

WINSTON CHURCHILL FUNDS YOUTH STORYTELLING!

Terrie Howey has been travelling

In January 2012 I was awarded the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travelling Fellowship (they award grants “to British citizens from all walks of life to travel overseas, to bring back knowledge and best practice for the benefit of others in their UK professions and communities”) to travel to America and Canada to explore Youth Storytelling. The aim of this journey was to look at methods for encouraging new and young people into storytelling and what systems of support, development and mentoring, as well as what measures are in place to sustain these programmes, by learning from North American models of youth scholarships and training schemes. The aim was to gather evidence that these programmes are not only feasible but very much active, and could improve and cultivate opportunities for new and youth tellers in England. Ultimately, the project aims to look at practical ways in which this information could benefit and be implemented in the UK storytelling community, and gain recognition from funding bodies enabling provisions for the development on a local, national and international level.

The trip, which began on June 25th 2012, included travelling to six cities in six weeks to visit fifteen projects, including community based projects such as after school schemes and Saturday morning family story circles, to national scholarships, and meeting over 500 storytellers. Along the way encountering tornados and a forest fire (thankful not at the same time), being interviewed on Canadian Radio, and performing in Toronto, Ottawa, St Johns, San Francisco and Montreal.

The American section of the trip was comprised of Cincinnati and California. Cincinnati was the venue for the National Storytelling Network (NSN) conference, the Youth, Educators and Storytellers (YES) Alliance and Storytellers in Higher Education (SHE) Pre-conference and a Master class ‘Creating a Storytelling Classroom’ by two ‘Teaching Artists’. In California I visited Robert Greygrass a Native American Storyteller and Camp Winnarainbow, a children’s performing arts summer camp, using performing arts to create stronger, healthier communities.

Canada involved visiting Toronto, Ottawa, St Johns and Montreal.

Toronto offered up a plethora of different projects such as; Storytelling Toronto – which in itself is an umbrella for many different projects happening across the City; Academy of the Impossible – a programme run to support young adults into creative careers; The Stop - a community centre and project encouraging local community; and the Raconteurs – a very popular story slam which regularly sees a crowded audience aged 20-40 gather to listen and tell personal stories.

Ottawa has both the Ottawa Story Tellers (OST) organising storytelling events, training and festivals and the increasingly popular ‘Once Upon a Slam’ - a story-slam run by Ruthanne Edward. St Johns Storytelling Circle similarly runs story circles and festivals and is the scene for a number of historical city-specific storytelling shows and walks penned and still occasionally performed by Dale Jarvis. Montreal was the venue for this year’s Storytellers of Canada: Conteurs du Canada (SCCC) Conference, as well as having its own flourishing story scene in both the Anglo-phone and Franco-phone cultures.

In terms of Youth Storytelling projects in North America, generally a lot of personal storytelling is being used, especially in places like the Story Slams. It is not that young people cannot or do not tell traditional stories, many talk about having a great love for the classical stories, or learn to tell stories by working on folk and fairy tales. Yet, when it comes to what they tell when they are given a platform, for the most part personal narrative. For a young person this is incredibly important, on the storytelling stage they can talk about issues which affect them, open up emotions, deal with matters and problems, and actually be heard. To look out and see a room of people listening, really listening



Csenge Zalka, Terrie Howey, Rachel Hedman.
Young storytellers at the NSN conference in Cincinnati 2012.

is a great way to empower anyone, especially youth. This empowerment strengthens storytelling too, by giving it a new voice and keeping the art form fresh and fuelling its development.

As a result of this trip I had to submit a report on my findings, which can be found online at the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust website. I have also been invited to give a guest lecture at my former University, about what I discovered on the trip and storytelling in general. I have also returned to Canada to follow up some projects with the Ottawa Story Tellers and will visit the famous story slam 'The Moth' in New York. The most signifi-

cant aspect is that I am currently in the process of developing an international network for people and participants in the field of youth storytelling. If you are interested in finding out more please contact me by emailing info@redphoenixstory.co.uk

This has been the trip of a lifetime, allowing me to meet so many generous, inspiring and talented people, with whom I aim to continue working internationally and cross culturally to provide encouragement and support for those who come behind us. In doing so we shall provide an environment where young people can learn a world of stories, and also learn about the world through stories, bringing about greater cooperation, communication and creativity.



By Terrie Howey,
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BACKGROUND:

In early 2012 Terrie became the Director of the 'Young Storyteller of the Year' a national competition for 15-25yr olds. Having recognised the limited opportunities for youth storytellers in the UK she applied to the Churchill Trust to visit America and Canada to investigate support systems for youth-tellers there.

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIP

This living memorial to Sir Winston operates a travelling fellowship scheme which enables British Citizens from all walks of life to acquire knowledge overseas to the benefit of Community and Country. Subjects cover the widest variety of topics: from the arts to industry and leading edge technology; conservation and the environment; social concerns and animal welfare and from exploration and adventure to services for the disabled. As well as promoting a greater understanding between peoples, the experience makes Churchill Fellows more effective at work and in the community. Approximately 100 awards are made annually with an average duration abroad of 4-8 weeks.

Full information and details on how to apply can be found on the Trust's website: wcmt.org.uk