

The Storyline

Magazine of The New Zealand Guild of Storytellers Nga Kaikorero Purakau O Aotearoa



*Holding hands
around the world
through story.*



SEPTEMBER 2017

Editorial

As I sit down to share with you all this quarter my mind and soul focus on story and all its wonders. So many of those who have shared with me in this art have both taught me and affirmed me.

Elizabeth Ellis (I tell some of her stories), said that storytelling is the grandmother of all our knowledge, the ancestor of all the arts. Trace back any current field of study, eventually you will come to a group of people around a fire, telling stories.

We repeat this idea so often when we share in the local schools each year. We light a candle to symbolise the gathering round a fire.

It was in 1976 I first shared with Margaret Read MacDonald and we still keep in touch. She points out that for 4,000 years humans have been passing stories from one to another. She says, "Don't be the weak link...pass your stories on."

Storytelling can be so wonderful and so awful.

Len Cabral said, "Storytelling creates the foundation for a connected community."

That is wonderful but it can sometimes be part of the awful.

The stress of trying to convince others, both old and young, that the gift we are offering is worth their participation; the awfulness of trying to fulfil a massive and wonderful task but feeling no one is out there to help; truly I sometimes wonder what will happen to our Guild when I die because Tania can't do it alone.

Even trying to find the energy to seek out and learn new stories but that is minor.

But the wonderful far outreaches the awful.

At this moment in time I feel as if I am standing on a bridge.



Behind me is my home place with the wonderful experiences we have been having in our schools which totally affirm that we are where we should be. We see vividly the truth of Joe Bruschac's statement that stories are alive. We need to listen to them, for they know us better than we know ourselves.

We hear and see children listening to our tales and then responding with what they heard or asking such deep questions.

Now and again we get a response that brings tears of deep wonder to our eyes. A teacher who shared a small student's first ever piece of independent writing and the longest he had ever produced. This boy is brain-damaged and has a helper but he sat transfixed through the hour long programme and then wrote. Or the face of a youngster alive with anticipation and jumping ahead in the story.

Oh, it could go on, but it reminds us that stories can, and do, change the world.

As I look forward to the three weeks ahead I know that I will be surrounded by people and tellers and wonders and I can just wallow in it.

Some of you will remember Antonia Rocha. He has been here in Southland twice and it is he who said:

Stories beget understanding,
Understanding begets respect,
Respect begets justice,
Justice begets peace.

That is the power of Story.

Then there is Diane Ferlatte with whose family I stay and she has given me so many gifts it would take a whole book to share even some.

I will eat meals with Ed Stivender and share a bed with Antoinette, our vice-president.

Then our wonderful Connie Reagan Blake –
“As a storyteller, you have the best seat in the house! So find yourself a few listeners and enjoy!”

We do, don't we, Tania?

And I will bring back across the bridge new stories, CDs, books and much to share.

I know our president will share. Will you?

A traditional folk tale ending:

The Dreamer awakes,
The shadow goes by.
The tale I have told
That tale is a lie.
But listen to me
Bright maiden, proud youth,
The tale is a lie,
What it tells is the truth!

“If you want your children to be brilliant, tell them fairy tales.

If you want your children to be even more brilliant, tell them even more fairy tales.”

Albert Einstein

“Life is the most wonderful fairy tale of all.”
Hans Christian Anderson

Liz Miller,
Editor
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Website Matters

Remember all members have a personal code for our website so you can just go in and use it.

If you are unsure how to add your profile, an event or anything else you can send it to our webmaster, Hemi, and he will do it.

Hemi has added all the past copies of the Storyline (back to July 2013 which is all he had available) and will keep each issue as a new one is published in that file.

Things you can do on the website:

- Create a storytelling profile to advertise your storytelling services.
- Add your profile as a member interested in this amazing art.
- Post ideas, news and stories.
- Post upcoming events.

To login go to storytelling.org.nz and click the yellow “Member Login” button in the bottom right corner of the website.

We also have a more direct login – www.storytelling.nz

Then follow the instructions. If you have forgotten your password click the request for a new one.

Have a question or need help? Simply email the site administrator at: hemi.ruatoto@gmail.com

A web-site is only as effective as the members make it. We cannot make up things to add to it.

