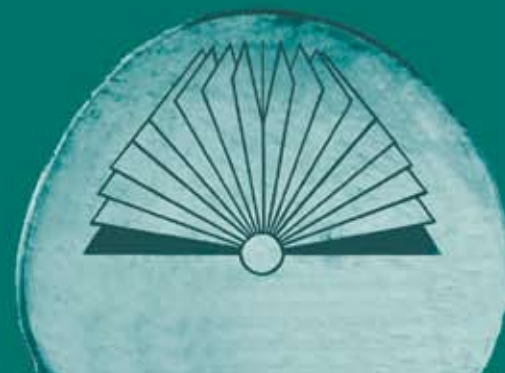


# Active Projects



*Simply by becoming Christian, many Eskimos have  
had to add a dog to their team.*

*On north Baffin Island every Eskimo  
above the age of six has his own Prayer Book  
and New Testament printed in syllabic character  
writing. In addition, every family has one or two  
or often three books of the Old Testament, plus  
notebooks and paper for jotting down  
Bible quotations and references.*

*If there are six people in a family,  
the total weight, plus that of one small bag of flour,  
means an additional dog on the team.*

*Doug Wilkinson in Land of the Long Day*

# Public Presentation or Open House

## Ideas for Holding a Public Presentation or Open House

- When your group has completed its research, you may want to share your work with the community in the form of a public presentation or an open house.
- A public presentation is an event that happens at a specific time; for example you might plan a presentation for Saturday afternoon, 2:00 to 4:00 pm. For an open house you might set up displays which could be open to the public for one, two or more days; your group would be available to explain your work to people. You might do some short demonstrations or performances throughout the open house.
- Decide on a time and place to hold the presentation or open house.
- Discuss with the group different ways of presenting the information. Brainstorm all the possible ideas and then the group members can try to reach a consensus about the methods they like best. Depending on the form your research took, you will have different options for your presentation:
  - ☒ Visual displays on large presentation boards with pictures and text.
  - ☒ A video screening.
  - ☒ An oral presentation with demonstrations, objects, photographs, slides.
  - ☒ A cultural performance with singing, drumming, dancing.
  - ☒ An interactive display in which the audience can participate in activities.
  - ☒ A PowerPoint presentation on the computer.
  - ☒ A combination of the forms mentioned above.
- Plan your presentation – you may decide to break into groups with each group working on a section of the presentation. Groups can look at each other's work as it progresses and give feedback.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- Hold at least one practice session so everyone has a chance to see how the parts of the presentation fit together and to feel comfortable with their roles.
- Advertise the presentation on the local radio, through posters and invitations.

# Skill Demonstrations

*When you teach a skill to others, you must learn it very well yourself first. You need to think about the steps involved and techniques for being successful at the skill. Passing on a skill gives you a sense of personal and cultural pride.*

## Ideas for Skills Demonstrations

- Learn how to perform a skill – through research, listening to existing oral history recordings, speaking with Elders and through practice. Here are some examples of skills: making a tool, iglu, qajaq, qamutik, preparing skins and sewing an article of clothing, playing a game, drumming, square dancing or throat singing.
- You could teach that skill to other members of your group.
- Teach the skill to children – bring your own children to your literacy group; demonstrate the skill and give the children a chance to try it. Teach a class at school or an after-school session at the library or Community Learning Centre.
- Hold several evening sessions at the Community Learning Centre where other adults can come and learn from you.
- Plan and coordinate events where Elders can demonstrate skills.
- Volunteer to demonstrate skills at a museum or cultural centre – or as part of an orientation for new teachers, government workers or tourists from the south.

## Planning the Event

- First decide if you will need a budget – to pay Elders and buy materials – and if so, where will you get the funding? Plan in advance.
- Once your project is up and running, begin to prepare for your teaching events. First, brainstorm as a group how you are going to introduce and explain the skill. Who is going to do what? Who is going to arrange the space for the event, ask for donations of materials or food, invite guests and Elders, advertise your event? Make a work plan and post it on the wall so everyone can keep track of their jobs.
- If you are going to be speaking at an event, write down what you plan to say on cards. Hold practice sessions in front of your whole group so people can get feedback and feel comfortable with their role.

