



## INNOVATIVE LEARNING TOOLKIT

### PROJECT TITLE: Story Telling

### Tags; storytelling, audio, DVD

Storytelling is the ancient art of describing events in images, sounds and words. It can happen in person, or stories can unfold online through leading edge story telling mechanisms. Telling stories in natural environments can link people to place very powerfully.

### EXAMPLES AND CASE STUDIES

#### Project Twin Streams

Storytelling is a very effective way of capturing people's hearts and minds, and is core to [Maori cultural practice](#). It is also one of the core areas of creative and innovative practice within PTS.

Maori cultural expert Riki Bennett has worked extensively alongside PTS coordinators introducing various community groups to a range of different [cultural practices, artefacts and stories](#)

In the words of someone related to PTS: "A green plant is just a green plant until you tell the story about it, relate the ancestral uses of it or talk about how it attracts birds or is good for healing etc, then it it's not a green plant anymore, people think about the value of that plant for food, medicine, the environment."

And another person: "Storytelling is very important in capturing people's imagination and creating wonder through stories of the area, and the creatures that live in it - such as the eel's migratory journey, stories about history, stream stories, Taniwha stories, history of the people and places in the area"

A powerful example of this is the [Guardians of the Mauri DVD](#), created in partnership between Te Kawerau a Maki and Waitakere City Council. The imaginative mix of live and animated action traces the epic journey of humans who have been magically turned into fish. As they travel along Henderson Creek and the Opanuku River, they learn local legends and stories as they endeavour to find Te Awhiorangi, the Taniwha, and Guardian of the Mauri.

Snapshot: Currently the Community Co-ordinator for Opanuku Stream (Annie Cochrane) and the PTS Arts Co-ordinator (Janet Holt) are compiling a book about the Opanuku stream in conjunction with Waitakere Writers. This is their contribution to raise awareness of the stream through recording local stories. Stories are not only entertaining and informative accounts of life in and around the steams, but they also assist with the recording of oral



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history in the area. Contributors include local residents and schools and are stories from the past as well as present day.

Snapshot: The PTS Arts Coordinator Mandy Patmore successfully submitted a concept for a public bridge art project. Her design was based on her extensive research, and connection with eels, particularly the

Long Finned Eel which is an endangered species. At the bridge opening she told the story about the eel's journey, and this story was cited by many people in the research as particularly inspiring.

Mandy also uses her performance background to great effect when carrying out her work as an art coordinator. She often tells a story about a village that once had a wonderful stream, but neglected it and suffered the dire consequences. Then she invites her audience to envision a new future for the stream, their stream, if they care about it...a future where they can swim in it again and enjoy its beauty. Mandy describes the need to really set the scene when telling stories, and to keep them real and relevant by making sure people know why you are telling it.

"oral histories are shared by member of the community eg. nanny Makere's children eeling in their youth, local knowledge of the water hole and stories related to that, family gatherings held in the stream reserves. These events evoke people's own recollection of times spent at the stream (kaimoana, social activities like swimming, sad reflections that triggered a response to heal the past)" [extract from Ranui- Massey Annual Report 2007 pp: 9]

### OTHER REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES

A great example of the use of local stories to promote understanding about the environment is related in the [Travelling River](#) case study, from the Motueka River catchment. Travelling River was an art exhibition comprising over 250 community photographs, stories and scientific images from the Motueka catchment. More than sixty people contributed images and stories about their lives and work along the river and Tasman Bay.

An [ambient audio adventure through Golden Gate Park](#) is a really interesting, creative audio tour where people are guided through the park and can listen to its sounds, hear the park's stories, encounter creatures and discover its mysteries.

Along similar lines, but with the stories transmitted over a mobile phone, the [walkumentaries](#) designed by the Banff Centre are another fantastic case study to consider.

The [Oxley Creek Water Festival](#) offered a range of events and activities from school projects to hands-on work at various sites along the creek. The festival, and its website, also incorporated a collation of local stories of the history of the creek and area, from early tales



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of explorers and settlers, through to the range of industries and animals in the area and the damage to the natural environment.

### IDEA INCUBATOR

Combine ideas from [ARG games](#) to create stories that unfold through clues and mysteries. Have stories be a valid data collection item in a cross catchment holistic community based evaluation and [monitoring](#) programme, tie this in with existing curriculum by creating modules for teachers to use in classrooms)

Use locative media technologies to 'insert' stories into the environment to be discovered on people's phones as they walk around streams and walkways - create these with local high school students

Create cross catchment story telling initiatives that bring together unusual partners such as digital artists, scientists, writers, local iwi and leisure groups. Allow them to create experiences where different kinds of

information is gathered and exchanged as they travel along the waterways of the Waitakere catchment using a variety of different methods.

### FURTHER INSPIRATION AND RESEARCH

Here is a link with a compendium of resources for conversational work as a medium for community development. Some of this involves storytelling.

<http://www.dialogueproject.net/resources.shtml>