Some of our members have not posted their profile at all. Why?

Even just your name and what and where you tell or listen will at least let people know we don't only have the few members listed.

A new story on the web-site would be good.

President's Report

September 2017

Whilst gathering my thoughts today, before settling myself to write this report, I re-read what I had written for the September 2015 issue (I was still travelling in September 2016 and so missed writing a spring missive.)

What struck me is how much of our lives are made up of off-repeated cycles. Here we are again broaching another spring, with a winter of coughs and colds hopefully behind us (as I write this my oldest girl is in her bed with the snuffles and a good book). The warmer weather, seeing the lambs in the paddocks as I drive to school each day, the blossoms on the trees - all give a lift to the spirit. We have had a relatively mild winter down here – unlike some other parts of New Zealand who have suffered through very wet winter weather indeed! – yet we are looking forward to more sunshine and longer days.

Term 3 is the time that Liz has her 'Dreamweaver' programme, telling stories at almost all the schools in Invercargill, and I am again thrilled to be able to share the afternoon programmes with her. It does add pressure to already busy days, but the time spent with Liz is precious to me, because of both her mentoring and her friendship. And the sheer pleasure of sharing stories with many-hundreds of children, seeing their wonder, hearing their laughter, answering their questions... isn't this why we are storytellers? It is for me.

Liz and I were again honoured to judge a story-retell festival at one of our local primary schools. The last time we did this, a Year 4 girl's retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Little Match-Girl' brought us to tears. That young lady is now in Year 6, and I really looked forward to seeing what she would retell this year, and she didn't disappoint! Her story was very mature and had amazing depth of feeling to it. In fact, all the nine finalists were incredibly talented and we had a very difficult job to select one winner



in each category. This is the fifth year that the school has been running this festival and the quality of stories and the confidence of even the youngest tellers is improving each year.

And Liz is again preparing for her annual expedition to Jonesborough, Tennessee, catching up with friends and storytellers, and scouting out the best of talent to bring to New Zealand for the Southland Festival of the Arts next May. I am not able to go this year – I'm already taking time off work to attend the second year of 'Walking the Wildwoods' workshop with Shonaleigh in November.

Speaking of Shonaleigh, if you are not already aware, she is returning early next year to run a series of workshops throughout New Zealand. A huge 'thank you' to Sharon in Christchurch and Judith Frost-Evans for being the drivers behind making this visit happen. If you have not seen or worked with Shonaleigh before I cannot recommend strongly enough that you make every effort to attend any event that you can – I'm sure you won't regret it!

So many repeated cycles and yet such infinite variety within them. Aren't we blessed?

I hope that you are all well, that spring has sprung for you and that you are still spreading and receiving joy through your storytelling.

Happy telling, all.

Tania
andrewtania@hotmail.com

Secretary Report

We have 31 individual members. 2 live in the USA. 4 group memberships. This means 35 memberships.

However, 8 individual members and 1 group member are seriously overdue.

This really means that, unless the payments come with this reminder, they will need to be removed from the roll which makes it just 26 memberships left.

Remember, too, that our AGM will be held late in November or early in December.

Once the auditor has received the bank statements and completed that task and the annual report is ready we will set a date and send these papers and details as to how to participate.

Editor's Report

DEADLINE for next issue is **MID-NOVEMBER** for December issue.

Treasurer's Report

We had \$6673.76 at the end of August.

I have sent our tax return for 2016/17.



Regional News

CHRISTCHURCH

Shonaleigh Cumbers, the last drut'syla, tours Aotearoa New Zealand March 2018!

Shonaleigh Cumbers, is a Drut'syla, a storyteller in a Jewish tradition that has almost become extinct. She is Associate Lecturer Derby University, Artistic Director at Phrase Arts and on the board of the British Awards for Storytelling Excellence (BASE) and a writer. She is in high demand globally to share this ancient tradition. Shonaleigh will be touring New Zealand during March next year with weekend interactive performances of Tellers, Tales and Traditions in Wellington and Christchurch; a five-day introductory training of Creative Writing and Narrative Arts in the Drut'syla tradition and techniques (16-20 March); and potentially other events in Waiheke Island, Hawkes Bay and Invercargill. Details will be released soon. Places will be limited, so get in touch if you are interested to be on the priority list for bookings for the 5-day training or Tellers, Tales and Traditions weekend when details are released.

