



## PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

This guide is designed for teachers and other educators, and will provide ideas and activities to encourage student participation in the Common Ground project at the New Bedford Whaling Museum. An accurate and colorful picture of New Bedford depends on your stories; in a mosaic, each piece contributes to the beauty of the whole while retaining its own unique character. This guide suggests two projects for students and includes videos and supporting documents to use in the classroom.



"This is going to be about your stories. We want to collect as many stories from as many people in Greater New Bedford as we can. The more stories we get, the more accurate the picture of living in New Bedford will be...and years from now, your grandchildren will be able to come into the museum and ask to find your story. This is a history project where we are archiving for the future."

– DR. AKEIA DE BARROS GOMES, NBWM CURATOR OF SOCIAL HISTORY



ALL PROJECT RESOURCES CAN BE FOUND AT  
[educators.whalingmuseum.org/commonground](https://educators.whalingmuseum.org/commonground)



## PROJECT 1

# Telling Your Story

Students learn about the New Bedford Whaling Museum project *Common Ground: A Community Mosaic* and consider its aims and objectives. Students practice telling and listening to personal stories and finally submit one personal story for the Museum's collection.



## ASK

- What does a museum do?
- What belongs in a museum?
- When you visit a museum, what (if anything) do you connect to or feel inspired by?
- If we can preserve something for the future right now, what should we preserve?



## EXPLORE

### ▶ CHECK IT OUT



THE COMMON GROUND  
project website.  
[CommonGroundMosaic.org](https://CommonGroundMosaic.org)



VIDEOASK, the Common  
Ground story recording  
platform for submitting  
your story. [EXPLORE HERE](#)

### ▶ WATCH & LISTEN



DR. AKEIA DE BARROS GOMES  
introduces the project and what she  
finds important about it.  
[EXPLORE HERE](#) (Video 1)



SOPHIA'S COMMON  
GROUND STORY about  
food, family and heritage.  
[EXPLORE HERE](#) (Video 2)



VICTORIA'S COMMON GROUND  
STORY about dressing in disguise.  
[EXPLORE HERE](#) (Video 3)





## ACTIVITY

Students will practice telling their own stories, and listening to other people's stories. Students will then be asked to submit their own story to Common Ground. It is important to emphasize that every "piece" of the mosaic is important. There are no strict guidelines for what a Common Ground story should be. Stories can be recorded in different ways: as videos, as audio-only recordings, or in writing.

### PRACTICE IDEA #1: STORYTELLING LIGHTNING ROUNDS

Dr. de Barros Gomes acknowledges it is very difficult to just "share your story." In this activity, students will practice asking one another questions that may lead to storytelling or spark ideas.

- Each student should choose one "interview question" to ask another student, from the list of questions based on the [Common Ground Project Sheet](#). A student could also choose to write their own question based on topics in the [Common Ground Project Sheet](#).
- Divide students into interview pairs. Each "interview" will last only 1 minute and 30 seconds. The first student asks their question and the second student answers. The interviewer must listen silently. At the end of the timer, the interviewer must give one acknowledgment or appreciation. Then, roles switch. When both students have had a chance to speak, either may choose to "steal" their partner's question (or hang on to their own). Then, students should switch partners and repeat the exercise.

*NOTE: In a virtual classroom, break-out rooms are useful for creating rotating student pairs. In-person, students can stand or sit in concentric circles. At the end of the 3-minute interview period, the outside circle can rotate to switch up the pairs.*





## PRACTICE IDEA #2: GROWN-UP SHOW AND TELL

One topic Common Ground seeks to explore is “My Stuff and My Identity.” What do the things we use, own or treasure say about who we are? Ask students to participate in a “Grown-Up Show and Tell” and present an object that carries meaning for them. This works well in a virtual classroom setting. Here are three ways:

1. Ask students to choose a personal or family treasure for show and tell. Why is this object valuable or important? What do you think other people could learn about you by viewing this treasure?
2. Ask students to “curate” a small exhibit about their own lives. If there was a museum exhibit about you, what are three objects that would be in it?
3. Review the Common Ground interview questions on the [Common Ground Project Sheet](#), which identifies possible story themes like “Neighborhood Stories,” “Hardship and Struggle,” or “Creativity and the Arts.” Identify a Common Ground theme for the show and tell, and ask students to bring in an object that tells a story and connects to that theme. (Can an object represent a family story? Or a hardship you have experienced? Or a change that has happened in your lifetime?). Students could also choose their own theme to illustrate with a show and tell object.