-

# Skits, Plays or Puppet Plays

## Ideas for Creating Skits or Plays

- Your literacy group may want to use drama to show the ideas you learned through your research. Or drama may be the main focus of your project, so the group could listen to existing recordings to find a story to base a play on.
- To build confidence and to get the literacy group used to working together, the facilitator can include warm up exercises, movement and vocal exercises and improvisational exercises in the literacy program from the start. (See the list of resources at the end of this section.) These exercises can serve as energizers during the research phase of your project and make your group comfortable with the idea of creating a dramatic production.

## Steps in Creating a Skit or Play

### *The Story*

As a group, decide on the topic you want to base your play on. It could be a legend told by Elders or found in a book, a true-life story, or an issue that you want to bring to the attention of your community. Brainstorm all your ideas as a group; then try to agree on one topic. Or instead, small groups could work on one skit or story each; then all the skits can be linked together to make one performance. A skit is a short, often funny, play.

### *Creative Choices*

Look at films and videos of plays produced by other groups to introduce your group to different approaches to theatre. This will give you ideas for ways to show your story or issue visually. (See the list of films at the end of this section.) Hold discussions after you watch a video; brainstorm different dramatic approaches you see in the videos. Make a list of brainstormed ideas on flip chart paper. You might show some of the ideas in the form of drawings instead of writing.

### *Visual Images and Style*

There are many ways you could approach the drama. You may see examples of some of these different techniques in the videos you watch.



What kind of visual images do you want to use in your play to get the message across?

- ☒ Will your play include dialogue (characters speaking)? Or will it involve music, drumming and movement? Or mime? Mime shows characters, moods, ideas and events through arm gestures, facial expression and body movements, but no words are used.
- ☒ Will you have a narrator telling a story or voicing some details during the play?
- ☒ Will you use masks? – The actors could wear masks while they are onstage or hold the mask by a stick attached to it. Sometimes actors change masks throughout the play to show different characters and emotions. In some plays, the actors wear black clothing and masks that are white or brightly coloured on a white base. The lighting shows the masks, but only shows shadowy images of the body movement.
- ☒ Will the audience participate in your play? Will you set up some situations where people in the audience respond to the actors or the situation?
- ☒ Will you act out natural elements such as rocks, wind and snow?
- ☒ Will you create a set – a backdrop and items that remain on stage during the scene? Or will you have an empty stage, leaving the audience to imagine the setting?
- ☒ Will you have costumes? Where will you get the costumes or do you plan to make them?
- ☒ Will you use sound effects, such as music, wind blowing or water running? Will they be recorded on tape for the performance or done live during the play?
- ☒ Do you have performers in your group? Would they like to write music for the play or play an instrument and sing? Will you use traditional drumming and pisiit or throat singing?
- ☒ Will you use props (items used by the actors during the play – moveable things)?
- ☒ Will you need special lighting and a technical team to operate it?
- ☒ Do you need to build a stage or is there somewhere in town that already exists where you can perform your play?

### ***Script Outline***<sup>1</sup>

Develop a script outline once you know the story you are going to tell and have some idea of the visual images you want in your play. A script outline tells the story from beginning to end, but without the dialogue. (See *Radio Plays* in the *Oral Projects* section.)

- Brainstorm possible scenes for the play from the story you've chosen. A scene is a part of the play where the action is continuous and a specific part of the story is told.
- Brainstorm on individual sheets of paper, so you can move the order of the scenes around as you develop your script outline.
- For each scene, list the number of actors needed and the role they perform. Discuss the props, costumes, masks, sounds or sets that might be needed.

### ***Writing***

When the script outline is complete and you've decided on the style of your play, divide into small groups or pairs. Each group can take several scenes to work on writing. If you have decided to use dialogue, the groups discuss and write the words the actors will speak.

