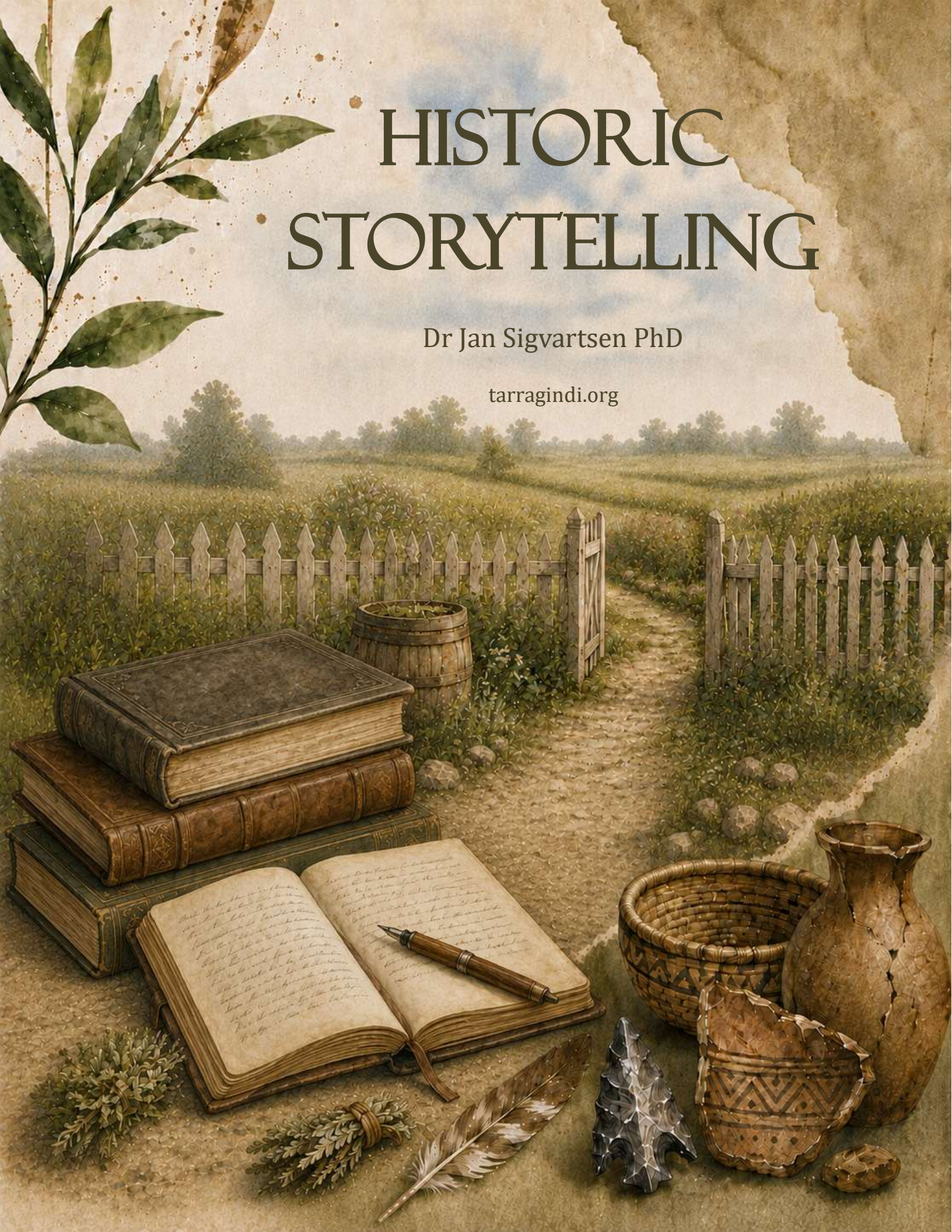
HISTORIC STORYTELLING

Dr Jan Sigvartsen PhD

tarragindi.org



Berrien Springs Partnership Syllabus

CLASS TITLE:	Historic Storytelling (ages 8-20)
TOTAL REQUIRED HRS:	16
ADDITIONAL TIME POSSIBLE:	Yes (if needed)
TOTAL SEMESTER HOURS:	32
LOCATION (address):	6161 Pheasant Court, Berrien Springs, MI 49103
PRIMARY INSTRUCTOR:	Dr Jan A. Sigvartsen PhD **(goes by Dr Jan)**
SECONDARY INSTRUCTOR:	Ms Leanne M. Sigvartsen **(goes by Ms Leanne)**
CONTACT INFORMATION:	269-363-3968 (text available)
	Jan@tarragindi.org
	Leanne@tarragindi.org
	tarragindi.org
INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS:	Dr Jan - BA, MA, PhD
	Ms Leanne – BA Psych, PGD Psych, MCouns

