



INNOVATIVE LEARNING TOOLKIT

PROJECT TITLE: Symposiums, Conferences and Workshops

Tags; conferences, peer support

Difficult to categorise, but perhaps best described as group gatherings where learning or engaging on a particular topic is the main focus. Usually these involve some kind of facilitated component, and sometimes [multimedia presentations](#). Some are formal in nature, others very informal and interactive and combine a number of other activities such as [music](#), [storytelling](#) and [games](#). There is some crossover with [festivals and community gatherings](#)

EXAMPLES AND CASE STUDIES

Project Twin Streams

Coordinators have used workshops to engage very specific audiences, and tailor learning to their needs.

One great PTS example of a peer support group and workshop approach was established through [Sustainable Ranui](#) (the PTS Sustainable Living Sustainable Households demonstration project in Ranui). The team invited local households to come together in groups to consider and discuss a range of sustainability topics, and then make commitments in terms of personal actions they would take.

The [Vision Waitakere](#) case study is another example of using a variety of techniques with a particular audience in order for them to critically examine their assumptions around the environment, envision a new future together and take some actions. It used a combination of facilitated discussions, multimedia resources and hands-on activities.

Maori cultural expert Riki Bennett has worked extensively alongside PTS coordinators running workshops and community events that use [hands-on demonstrations](#) of a range of different [Maori cultural practices, artefacts and stories](#).

OTHER REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES

Innovative conferences are sometimes few and far between. However two initiatives are specifically focused around kids teaching kids.

Young people are empowered to design events and sub-activities for their peers. In NZ this is most clearly exemplified by the very successful [Enviroschools Youthjam](#).

A similar venture in Australia is the [Youth Environment Conference](#) based on the [international youth river health conference model](#)



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Longer-term programmes and workshop series

Workshops can be very effective when they are used as part of a longer term, integrated strategy or programme. These 'techniques' are really long term interventions that use a number of participatory and learning techniques, usually within a workshop and/or community event format to build capacity, educate and change behaviour. They often focus on tapping into local community mentors and leaders to build networks and relationships with other community members over time.

For example, see:

[Sustainability Street](#) - an example of a long-term community based education program where participants get together as local communities, learn about ecological sustainability and then do what they can to encourage, assist or 'teach' other individuals or other communities to join the groundswell for ecological sustainability.

[Business Streams](#) - a long-term capacity building approach for small businesses in Australia. It aims to reduce stormwater pollution by building relationships between businesses and local authorities, raising awareness of pollution issues and encouraging businesses to commit to a series of pollution-reducing actions.

As another example, [Waterlution](#) runs a workshop series in Canada called the Future of Water. These are residential workshops run over two days, aimed at encouraging young professionals (people aged 20-35) to think and talk about the impact of water on their lives and environment. The workshops combine a range of experiential learning techniques and field trips with presentations and discussion sessions using participatory techniques such as [Open Space Technology](#) and [World Café](#). To compliment the experiential learning component of the programs they invite scientists, policy makers, business decision makers, planners, engineers and educators to share their knowledge and expertise with participants. The actual content of the workshop sessions is tailored to the audience and

the specific water issues they face (such as agricultural water issues and how they are connected to water management in an arid region of Canada).

The programme also includes a post-workshop component where participants are encouraged to stay connected to provide peer support.

Global Action Plan's [EcoTeam programme](#) involves community members meeting in small groups to discuss sustainability issues and what they can do to reduce their impact on the earth. It is a networking and peer support programme that seeks to educate and inform, and bring about deeply considered behaviour changes. Each group sets goals, in terms of energy consumption and waste reduction, and then measures their progress against these goals.

Also, see the [Te Piataata Trust](#), a program for at-risk youth in Waitakere. In a story related by one person about Te Piataata ..." a young boy took an overseas visitor along a stream telling them all about native plants and gave a presentation to a large group of people about



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health and safety, where previously he would have been unable to do this. The program had given him the self-confidence and ability to speak out and influence others."

However, even one-off symposiums and workshops can be useful in raising awareness on particular issues, and possibly even transformative:

[Awakening the Dreamer](#) is a symposium created to engage people in interactive discussions and activities based on a number of [multimedia resources](#), and the emotionally connecting work of [Joanna Macy](#). It focuses on building people's capacity to think systemically and to encourage critical reflection. Recently introduced to NZ, the Awakening the Dreamer work has gathered a large following with a number of people trained in delivering the package.

[Pecha Kucha](#) is a presentation format in which creative work can be easily and informally shown. The name derives from a Japanese term for the sound of conversation ("chit-chat"). The idea behind Pecha Kucha is to keep presentations concise, the interest level up and to have many presenters sharing their ideas within the course of one night. Therefore the 20x20 Pecha Kucha format was created: each presenter is allowed a slideshow of 20 images, each shown for 20 seconds. Pecha Kucha Night is currently worldwide in 165 cities. Pecha Kucha can be very effective at awareness raising on a particular issue and assisting with networking within a community of practice.

The [Lincoln Envirotown Trust](#) works with the community to find solutions to projected growth and associated environmental issues in Lincoln. They use a range of techniques and activities including energy efficiency workshops (which include a bus tour of some energy efficient homes in the area), and workshops on sustainable living and composting.

IDEA INCUBATOR

workshops combining multimedia materials with facilitated interaction and interactive exercises would be a valuable addition within a longer programme. Especially if these materials were specifically tailored to the needs of particular audiences and appropriate to the local environment.

symposiums, and events such as Pecha Kucha are efficient and interesting (if designed well!) ways to raise awareness of particular issues.