

MEDIA RELEASE

Canadian Seniors Storytelling Program Turns the Smartphone Into a Doorway to Memories

One Memory at a Time® launches free APP designed to help older adults reconnect with memories, stories and the people around them

MONCTON, NEW BRUNSWICK — September 2026 — We are often told that smartphones are pulling people apart. New Brunswick author and community volunteer **Tony Hebert** is betting that the same device can help bring them back together. Over 70 communities in Canada are using his program.

Hebert, creator of **One Memory at a Time®**, has launched a new free APP of the guided storytelling program he developed to help older adults reconnect with memories through stories rather than direct questioning. The result puts an entire storytelling and memory-conversation program onto the smartphone, tablet or computer that a family member, volunteer, caregiver—or older adult—may already have nearby.

There is no app to purchase, no need for print as in his previous version, no subscription, and no App Store download. And that is very deliberate.

“The phone isn't the destination. It's the doorway,” says Hebert. “A person reads a story. They pause. Something connects. A memory arrives. Then the phone can be put down and the conversation begins.” The program can be accessed at onememoryatatime.org/app.

From a Workbook to a Door That Can Open Almost Anywhere

One Memory at a Time began as a printed guided storytelling workbook last year. Its approach grew from Hebert's observations about what happened when older adults were invited into memories through familiar stories, sensory details and patient listening. The new digital version carries that same approach onto smartphones, tablets and computers.

A senior can open it while sitting at home. A daughter can use it while visiting her mother. A grandson can sit beside his grandfather and explore a Guided Story. A volunteer can carry the entire program into a conversation without carrying a binder. A retirement residence or community organization can begin without first printing dozens of workbooks.

The original workbook remains available through the platform for those who prefer paper. But Hebert says the digital version removes an important barrier. **“I didn't want paper—or somebody's budget—to determine who gets the opportunity to remember.”**

We Don't Ask for Memories. We Help Them Arrive.

The philosophy behind One Memory at a Time is intentionally different from traditional interviewing. Instead of beginning with questions such as *“What was your first job?”* or *“What do you remember about school?”*, the program begins with a short **Guided Story** containing familiar experiences, people, places, sounds, objects and sensory details. Those details act as memory triggers.

Hebert compares the process to putting out a bird feeder. If someone wants a blue jay to visit, they don't chase the bird around the yard. They put out a feeder, add the right seeds, create a safe environment and allow the bird to arrive when it is ready. Memory, he says, can work much the same way. **"We don't chase the birds. We put out the feeder. We don't ask for memories. We help them arrive."**

A memory may begin with something as small as, *"My mother had an apron like that."* But the apron may lead to the kitchen. The kitchen may lead to Sunday dinner. Sunday dinner may bring back a brother who was always late. And suddenly there is a story nobody set out to find. The Bird Feeder Story is now one of the resources available through the program's digital Library.

When the Memory Arrives, the Screen Becomes Secondary

The methodology is summarized in four words: **READ. PAUSE. LISTEN. FOLLOW.** A user begins by reading. Then pauses. If something connects, they listen. And if the storyteller begins following a memory in an unexpected direction, they follow the storyteller rather than returning immediately to the screen. That principle is important to Hebert. **"The objective isn't to finish the page. The objective is to open the door. When the memory arrives, the page has done its job."**

There is no memory test, no required order, no schedule and no finish line. The storyteller remains in control. The program's new introductory guide reinforces that users can stop, skip, return later or simply enjoy the conversation.

Sometimes Silence Is Part of the Conversation

The digital Library also introduces users to eight observations that emerged during the development of Hebert's One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology®. Among them are **Memories Don't Behave Like Filing Cabinets, Stories Open Doors That Questions Cannot, Every Story Changes Two Lives,** and **Silence Is Sometimes Doing the Work.** That last observation encourages listeners not to immediately fill a quiet moment with another question. A pause may mean the storyteller is thinking, feeling or remembering. **"The quiet is not empty," Hebert says. "Sometimes a memory is simply finding its way home."** The complete Eight Observations booklet is part of the growing digital Library.

Designed for the Senior Who May Never Join a Program

The move to digital is also intended to extend One Memory at a Time beyond retirement residences and organized seniors' groups. 93% of older adults in NB live independently in houses, apartments and rural communities. They may never attend a formal memory or storytelling program.

