Collective
MEMORIES

HOW TO RUN A MEMORY MUG UP

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Are there people in your community whose memories you would like to preserve for future generations? Do you want to record how things were back in "them days"?

Your community should host a Memory Mug Up!

A Memory Mug Up is an informal story sharing session for community members, where people gather, have a cup of tea, and share memories. The idea for Memory Mug Ups was developed by Martha MacDonald at the Labrador Institute. In describing where the name came from Martha said, "A mug-up is a snack that people have when they're in the woods." She explained the mug up was a simple idea they developed, "One thing we wanted to do was kind of community outreach, and so we thought it would be a good idea to just go visit people in their communities and talk to them about days gone by, very simple idea."

The goal of the program is to help participants share and preserve their stories. Whatever story is important to your community, whether it's a personal story, a story about a family member, or a story about the community as a whole, the Memory Mug Up program can help you preserve and share it. As Martha said the tone of the "mug-up is about getting community together".

Hosting a Memory Mug Up is easy! You only need three things. First you need a space to hold the event. For the space you should consider the size of your community and how many people will come out to the public event. You want to have enough space to seat people comfortably in a circle of chairs so everyone can see and hear one another.

Second you need the people! Although advertising through local radio, print, and television is helpful the most beneficial way to connect is through a phone call. Make a list of the people in your community who should be invited, then call and personally invite them. Open the event to the general public but make sure you reach out in person in order to ensure a good turnout.

Third (and perhaps most important) you need tea and cookies! Everyone loves a bite to eat so put on a little spread. Serve fruit, veggies, or cookies and of course tea and coffee. You don't need a lot of food. A small snack is great for when you take a break and want to enjoy a cup of tea or coffee.
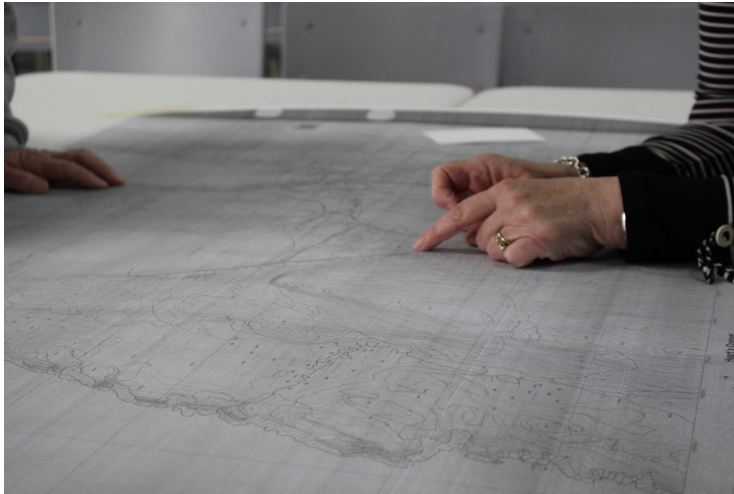
For the Memory Mug Up itself the main thing is to get the ball rolling and get people talking. Depending on your community you may want to focus a particular theme like a shipwreck or an industry. Another option is to bring in props. Childhood toys like marbles and skipping ropes, or old fishing and farming equipment can help to jog people's memories.

If you want to capture place names enlarge a map of the community and spread it on a big table with seating. You can ask people the important places in the community especially the local names on paths and natural features. Make sure you prepare some questions to get people talking. Ask simple questions about their family names, when their families moved to the community, what life was like growing up, or where they went to school to get the conversation started.

During the session listen to the group to see if you can locate any good story tellers or people who would be interested in a follow up interview. Once the session is over hand around a sign-up sheet or go from person to person to see who would be interested in doing a one on one recorded interview. Make sure you have everyone's contact information then follow up individually.

If your community does not have access to a digital recorder keep in mind that many cell phones and computers can record interviews. Just be sure you know how to properly copy and save the file to a computer and be sure to get the proper consent to record the interview. If you

would like to learn more about doing interviews visit the Oral History guide on our website www.ichblog.ca

If you have any questions about the Memory Mug Up event, or how to record local oral histories, reach out to Dale Jarvis at Heritage NL at dale@heritagenl.ca or 1-888-739-1892 ex. 2.