The potential for digital storytelling with Kaupapa Māori Research and Whānau Ora

Whaowhia te kete mātauranga
Fill the basket of knowledge

**Introduction**

When I first started this assignment, I had some vague idea about how digital storytelling might fit well with a Kaupapa Māori research methodology. I was fortunate that the Tangata Whenua, Community and Voluntary Sector Research Centre (the Research Centre) contacted me and asked me to upload a conference paper I had just presented at the Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association (Dibley, 2012). After discussion about the paper and the work I had been doing in this area, we discussed the possibility of my developing webpages of resources for the new Whānau Ora site.

As part of the development of the webpages, I was able to attend a day-long research seminar focused on digital stories. The seminar was full of the stories of those who had worked collaboratively to achieve outcomes for their communities and for their whānau. Yet, what we see in the mainstream media is the following headline story 'Whānau Ora: Where's the Difference?' (Fairfax Media, 2012).

This paper is, therefore, a work in progress, attempting to bring together many threads to form a coherent pattern. Firstly, there is the official evaluation that provides output focused information about what whānau and providers have been doing as opposed to the stories we heard at the seminar. I then go on to talk about my presentation and the link between indigenous frameworks and digital stories ending with some of the reasons why I think digital stories work so well with Kaupapa Māori research.

I should point out that this paper seems to be just the start of the story for me. It has led me back to seminal ideas that have shaped my research and evaluation practice. Yet, the stories need to continue to unfold and expand beyond this piece of work. As one whakataukī expresses it: *Ahakoa he iti, he iti ponamu, Although it is small, it is precious.*

**Whānau Ora and evaluation**

Durie introduced his presentation at Te Anga Mua Whanau with the following headline from the Dominion Post – Whānau Ora: Where's the Difference? (Fairfax Media, 2012).

The first evaluation plan released in November 2012 gave an indication of the number of whānau involved in the programme. As highlighted below, the trial information from seven providers show that whānau were engaging in the programme.

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1 A glossary for the Maori words in this document is provided at the end of this document. All these words are used in everyday context in New Zealand conversations. For more information about the words, please go to www.maoridictionary.co.nz or http://www.learningmedia.co.nz/ngata/
During the quarter ending 30 June 2012, 333 whānau, representing 1301 individuals, were engaged with ‘Whānau Ora’ services directly funded by Te Puni Kōkiri. During the quarter, 72.9% of the 1301 individuals engaged with services were Māori, 12.6% Pacific and 14.5% were other ethnicities. Over 50% of the 1301 individuals were under 20 years old, and 30% between 5 and 14 years. 498 whānau plans were developed and 791 plans were progressed during the quarter. (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2012)

The data tells a story of the number of whānau involved, and the types of things they are doing, as highlighted in the box below:

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Strengthening whānau collective capacity is critical to self-management and to any social, economic or cultural improvements for whānau. One provider collective described, 'The majority of whānau have some form of disconnection within their whānau. This is at varying extremes and some do not identify this as an issue until actually progressing through to setting and achieving their goals. ... we work to put things back together within whānau. Whānau Ora empowers whānau to re-establish whakapapa connections and strengthen relationships so that whānau can become self supported, self sustainable and self managed so they no longer require support services.'

Through whānau planning and other aspects of collectives’ service delivery, whānau are taking steps to strengthen their capacity. Collectives emphasised the importance of whānau hui as an important time to re-establish these connections, and allow whānau to speak about their whānau, their marae and their whakapapa. (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2012, p. 10)
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Duri talked about different ways Whānau Ora might be measured commenting that it was important to measure whānau outcomes but that personal anecdotes were helpful. I came away from the day thinking that digital stories were one of the ways that these anecdotes could be seen by the many. What the mainstream media focus on is the outputs from whanau ora, they expect measurable outcomes in the very short term.

