



# Digital Storytelling Connects Diverse Communities

Project Team: Laurie Anderson, Sally Rafson, Andi Fischhoff, Paula Kelly

## Overview

The Pittsburgh region is proud of its immigrant history, yet many are unaware of the refugees now resettling in their communities. The rhetoric of the recent election has made discussions about refugees and immigration more difficult, and locally, we've had problems of bullying and even violence.

This project brings together recent refugees and long-time Pittsburgh residents to each tell their stories of immigration.

The brief videos or “digital stories” that are created will be shown at a library and other community venues as part of facilitated conversations. We hope that community residents reflect on their social and civic responsibilities to refugees and to one another.



*A refugee and long-time local resident discuss their stories with assistants.*

## Methods

The project has two primary activities:  
**A 4-session Digital Storytelling Workshop** - 10 participants create their own videos that tell their stories – whether their own or a family member's.

Participants write their story (~450 words), record it, find images, and use WeVideo software to put it all together into a 3-4 minute video.

The first series of workshops is being held at Whitehall Public Library. The methodology for the series has been adapted from a model created by the Center for Digital Storytelling.

### *Workshop participants:*

- 5 refugees (from Sudan, Bhutan/Nepal, Mexico, Guatemala)
- 5 long-time residents with family members who immigrated long ago.

### *Workshop staff:*

- Workshop leader/teacher
- Technology instructor/Videographer
- Technology assistant
- Interpreters (Spanish, Bhutanese)
- Volunteers (writing, technology)

## Public Programs

The audience will view the videos. Discussion about the stories and their implication will be facilitated by Duquesne University faculty.



*Bhutanese teens attend training to prepare to be technology volunteers.*

## Strategies for Success

- Reach out to refugee settlement agencies, ethnic community groups (e.g., Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh, Union of African Communities, Casa San Jose), churches, and other groups to recruit participants.
- Recruit volunteers to assist participants with writing their stories.
- Recruit high school students to help participants with WeVideo technology.
- Hold a training session for interns and volunteers before the first workshop.
- Assess participants' skills and attitudes at the start of the first workshop, so change can be evaluated.

## Acknowledgements

This project is made possible by a grant from the **Institute of Museum & Library Services** as administered by the PA Department of Education through the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, and the Commonwealth of PA, Tom Wolf, Governor. Funding also provided by **Vibrant Pittsburgh**.