

Leigh-Anne Kehler Storyteller CCBC Tour May 2019

Touring through Northern Ontario as a storyteller is like breathing in fresh beauty around every corner. The shield, the lakes, the fox and her pups, the mighty moose and the Mennonites in their horse-drawn buggies all create a sense of peace and purpose. This is a land primed for magical tales.

My program was a journey around the world to places I've visited, sharing tales of those travels interwoven with folklore from the various regions. The program ended with a story from my family farm to demonstrate that our root experiences and our memories have an effect on our teller's voice.

Common audience questions included "What's the difference between knowing a story and memorizing story?", "How did you get (gather) your stories?", "What is a professional storyteller?", "What made you want to become a storyteller?" I was thrilled to share my process by explaining the power of imagery as a form of kept knowledge and how story pictures are transmitted from the teller to the audience through spoken word. "I believe those pictures you've formed in your minds are the illustrations so we've creating a living book together!" I was equally thrilled to share how my father was my first inspiration.

I also enjoyed the challenge to connect to specific communities along the way. A librarian at a Catholic school asked if I have Catholic themes in my stories. I told her I'd "See what I could do" and chose to share stories with the theme of believing in something you can't see.

It was an exceptional week filled with gifts given and received. Over and over again I was able to be an example and a reminder that storytelling must be alive and well, if we are to remain alive and well.