Creative Writing and Narrative Arts

A five-day introductory course to the Drut'syla midrash - the hereditary training of traditional Jewish women storytellers. We will explore ways in which the Drut'syla's methods and approaches can be adapted practically to creative writing, storytelling, the contemporary arts and other disciplines that utilise story. We will learn how the nature of story works, and a set of unique tools to allow the crafting of a story in an intricate and unique way.

This training is for storytellers, writers and creatives from any discipline who use narrative or stories as an inspiration. This may also be applied to developing a lattice of cultural and ancestral stories from your culture. Suitable for teachers, counsellors, social workers, librarians, writers, storytellers and anyone who works with narrative.

If there is enough interest, Shonaleigh will return in 2019-2021 to offer Walking the Wild Woods - a three year part-time training course in the Drut'syla tradition. Creative Writing and Narrative Arts is a preferred pre-requisite for entry to this training.

Tellers, Tales and Traditions

A unique, immersive weekend of storytelling to experience a living, unbroken oral tradition. The Drut'syla tradition has been passed down from grandmother to granddaughter by generations of Jewish women. Around 4,000 tales are held within the mind and recalled on request, using the lost art of 'stories within stories'. This

weekend is an opportunity to gain an insight into how a culture thrived before the written word became common practice.

Starting at one point in the lattice the listeners will guide the journey through the interlinked tales, hearing stories possibly left untold for two generations. There will be time for discussion and exploration of both the tradition and the stories.

To register your interest, find out more and keep track of updates go to:

www.thestorycollective.nz
www.facebook.com/thestorycollective
thestorycollectivechch@gmail.com

www.inthebellyofthewhale.org
www.facebook.com/inthebellyofthewhaleschoolofstorytelling

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Contributions

A HOUSE'S STORY

Once upon a time, a very long time ago, I'm not sure when but probably about 1900, a little wooden house was built on top of a hill. Just a small hill overlooking 200 acres of rushes, manuka and swamp.

It was a little house shaped like a box with a lean-to at the back, three bedrooms and the front room. The lean-to held the kitchen, a long narrow room with an open fire at one end where the cooking pots hung on a steel rail above the flames. There was no bathroom and the long-drop toilet was down the garden path.

I don't know who built it or who lived there but I do know that in 1932 my grandparents moved there with their three teenage sons and one small daughter.

Grandfather built a hut outside for his three sons to sleep in and planted macrocarpa trees on the south side to shelter the house from the wind and rain.

He then cleared the bush from between the shelter trees and the house and Grandma set to work planting every sort of fruit tree you can imagine.

On the sheltered side of the house, in the bush, she set up small wooden hutches down little gravel paths and in there, clucky hens were housed to sit on hen eggs and duck eggs and raise youngsters.

Grandfather and his three sons set to work clearing and draining the land, and building stables for the draft horses and a cowshed to milk the cows.

My father was the middle son and when he married my mother a little cottage was put at the bottom of the hill for them.

When I came along the clearing and draining of the swampy land was still going on and my view of my father was mostly just the top of a shovel throwing dirt out of deep ditches. No ditch diggers then.

My grandfather and I became inseparable and I stayed over at the little house on the hill many times. I would sit on Grandfather's knee at night and we shared his cup of tea. Milk and two sugars. A mouthful for him and teaspoonful for me.

At bedtime Grandma would strip me off in front of the fire and I would be scrubbed with homemade carboloc soap and a flannel that felt like sandpaper.

Then it was off to the spare bedroom with its lino floor and no insulation in the walls. It was so cold, but worth it to be there with those loving grandparents.

When they retired to town Mother and Father moved to the little house on the hill and a builder came to rebuild the kitchen. It was made shorter and wider with many cupboards. At the far end of the old kitchen he built a bathroom with a flush toilet. An amazing thing. It had a chain you pulled and water flowed. A miracle indeed.

The front room where no one went and Grandma had kept all her special things now became the living room with everyone sitting round the open fire.