- When your small group is writing the dialogue, physically act out the scene and speak the words. Try it in several different ways and decide as a group which version you like the most. This will make your writing more fun and bring the scene to life. If the scene involves hearing joyful news, how should the actors express the joy? You could even record the different attempts at creating the dialogue; then the group will be able to replay the scene and build on each attempt. You should also write out the body movements the actors will perform, costume or prop changes, and the technical support needed, such as sounds or lighting. Type up each scene when it is complete.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Lessons from Our Oral Tradition, Legends and Theatre for Community Action* by the Arctic Public Legal Education Association and Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland, 1992, and *Ready for Action, A Popular Theatre Popular Education Manual* by wpirg.org – the Waterloo Public Interest Research Group, Waterloo, Ontario, 1994, 2001





## ***Journals***

Literacy group members could write journal entries about the progress of their work. What are your thoughts and feelings as you go through the process of creating and performing in a play?

## **Ideas for Creating Puppet Plays**

- Creating a puppet play could be an interesting and fun intergenerational project. You could base your puppet play on a local legend or true-life story. Parents and older children could write the script outline and scenes together. Younger children and parents could create the puppets together.
- You could use the ideas in the *Skits and Plays* section as a guideline for creating script outlines and writing scenes for your puppet play.

## **Making Puppets**

There are many different kinds of puppets you could make:

- *Marionettes* – puppets with strings to make them move.
- *Hand puppets* – made from fabric or skins.
- You could model the heads from paper-mache or clay.
- Finger puppets.
- Puppets mounted on a stick.
- *Rod puppets* – rods are attached to the puppets' hands and used to create hand movements.

## **Northern Films**

- *Artcircq*, 2001, Canada, Igloodik Isuma Productions
- *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*, 2001, Canada, Igloodik Isuma Productions
- *Chinook Winds: Light and Shadow*, 1997, Canada, Aboriginal Arts Program – Banff Centre for the Arts
- *The Drum Dancer*, 2001, Canada, Kitikmeot Heritage Society
- *In Iirgu's Time*, 1988, USA, Sara Elder and Leonard Kamerling, distributed by Documentary Educational Resources (USA)
- *The Journey of the Stone*, 2001, Canada, Kitikmeot Heritage Society
- *Journey to Nunavut*, 1999, Canada, Martin Kreelak, NFB, IBC
- *Kikkik*, 2000, Canada, Words and Pictures Video

- *Nanook Taxi*, 1977, Canada, Tulugak Production Company
- *Nirniura*, 2000, Canada, Arnait Ikajurtigiit Collective, Iglooklik
- *Nuliujuk: Mother of the Sea Beasts*, 2001, Canada, John Houston, Triad Film Productions
- *Qagqiq*, 1989, Canada, Iglooklik Isuma Productions
- *Songs in Stone: An Arctic Journey Home*, 1999, Canada, John Houston, Triad Film Productions
- *Unikausiq*, 1996, Canada, Arnait Ikajurtigiit Collective, Iglooklik
- *Uvajuq – The Origin of Death*, 2001, Canada, Kitikmeot Heritage Society
- *The White Dawn*, 1974, USA, Paramount Pictures

### Drama Resources

- Canadian Improv Games – [www.improv.ca](http://www.improv.ca)
- *Games for Actors and Non Actors* – book by August Boal, published by Routledge
- Headlines Theatre Company – [www.headlinestheatre.com](http://www.headlinestheatre.com)
- The Improv Encyclopedia – [www.humanpingpongball.com](http://www.humanpingpongball.com)
- Arts4Schools – [www.arts4schools.com](http://www.arts4schools.com)



# Story Sacks

## What is a Story Sack?

*A story sack is a large cloth bag that holds a book and an audio recording of the book, as well as props, characters and scenery to bring the story to life. Children and their parents act out the story as they read or listen together. With the props in a story sack, parents who are not strong readers have more ways to get involved with a story and to make reading fun for their children.*

In Canada we have a family literacy program called *The Storysacks Canada Program*. *The Storysacks Canada Program* is an exciting new community literacy program which brings children's books to life for families. *The Storysacks Program* makes use of community assets – it brings together all kinds of people, with many talents and strengths, to create interactive reading kits that make books fun for everyone. The Nunavut Literacy Council is an official trainer for this program. If your literacy or community group would like to get involved in making story sacks, call the literacy development coordinators for information, resources or training.

