Using Digital Storytelling to Capture Responses to the Apology

Jean Burgess and Helen Klaebe

Abstract

This article discusses a pilot project that adapted the methods of digital storytelling and oral history to capture a range of personal responses to the official Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples delivered by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on 13 February 2008. The project was an initiative of State Library of Queensland and resulted in a small collection of multimedia stories, incorporating a variety of personal and political perspectives. The article describes how the traditional digital storytelling workshop method was adapted for use in the project, and then proceeds to reflect on the outcomes and continuing life of the project. The article concludes by suggesting that aspects of the resultant model might be applied to other projects carried out by cultural institutions and community-based media organizations.

Introduction

On 13 February 2008, newly elected Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered an official apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples.[1] It was an event that had been centuries in the making, and for many observers it was more than a decade overdue, coming 11 years after the *Bringing Them Home* report into the Stolen Generations,[2] which had strongly recommended that "all Australian Parliaments officially acknowledge the responsibility of their predecessors for the laws, policies and practices of forcible removal" (1999: 5a). The Apology was directed at all those who had been affected by these policies, and acknowledged the continuing loss and trauma that resulted from them. The question of the Apology—long awaited but never delivered—had been one of the most persistently divisive and hotly debated issues in Australian public life under Rudd's immediate predecessor John Howard. When it finally came, it was broadcast live on national television, becoming one of the most widely shared common experiences in the Australian cultural public sphere.[3] In the media more broadly, it prompted intense discussions of related issues and a broad range of emotional responses. In this article, we focus on the ways the Apology as a shared national event functions as a catalyst for and continuation of public conversation via a range of mainstream and community media, and reflect on a co-creative media project that attempted to amplify and archive aspects of the event.

As a discursive event, the Apology was not only an act of speaking, it was also one of listening, structured by the "ethics of recognition" that is essential to genuine acts of reconciliation (Schaffer 2004). In explaining just what it was that the Government was apologising for, Rudd quoted from some of the hundreds of stories of lives affected by

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[1] In Australia, the term Indigenous refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
[2] The term Stolen Generations is used to describe the children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who were forcibly removed from their families under the official policies of Australian Federal and State government agencies during the period from the late 1800s until the 1970s.
[3] The full text of the Prime Minister's speech is available at the official website: http://www.pm.gov.au/media/speech/2008/speech_0073.cfm

the removal policies of previous governments. These personal stories had emerged to become part of the public record over the previous decades (as in, for example, the Bringing Them Home oral history project hosted by the National Library of Australia);[4] they were finally given the mainstream media space they warranted as the official event drew closer.

While deep suspicion and cynicism surrounded the Apology in the weeks and days leading up to it, when it eventuated many observers noted with some surprise the depth of its apparent sincerity (Schubert 2008). This perception of sincerity was made possible, we argue, only because Rudd explicitly performed the act of *listening* to the stories of how real people were and continued to be affected by removal and displacement. This is explicitly represented in the text of Rudd's speech, where he refers to the stories of the Stolen Generations, saying:

> These stories cry out to be heard. They cry out for an apology. Instead from the nation's Parliament there has been a stony, stubborn and deafening silence for more than a decade.

Whether the spirit of sincere listening has yet been or ever will be translated into effective policies to remedy the deep structural inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is—as it should be—a subject of ongoing and urgent debate. While the personal testimony of those who have been affected by past policies of forced separation has been essential in raising awareness of the issue—potentially enabling settler Australians to "become aware of our own subject-positions as the inheritors of a post/colonial legacy" (Kennedy 2004: 48), the *Responses to the Apology* project we discuss in this article did not seek to duplicate projects that gathered personal testimony from members of the Stolen Generations. Although testimony formed part of the stories themselves, the project overall sought to capture the Apology as a cultural event enacted at a national scale but felt and interpreted at a personal level.