**Stories at Te Anga Mua Whanau**

The stories at Te Anga Mua Whanau provided an insight into the Whānau Ora programme that any report is not able to. The personal change within these whānau led the room to silence and tears as they shared stories of overcoming violence, drug abuse, alcohol abuse and prison. Any observer would notice the similarities between what occurred in the room and what happens in digital stories as articulated by Lambert, 'today, what we know is that when you gather people in a room, and listen, deeply listen, to what they are saying, and also, by example, encourage others to listen, magic happens' (Lambert, 2009, p. 86).

In order to measure these stories at a macro level, it will take a generation as Durie said, commenting that everyone in the room would need to come back in 37 years. However, the changes taking place in each of these whānau are just as important as the bigger picture.

**Research and evaluation and Whānau Ora**

There is an evaluation process in place for Whānau Ora, alongside action research. Action research is the next aspect I want to focus on in relation to digital stories.
I consider action research to fit well within the transformative and constructivist paradigms. Both of these paradigms reject the notion of one reality. In considering their ontological nature, both see multiple and diverse versions of reality and use methodologies that ensure all views are incorporated. (Mertens, 2010) The use of methodologies within these paradigms (narrative inquiry, appreciative inquiry, Kaupapa Māori and participatory action research) give me the opportunity to explore the experiences of all those involved in the research or evaluation project. Both these offer me an opportunity to use the action research methodology which is cyclical and accepts change as part of the process. The diagram below (Wadsworth, 1998) sets out the action research cycle that is being applied to this project. Action research ‘is aware of its inevitable interaction in the social situations within which it operates and seeks to turn these to consciously-applied effect (Wadsworth, 1998).

![Cyclical Research Process](image)

Figure 1: Action Research as cyclical research process

It explicitly sets out to study something in order to change and improve it. As with the diagram on the next page, my question seeks to find the link between digital storytelling and Kaupapa Māori research. In testing this question, I need to analyse the literature to determine whether this is, in fact the case. The development of a presentation will allow a group of Kaupapa Māori practitioners to reflect and provide feedback into the theory and online resources.

The new actions referred to in the diagram above will be a result of feedback. I consider the process will lead to a better product for those accessing the online resources.

**The use of digital stories as a research and evaluation method for indigenous communities**
There are many research, evaluation and other digital storytelling projects with indigenous people. The two examples I used from Australia both use digital stories as strength-based methods with the following outcomes:

- to strengthen community
- to strengthen the links between different age groups, in particular elders and youth
- to show positive images of indigenous people in Australia
- to build skills and experiences in the communities and
- to improve health and well-being.

When considering the above list, the outcomes align well with the outcomes for Whānau Ora. Digital stories could be used as a method to ensure 'whānau have the collective capacity and strength to pursue their aspirations (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2012, p. 2). They can be used alongside other methods such as the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) already used (Pipi, 2010). Pipi discusses the use of the PATH in 'exploring an individual's life purpose, reflecting on their current situation, planning for the realisation of specific dreams and aspirations' (Pipi, 2010). This illustration here shows a PATH developed by a whānau that told their story as part of Te Anga Mua Whānau. The story included overcoming alcohol and violence to get back in touch with their whakapapa and their wider community.
Sitting in the audience, the narrative account by this whānau reflected for me what the research on digital storytelling has found. Hull and Katz looked at the articulation of important moments in two individuals lives drawing on the work of Bruner who commented on the universality of turning points in peoples lives. These were moments 'where people report sharp change in their lives and demonstrate accompanying dramatic changes in their representations of self' (Hull and Katz, 2006, p.45). The authors looked at the experiences of these individuals in making digital stories and the impact the stories had on them. Hull and Katz believe that these individuals ability to author powerful multimedia pieces 'have provided both Randy and Dara with the means to reposition themselves as agents in and authors of their own lives' (2006, 69). In much the same way, the PATH model gives whanau the opportunity to look back as well as form a positive identification for their future in their own words.