But they may have a daughter. A grandson. A neighbour. A volunteer. A friend. Or simply another person willing to listen. **"I don't want there to have to be an organization between the senior and the conversation," says Hebert. "If two people have a phone, tablet or computer and a little time, they can begin."**

Turning a Device That Can Separate Generations Into One That Connects Them

Hebert believes the digital format creates another significant opportunity: intergenerational storytelling. Young people already live comfortably with smartphones and tablets. Rather than asking a student or young volunteer to carry a large workbook into a conversation with an older adult, the Guided Story can eventually be delivered through the device already in their hand. Then, ideally, something decidedly low-tech happens. They talk.

“We spend an enormous amount of time worrying that technology is separating generations,” Hebert says. “Perhaps we should also be asking how we can use that same technology to bring them together.”

That thinking is also informing **Stories Across Generations®**, Hebert's educational application of the One Memory at a Time Guided Storytelling Methodology®. The current digital platform contains One Memory at a Time, Volume 1 — *Our Youth*. The same architecture is intended to provide a future delivery vehicle for the educational program.

More Than an App — A Growing Library

The web-based program has also become a home for a growing collection of free resources. A newcomer can begin with a five-minute introduction or the Bird Feeder Story. Users can explore the complete Volume 1 workbook, Hebert's new book *How Stories Want to Be Found*, the Eight Observations and a Memory Game.

Those wanting to help another person can access Memory Companion training, a Quick Guide and instructions for preserving a story. Resources are also being developed so community organizations across Canada can introduce One Memory at a Time themselves. That is intentional. **Hebert says, with now over 70 communities in Canada using the program, the One Memory at a Time program should never depend on the creator being in the room.”**

Why Is All of This Free?

It is a question Hebert says he is asked frequently. After the time, development and personal investment involved in creating the workbook, training, presentations, digital library, and web platform, why give it away? His answer is straightforward. **“Because I never wanted cost to determine who gets heard. You cannot put a price on dignity or treat memories as a transaction.”**

Hebert says more than three decades of involvement with seniors and community organizations taught him that even worthwhile programs can fail to reach people because budgets are limited, staff are stretched and organizations must constantly make choices about where scarce resources are spent. One Memory at a Time is a volunteer model and, after training, requires little staff, if any. With One Memory at a Time, he decided to remove the purchase decision. No subscription. No licence fee for a family or organization wanting to begin. No requirement for a seniors' club to find a grant before trying it. **They can simply begin.**

And Why Document Everything?

There is another question Hebert answers with characteristic simplicity: **“What if I die?”** At 72, after a lifetime of community involvement and volunteering, Hebert says he does not want the future of the idea to depend upon his ability to personally explain it. That is why the methodology has been documented. It is why Memory Companion training exists. It is why presentations and support materials have been created. And it is one of the reasons the digital platform was built. **“Too many good ideas disappear with the people who created them. I don't want someone else to have to figure this out all over again.”**

His objective is that someone he will never meet should eventually be able to discover One Memory at a Time, understand its philosophy and use it properly. **“Perhaps the final test of whether I built it properly is that One Memory at a Time can continue without me. And I think that's a very good thing.”**

From One Workbook to Thousands of Doors

What began with a workbook can now potentially enter a family home, seniors' residence, community organization or intergenerational conversation almost anywhere there is internet access. For Hebert, that is the significance of the technology. It isn't about putting another app on people's screens. It is about creating more opportunities to put the screen down. **“One memory can change a conversation. One conversation can change a relationship. And sometimes that relationship is the most important thing we preserve.”**

One Memory at a Time© is currently entering expanded beta testing, with more than 100 reviewers preparing to test the digital experience and provide feedback. The program remains free. Because ultimately, Hebert says, One Memory at a Time was never meant to be something people bought. **It was meant to be something people used.**

And sometimes all it takes to begin is another person willing to say: **“I'm here. I have time. I'd like to listen.”**

Try One Memory at a Time©

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About One Memory at a Time©

One Memory at a Time© is a free guided storytelling program created in New Brunswick to help older adults reconnect with memories, stories and meaningful conversation. Rather than beginning with direct questioning, the program uses Guided Stories and familiar memory seeds to create comfortable pathways into recollection. Its philosophy is summarized in four words: **Read. Pause. Listen. Follow.** **We don't ask for memories. We help them arrive.**