## FINAL PRODUCT

After exploring these ideas, students submit one personal story in any format to the New Bedford Whaling Museum. One way to encourage submissions is to ask students to pair up and record one another's stories. A facilitator can also interview students and record the conversation. Students should be encouraged to use the Museum's online storytelling tool, VideoAsk. The storyteller can set up a laptop or phone to record, and a partner can sit behind the camera to ask questions or act as a friendly listener. A remote alternative to this is to set up a meeting on Zoom, Google Meet or a similar platform, and record the conversation between storyteller and listener. In this case, recorded conversations can be emailed to [stories@whalingmuseum.org](mailto:stories@whalingmuseum.org).





## PROJECT TWO

# Preserving a Story

Students learn methods for collecting stories from their communities, and ethical guidelines for doing so. Students plan and execute an interview or recording with another storyteller in their lives or communities. Finally, students submit a "collected" story to the New Bedford Whaling Museum's Common Ground project.



"We all have stories to tell. Think about and select who you want to hear from. Listen, don't talk. This is difficult! The people who are sharing their stories are human. They have flaws, problems, concerns and interests. Most importantly, they may think completely differently from you. That's fine. You're documenting, not trying to change anyone's mind about anything."

– DR. AKEIA DE BARROS GOMES, NBWM CURATOR OF SOCIAL HISTORY



## ASK

- What was challenging about telling your own story for Common Ground ?
- Did you learn anything in the process that could help or encourage other storytellers?
- If we are trying to capture a picture of New Bedford today, who do we need to hear from?
- What do we need to hear about?







## EXPLORE

### ▶ WATCH & LISTEN



DR. AKEIA DE BARROS GOMES presents her work as an anthropologist and explains methods for collecting a story. Learn about the work of an anthropologist, and how the study of anthropology informs this project. [EXPLORE HERE](#) (Video 4)



TOUR A NEW BEDFORD NEIGHBORHOOD with storyteller Bernadette and Dr. de Barros Gomes, who collected Bernadette's story on a walk through Bay Village. [EXPLORE HERE](#) (Video 5)

### 📖 READ THIS

- READ A STORY collected by a student interviewer (the storyteller wishes to be anonymous): [There is Beauty in Your Name](#) (see "Supporting Materials" towards the end of this guide)



## ACTIVITY

Students will review methods and approaches for collecting a story from another person. Students will also review ethical guidelines for this work, rooted in the discipline of Anthropology. Using these tools, students will plan to collect a story for the museum. There is a Story Planner worksheet on the next page. Students will identify a storyteller to work with and will record their story.





## COMMON GROUND

# Story Planner Worksheet

✓ **REVIEW** TIPS FOR COLLECTING A STORY FROM DR. AKEIA DE BARROS GOMES:

- Select someone who has a story to tell.
- Remember that storytellers are human beings with problems, concerns and interests.
- Listen, don't talk. Take a passive role in the conversation.
- Keep in mind that your values may not coincide with a storyteller's values.

✓ **UNDERSTAND** THE ETHICS OF COLLECTING A STORY:

- Get informed consent (see *Supporting Materials* at end of this guide).
- If a storyteller asks to be anonymous, keep their name and identity anonymous.
- Do not enhance stories.
- Respect a storyteller's point of view.

✓ **DISCUSS** AND TAKE NOTES:

- What is the biggest or most important historical moment you have witnessed so far?
- When you think of someone "with a story to tell," who comes to mind?
- Do you know this person? If not, what person in your life has a story to tell?
- If you asked an older person in your life the first question above, do you think they would have the same answer? Who would you ask?
- What do you think the street or neighborhood where you live looked like 10 years ago? What about 30 or 50 years ago? Do you know anyone who saw it in the past and could describe it to you?

✓ **PLAN** YOUR INTERVIEW:

- Who will you collect a story from?
- What is one reason why you picked this person?
- What could this person teach museum visitors about Greater New Bedford, past or present?
- What is the first question you will ask this person?
- Where will you collect your story? Is there an activity you and the storyteller will do together?
- Will you record your story using video? If not, how will you record your story?





# Submission

After exploring these ideas, students submit their “collected” story in any format to the New Bedford Whaling Museum.



## IMPORTANT

It is important to know that any stories submitted to the Museum will become part of the museum's collection, and may be shared. Storytellers may request anonymity, and any questions can be directed to:

**Akeia de Barros Gomes**

✉ [stories@whalingmuseum.org](mailto:stories@whalingmuseum.org)

☎ (508) 717-6853

# Supporting Materials

On the following pages, you will find resources that will help facilitate getting information for your collected stories.