The project was an initiative of the State Library of Queensland (SLQ), conducted in collaboration with individuals from Brisbane-based Indigenous community, media and educational organisations, and a research team from Queensland University of Technology (QUT), including the authors. The aim of the project was to devise and carry out a pilot project to explore the use of digital storytelling and oral history to capture a range of personal responses to the Apology, with a view to extending the program in other areas of Queensland.[5] The digital storytelling workshop method was significantly

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[4] The Bringing Them Home Oral History Project is a major undertaking of the National Library. It was funded by the Australian Government as part of its response to the Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, and its 1997 Report, Bringing Them Home. See: http://www.nla.gov.au/oh/bth/ (accessed 11 July 2009).

[5] The authors gratefully acknowledge all the participants, facilitators, fellow researchers, partner organisations and library staff whose generous contributions of time and enthusiasm made the *Responses to the Apology* pilot project possible. The use of data and content from the project for research purposes complies with and has been cleared by the Ethical Clearance requirements of Queensland University of Technology.

adapted for use in the project—rather than a week-long hands-on workshop, the project combined intensive group meetings with a distributed production process, teaming up Indigenous facilitators, technical and creative practitioners with each of the participants. The outcome of the project was a small collection of stories that captured the emotional and historical significance of the Apology, incorporating a variety of personal and political perspectives, and serving to demonstrate the possibilities of using digital storytelling in this way. In the remainder of this paper, we describe in detail how the digital storytelling method was adapted for this context with a relatively constrained timeframe and budget. We share the methods and outcomes of the project, with the hope that some aspects of the resultant model might be applied to other co-creative or participatory media projects carried out by cultural institutions and community-based organisations.

Digital Storytelling and the State Library of Queensland

Digital storytelling is now used worldwide as a methodology for participatory content creation. It has been employed by a range of public sector and community organisations for a variety of purposes including advocacy, public relations, education, community media, and therapy (for a large number of case studies, see Hartley & McWilliam 2009; Lundby 2008). In each of these contexts, as we have noted elsewhere, the practice of digital storytelling is shaped by "enabling and constraining factors such as institutional realities, project goals, participant expectations, and the availability of production and distribution resources" (Spurgeon et al. 2009). However, whatever the context and the compromises that are required to fit that context, digital storytelling has some core aesthetic and social elements that make it appropriate for use in a project such as the Responses to the Apology project we discuss here. Across several national, institutional and ideological contexts, Digital Storytelling as a movement is explicitly designed not to appropriate the voices of ordinary people, but to amplify them as a relatively autonomous and worthwhile contribution to public culture (Burgess 2006).

In the dominant model of digital storytelling, the collaborative workshop, led by a team of facilitators, is the core of Digital Storytelling. The length and format of workshops vary slightly, but all Digital Storytelling workshops derived from the California-based Center for Digital Storytelling's original model (Center for Digital Storytelling 2006), share certain features in common. The most important of these is the 'story circle', where the participants play storytelling 'games', share information and anecdotes about themselves, and engage in creative writing exercises. The basic story ideas based on each person's personal autobiography are developed during this process, and it is from this process that a written script and storyboard on which the digital story will be based emerges. These scripts are then recorded as voice-overs, spoken by the participants. Once the accompanying images are selected (usually from photo albums) or captured and edited if necessary, the audio and visual elements are combined in a video editing application to produce a digital video between 2 and 5 minutes in length that is of sufficient technical quality for web streaming, broadcast, or DVD distribution.

There has been a significant take-up of the Digital Storytelling form and workshop process in US educational contexts, as well as community media contexts and cultural institutions in several countries. Examples include the Australian Centre for the Moving

Image (ACMI), which regularly runs Digital Storytelling workshops and features digital stories in its exhibitions and installations, and a wide range of community-based projects in the US and elsewhere, such as the Stories of Service project, which runs digital storytelling workshops with returned servicemen and women in collaboration with youth volunteers, and publishes the stories at its website.[6] Digital Storytelling was also adapted for BBC Wales in 2001 by the social documentary photographer and educator Daniel Meadows, after he attended a workshop at the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California (Meadows 2003).

