REEL STORIES FOR REAL CHANGE: Storytelling for Social Justice at NOAA Fisheries

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BACKGROUND
Low diversity in fisheries science field and NOAA Fisheries due in part to poor representation
To improve inclusivity, studies point to storytelling with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)
This hasn’t been done before at NOAA; Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) undergoing 1st project right now
The aim of this study was to investigate strategies for NOAA Fisheries to implement DEI-based storytelling

RESEARCH QUESTION:
What are the best practices for using storytelling as a tool to advance DEI goals within NOAA Fisheries?

INTERNSHIP & METHODS
1. Two phases of research:
   1. A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine current storytelling use within AFSC
   2. Interviews with professional storytellers who work in DEI to investigate storytelling implementation

   Internship: NOAA Ship Miller Freeman Exhibit Update Project
   - Current exhibit omits namesake’s leadership in Anti-Japanese Movement, new exhibit to feature NOAA Ship Bell M. Shimada & namesake as counterpoint
   - Digitized primary documents and developed service history timelines of ships (fig.1)

RESULTS
A four-step approach was identified using the NOAA Ship Miller Freeman Exhibit Update Project as a case study:

1. Audit Current Storytelling for Gaps and Opportunities
   - Whose story is being told? Is the story engaging & accessible?
   - Gaps: omits full story of namesake & not very engaging/accessible
   - Opportunities: rich history of very loved and influential ship (fig.2)

   Figure 2: Former NOAA Ship Miller Freeman spotlighted in existing exhibit at the AFSC (photo by NOAA)

2. Identify Marginalized Stories within Community
   - Whose stories are not being told?
   - How can these stories be shared in ways that are judicious, respectful, and meaningful for the community?
   - Bell M. Shimada (fig. 3) named for former NOAA scientist

   Figure 3: Active NOAA Ship Bell M. Shimada will also be celebrated in new exhibit (photo by Sean Mooney)

3. Reorient Stories Towards Education and Outreach
   - How can these stories be told in ways that educate and engage wider audiences? What is the “gift” they offer?
   - History of NOAA ships and fisheries science, story of Japanese American Incarceration during WW2

RESULTS (CONT.)

4. Develop and Deliver New Story
   - Four main elements of effective storytelling (fig. 4) to help develop a holistic storyline focused on DEI
   - Project currently working to develop cohesive storyline and gather stories and pictures from community

   Figure 4: The four main components of effective storytelling, drawn from thematic analysis of interviews

IMPLICATIONS
Paves the way for future DEI storytelling projects within the community
Frames DEI storytelling as a strategy to enhance outreach to marginalized communities
Offers strategy for NOAA Fisheries to explore and share history in a way that celebrates its diversity

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