of 2 days, this year's lab hosted diverse participants and contributors from around the world.



Objective:

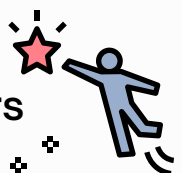
Promote localization and sustainable development by encouraging the practice of ethical approaches to storytelling at the grassroots level, and in working with diverse communities

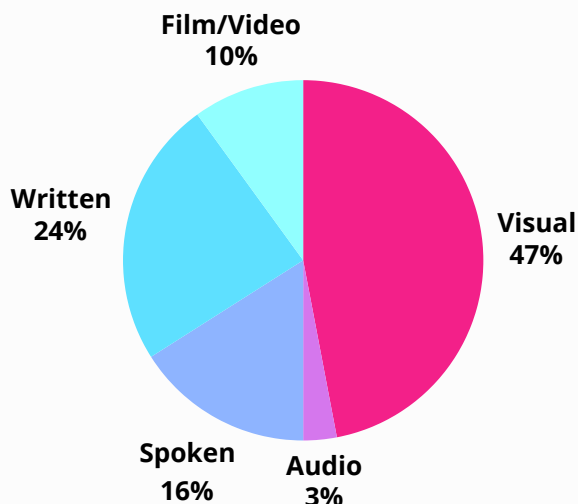
67 

Participants

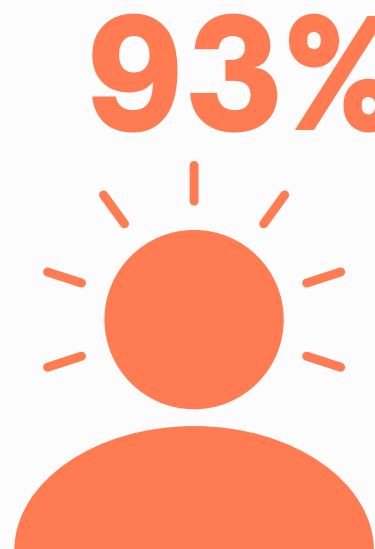
We asked participants, in what capacity they are telling stories?

 **32%** in communications

32% in creative arts & aspiring storytellers 



Almost half of participants are inspired by **Visual storytelling** medium(s) (i.e. photography, painting, etc.)

93% of survey respondents indicated they have an **increased awareness** on dignified and ethical storytelling 

DAY 1

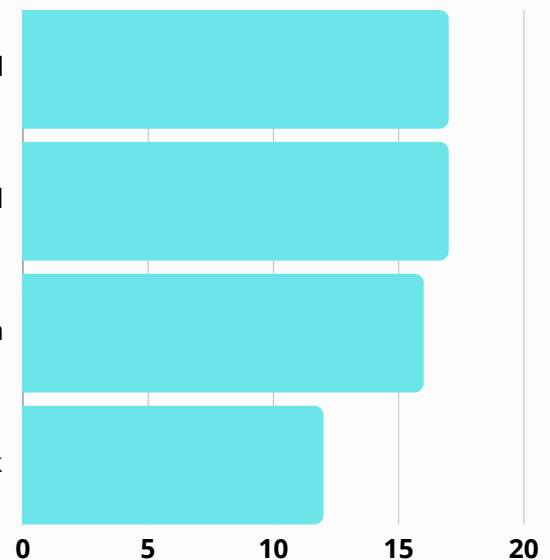
"I learned more about dignified storytelling and cultural awareness. To be respectful of people and the narrative I use when sharing other people's stories"

The 10 principles of Dignified Storytelling



We asked participants which principle they resonate with most. Here's some of the top responses:

We are all multi dimensional
A story can change the world
I do no harm
Consent is more than paperwork



Chief Moomen

Keynote Performance

"So powerful!"



Setting the stage for Day 1 of the Innovation Lab, African poet and playwright Chief Moomen introduced the public to the 10 principles of dignified storytelling. The performance was followed by a short speech that inspired the audience to reflect on what it means to tell stories with dignity.

Dignified Storytelling PANEL + Q&A

"Today I was made more aware of how much storytelling we do when we are not intentionally or consciously telling a story. It is probably impossible NOT to be telling a story or receiving a story!"



Kath Clark
Communications
Co-director, InterPares



Ragy Saro
Head of International
Organizations at Expo 2020 and
lead on Dignified Storytelling



Tristen Schneider
Indigenous Youth
Facilitator, Advocate,
Entrepreneur



Tina Sweeney
Sr. Officer, Outreach
and Partnerships,
Cuso International

This panel brought together global and national experts from diverse occupational backgrounds. The conversation was centered around the different principles of dignified storytelling, how they relate in different sectors of international cooperation work, and how individuals can apply them to shape and reshape the way stories are told. Participants engaged by asking questions and reflecting on the information shared.

"Learning that a rich community of practice exists in the communications space for dignified storytelling motivates me to further our work."

78%

of survey respondents indicated that they have an increased motivation to take action on global issues



Watch the full recording [here](#)

DAY 2

Ethical Storytelling Lab

"Whose eyes am I seeing the world through?"



