Facilitating participatory interpretation with games and more!
Session Outline

• Introductions
• Participatory interp framework
• Participatory interp examples
  • Games
  • Hybrid programs
  • Inquiry/booklet-based
• Assessment- what worked and what needs work
• Future direction and wrap up
Out of all of today’s participants, I think my weather is the worst because __________________!
A bit about me...

1. I’m a Parkie:
   • 7 years with Parks Canada in Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay
   • 18 years managing a non profit protected area
   • 8 years Chief Park Interpreter for a provincial park
   • 3 years researcher and analyst for municipal parks

2. I’m a scholar practitioner:
   • Honours Bachelor of Arts thesis: interpretation on wilderness trips
   • Masters of Science thesis: stakeholder communication at protected areas
   • Social Sciences Doctorate dissertation: inspiration in interpretation

3. I’m a mother of two and a grandmother:
Inspiration in Interpretation

• I received my Doctor of Social Sciences degree in 2015 based on research that was critical of the status quo in interpretation.

• I focused my research on the idea of inspiration in interpretation, as an alternative to the education-based status quo in interpretation.

• I have been refining and developing the ideas in practice ever since.
My research

Research Question:
• What could “inspiration” contribute to holistic interpretation?

Interdisciplinary Approach:
• Social sciences perspective
• Psychology literature on inspiration as a concept
• Interpretation literature, especially new perspectives that focus on visitors and that are critical of the status quo

Qualitative Methodology:
• Virtual World Café: “Conversations that matter” in an online format, with 33 interpreters from 21 agencies in North America.
HHH+PPP+AB=INSPIRATION!

- Head, Heart and Hands are the entry points to inspiration.

- People are inspired by People, Place and Participation.

- People are inspired to Action and Being.
Participatory Interpretation

• Interpretation in which all audience members are actively engaged.

• Guidelines:
  1. Target programs at youth and family audiences.
  2. Aim for active participation by all audience members and to reach people at the level of their head, heart and hands/feet.
  3. Think outside the theatre, e.g., minimal use of stage and technology.
  4. No PowerPoint slides and limited use of memorized scripts.
  5. Amaze our visitors with the unexpected. Surprise and delight them.
  6. Interpretation WITH visitors, not FOR visitors, i.e., we are facilitators.
  7. Invite use of senses.
  8. Make use of the “real thing” as much as possible. Be place-based.
  9. Make it easy to share stories, don’t just tell stories.
My participatory interpretation
examples

1. Games
2. Hybrid programs
3. Inquiry/booklet-based

Plus your examples and ideas!
Games: Eco-Jeopardy with Annaick Balsan
Games: Jenga with Ardelle Hynes
Games: Wheel of Wildlife with Lydia Smith
Games: Table top Jenga
Games: Life size board game
Your ideas and examples

Question- What games have you tried or seen used successfully in interpretation?

What worked and what didn’t?
Hybrid Programs: For the Love of Mountains with Laura Stern
Hybrid Programs: Celebrating C150 with Ardelle Hynes
Hybrid Programs: Going to Bat for Bats with Erin Stewart
Your ideas and examples

Question: What hybrid-type programs have you tried or seen used successfully in interpretation?

What worked and what didn’t?
Inquiry/booklet-based programs: ZIT
Inquiry-based programs: 
Geocaching and Xplorers
Inquiry-based programs: PIT
Your ideas and examples

Question- What inquiry/booklet-based programs have you tried or seen used successfully in interpretation?

What worked and what didn’t?
Others: Guided Walks/Tours
What works

1. Games- people know them!
   “We are going to look up the answers to questions you didn’t know.”

2. Use of teams- easy to be involved
   Inspired by “Participation/audience engagement/hearing others stories.”
What worked…

3. Participation throughout program, not just second half
   Inspired by “Finding, everything. As a parent enjoyed historical facts/exercise for kids.”

4. An excited and well trained interpreter
   Inspired by “The enthusiasm of the presenter Erin.”

   Inspired by “The knowledge of the interpreter and I want to learn even more.”
What worked…

5. Fitting messages in the program
   *Inspired to “Take more care when hiking and staying on trails.”*

6. Being flexible – go with the flow
   *“Excellent show - I really liked how it was interactive with the debate; it was a great way to present the information.”*
What worked…

7. Giving people the unexpected
   “I was amazed by how many fossils there were. Almost every rock I turned over had one.”

8. Opportunities for socializing
   Inspired by “Working together with other families throughout the activity and the kids left at the end of the night making plans to play together.”
What needs work

1. Promotions - meet expectations
2. Preparation - needs lots
3. Facilitation skills - hire and train for them
4. Time needed in program - it takes longer
What needs work…

5. Socializing opportunities- make it comfortable
6. Variety of program options- to meet needs
7. Know your audience
8. Guidelines to staff need to be clear
Future Direction

• Continue to focus on inspiration as the purpose of interpretation and use my research results:
  • HHH+PPP+AB=INSPIRATION.
• Build on what worked and work on those areas that need work!
• Use participatory framework in non personal interp media as well.
• Work on facilitated dialogue and story sharing and on making inquiry-based programs more open ended.
The actions I will take to offer interpretation that is more participatory are

______________________________.
Thank you!

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