At QUT, a team of researchers has been engaged in research-based practice in the area of digital storytelling and co-creative media since 2004. Across a large number of projects, the methods and principles of digital storytelling have been adapted, explored and refined for a range of purposes. Projects include: the Youth Internet Radio Network (YIRN) (Notley & Tacchi 2005), which conducted digital storytelling workshops with young people at various locations around Queensland; the Kelvin Grove Urban Village Sharing Stories project, a participatory public history project that involved mainly older participants (Klaebe 2007; Burgess & Klaebe 2009); the Finding a Voice Project, which explored co-creative media strategies for the purposes of development and poverty reduction in South Asia (Tacchi 2009); and numerous research partnerships with urban developers and cultural institutions.

One such partnership has been with the State Library of Queensland (SLQ), which has been collecting digital stories related to the history of and contemporary life in Queensland for several years, and is increasingly becoming directly involved in commissioning and creating digital stories in partnership with community-based organisations. At SLQ the focus is on how digital storytelling can be integrated with existing activities in the collection, archiving and curating of heritage materials, particularly oral history recordings, as well as utilizing its significant potential as a tool for skills transfer and new media literacy development. While the original Californian model of digital storytelling focused on the liberation of self-expression using then-newly available digital technologies, and other projects focus on digital storytelling as a means of propagating digital literacy, the focus in institutional contexts such as the State Library of Queensland is around the stories themselves as heritage materials. This connects digital storytelling at SLQ to participatory public history more than it does to adult learning, where personal narratives are woven into the public record, and where individuals and communities participate actively in the creation of these narratives (Klaebe & Burgess 2008a). This broader context of participatory public history is of particular relevance to the Responses to the Apology project. In Australia, the Stolen Generations narrative has been a particularly striking example of the rise of personal testimony and the corresponding "undistancing" of the past (Attwood 2008); developments associated with this participatory turn in the practice of public history.

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[6] The Stories of Service website can be found here: http://www.digiclub.org/sofs/ (accessed 11 March 2009)

Project Design and Objectives
A recent strategic review of the uses of oral history and digital storytelling at SLQ (Burgess & Klaebe 2008b) contained several recommendations that were to be addressed through the pilot project. These suggested that SLQ should: involve community-based facilitators in order to increase community capacity in the practice of oral history; collaborate with Indigenous media and training organisations; and prioritise inter-generational collaboration to facilitate both technical skills transfer and knowledge sharing (2007: 49-51). From a research perspective, the QUT team saw the collaboration with SLQ as an opportunity to create a culturally and historically significant collection of heritage materials; to pilot innovative methodologies in the co-creation of heritage via digital storytelling and oral history; and to introduce and train staff and community members in the practice of oral history and digital storytelling through a combination of workshop activities. We were aware of the limitations of the project: it could not hope to be comprehensive or representative of the Queensland population as a whole or of its diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. However, we envisaged that if it was successful, it might provide a model that could be extended to other areas of Queensland and Australia.

This pilot project was an opportunity to make the preliminary steps necessary to bring these goals together. Within an overarching objective to advance public understanding of the human dimensions of the Apology, it also modelled new approaches to the inclusion of personal histories and perspectives in the work of publicly funded cultural institutions, and was executed using a collaborative methodology designed to amplify these personal perspectives rather than to incorporate them within a master, institutional narrative. The project operates at a number of layers—the institutional and organisational partnerships that shaped it; the process of collaboration between individual participants, facilitators and staff who worked together on the project; and the 'product'—the stories themselves, their content and style, their publication and their status as permanent public record. All these layers are important.

