Storytelling

Proposal: Development of a network linking personal narrative and storytelling projects and archives related to the conflict. This will include support for repositories for stories and narratives thereby enabling wider audience engagement.

Guiding principles & values

- Care and respect for all involved including those who share their stories, those who collect them and those who engage with them.

- Increased sharing of learning between storytelling projects relating to the conflict.

- Encouragement for such projects to follow appropriate ethical principles in their work.

- Creation of opportunities for hearing stories that have been gathered.

- Recognition of storytelling as an active and inter-relational process in building peace.

- Recognition that stories take many forms including oral histories, written archives, audio, video, encounter projects and artwork.

Benefits & Challenges

Benefits

- Proper curating of stories for the sake of the participants, their families and future generations.

- Builds on extensive work already done in gathering and archiving materials.

- Can make space for those narratives not yet heard or made accessible.

- Can allow for a richer and broader view of the experiences of the past.

- Can enable sharing of learning.

- Can contribute to other mechanisms for dealing with past.

Challenges

- How to archive stories so that they are accessible.

- How to collectively archive the differing story formats and distinctive project origins.

- How to listen to stories and not just share one's own perspective.

- How to ensure appropriate consent has been obtained and that stories have been gathered and curated ethically.

- There are stories that cannot yet be told.

- Ensuring confidentiality or embargoes are undertaken within the limits of the law.
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Rationale

The existence of numerous examples of storytelling work being undertaken successfully offers the potential for wider learning, engagement and networking. A wide range of accounts being recorded and shared prevents a singular, exclusive narrative of the conflict becoming dominant.

What is needed?

- Support for the ongoing development of networking opportunities to share learning and the working through of practical and ethical dilemmas.

- Support for existing archives and maintenance and expansion of their potential audiences.

- Support for new and existing work which enables storytelling projects to share experience and learning.

- Development of listening opportunities, including incorporating existing projects into new initiatives.

This is one of a set of HTR proposals on dealing with the past relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. HTR believes these proposals would be best implemented as a comprehensive response to ensure that a range of complex but interrelated needs are met.