# Participant Story Guide

**Your story is part of Our Town.**

Welcome to *Our Town: Stories from Wasaga Beach*, a community storytelling and podcasting project from Wasaga Beach Public Library, made possible through Ontario's Seniors Community Grant Program.

Through this project, you'll learn storytelling and podcasting skills, capture meaningful stories and experiences, and help celebrate and preserve the voices of our community.

Each participant has the opportunity to create one short podcast episode, approximately **10–15 minutes when completed and edited**.

You can choose to:

- Tell your own story.
- Interview someone else and help share their story.

You don't need previous storytelling, interviewing or podcasting experience. WBPL will provide equipment, resources, workshops and support throughout the process.

## 1. Finding Your Story

You don't need an extraordinary experience to tell a meaningful story.

Think about a memory, person, place, passion or experience that interests you. Your story doesn't have to have happened in Wasaga Beach.

### Story ideas

**If you're telling your own story:**

- A memory you'll never forget.
- A place that shaped you.
- Starting over somewhere new.
- A hobby or passion you discovered.
- A tradition you've carried with you.

- A moment when Wasaga Beach became home.

**If you're interviewing someone else:**

- A passion or hobby they love.
- A memorable experience from their life.
- A person or place that shaped them.
- How they became involved in the community.
- How they chose their career.
- Something they've learned along the way.

### From topic to story

A topic tells us what something is about. A story takes us somewhere.

| Topic | Possible story |
|---|---|
| I love airplanes. | The first time I climbed into the cockpit. |
| I moved to Wasaga Beach. | The moment I realized this had become home. |
| I play music. | How music brought me into a community I didn't expect. |

Look for an interesting experience, moment or journey within your broader topic.

## 2. The Our Town Story Arc

Your story needs somewhere to go, but it doesn't need a dramatic conflict.

**WHERE WE BEGIN**

Where does your story start? What does the listener need to know?

**THE JOURNEY**

What happened? What did you experience, discover or encounter?

**WHERE WE END UP**

Where did it lead? Why does it matter now?

Remember: you're not trying to tell your entire life story in 10–15 minutes. Choose one interesting thread or moment in time.

## 3. Think in Moments, Not Just Summaries

Summaries help move a story forward, but specific moments help listeners experience it with you.

Instead of simply saying:

"We travelled across Canada, and it was an amazing experience."

Find an interesting moment:

"I remember standing beside my bike that morning thinking, 'What have I gotten myself into?'"

To bring a moment to life, consider:

- Where were you?
- Who was there?
- What could you see or hear?
- What happened?
- What were you thinking or feeling?
- What happened next?

Telling your own story? Ask yourself.

Interviewing someone else? Ask them.

You don't need to answer every question. Choose details that help bring your story to life.

## 4. The Art of a Good Interview

A good interview isn't an interrogation. It's a conversation with a purpose.

**Make them comfortable.** Start with easy questions and build rapport.

**Ask open-ended questions.** Give people room to tell you something.

Instead of "Did you enjoy it?" try "What was that experience like?"

Instead of "Were you nervous?" try "What were you feeling at that moment?"

**Really listen.** Don't just wait for your turn to ask the next question.

**Follow the interesting thing.** Your question list is a guide, not a script.

**Know when to slow down.** When you hear something interesting, stay there and ask for more.

**Don't fear silence.** Give people time to think. Pauses can be removed during editing.

**Let them tell it their way.** Avoid assuming how someone felt about an experience.

### Six questions that keep a story going

1. Tell me about…
2. What was that like?
3. What happened next?
4. What do you remember about that moment?
5. Tell me more about that.
6. Why does that stay with you?

And then… listen.

**The best question might be the one you never planned to ask.**

## 5. Creating Your Our Town Episode

Your completed episode will follow a simple structure:

1. OUR TOWN INTRO — Provided by WBPL.
2. YOUR INTRODUCTION — Introduce yourself or the person you're interviewing.
3. YOUR STORY OR INTERVIEW — The heart of your episode.
4. OUR TOWN OUTRO — Provided by WBPL.

Your finished episode should be approximately 10–15 minutes long.

Your original recording can be longer. During editing, you'll choose the strongest material and shape it into your finished story.

### Introducing your episode

**Interviewing someone?**

"In this episode, you'll meet [name], whose story…"

**Telling your own story?**

"In this episode, I'm sharing the story of…"

Your introduction should briefly answer: Who are we listening to, and what story are we about to hear?

You may find it easier to write this after you've recorded your main story.

### Sound can tell the story, too

Think beyond voices.

Could you capture the sound of a place, activity, instrument or experience connected to your story?

Additional sounds are optional, but they can help listeners experience the world you're describing.

WBPL will provide music for your episode. Check with staff before including outside recordings or copyrighted material.

## 6. Your Next Steps

**FIND & PLAN:** Choose an idea and begin shaping your story.

**RECORD:** Borrow a Library Podcasting Kit and capture your story or interview.

**EDIT:** Attend an editing workshop, beginning in November.

**GET SUPPORT:** Visit Open Studio if you need additional assistance.

**Our Town: Stories from Wasaga Beach**

Ontario

WBPL wasaga beach public library

**SHARE:** Complete your episode for the Our Town podcast, launching in March 2027.

## We're in this together!

WBPL provides:

- Portable Podcasting Kits.
- Standard Our Town introduction and closing audio.
- Music.
- Editing workshops.
- Open Studio support.
- Online recording resources and equipment guides.

**You bring the story. We'll help you build the episode.**

## Online resources:

**wasagabeachpubliclibrary.ca/our-town-resources**

## Questions? We're Here to Help!

General Inquiries & Storytelling Support - Tracey Strnad Email: Tracey.Strnad@wasagabeach.com

Audio Recording & Technical Support - Drazen (Vic) Vicic Email: Drazen.Vicic@wasagabeach.com

**Scan to visit Our Town resources web page**