The Process
As part of the initial project design process, SLQ Heritage Collections and Indigenous Library Services (ILS) staff identified key internal staff, external Indigenous facilitators and creative practitioners, and generated a list of possible participants to be approached. The research team did not participate in the selection of or original approach to participants other than to suggest that:

- A mix of ages and genders be included in the group of participants if possible
- A small number of Indigenous artists, media professionals or creative practitioners interested in learning about oral history and digital storytelling methods be employed as facilitators, to work alongside QUT researchers and SLQ staff.

The QUT research team comprised several researchers, professional practitioners, postgraduates and undergraduate students. Some members had worked with us before and others were new to digital storytelling and were auditing the project.

The external Indigenous practitioners who worked as facilitators on the project included:

- Faith Baisden—Consultant, SLQ Indigenous Languages Project

- Michael Rennie—a trainer for Triple A Training in an online radio course, and through his own studies at Triple A, the Queensland Training Awards 2007 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year
- Getano Bann—performer, storyteller and facilitator, and Australia's first Indigenous registered music therapist
- Samia Goudie—lecturer in Population Health at the University of Queensland, as well as an experienced film-maker and digital storytelling facilitator. She is also the lead researcher on the innovative Hopevale-Pelican project.[7]

The first formal event of the process was a half-day Facilitators Workshop, held in a meeting room at SLQ. The workshop was highly compressed due to the existing work commitments of the facilitators, but it included an introduction and screening, story circle activity, and a 'practice run' at quickly developing a script based on the participants' experiences of the Apology on the day.

The most intensive activity of the project was the one-day Storytelling Workshop including all the participants, the external facilitators, and the QUT research team. In preparation for this session the QUT team had carefully prepared the facilitators, researchers and technical support staff for their roles through a series of detailed emails. Each of the facilitators knew which participants they would be assisting, and had had opportunities to make contact with them before the workshop. All the participants had been sent detailed information about the aims and objectives of the project. This information explained the process of digital storytelling and how they would be involved if they chose to participate, and included links to several examples of published digital stories on a range of topics.

After an initial introductory session,[8] the facilitators, technical assistants and participants formed a number of teams, and worked in separate spaces on story ideas and scripts. Each of the teams worked in different ways and at different speeds. One participant worked relatively independently to complete the script, record the voiceover and provide images comfortably within the 4-hour session. Others preferred to use a leisurely process of semi-structured interviews to put the interviewee at ease and help 'find their story'. In some cases the full recordings of these interviews have been preserved as part of the SLQ oral history collection. These long recordings were subsequently edited in consultation with the participants and facilitators to produce a shorter voiceover for the

[7] The aim of this project is to explore the impact on Indigenous people's sense of wellness through experiences of storytelling using new media. The project is part of a partnership between the Elders of the Hopevale community of North Queensland, Pelican Expeditions and the State Library of Queensland. See Davey and Goudie in this issue of 3CMedia.

[8] Upon arrival it transpired that the room allocation had changed to accommodate more people, in the process changing from a circular set-up to rows of tables facing the "speaker' at the front. Although this initial obstacle was eventually overcome, this set-up made it difficult at first to create an atmosphere of trust and open sharing, particularly because this was the first time that the participants had met the research team and facilitators. We note it here in the hope that future projects might avoid similar occurrences.

purpose of the digital story itself. In previous projects we have found this approach particularly helpful when the participant is unable to commit to the time required to create a digital story using the intensive, multi-day workshop method. QUT researchers took on a roving support and observation role, noting the logistics and progress of each group, or using lists of topics or themes that were discussed in stories to source suitable images from SLQ's extensive collection. Other researchers, with photographic and film backgrounds, took impromptu images of the groups as they worked, and also were available to capture any images that the teams wanted to include in their stories. Extensive follow-up sessions were then required to source additional material, consult with participants on suggested edits, or to check the accuracy of information used in the stories. The QUT team gradually assembled these materials into the final format, along the way consulting with the participants and facilitators to ensure that the evolving digital stories were an accurate representation of the participants' intentions and perspectives on the Apology.