Mother insisted the fruit trees on the south side be bulldozed out and the bush on the sunny side cleared away. I watched this process with great sadness, but Mother insisted and that was that. She said the house was damp and cold and this would fix the problem. It didn't, much to my delight.

How I missed the happy hours I had spent high in the branches of Grandma's fruit trees eating cherries, greengages, apricots and apples etc or playing in the bush with the little chickens and ducklings.

To me this was a disaster.

Ten years later Mother decided the farm was no place for her and moved to town. Father continued farming till his death in 1995, then I took over. Once again, the little house saw changes. Out went the open fire in the front room and in went a modern wood burner. This wonderful invention dried the old house out at last. The wall paper shrank in the heat and the joins in it parted company. The scrim behind the paper became loose and in a high wind the paper in my bedroom flapped in and out. Some lovely, clever friends came and the wall on the weather side was taken down and rebuilt. The borer must have got an awful fright. The room was gibbed and painted and I slept in warmth and luxury from then on.

When I retired a dairy farmer took over and the wee house had a complete makeover, even aluminium windows, new paint inside and out. It looked a picture.

Over the next two years the macrocarpa trees were cut down, the old stables and cowshed were bulldozed and buried under the ground and once again the little house stood alone on the hill.

It seemed history was going in a circle.

Three Filipino dairy workers moved in. The next thing I heard was they had taken off all the cupboard doors in the kitchen, put netting over the cupboards and installed a whole heap of live chickens. They lived with the chickens in there for nearly a year before their employers discovered this.

I have since been told the kitchen cupboards now have their doors back on, the chickens are gone and the three workers are allowed to buy chickens from the farmer, three only at a time, and must return the heads the next day.

I wonder what the future holds for this little house with so many stories to tell.

Heather Perriam

*"We must not only give what we have;
we must also give what we are"*

- Desire-Joseph Mercier

Mary Priscilla Sheddan sent this in, from a varied collection of multicultural folktales and myths – a resource for therapists, educators, environmentalists, storytellers and tree lovers!

WHY TREES WHISPER

Estonian Legend

Retold by Anne Pellowski

In the early days of earth, not long after the trees were created and humans were forced to leave Paradise to work, a man went out to the forest to cut wood. The first tree he came to was a pine tree. But as soon as the man lifted the axe he heard a voice cry out.

“Don’t strike me. Can’t you see the sticky tears that are already coming out of my body? If you hit me it will bring you bad luck.”

The man did indeed see the sticky sap coming from the several cuts in the tree trunk, so he moved on farther into the forest. He came to a spruce tree and again raised his axe. But the spruce tree protested.

“Don’t cut me down. You will find me of little use, for my wood is twisted and knotty.”

Unhappily, the man went on until he came to an alder tree. Once more he raised his axe to strike but the alder shrieked at him.

“Be careful that you don’t wound me. Whenever I am cut, blood runs from my heart. It will stain my wood and your axe blood red.”

The man went no farther but called out to God.

“How am I to get wood to make fire and to build shelter? Every tree I meet cries out and pleads that I not cut it down.”

God took pity on the man and said: “Return to the forest. I will see that hence forth no tree will talk back or contradict you.”

The man did as he was told and this time no tree spoke to him. None protested as he cut them down to make shelter and to make a fire.

The trees were not happy about this. They dared not complain aloud to God. Instead, they began

to whisper softly, each time a person entered their domain in the forests. If you approach a group of trees anywhere, you can still hear them softly whispering to each other. They are gently complaining about their poor treatment at the hands of humans.

Commentary:

Many of our musical instruments are made of natural materials, but they have been refined to such a high degree that it is difficult to find the natural object behind all the polish. Also, we forget that music often imitates natural sounds in the environment: the brushing of leaves against each other; the wind whistling through trees or rocks; the songs of birds; the snap, crackle and pop of growing and dying trees and plants.

When I tell “Why Trees Whisper,” I like to have on hand some tree branches to wave through the air to create different kinds of “whispers.” It is challenging to see what range of sounds one can come up with while using only natural things, without altering them in any way.