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Before television and books, Storytellers were an important part of human life. They entertained and kept historic stories alive. You will learn how to speak publicly, engage your audience, and craft historic stories that 2000 years ago would have made you the storyteller of your community. For ages 8-20.
2. Using story prompts from our local community's past, students will learn how to work a newspaper article or historic chapter it into an oral narrative, and the mechanics of delivering it to an audience in an engaging way.
3. Students will be able to tell stories in public, and improve their confidence and public speaking skills, including voice projection and modulation for effect.
4. We want to encourage students to think critically about the past, apply modern wisdom to an old story, and inject humor and drama into their story telling.

All our classes are half semester (8 week) programs due to weather constraints.

Dr Jan can't do an archaeology in the snow or frozen ground! But he can teach Historic Storytelling! All his 12 programs do two classes in January and then half of them continue until March. The other half take a break and continue in April when the ground is thawed and we can be outside. This class is in the first half of the semester. **A list of his classes and when they are taught is on the next page.** If you are eligible, you can register for two of his programs in the Spring 2027 semester – one in the first half of the semester, and one in the second half and not overload your schedule each week!

CLASS TIMES:
*You only attend **one** 2-hour Historic Storytelling class each week FOR 8 WEEKS ONLY – January 11–February 23. You will get your preferred class time. You can make up missed classes by attending the other time slot if needed.*

- Monday 4:30pm – 6:30pm
- Tuesday 10:00am – 12:00pm

Our Spring 2026 Classes

First Half of the Semester

- **Arrowhead Making and Ancient Tools** - learn to make stone arrowheads, identify and date them, and make ancient stone and wood tools used by ancient people. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Board Gaming, Civilization Building** – learn to build strong communities by building small ones in an in-person, interactive, screen-free class. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Genealogy 101** – trace your family tree as far back as you can go (Warning: HIGHLY addictive!!). Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Historic Photography** – learn photography by capturing a new local historic site each week and learning its story. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Historic Court Trials** – bring your acting skills and relive real 1800s court trials that were tried in the Berrien Springs Courthouse – Michigan's oldest courthouse. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Historic Storytelling** – learn the ancient art of telling stories and keeping our history alive. Syllabus at tarragindi.org

Second Half of the Semester

- **Archaeology Dig – Tarragindi** - Excavate one of the Berrien County's oldest settler farms, that is nearly 200 years old, with archaeologist Dr Jan Sigvartsen PhD. We find antique bottles, coins, and so much more! Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Cemetery Restoration Project** - Help save one of Berrien County's oldest cemeteries and learn the life stories of our earliest European settlers who are buried there. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Garden Recreation Project - 1000 Years Ago** - Recreate a real Woodland Native American garden based on Michigan's very own archaeology record. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Gardening Project, 1830s Early Settlers Garden** - Recreate a real Berrien County early settler garden based on historical records.
- **Historic Tree Rescue - 250-Year-Old Oak** - Participate in the rescue of what we believe may be Berrien County's last "Witness Tree."
- **Historic Writing** – hone your writing skills by capturing local historical stories and getting them published. Syllabus at tarragindi.org

SYLLABUS/OUTLINE: Weekly approximate breakdown of activities:

Class 1: (2 hours) January 11 or 12
Tarragindi Archaeology Dig site: 6161 Pheasant Court, Berrien Springs, MI 49103.
This class is the foundation of your program. We will talk about the history of storytelling, tell some stories and go over the basics of telling a good story.

Class 2: (2 hours) January 16, 2:30-4:30pm OR January 17, 2:30-4:30pm (attend 1 only)
1860 County Poor Farm Tour (Love Creek County Park, 9292 Huckleberry Rd, Berrien Center)

Did you know most early settlers in Berrien County couldn't tame the land into a workable farm? Many didn't even have the money to go home. That is why Berrien County set up the County Poor

Farm that became a thriving community of its own and an example of what can be achieved when communities work together.

Class 3: (2 hours) January 18 or 19
Historic Storytelling – 6161 Pheasant Court, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Prompt - Last week you learned about the 1860 Berrien County Poor. Using this story and your creativity, retell its story or a part of its story to the class.