Danielle Khan Da Silva
Executive Director,
Photographers Without Borders

IN COLLABORATION WITH



17

Participants

Facilitated by Danielle Khan Da Silva, Executive Director at Photographers Without Borders Canada, Day 2 of the Innovation Lab provided a deeply engaging and intimate space to explore decolonizing mindsets and what an ethical and anti-oppressive approach looks like through different stages of storytelling assignments.



Session Reflections

"Good intentions don't = good work"

"Ethics in storytelling allows the story to be told the way the participant/originator of the story wants it to be told"

"We can start by declaring our filters and biases...how they evolved and our continuing attempts to decolonizing ourselves"

"I did not know this back story. Another thing to unlearn... that I misinterpreted."

"Just acknowledging Power and privilege, not denying them is itself a big step"

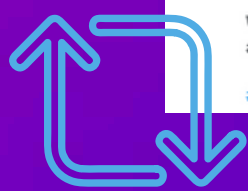
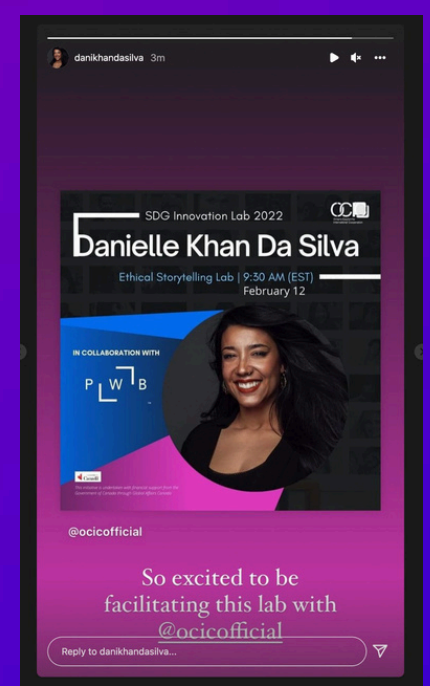
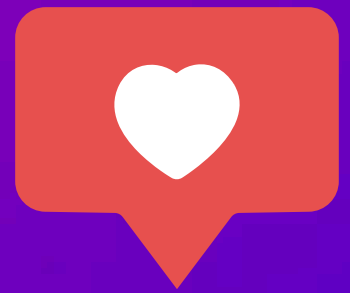
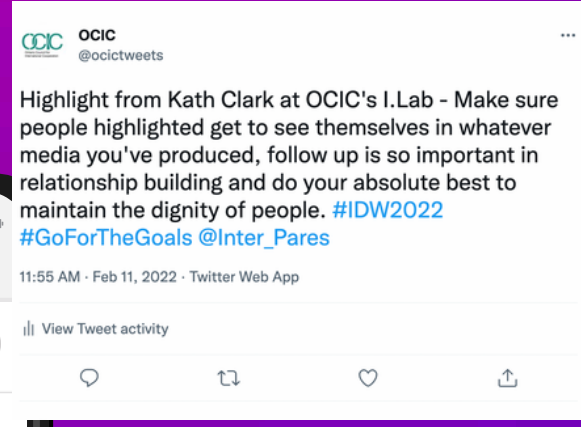
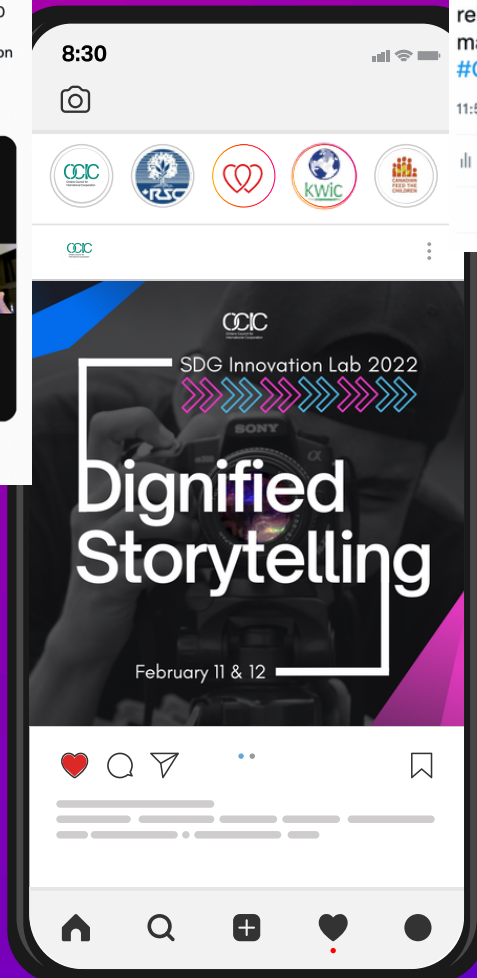
"Allyship is necessary because we so often are not sharing our own stories."

Social Media & Outreach

During this year's Innovation Lab, OCIC developed a series of colourful graphics and live tweets and posts that received over 1000 impressions on Twitter alone!

1000+ Impressions

#IDW2022





STORIES OF IMPACT

I attended the first day of OCIC's Dignified Storytelling workshop. The key takeaway I received from attending this event was the encouragement that creative and **dignified storytelling is a viable career choice** in humanitarianism.

