



INNOVATIVE LEARNING TOOLKIT

PROJECT TITLE: Encounters with Nature

Tags; stream life, community gardens

One of the most obvious and effective methods to help people learn about nature is to take them into nature. They can engage in work and or leisure activities related to the environment, or simply listen to and share stories, allowing people to hear about myths and tales of the local land while experiencing its beauty.

Transformations in perspectives can occur as people are awe struck by the miracle of life, and their assumptions are fundamentally disrupted by nature itself.

EXAMPLES AND CASE STUDIES

Project Twin Streams

One of the most engaging parts of the PTS programme is the way in which people are encouraged to encounter nature. This happens very practically through the [planting programmes](#), but also through other mechanisms such as meeting stream critters in their local waterways.

Often these experiences create a sense of awe as people suddenly realise that there is life in streams they had thought were dead. They also more deeply connect to the amazing qualities and life experiences of their fellow beings, some of which are endangered.

"People assume nothing lives there and are shocked and awestruck when they see these creatures surviving right next to their houses in the stream"

There are two main organisations that provide this opportunity in partnership with Project Twin Streams they are [Wai Care](#) and [Keep Waitakere Beautiful Trust](#).

There are also edible community gardening projects ([Oratia Stream](#)) which encourage people to encounter nature in a very practical way. They learn how organic food can support their bodies, while the process of building the garden fosters inter-cultural learning and community collaboration.

Another garden-based case study is the [Pa Harakeke](#) (flax garden) planted alongside the Opanuku Stream. This has provided a garden where heritage weaving cultivars could be grown, protected and made available for cultural harvest and educational purposes.

OTHER REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES



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WaterCare's [Rainforest Express](#) is a wonderful way of encountering nature via a narrow-gauge railway located deep in the heart of the Waitakere Ranges. You are taken through ancient forest, and pass

through tunnels lit at night with a multitude of glowworms (and housing the odd cave weta!). The adventure culminates in a visit to one of the silent have of the Upper Nihotupu Dam.

Auckland Regional Council have a number of different ways you can [encounter nature in their parks](#)..some reflective, others more active.

The [FutureFarmers](#) case study is a fantastic community gardening project that could be adopted by PTS to further connect people to nature. It takes the Victory Gardening approach used in World War I and II and updates it for the modern form of 'victory' in terms of sustainable food production and the reduction of food miles. People are encouraged to grow a garden in all kinds of available spaces - window boxes, rooftops, front and back yards, etc. The victory garden team provides all the plants and equipment, and then it's up to the individual household to maintain their plot

IDEA INCUBATOR

supporting community gardening to an even greater degree, and in more creative ways could be a way of supporting people to not only build their capacity to think systemically, but also provide for themselves in a time of economic hardship. Combining gardening with surprising and creative public art aspects could be a interesting way of engaging people.

encouraging groups to come and meditate, sit in silent contemplation, and/or learn relaxing activities such as [Tai Chi](#) or [Taize](#) (or different kinds of reflective art practice) could be a way of introducing adults to streamside life in a more directly contemplative or spiritual sense, especially if combined with encounters with stream critters.