Class 4: (2 hours) January 25 or 26
Historic Storytelling – 6161 Pheasant Court, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Prompt: George Harland, a Spanish Dollar counterfeiter, escaped from the 1838 Old Jailhouse in Berrien Springs. Craft a story about how he escaped and the Sheriff put a $75 reward on his head, or was this a justifiable crime?

Class 5: (2 hours) February 1 or 2
Historic Storytelling – 6161 Pheasant Court, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Prompt: The Brickmaker of Berrien Springs is a tale of a man who went out for groceries for his wife and came back a civil war veteran.

Class 6: (2 hours) February 8 or 9
Historic Storytelling – 6161 Pheasant Court, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Prompt: Phebe Stanclift-Tooley was a former Quaker who had the humiliating task of divorcing her husband in the 1860s when he deserted her and their three children and ran off to California – never to be seen again. But then she married one of the wealthiest men in Berrien County... (Did you know it is some of her things that we are digging up at the Tarragindi Archaeology Dig!)

Class 7: (2 hours) February 15 or 16
Historic Storytelling – 6161 Pheasant Court, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Prompt: The Pokagon Band was going to be sent to Kansas on the Trail of Tears. Could Judge Epaphroditus Ransom save them from being forcibly removed from land they had rightfully purchased? Would Judge Ransom take on the United States Government for them?

Class 8: (2 hours) February 22 or 23
Historic Storytelling – 6161 Pheasant Court, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Prompt: The lost village of Wolf's Prairie (now Berrien Springs) has long been a mystery. Where is it? What if Dr Jan and his archaeology team found it? Tell the story of the find.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

1) Students agree to attend at least 80% of class sessions/lessons offered. We have plenty of classes scheduled so you can easily catch-up missed classes. Attendance is kept online and tracked by Partnership staff. Unexcused absences, or failure to meet the 80% threshold may result in program discontinuation. See Ms Leanne if there is a problem or you need to attend a different class time.

2) The Partnership Student Assessment is filled out by the teacher and turned in to Partnership staff. The rubric is found on the teacher's online attendance sheet. Failing marks for lack of participation, behavior issues, excessive absences, etc. may result in program discontinuation.

3) Other class-specific assessment: Engagement in the program, follow through with instruction,

care taken with handling artifacts, and participation in research of artifacts found.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

www.tarragindi.org/resources - page on our website giving links to local history resources, and Parent Partnership project resources.

CLASS-SPECIFIC POLICIES:

ZERO BULLYING – we have a zero bullying policy. We want to be a space were people build one another up, not tear each other down. Please report bullying to Ms Leanne immediately. Do not attempt to deal with it yourself or have your parent deal with it.

We work on a compassionate three-warning system. A child engaging in anti-social behaviors will be given a first and a second warning, along with compassionate and clear expectations of future behavior and examples of that behavior. We have only ever needed to give one first warning, due to the efficacy of this compassionate system. However, if a child requires a third warning, they will be removed from all Tarragindi Initiative programming.

ZERO Sexual harassment, profanity, sexually explicit, or crude behavior or speech – we have a strict zero-acceptance policy for anti-social behaviors. Again, we are a space that makes people feel welcome and accepted, not uncomfortable. Please report these behaviors to Ms Leanne immediately. She will deal with it and these behaviors were the topic of her Masters research thesis. Again, grace will be offered along with the same compassionate three warning protocol outlined above.

Withdrawal from the class: If you wish to withdraw from the class, you must do so *following Class 1 (January 11-12) or prior to Class 2 (January 16-17)*. Otherwise, very significant investment will be made in you/your child and their participation in the class that you may be financially responsible for if you withdraw after this. *Your class starts on January 11-12 – not when we get together to tell stories on January 18-19.* You must attend these two January classes as they are the foundation of the program – let us know if this is a problem as we may be able to schedule a catch-up class for you. Parent Partnership staff have been advised of our deadlines. If your schedule changes after the Tarragindi withdrawal deadline, please talk to Ms Leanne, as she may be able to work something out for you or schedule another class time for you.

Attendance: If you can't attend the first two classes in January, please let Ms Leanne know so she can arrange a make-up class for you as they are the foundation of the program. Students can attend any of the two scheduled classes each week. They are also welcome to make up a class by attending another class time too.

Weather: It is rare that we cancel class due to rain or snow. If it is raining hard, the class will be canceled the night before and all students emailed. Check your email before coming to class. No email – class is on. Dr Jan will still go down to the meeting place to ensure everyone got our email message. Double check your spam folder.