*The Storysacks Canada Program* is based on discovering people's strengths. Story sacks are made by people in the community. Depending on the story, a story sack might include handmade masks, costumes, dolls, scenery, characters, furniture, houses, iglus or tools. Or it may include stuffed or plastic toys found in someone's toy box or at house sales. When a group of people in the community get together to make story sacks, they use their talents and have fun together, as well as creating a wonderful new resource for families.



*Gorretti Panika of the Nunavut Literacy Council demonstrating her story sack for the book, 'Silatsiavaak' at a Family Literacy Workshop in Arviat.*

## Ideas for Creating Story Sacks

- This would be an excellent project for a sewing and literacy program or a women's literacy program.
- But men can be involved as well – making tools, small houses or furniture, model skidoos and qamutiit. Husbands or other relatives of the literacy group members, community volunteers, carpentry course participants, or Elders' group members might be interested in participating.
- Creating story sacks is a great way to promote Inuktitut literacy. Your literacy group could make a series of story sacks based on Inuktitut books or oral stories and create a lending library for parents who want their children to be excited about reading in Inuktitut. Parents participate in a short training to show them how to use story sacks before they borrow them.
- Your group could team with other organizations in the community so you will have more resources for your story sacks program: an Elders' group, a sewing group, the girl guides and scouts, a school class, a carpentry course, a library committee. Or ask for volunteers to come and work with you on the story sacks program.
- Ask the Nunavut Literacy Council for resources and guidance. We have ideas about what to put in your story sack and how to make it fun and safe for young children.
- You may want to look for funding to buy materials or donations from local businesses.
- Choose written stories, recorded stories or oral stories you have heard in the past. Choose stories that are active and interesting for children.
- Decide how many people would want to work on a story sack together. Perhaps groups of four or five would be a good number. Brainstorm all the items you want to put in your story sack. Make a list. Make a work plan. Who will do which jobs? Post your work plan so everyone in your group will know what jobs they are responsible for.
- Make a recorded version of the story to go in the story sack. (See *Talking Books* in the *Oral Projects* section.)

- If the story is a recorded oral story, type up a written version in large clear print, using the exact words of the storyteller.
- The facilitator teaches mini-lessons on the writing process, syllabic keyboarding, grammar and any other topics as they come up.
- Make a backdrop from cardboard, skin, fabric or light wood. The backdrop will show a background scene from the story. You may have one backdrop or more.
- Each story sack group can decide how they want to make the characters in the story: hand or finger puppets, masks, hats, costumes or handmade dolls. Or you might use stuffed toys, or plastic or wooden animals bought at house sales, dollar stores or found around home. When masks or costumes are used, the children and adults become actors and perform the same actions as in the story. The way you make the characters depends on the interests and skills of your group members and the resources you have available.
- Make or find props that go along with the story. These are things like a kakivak, guitar, rifle, fishing net – anything that will help people act out the story. The props don't have to be perfectly like the real thing or like the illustration in the book. They can be realistic, but they can also be silly or funny.

*Here are some ideas about safety:*

- ☒ Use thread to design the eyes and nose instead of buttons or commercially produced plastic eyes.
- ☒ Use fabric to fill dolls, not seeds or beans.
- ☒ Look at labels to make sure toys are non-toxic.
- ☒ Use fire-resistant materials.
- ☒ Don't include small toys or parts that might be swallowed. The inside cardboard roll from paper-towel is a good test for size. If a toy or part can pass through the roll, don't include it in your story sack.
- ☒ Check all stuffed toys carefully to make sure they are safe and washable.
- Find a non-fiction book that relates to your story.
- Make a large cloth bag – large enough to hold your backdrop and all your characters and props. Put the name of the book on the outside of your story sack. Use felt, cloth or skin letters or fabric paint.