The link between digital storytelling and indigenous frameworks

Analysis of research shows us that indigenous groups are using digital stories in research, evaluation and healing (Australian Centre for the Moving Image, n.d.; Goudie, n.d.; nDigidreams, n.d.; Schlaikjer, 2011; SistaGirl Productions, n.d.; The Cultural Conservancy, n.d.). As well as working with mainstream organisations such as the Centre for Digital Storytelling, they are developing models that conform to their world views.

One such example is nDigidreams, an indigenous women owned company that provides training in instructional technology and digital storytelling. They have developed their four directional framework grounded in indigenous knowledge.

![Four Directions Framework by nDigiDreams](image)

nDigiDreams has created digital stories with Native Americans including the story of Ronnye Manualito. Ronnye’s story was highlighted in the New York Times article (Belluck, 2009) about proposed changes to health care for Native Americans. As nDigiDreams comments, 'Digital stories provide alternative views and perspectives that demystify
stereotyped representations about indigenous peoples’ (NDigidreams, n.d.). In Ronnye’s story, he talks about the struggles he had with the American health system and his determination to have surgery for an injury he sustained at the age of 5.

Tuhiwai-Smith, in her seminal book, Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999, p. 1) starts out telling us that research is one of the dirtiest words in indigenous cultures. She highlights a range of indigenous research practices, most importantly in the hands of indigenous peoples themselves. She draws on Freire’s own seminal work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1997) in which he theories that the education system should treat the learner as a co-creator of knowledge.

I have already spoken in this document about the wide use of digital stories by indigenous communities. Below I outline some of the reasons they would work well, within a Kaupapa Māori philosophy. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any examples of digital stories being used in a kaupapa Maori setting. My case studies are Pitcha This, Hope Vale – Pelican Project Digital Stories and digital stories made with the help of nDigiDreams.

The story circle or the process of whakawhangaungatanga

The CDS model is based on work-shopping stories as part of a community of storytellers. For digital stories to work well in a kaupapa Maori methodology, the story circle is an important part of the process. This part of the process fits well with the concept of whakawhanaungatanga. Bishop (1996) associates the term whakawhanaungatanga with establishing collaboration processes in research. The collaborative nature of Kaupapa Maori research is highlighted on the Rangahau website as one of its research methods (Rangahau, n.d.).

Another digital storytelling project I did about Maori networks highlighted this point for Maori staff within a government department (Dibley & Cammock, 2010) – find quote from report. By sitting around in a circle and sharing stories, those involved in the workshop are meeting kanohi ki te kanohi and getting to know each other, building up trust in the process and in each other. For anyone facilitating this process, they too need to share their stories to show themselves to be part of the group.

Too often, researchers have come into communities and taken knowledge away with them. The story circle allows for equal sharing of stories. The researcher/facilitator is also sharing skills that will benefit the whanau/community they are working with. Knowledge is being shared and given back.

Intergenerational element

Some of the digital stories take part in workshops between the generations, examples include:
Hope Vale – Pelican Project Digital Stories – the elders in the community were keen to get youth involved in
Pitcha This – brought together elders, young people and community members to affirm identity and provide positive images of indigenous Australians.
Digital stories are often used in workshops with young individuals to help build community of some sort and to help in the transferral of knowledge. Stories of Service PhD example from Action Research, the youth became advocates for the veterans once they had made their stories. Point about transformational learning experience as part of digital story project.

The whānau stories presented at Te Anga Mua Whānau were intergenerational stories of change. Digital stories could work well in this context, in particular giving rangatahi a key role to play in helping produce the story. They could also at the same time learn more about their whānau or hapu.

Reclaiming the past
Tuhīwai-Smith writes that 'every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view to rewriting and rerighting our position in history . . . to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes' (Smith, 1999, p.28). Through digital media, indigenous artists are finding many ways to represent history from the experience of those who were colonised (see for example Wilson and Steward, 2008). As the use of digital storytelling is developing within indigenous communities, it is being seen as more than a media form but incorporates a strong element of capturing important cultural practices. Davey and Goudie quote Burgess in this regard, ‘(t)his form of digital storytelling can be understood not only as a media form, but as a field of cultural practice’ (2009, p. 36).