For the past few years, I've felt confused about what to pursue after graduating from my degree in International Development from the University of Ottawa in 2019. I am familiar working in gender equality, research, and project management capacities. However, the work I truly enjoyed included interviewing community development leaders in Tanzania to capture their impact via photography and stories. Providing these assets to community development organizations brought me incredible joy, especially since they were shared with community members, multilevel government representatives, as well as donors and sponsors. Being able to **communicate their work creatively and accessibly** seems to be a growing need among international non-profit and non-government organizations, and I've since wondered about how to re-enter the industry with this specialty in mind.

"...INSPIRED ME TO PURSUE MY DREAM OF BEING A DIGITAL STORYTELLER IN [THIS] SECTOR."

Chief Moomen's performance has inspired me to pursue my dream of being a digital storyteller in the humanitarian sector. His **performance was moving and incredibly informative.** I appreciated the experiences and resources shared by the panelists. The Dignified Storytelling Handbook is a great starting place for me to catch up to industry terms and best practices. I also found Kath Clark's remarks about InterPares' process about dignified storytelling helpful. I appreciated their step-by-step outline of the process when lead times, consent, interviews, photos, and ownership are considered. The numerous links (to PDFs, website, resources, etc.) provided throughout the panel have also been helpful.

-Day 1 Participant: Tabitha Mirza

I attended the first Dignified Storytelling panel on Friday February 11, 2022. There were several learnings I took away from the event.

Firstly, I appreciated the inclusion of international practitioners in the Dignified Storytelling space, particularly the performance and panel discussion with Chief Moomen, and the work of Ragy Saro in Dubai. Chief Moomen's introduction of the 10 Principles of Dignified Storytelling was an excellent demonstration of the power of storytelling itself to make issues come alive (in this case, a spoken word performance of a set of principles) as well as a demonstration of the 10 principles in action, when it came to imagery and choice of words. I also appreciated learning from Tina Sweeney of Cuso International about their photo initiative, which covered issues of collaborative consent and production of dignified photos.

"...TO PURSUE ETHICAL COMMUNICATIONS PRACTICE, IN TERMS OF OUTPUT, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY IN TERMS OF PROCESS."

Secondly, I was struck by the attention to inclusion in the event itself, with translation, closed captioning, non-performative land acknowledgements, and excellent technical support that created a seamless virtual event experience.

As the Communications Manager at Canadian Feed The Children, it is always my goal to pursue ethical communications practice, in terms of output, but more importantly in terms of **process**. This event was my first time hearing about the **10 Principles of Dignified Storytelling, which provide a useful framework** to guide all communications within the organization.

To that end, our plan is to use these 10 Principles as a jumping off point to review and renew our consent and content development practices, in keeping with our overall **community-led, anti-racist and decolonial organizational goals**. In the short term, I have shared it with my team to use in developing their own communications pieces and included it in creative briefs with external communications vendors.

Thank you for this opportunity to deepen my own communications practice, which I hope will have a positive impact for the community members who so generously share their stories with us, and help Canadians better understand the nature of our international cooperation work.

-Day 1 Participant: Zahra Baptiste

I've always wondered having lived for as long as I did in the Global South before I came back to Canada, if we're not dishonoring the process of storytelling that requires a bit of preamble and a bit more contextualization of a story before we get right to the point like we do in North America, and so I've always been sensitive about that fact. In one particular case related to my work, I was at the very end of a project, and when going through how to edit and what needed to be edited, I had to go back to the person who I was helping through the process and say, "I can't edit this for you, it's your story. I can do the translation if you want and I will do the translation based on what you say, but I can't edit it for you, you have to edit it, and if you don't have time then we'll just have to let it go so it's your choice if you want to let it go or not".

I think it's sometimes about letting it go and not forcing the issue. For me, that's part of the ethical practice of allowing the authorship of the person's story, for their authentic voice to come through. It's their decision whether they want to follow through with the process or go ahead with a different process.

"...ALLOWING THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PERSON'S STORY, FOR THEIR AUTHENTIC VOICE TO COME THROUGH."

Misinformation is a real problem in the world but then again, it's a problem because we're not looking at peoples' perspectives and their needs or how society benefits or disenfranchises them. There's a lot of analysis that needs to happen before there's equity around the world.

I've learned that storytelling is one avenue where we can co-create opportunities for equity and telling each others' stories that allows for more belonging, justice and inclusion in a more equitable manner and not just a performative manner.

-Day 2 Participant: Paula Papel



RESOURCES

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT DIGNIFIED & ETHICAL STORYTELLING?

[10 Principles of Dignified Storytelling](#)

[Dignified Storytelling Handbook](#)

[Take the Dignified Storytelling Pledge](#)

[Decolonization & Ethics -
Photographers Without Borders](#)

[Ethical Principles for Public Engagement
Practise - OCIC and ADRA](#)

["Putting the People in the Pictures First" \(2019\)](#)

["You've been reframed" \(2020\)](#)

THANK YOU

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