**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**



**SAMPLE STORY: There is Beauty in Your Name**



**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**



**COMMON GROUND PROJECT SHEET**



**ALL PROJECT RESOURCES CAN BE FOUND AT**  
[educators.whalingmuseum.org/commonground](http://educators.whalingmuseum.org/commonground)



# Sample Interview Questions

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## JOURNEYS OR FAMILY HISTORIES

- Do you know how long your family has been in New Bedford or greater New Bedford? How did you or your family arrive here?
- Have you ever lived anywhere else? What do you remember about your first days or weeks here in New Bedford?
  - If you haven't lived anywhere else, have you ever imagined a different place you want to live someday? How would it be different than here?
- Is there a story behind your first name or middle name? Were you named after anyone else?
- Do you have a walk or path that you travel often? Do you walk the same route or take the same bus regularly? What do you notice along the way?

## MY STUFF & MY IDENTITY

- If there was a museum exhibit about you, what one object would have to be in the museum?
- In a fire or flood, what object or possession would you grab and save?
- Describe your favorite photograph of a family member. What does it look like? Why is it your favorite?
- Have you ever kept a diary or a journal? Did you hide it? Did you write in it often? Do you still have it?

## THEN & NOW

- What do you think is your earliest memory?
- Tell me about a time when you were really happy as a kid.
- What was one thing you totally misunderstood or got wrong when you were a little kid?
- What was your biggest fear as a little kid?
- Who was your best friend when you were in kindergarten? Do you have the same best friend now?
- What do you think is the most important historical moment of your lifetime so far?

## TRADITIONS

- What do you know how to cook? How did you learn?
- What one food reminds you of celebration or a good time?
- Does anyone in your family have a saying (or even a joke or story) that they use often? What is it? When or why do they say it?

## NEIGHBORHOOD STORIES

- Do you know or can you name most of the people who live in the houses near you?
- What is your favorite place to go that you can walk to or get to on your own?
- What do you think is the most important, interesting or beautiful place or site in New Bedford? Why?
- What do you know about the history or the past in your neighborhood? This can be recent or long ago.
- Has anything on your street or in your neighborhood changed since you first remember living there?
- Do you have a neighbor you would like to know more about?
- Tell me about an adventure or mission you went on somewhere in New Bedford.

## HARDSHIP & CHALLENGE (LIFE IN A PANDEMIC)

- What do you remember about your first day of quarantine in 2020? When did the world seem to change?
- Did you have a particularly hard day in quarantine? What do you remember about that day?
- What did you find out about yourself when you were quarantined? What did you find out about your family?
- What was your last day of school like in March 2020?
- What was your first day of school like in September 2020?



## *There Is Beauty In Your Name*

Do you know what it's like to have a unique name? It's very hard to accept and love your name when you have been bullied for years because of it. At a young age I had hated my name because it made me feel different from the other kids. Not only was it hard for them to pronounce my name but also no one else had my name. During my elementary school days I had constantly asked my mom why she gave me that name and she always brushed my question off. So I started to tell my teachers and classmates to call me by my last name, because I didn't feel comfortable when they called me by my first name. In fact I felt embarrassed and got upset whenever someone called me over and used my first name instead of my preferred name.

When I moved to New York for my third grade year I thought of it as a fresh start so as the first day of school came along I told everyone to call me by my last name. I also asked them to call me by a nickname I came up with, a name I used to wish I had. The year had been good so far for me. I had felt more relieved and happy knowing I wasn't looked at differently because of my name until one day at the end of the day my classmate and I were both together waiting for our parents to pick us up. As I was looking all around for my mom all of a sudden I heard her voice yelling out my name. My cheeks had turned redder than a tomato and at that moment I knew my classmate had heard it. I looked beside me to see her reaction and there it was my fear coming to life. She was laughing and mocking my name at that very moment my heart





dropped into millions of pieces and I started crying. I walked up to my mom and asked her once again why she had given me that name and there it was again she was brushing my question off. She had asked me why I cared so much about how people see me when in reality I didn't know I just wanted to feel accepted somehow in someplace.

For the next five months my mom had been dragging me to school. I felt so out of place once again. The girl had told everyone about my name, and she even mocked it then everyone started to do the same thing. I hated going to school even more after that day. I was just praying for summer to come faster so I wouldn't have to worry about kids mocking my name or fitting in anywhere. After that school year I never went back to that school again. I had moved back to Massachusetts where I started my studies again.

My mom had talked to me the morning of the first day of school. This talk wasn't any ordinary talk. She told me to stop trying to fit in, and to stop trying to be a follower instead I should be a leader and embrace myself and what makes me me. So later that morning during introductions I decided to use my actual name. I had realized that those who love me will love me the way I am. It turned out that everyone was amazed by my unique name and they really loved it and told me how beautiful my name was. I had never felt so happy in my life. I never felt such a huge relief of not worrying about people not liking me because of my name or mocking my name.





As I grew older people started asking me questions about my name. The most common question I kept getting asked was what does my name mean. I once again felt this huge heart ache, not knowing what my name had meant.