There is a strong element of reclaiming history in the digital stories developed by indigenous Americans, Canadians and Australians. The stories are not moderated by a mainstream media corporation. These are their stories where history is told from their perspectives. In many instances, they explore the implications of colonisation: loss of land, language and cultural connections, being taken from their families, and loss of identity.

Many digital stories by indigenous peoples retell the history of their communities, their whanau and their land. In many cases, the stories are used as a way to find out more about whanau members, people who are important to the storytellers. In the process they provide an alternative perspective to the more common history of their wider communities. A Native American's Perspective on Columbus Day (Charles, 2012) is an example of an analysis of history from the perspective of indigenous people that highlights the
discrepancies in the different versions of history that exists in colonised countries. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Waitangi Day, the day that certain Māori chiefs signed the Treaty of Waitangi with the English colonialists is always shrouded in controversy. We are well aware of the diverse histories of this country.

**Narrative structure -**

Davis and Weinshenker tell us that narrative is the means by which we learn from experience by reflecting upon experience, declaring what it means, and distilling it into a symbolic form to be expressed and remembered' (2012, p. 53). Further, they comment that narrative expression at its best can 'involve a sort of critical reflection in which experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated in relation to a broader purpose' (2012, p. 53). What I see in many of the digital stories completed by indigenous communities is the narrative reflecting on their experiences under colonial structures and the consequences of this. It is also, as Smith says, 'about recovering stories of the past . . . . about reconciling and re-prioritising what is really important about the past with what is important about the present' (Smith, 1999, p. 39).

The Hopevale project provided many different stories from a range of narrative perspectives. This project can be seen as part of a wider set of narratives for indigenous peoples using digital media to document important information for these communities.

Work in the Cape has been undertaken using new media and digital forms to document conservation and sea country knowledge, language and history through initiatives of the TKRP (Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathway)-Balkanu and The Cape York Institute. Indeed some of the Hope Vale community, who have been involved in digital storytelling training, have previously been involved in training with TKRP. Other work in the area of conservation and the bringing together of 'Old ways and New ways' through the dialogue of science and Traditional Knowledge's is occurring around Australia through organisations such as North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) and with collaborations with forestry, parks management, fire management projects, fisheries and so forth. (Davey & Goudie, 2009, pp. 35–36)

![Weaver Story - Clever with Hands](image)

**Figure 5: Weaver Story from Hope Vale - Pelican Project**

The narrative in the Weaver story (Figure 6 opposite) combines indigenous language with

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3 Information on all aspects of the Treaty of Waitangi is available on: http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/taxonomy/term/133. This website is excellent and provides historical and contemporary information as well as resources for the education sector.
information about traditional cultural practices, including basket making. The narrative is firmly embedded in the community to which the storyteller belongs. The use of digital storytelling is the medium that will allow the knowledge to be passed on to other members of the community.

**Creating their own positive stories**

Marker's review comments on Ginsberg saying that indigenous digital media offers:

> prospects for a more imaginative view of futures that contain both the traditional knowledge of ancestors and the contemporary dreams of communities that are taking control of the technology to represent themselves on the world screen.

Telling their own stories is important for indigenous communities, who are often referred to negatively in mainstream media. As one project using digital storytelling explained:

> Negative portrayals in the media of Aboriginal communities need to be replaced with first-person narratives that challenge dominant stereotypes and overturn conventional concepts of the ‘expert knower’ (Rigney 1997; Smith 2002).

