

# We humans are a unique race of storytellers

by Mark Pavilons

We all love a good story. And each and everyone of us is the topic of an epic tale.

Despite our differences, Brad Pitt once observed that "storytelling reminds us we're all the same."

It's in our DNA, literally and figuratively and it's embedded in every aspect of our modern society.

From art, music, fiction, movies, graphic novels and even marketing, stories come alive. They attract, stir emotion and crush loneliness. Stories are essential to our species and always have been.

Human beings, since the very beginning, were expert storytellers.

The first complete "book" was The Epic of Gilgamesh, dating back to between 1,300 and 1,000 BC. The ancient language is a type of Semitic language that's an adaptation of Sumerian cuneiform.

This is simply when, as far as our records show, humans first inscribed a story, thereby preserving it and allowing it to be read in a fixed form by others. Undoubtedly, humans were telling stories before they wrote them down.

It is not clear when humans first began telling and retelling narratives.

We're known as Homo sapiens "wise man" but some think we're more like "Pan narrans," or "storytelling chimps."

Pause for a moment of reflection.

It's estimated that language developed anywhere from 50,000 to 150,000 years ago.

Storytelling may have evolved because it gave our ancestors some sort of evolutionary advantage "storytelling evolved as a way of binding us as a species.

Tall tales serve as a powerful tool for emotional regulation. By articulating their experiences through narratives, individuals can process traumatic events, reduce anxiety, and foster resilience.

Creative storytelling, whether through oral traditions, literature, or modern media, engages listeners and creators alike. We empathize with characters.

Everyone loves a story, especially one they can relate to.

If you have one of me, share it and I am alive again.

"A single conversation across the table with a wise man is better than 10 years mere study of books," said Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

I can attest to that myself and I read thousands of words each week.

Without carvings, paintings, written texts, we would know nothing about our past. Believe me, it's rich and those ancient tales beg to be relived, retold, over and over.

Oral myths in North America are common among our Indigenous Peoples. The concept of Turtle Island and countless sagas of Tricksters are rich, colourful and so very important. It's about our roots, our very essence on this planet.

Traditional anecdotes led to written tales and documents, highlighting events of the day.

A real 'voice' in writing speaks volumes about each of the culture's everyday life. What some accounts lack in action and adventure, they make up for in the fabric of community and family.

Our yarns come down to people 'typical' human beings capable of great things. The historical folklore is about humans and nature, about unearthing mysteries. It's about the magic that created us.

And who better to tell such tales than us?

No matter who you are or where you come from, I'm sure you have dozens of anecdotes, fables and fantastic stories to share. If you're lucky to have parents and grandparents, you likely hear them over and over again at family gatherings.

My advice is to hold these moments, and these messages, dear. You will be the guardian of your family's novels.

I learned that there are libraries in Denmark where you can borrow people instead of books. It involves sitting and chatting with one another for 30 minutes. All you get is a name tag with a title, and you just listen without judging.

The Human Library is apparently active in more than 80 countries.

The library publishes people as open books.

'The Human Library is, in the true sense of the word, a library of people. We host events where readers can borrow human beings serving as open books and have conversations they would not normally have access to. Every human book from our bookshelf, represents a group in our society that is often subjected to prejudice, stigmatization or discrimination because of their lifestyle, diagnosis, belief, disability, social status, ethnic origin etc.'

What an amazing idea. I believe this is something that every community should have and could really benefit from.

My wife once worked at a nursing home and the stories she heard from residents were remarkable. They ranged from war tales and business ventures to travel and anecdotes from the 'good, old days.'

Many of us may have disregarded our parents' stories of growing up with nothing, walking to school through 10 feet of snow, and so on. But we remember them, often with fondness. And yes, living in rural Caledon, I did trek up our 700-foot driveway in thigh-deep snow to catch the bus.

My parents' tales are part of who I am, and how I came to be. There's no way that's inconsequential or meaningless. It's vital to my family's journey and lineage.

While some have faded from memory, when my kids ask I share what I remember about my parents. If we all thought about it, our personal tidbits would be a great foundation for a Netflix movie or TV sitcom. That's because our stories are real 'you can't make this stuff up!'

'There is no such thing as a worthless conversation, provided you know what to listen for. And questions are the breath of life for a conversation,' according to James Nathan Miller.

Each week in this very paper are real stories ? accounts of human achievement, tragedy, faith, and goodness.

We should all continue to share stories because deep down, it's what makes us all human.