Like the floss of dandelions and milkweed, ancient stories like this one should continue to be sent floating out into the wide world, in much the same way they have drifted down to us across centuries. By telling them, we keep alive our wonder at the tremendous variety of life on our planet.

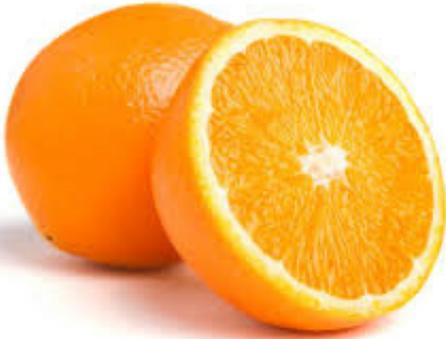
Source:

Story and comments are excerpted with permission from Hidden Stories in Plants: Unusual and Easy-to-Tell Stories from Around the World Together with Creative Things to Do While Telling Them by Anne Pellowski, Macmillan NYC, 1990.

Contributor:

Anne Pellowski was a children’s librarian with the New York Public Library for eight years. She then founded the Information Center on Children’s Cultures of the U.S. Committee for UNICEF, which she directed for fourteen years. In addition to Hidden Stories in Plants (now, alas, out of print), her books include The World of Children’s Literature, The World of

Storytelling, The Story Vine and The Family Storytelling Handbook. As a storyteller, she is much sought after by schools, libraries, and professional organizations. She is also an active member of the International Board on Books for Young people (IBBY). Now “retired” and living in Minnesota, she finds she is busier than ever.



ORANGES AT WAIMATE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

The little green truck rattled its way across the gravel, past the school bell and onto the tennis court, followed by a rowdy group of yelling and cheering boys. A cry went round the playground.

ORANGES! IT'S ORANGES!

At the office block the truck was met by the headmaster, Mr Wilson, and one of the young male teachers. The boys were soon dispatched and Mr George Chang and his companion unloaded wooden boxes from the deck of the truck. The young teacher was left on guard as the others disappeared upstairs, and Mr Chang left the grounds.

We waited...And waited...What was happening? The bell rang for assembly. Lined up as usual, the classes marched to their places. Infants sitting cross-legged, juniors kneeling, seniors standing, making three sides of a square, teachers lineup on the fourth side by the bell, facing the children.

Solemnly we saluted the flag, reciting the pledge:

I salute the flag. Symbol of.....and Empire. (Was it King? Was it Country? Perhaps Liberty? Or Freedom? I cannot, cannot remember!)

I'll give you the note.....lah! sang Mr Wilson.

We sang the National Anthem.
God save our Gracious King...

The visitor, the Chairman of the School Committee, looking uncomfortable in his Sunday best suit and polished brown boots, was introduced. He addressed us. Told us how lucky we were. Told us how important the School Committee was. Told us how the School Committee had arranged the purchase of oranges from the first shipment to come into the port of Timaru after the war. Told us how lucky we were that Mr Chang had got up early in the morning to travel in his truck to Timaru to procure the oranges as they were unloaded, then bring them back to school for us.

Three cheers for the Chairman...
Hip, Hip, Hooray!

Three cheers for the School Committee...
Hip, Hip, Hooray!

Three cheers for Mr Chang... *Hip, Hip, Hooray!*

Then came the Social Studies lesson –

Where the oranges were grown, how they were picked, each wrapped in tissue paper, packed into light wooden crates, loaded on the ship and crossed the ocean, until they at last reached Timaru.

Then came the lesson on the senses. When we received our orange, we were to look at the shape, feel the shape, smell the aroma, but told DO NOT PEEL the orange.

Again in our lines, the teachers distributed the oranges. Once again in quadrangle formation, the classes settled down.

At last we had the instructions!

First unwrap the orange carefully smoothing the orange tissue – you will need it later!

DO NOT EAT YOUR ORANGE!

Now starting at the top, carefully peel the orange, taking care to see how long a strip you can get without breaking. Compare your strip of peel with those around you. Who has the longest? Hold them up to show your teacher.

At this stage some of the senior boys at the back who had already scoffed their oranges, were busy trying to bully the girls in front of them for a piece of their peel.

FEEL your orange, SMELL your orange but DO NOT EAT IT YET!

