



## INNOVATIVE LEARNING TOOLKIT

### **PROJECT TITLE: Community Events, Festivals and Gatherings**

#### **Tags; community events, festivals, networking**

Events, festivals and gatherings are a way of bringing people together to celebrate and have fun, while also learning, connecting with each other, and perhaps engaging in collective activities that add value and support the community. Festivals and different kinds of community gatherings seem to work most successfully when a wide variety of people are involved, and a number of different activities and events are included: especially food, music and other kinds of entertainment. They are wonderful awareness raising tools, and social connectors, especially if they are co-created by the audiences themselves.

#### **EXAMPLES AND CASE STUDIES**

##### Project Twin Streams

Project Twin Streams uses community events as a core component of their work in the form of [planting days](#). These often involve [encounters with nature](#) as well.

Other PTS community events include weeding and clean-ups, such as the [Big Clean Up / Dad's Day Out](#) case study, where a PTS coordinator joined forces with the organisers of a fathering week event. Together they created a joint event to both promote fathering and clean up Henderson Creek.

Another great PTS example involved [connecting people visually from a gutter near their house to the stream](#), and having them follow a trail until they reached the stream side. At this point a big handmade sign reminded people of the stream name. Next to it a Keep Waitakere Beautiful Trust van inspired people with examples of stream critters actually living in their water.

The [Green Business on Aetna Street](#) case study relates an example of the community coming together to clean up the stream area surrounding a group of factory units.

Festivals, such as the Corbans Estate Arts Festival also bring together a number of different groups, providing stands with educational opportunities and materials, as well as the successful mix of food, entertainment and hands on activities for different age ranges.

Not strictly a festival but more an arts based 'event' is the [Arts Awards](#), of which PTS sponsored a category. It is an example of a cross-catchment initiative bringing the arts community together with the public, and in this case an opportunity for PTS to raise its profile in a different area.

#### **REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES**

##### Festivals



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System Reload is a great example of an extremely innovative festival. If you look at the schedule there are some really interesting and inspirational ideas that combine design and arts aesthetic, participation and fun and clear core messages about sustainability.

<http://www.systemreload.org/>

The [Oxley Creek Water Festival](#), in Brisbane 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 many other techniques and approaches to engage with the community and encourage them to see the value in their area and the creek.

Bioblitz is a Landcare Research initiative that shifts around between Auckland councils. <http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biosystematics/bioblitz/>. It was held in Waitakere in 2006. Photos available here:

<http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biosystematics/bioblitz/auckland2006/index.asp>

[Burning Man](#) is an internationally famous temporary installation/community gathering/interactive public arts festival that takes place in the Nevada Desert once a year. Participants bring all their materials to the site, set up camp and their installations and experiences, and engage in community for a month. At the end of the festival they remove everything from the site (or burn it down) to the point that it seems as if they were never there. The festival is one of the premier avant garde arts festivals on the planet and reading through [the archive](#) could provide inspiration for temporal art/festivals that could be created in NZ. See also [Welfare State](#) in the Wai-Wiki [Theatre and Drama](#) section.

### Community events

[Te Rangatahi o te Whenua Trust](#) is involved in a range of activities which aim to improve ecological, social and economic outcomes through environmental education, restoration and protection. The trust is based on the East Coast near Opotiki and carries out general environmental education, alternative education programmes, pest eradication and bush regeneration initiatives and environmental restoration projects.

[The Kaipatiki Project](#) is a community organisation based on Auckland's North Shore that is involved with nature restoration and environmental education. They work with the local community and North Shore City Council within the Kaipatiki Creek catchment to restore and enhance the ecology of the creek and forest margins through pest control, regeneration work, planting and monitoring. The project is largely reliant on local volunteers, has a small number of staff, and a centre based on the North Shore.

[Friends of the Whau](#) is a community based ecological restoration organisation who work with other groups, local residents and the general public to improve the natural environment of the Whau River Catchment in Auckland through planting, clean ups, weeding and education. It aims to increase awareness about water quality and other environmental issues affecting the catchment, and mobilise the community to make a difference.



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### [Clean Drains River Gains](#)

aims to get people thinking about the link between drains and local rivers and waterways. It uses a variety of communication methods to raise awareness of the link between stormwater drains throughout a community, and the natural waterways in the area, and educate people as to how they can contribute to the reduction of stormwater pollution. The simplest and perhaps most effective of these is the drain stenciling programme, which involves stenciling the message "clean drains river gains" on drains around the city.

### **IDEA INCUBATOR**

community gatherings are a wonderful component of the current PTS programme, and there is an opportunity to experiment by bringing in elements such as [community theatre](#), and different kinds of temporary public installations that are new and surprising. The challenge is also to integrate them into a wider awareness raising, educational and community building programme so that they are not just another one off experience, and the learning is carried back into households.

[community monitoring](#), [storytelling](#), [interactive mapping](#), [mobile resource centres](#) and [games](#) could all be included in festivals.

festivals could be even more imaginative by creating them in collaboration with art and design institutions, and/or theatre production companies, and thinking of them as educational interactive installations rather than traditional community gatherings. Curators could bring together the events...working alongside educators and facilitators and scientists.