The situation in Aotearoa/New Zealand is similar. In March 2012, Te Ururoa Flavell, Maori Party Member of Parliament for Waiairikicommented on this in his local newspaper:

> Day after day, it can be quite disheartening to see such stories in the media, meanwhile, positive events such as Te Ru o Te Manawa and the Te Arawa Pride games get minimal exposure. Take for example these latest regional comps. There was one positive report about them the next day, followed by about three days of negative reports citing disputes, protests and so on. It is more disappointing I suppose when it is Maori media or organisations who do little to highlight the positive Maori initiatives. They tend to dwell on the very few negative issues.

The Australian Centre for the Moving Image highlights stories of Aboriginal Australians who talk about the impact of discrimination themselves and their whānau. Mick Edward’s digital story talks about his early upbringing and the devastation of being stolen from his people to be shuffled around from institution to institution until he found his people again. Though focusing on the hurt of the past, the message is that These personal stories are gifts to all nationalities in helping to heal the past.

A YouTube documentary about Pitcha This starts with an introduction specifying the process of identifying ‘positive and realistic images to reflect the stories and images of community members in everyday life’ (Thompson, 2010). The results of the project reflect this aim showing a diverse community participating in many different ways in much the same way as the mainstream community. These images are far from the sometimes
stereotypical and negative portrayals of indigenous people in the media (for a very small sampling of writings of this, see: Bullimore, 1999; Flavell, 2012; Media Smarts, n.d.).

**Conclusion**

This paper is the beginning of a story about the links between indigenous frameworks and digital storytelling. Digital storytelling is embedded in many indigenous communities across the world and used a range of ways, as research and evaluation, as positive historical and contemporary stories to counteract mainstream media and as part of healing and health related projects. They are often intergenerational and explore indigenous experiences from many perspectives.

Digital stories would work well within the Whānau Ora programme, providing both providers and whānau to share transformational stories. From my research to date, I have not found many examples of digital stories being used in Kaupapa Māori or indigenous communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Researchers involved in Whānau Ora have told me that some of the whānau have made stories. It is the intention of the Community Research Centre to highlight those stories along with the information provided by me. I look forward to seeing the expansion of digital stories by Kaupapa Māori researchers.

**Bibliography**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aotearoa</strong></td>
<td>Literally, land of the long white cloud, the Māori name for New Zealand.</td>
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<td><strong>Hapū</strong></td>
<td>Kinship group, clan, tribe, sub tribe - section of a large kinship group</td>
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<td><strong>Hui</strong></td>
<td>Gathering, meeting, assembly, seminar, conference</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kaupapa Māori</strong></td>
<td>Kaupapa Māori’ is used popularly by Māori in a fairly broad way meaning any particular plan of action created by Māori, expressing Māori aspirations and expressing certain Māori values and principles. (Royal, n.d.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Marae</strong></td>
<td>Also referred to marae ātea, courtyard, public forum - open area in front of the wharenui where formal welcomes to visitors takes place and issues are debated. The marae ātea is the domain of Tūmatauenga, the atua of war and people, and is thus the appropriate place to raise contentious issue.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Māori</strong></td>
<td>An ethnic group of Aotearoa, the indigenous people/tangata whenua of this country.</td>
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<td><strong>Pakeha</strong></td>
<td>Non-Maori member of New Zealand, generally those of British parentage who came to New Zealand earlier than more recent migrants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tangata Whenua</td>
<td>Literally people of the land. Because Māori came to Aoteroa/New Zealand prior to other nationalities, particularly Pakeha, they are often referred to as tangata whenua.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Te Puni Kōkiri</td>
<td>The Ministry of Māori Development, a government agency providing policy advice in relationship to Māori issues. I have worked in this organisation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whakapapa</td>
<td>Generally refers to family tree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whakataukī</td>
<td>Māori proverb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whakawhanaungatanga</td>
<td>process of establishing relationships, relating well to others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whānau</td>
<td>Family, often meaning extended family in the context of Māori families.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whānau Ora</td>
<td>Policy of the Māori Party, now implemented in New Zealand.</td>
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