So when I got home I tried searching my name up and nothing popped up so I asked my mom what my name meant. She told me that she didn't know. For a couple years I had been stuck on that question until one day I saw a quote that said "your name doesn't define you, you define your name" and that moment was when I found the answer I'd been searching for for years. My name definition changes over the years as I get older. My name may not have a definition but I have a chance to make my own and it will be known for being loving, determined, and hard headed at times.

With only those few words I had learned how to love myself inside and out and accept not only my roots but me and who I am. I also learned how to never try to be someone who you're not. Some people think names aren't anything important but your name is what you are. Your name plays a big part in your life and I believe it's a wonderful privilege we get to give our own definition and personalize our names, our identity, and our roots.

This person wants to remain anonymous



# Informed Consent Form

## Dear Greater New Bedford Resident,

We are collecting community stories. The purpose of our story collection is to archive and exhibit the lives of people in Greater New Bedford. This project will help expand the narrative within the New Bedford Museum and make exhibitions within our walls more inclusive and more representative of our community. This project is being conducted by the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

With your permission, I would like to document your story. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you are uncomfortable with any questions or with my presence, you can refuse to participate, answer questions, or refuse to allow me to speak to you at any time without explanation.

Should you wish to share your story, but remain anonymous, your personal information (including name and address or any information that may identify you) will be kept confidential and removed from all notes and documents and will also be removed from future publications. Photographs may be used for future exhibitions and publications if you consent. However, if you would like to request that your face be obscured in published photographs, place an X in the appropriate box below.

If you have any other questions about your participation in this project, please don't hesitate to contact Dr. Akeia de Barros Gomes, Curator of Social History at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, at 508-717-6853. You will be given a copy of this document for your records.

**Please fill out, tear off and return the section below:**

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## COMMON GROUND CONSENT FORM

- ☐ I consent to participate in the research study conducted by Akeia de Barros Gomes, PhD and this student interviewer.  
*I understand by giving permission, I:*
- have fully read this "Informed Consent Form" and have had the opportunity to discuss any concerns and questions. I fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research and any foreseeable risks and consequences;
  - understand that I may refuse to participate in this project at any time and that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation at any time without consequence;
  - understand that I am free to refuse to answer any question in interviews.
- ☐ I give my interviewer and Akeia de Barros Gomes, PhD permission to photograph and/or video record my person, my home, and my belongings.
- ☐ I would like my face obscured in all photographs.
- ☐ I do not wish to participate in the project conducted by Akeia de Barros Gomes, PhD and my interviewer.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_





# common ground

A COMMUNITY MOSAIC

## Share your story!

New Bedford is an extraordinary place  
where different paths from around the world  
have intersected and defined the city's character

The New Bedford Whaling Museum is collecting and sharing stories that help paint the picture of Greater New Bedford. By recording and submitting your story, you will help create the collective story of the community. This story-gathering initiative will culminate in an exhibition that shares the lived experiences of our enduring and evolving communities.

From its beginnings as a part of Wampanoag territory to its early Azorean and Cape Verdean immigrants, and more recent Central American and Caribbean immigrants, the common thread throughout New Bedford's history has been migration, and its ethnic and cultural diversity—the heartbeat of this port city. Like a mosaic, this exhibition will highlight how individual stories and experiences intersect to create a singular picture of New Bedford—finding the common ground.

**For questions or more details, contact:**

Dr. Akeia de Barros Gomes  
Curator of Social History

✉ [stories@whalingmuseum.org](mailto:stories@whalingmuseum.org)  
☎ (508) 717-6853



Share your story at  
[CommonGroundMosaic.org](http://CommonGroundMosaic.org)





# What's your story?

→ **Neighborhood stories**

Tell us about where you call home and what's special about it.

→ **My stuff and my identity**

Do you own or use something that connects you to the city, your history, your identity, your family or your community?

→ **Then and now**

Are you a community "elder?" Do you have stories of changes in your lifetime or historic moments in the city?

→ **Hardship and struggle**

Share a story of hardship or struggle you have faced or that you see facing the city?

→ **A day in my life**

What is your typical day like?

→ **Places and spaces**

Do you have a story about a landmark or place that defines the city?

→ **Family histories and stories**

Do you have a story about your family migrating to the city, or of your family's experience within the city?

→ **Stories about "My City"**

Do you have a story about what makes the Greater New Bedford area unique and what makes it yours?

→ **Creativity and the arts**

Tell us about art, artists, or artistry in the area? Do you find New Bedford to be a place of artistic expression? How or why does the city inspire you?

**common  
ground**  
A COMMUNITY MOSAIC



NEW BEDFORD  
**WHALING  
MUSEUM**

Share your story at [CommonGroundMosaic.org](https://CommonGroundMosaic.org)