- Create games to go in your story sack – games that relate to the story. (See list of web sites at the end of this section.)
  - ☒ Memory games
  - ☒ Matching games
  - ☒ Card or board games
  - ☒ Rhyming games
  - ☒ Number games
  - ☒ Singing, clapping or dancing games
  - ☒ Alphabet games
  - ☒ Guessing games
  - ☒ Visual discrimination games
- Make a prompt card for parents to show them how to play the games and any special information about how to use the story sack.
- Make a checklist of everything that is in your story sack, so you can easily check to see if anything is missing.
- When your story sacks are complete, share them with the other group members. Encourage people to participate in acting out the story.
- You could invite your own children to a ‘Story Sacks Party’ one afternoon and have fun reading and acting out the story with them.
- Ask the Nunavut Literacy Council to give you information about training parents to use story sacks. Your literacy group could create a system for lending out the story sacks to families in the community. You could organize and deliver a training session for parents.
- If you do lend out your story sacks, you must check them regularly to see that all the pieces are there and in good shape. Replace or repair items as needed. You need to have a system to keep the story sacks in top condition so families will always enjoy them to the fullest.
- If your group is not able to act as a story sack lending library, find out if another group is interested: the library, family resource center, wellness centre or the school.
- The literacy group members could write journal entries throughout the project. Record the progress of your work. What are your jobs within the group? What are your thoughts and feelings about working on the story sacks project?

## Story Sack Checklist – What is in a Story Sack?

- ☒ Storybook or typed story
- ☒ Recording of story
- ☒ Characters – masks, costumes, puppets, dolls, etc.
- ☒ Props that go with the story – eg. toy rifles, chairs, whistles, fishing rods, binoculars, guitars, etc.
- ☒ Backdrop or scenery
- ☒ Parent prompt card
- ☒ Game
- ☒ Non-fiction book
- ☒ Cloth bag with name of story on it
- ☒ Checklist of everything in the sack

## Useful Web Sites

*The Storysacks Canada Program* – [www.storysacks.nald.ca](http://www.storysacks.nald.ca)

## Games

[www.preschooleducation.com/ga.shtml](http://www.preschooleducation.com/ga.shtml)

[www.enchantedlearning.com/Home.html](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Home.html)

[www.kootweb.com/games.html](http://www.kootweb.com/games.html)

[www.agameaday.com/kidshome.html](http://www.agameaday.com/kidshome.html)

[www.gameskidsplay.net](http://www.gameskidsplay.net)



*Story Sack of 'The Bear on the Bed'  
by Ruth Miller played by Mary  
Amaujak Irkootee and friends from  
Rankin Inlet.*

# Active

- If your Community Learning Centre, community group or school has a video camera you can borrow, some people in your literacy group may really enjoy this project.
- You could video Elders' interviews if they feel comfortable with that. As well, make an audio recording, so you will have access to both later.
- You could video the steps in completing a skill – preparing skins, making a tool, preparing igunaq.
- Create a commentary for your video – an oral description of what is happening in the video. The commentary might be an Elder's words. Or, as literacy group members, you can create the commentary yourselves. Write out the script for the commentary and produce it after the visual portion of the video is prepared and edited.
- Your group could act out a traditional story or myth and videotape the production. First research the story or myth in as many forms as possible – written stories, oral interviews and recorded interviews. Then write a script for your production. (See *Skits, Plays or Puppet Plays* in the *Active Projects* section and *Radio Plays* in the *Oral Projects* section for ideas on preparing a script.)
- You could partner with a group in another community. Decide on a topic that both groups are interested in. Each group can research and create a video in their own community and then send the video to their partner group. This is one way to compare regional differences.
- Video a trip by Elders to a place on the land where they used to live. Video their stories for others to share.
- Each member of the literacy group could video songs, aqausiit or pisiit that are sung by members of their family. The family would then have a record of these songs to keep, as well as perhaps making them available in the library or cultural centre.
- Add music, commentary, graphics or sounds to the videos.

*Here (in Nunavik) Eskimos unable to  
speak their language was unthinkable  
a mere generation ago. The ability  
to speak Inuktitut, so sacredly central  
to who we were, seemed secure –  
never to be knowingly lost.*

*I am not yet an old man, and we see  
the dramatic erosion of the  
Inuktitut language very close  
to our homes and families.*

*This has caused general alarm among Inuit.  
We are acutely aware of  
the need to do  
something about it.*

*This realization is  
universal, and there is  
no sound argument for  
pretending that real  
threats to Inuktitut  
do not exist...*

*Zebedee Nungak in Inuktitut 93, 2003*

