



Media Release

Story Giants of Eden project launched

11 January 2011

Master storyteller Dominic Kelly inspired Eden District schools to tell tall tales at the launch of the Story Giants of Eden project at Penrith Leisure Centre on 7th January 2011.

“There’s gold under our feet,” Dominic told nearly 500 children and teachers, asking them to dig up local tales and continue the story-telling tradition of passing them on from one generation to the next.

Nic Ashby, a teacher from St Catherine's Catholic School Penrith enthused afterwards, “Yes, it's an excellent project, my class are very excited - great to have so many schools involved!”

Dominic Kelly will work with 18 school groups to teach them how to become storytellers. The children and young people will learn about their local folklore, stories and legends and then embellish them to create tall stories in preparation for performances on May Day in Penrith.

Each of the 18 schools will design a giant: a 10 feet tall carnival puppet to represent their story. Horse and Bamboo Theatre will lead mask and costume making sessions to prepare for the May Day event.

The puppets will also take part in the May Day parade accompanied by a processional band led by BlueJam.

The project was devised and is being co-ordinated by Dawn Hurton, Cumbria County Council’s Extended Services Adviser in collaboration with Penrith Action for Community Transition (PACT). It is supported by a grant of £49,000 from Heritage Lottery Fund.

Dawn Hurton said “People have been telling stories about the places they live for thousands of years. But as people rely less on memory in today’s instant world, stories that have never been written down but were passed on by word of mouth are in danger of being lost. If our children don’t rediscover our old legends and imagine new ones we will lose part of the essential DNA of Eden.

“Through the project we want to encourage children and young people to think about what’s special and important to them about the places they live. The stories they re-imagine will connect them with their physical landscape and community. I hope this will give meaning to some of the things which we should all cherish and protect in these changing times”.

She went on to explain that while some schools are using the project to draw in parents and the wider community, one school is going to share its local stories with linked schools in Africa and closer to home in Kendal. The project will not only be used to support history and geography, art and drama, it will develop the skills needed for creative writing

alongside the social skills that all children need to communicate with others and succeed in life.

“We're very happy to help make this innovative project happen,” said Chris Cant from PACT. “Keeping alive our traditional stories is an important ingredient of a thriving sustainable community, and we may need to re-learn skills about how to make best use of the resources around us.”

The project will also involve creating an illustrated book containing the stories and an exhibition at Penrith Museum.

Practices for BlueJam's samba band take place at North Lakes School on Thursdays at 7pm. Everyone is welcome.

Information on the project can be found at the PACT web site www.penrithact.org.uk or by contacting Dawn Hurton on 01768 812302. If community minibus volunteers are able to offer to help with transport that would be much appreciated.

Ends

Photos available

1. IMG15446_StoryGiantsIntro.JPG - 4MB
Fergus Vecqueray telling Dominic Kelly a story, accompanied by Ella Fears and Connie Hurton.
2. IMG15442_StoryGiantsIntro.JPG - 4MB
Dominic Kelly telling a story, with two project giant puppets nearby.

These photos can be downloaded from here:

<http://www.penrithact.org.uk/story-giants/story-giants-introductory-event-schools/92>

Other photos available.

Notes to Editors:

1. For further information on the Story Giants of Eden project, please contact Dawn Hurton, Extended Services Adviser (Penrith Town), Mobile: 07785372725, Tel: 01768 812302, Fax: 01768 242117, Email: dawn.hurton@cumbriacc.gov.uk
2. For further information on PACT please contact Peter Ward on Tel: (01768) 840153 or by email at: info@penrithact.org.uk
3. PACT (Penrith Action for Community Transition) is an environmental and community group made up of individuals who share a common purpose: to respond to the twin challenges of peak oil and climate change through strengthening local resilience.
4. The Transition movement was founded in Totnes in 2006 as a community based response to the twin challenges of climate change and peak oil. It is now the fastest growing environmental movement in the world. The term 'Transition' relates to the way in which the movement explores active ways for local communities to make the transition from a life based on oil dependency to one where oil is no longer affordable or even readily available.