Now, is everyone ready? Carefully, very carefully, break the orange in half. Now see how many segments there are in each half. Lay them out on your paper and count them. Look for the pips. These are the seeds from which the orange trees grow. Now you may take ONE piece. Eat it carefully and slowly, tasting the juice.

We carefully and happily enjoyed our first ever orange.

Now, children, wrap the peel in your tissue paper. Take it home to your mother. If she has enough sugar she may choose to boil it to make candied orange peel, said Mr Wilson.

Carefully holding our wrapped peel, we went back to our classes, and as instructed, put it in our lunch tins.

The lessons were not over! The first task that afternoon was to write a formal thank you letter to the School Committee. The letter was drafted on the blackboard by the class, following directions by the teacher, Mr Walter Rae, then carefully copied by each pupil on to good pad paper. These would be forwarded to the committee.

After a short interval we were again set to work. Now we had to write an essay about the morning's exciting activity. Each sentence was to have a subject and a predicate. We were to use adjectives, adverbs, start sentences with prepositions, use conjunctival phrases, and encouraged to be as descriptive as we could

possibly be. We made a first copy on newsprint pad paper, followed by a corrected good copy in our essay books. With cramping fingers some of us wished we had never seen an orange!

After school, my mother and I visited Mr Chang's shop.

He had been asked to distribute the surplus oranges to families with children, so we were doubly fortunate to be given another orange each. As Mother concealed the precious bag at the bottom of her basket, into the shop bustled a very large, very self-important matron, prominent in local affairs. Imperiously she gave her order finishing with the words... *"and I'll have some of those oranges, too."*

She pointed to Mother's basket.

Little Mr Chang shuffled round from behind the counter. He stood before her. He put his hands together. He bowed. He looked up at her. Very quietly and humbly, he spoke. *"Mrs.....Would you take them out of the mouths of children?"*

He bowed again, turned and continued with her order.

We scurried from the shop with the very unexpected and very special gift which we really enjoyed. A neighbour brought over a cup of sugar and the peel steeped in syrup on the black coal range. When the peel was dried it made a further delicious treat.

Thank you, School Committee, Thank you Mr Wilson, and especially Thank you Mr Chang for the Unforgettable School Memories.

Mary Priscilla Sheddon.

This story was especially amazing as I am telling my own story about childhood oranges in war-time. It is based on a story called 17 Oranges I was given by a lovely teller who lives in Australia. We travelled some together telling. The senior children never fail to respond and react and ask me, "Is it true?" Editor

Storytelling Groups/Contacts

REGIONAL CONTACTS

The person nearest to you should be happy to talk to you or help you arrange an occasion or start a group or just talk storytelling! If there is no one in your area perhaps YOU would be the regional contact. Let us know.

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| NORTHLAND/ FAR NORTH | | Keith Levy The Roaming Rhymester | 027 477 0211 keith@keithlevy.com |
| AUCKLAND | 7:30pm 1st Thursday of month | Margaret Blay (09) 630 6774 | 40 Croyden Street Mount Eden, 1024 margaretblay@gmail.com |
| CENTRAL HAWKES BAY | Phone for details | Mary Kippenberger (06) 856 8367 | 212 Argyll Road, RD1 Otane marykipp@hotmail.com |
| WAIRARAPA | Email for details gaye@storyweaver.co.nz | Gaye Sutton | Gaye Sutton, Te Pukeko Chester Road, RD1 |
| WELLINGTON | | Tony Hopkins (04) 381 3307 TXT 027 737 3185 | blackcherokee@actrix.co.nz |
| CANTERBURY | | Sharon Moreham (03) 967 7888 022 121 3648 | thestorycollectivechch@gmail.com |
| TIMARU | 3:30pm last Tuesday of month in Timaru Library | 027 292 5270 | dockrill@xtra.co.nz |
| INVERCARGILL | 7:30pm 4th Tuesday of month | Heather Perriam 021 180 6090 | hrp@xtra.co.nz |
| OKATO | 7:00pm 1st Thursday of the month. Step into Story | Lesley Dowding (06) 772 4545 | lezley@xtra.co.nz |

If there are any changes, please let me know.

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