

Story: continued from page 21

tainer carries similar meaning, it tells a similar story, to someone in China as it does to someone in Nova Scotia. It's a simple story that works in both places.

The story of maple is changing, at least in the telling. In truth, the story is the same, but stories are told and heard, printed and seen by people. If some of

the people hearing and seeing the story change, then the story changes too. So really what is happening is not so much the story itself changing in some fundamental way, but that the audience is growing. As any storyteller will tell you, the audience always shapes the story you tell.

The Work of Maple Associations

A panel discussion at the NAMSC annual meeting offered a number of suggestions for ways state and provincial associations can help their members.

Promote your members: A maple association's first priority should be to promote the work and products of its members. Second priority should be to promote the use of pure maple. The association itself should be as transparent as possible to the general public.

Printed materials: Offer a range of printed materials so that there's something available for every purpose. Wallet-sized cards for consumers, rack-sized brochures for displays, posters for hanging, bumper stickers, etc.

Distribution: Find allied organizations to distribute your printed materials: chambers of commerce, state departments of agriculture, tourism offices, visitors' bureaus with displays at rest stops, buy-local organizations, other agricultural support groups, etc.

Events: Hold 'kickoff' events at the beginning of the season and invite the governor and other local dignitaries.

Press releases: Look for reasons to send press releases to newspapers and

TV and radio stations. During the season is obvious, but also think about sending one when the NASS survey numbers are released, or when there are contest winners to announce.

Working with the press: Help your members understand what messages to offer reporters when they call. Focus on positive stories. Even if it's a poor season, talk about how they're making excellent syrup and there will be plenty available for customers. Make sure that photos show clean, modern processes, rather than rusty taps.

Social media: Use Facebook to promote members' sugarhouses and events. Post recipes to demonstrate the versatility of maple syrup. Encourage members to 'like' the association's page, which will, in turn, give them lots of posts to share with their customers.

Website: Association websites should feature directories to steer consumers to sugarhouses. Pages with lots of recipes are also popular.

Messages: Connect maple messages with other popular themes, like buying local products to support the local economy, environmentally sustainable stewardship of land, and nutrition.