After the digital stories had been through post-production, a semi-public screening was arranged by SLQ at a small auditorium in their new state of the art facility in Brisbane's South Bank. Before the screening, participants and their invited guests, friends and family, the external facilitators, and the SLQ/ILS staff and researchers who had been involved with the project met in the adjacent foyer for refreshments and food. At the conclusion of the screening, a brief informal discussion and feedback session was held. The eldest participant spoke about his great pleasure in not only the process of creating his own story, but about how he felt so moved by the others stories. His sentiments were echoed and the group asked if they could see them all again, which we did—this time with members of the audience quietly commenting on images or words spoken with adjacent viewers. Again people were invited to comment and more stories were told, leading on from the ones they had created.

We have found in past projects it is imperative to have a viewing attended only by those connected with the project first, prior to the publication or public screening of the work. This gives participants the opportunity to be supported by their friends and family because it can be emotionally overwhelming to be confronted with one's own story and images, especially on a cinema-sized screen, as well as to provide a sense of completion and to effectively gather feedback about the process and the stories themselves. In addition to the initial 'story circle' activities, under a distributed production model such as that used for this project, the group screening is the only opportunity for all the participants to come together, and so it is essential that it comes at the end of the production process.

The Participants and their Stories

A total of seven stories was produced in the pilot project. They were subsequently published by the State Library of Queensland at their own website and YouTube channel. The stories are conversational in style because of the oral history interview approach to creating the voiceovers. They focus on the individual storyteller's experience of the Apology as an event on the day, as well as their reactions to it afterward. The stories, are of course multiply mediated—through the digital storytelling form itself, through the collaborative circumstances of production, and through the embedding of

the project within discourses of the State via the partnership with the State Library of Queensland. However, we suggest that this does not necessarily result in these personal reactions becoming sanitised—indeed, clear expressions of anger and hurt, as well as pointed critiques of the Apology's limitations are evident in these stories.

Tiga Bayles is a leading figure in Indigenous broadcasting and politics; he was a key figure in establishing Canberra's Aboriginal tent city in 1972, and worked at Radio Redfern in the 1980s. Bayles is currently General Manager of Brisbane-based Indigenous radio station 989 FM, which doubles as a training organisation for community broadcasting under the name Triple A Training (supported by the Brisbane Indigenous Media Association). Under Bayles' guidance, the organisation has sustained high levels of achievement in both community broadcasting and in training—Bayles "insists that Indigenous broadcasting does not have to sound amateurish, that it should appeal to a wide audience and strive for economic independence" (Rennie 2007). In his digital story, which includes images of the past several decades of Indigenous activism with which Bayles has been involved, this commitment to leadership and self-determination combine with a controlled sense of anger as he talks about the experiences of members of the Stolen Generation (including members of his own family), the intensely emotional atmosphere in the gallery of Parliament House on the day of the Apology, and what the Apology means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. His story concludes:

> That step taken by the Prime Minister with his apology on that day has made a lot of mainstream Australians feel it is now OK to recognise the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this country. As opposed to the previous Prime Minister, where we had racists coming out of the wood work, it has created a change. It's a new era in our time. And mind, you saying sorry is only the very first step, but it's a major acknowledgement, it was a major event for us. But we've got a long way to go.[9]

Jeremy Robertson is a student at the Aboriginal Centre for Performing Arts (ACPA) in Brisbane. In his story, recorded as an interview in the auditorium at the State Library of Queensland and including images of ACMA as well as Robertson with his friends and family, he talks about his experiences at the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts (ACPA), contending with racial stereotypes and what Kevin Rudd's apology meant to him. He explained that he had little or no knowledge of the Stolen Generations until the Apology occurred, but that the Apology had raised his awareness: "I didn't even know what the stolen generation was until basically last year. I heard that it was something bad that happened in Aboriginal history, that something was going on and that people were taken, that's all I heard, I didn't realise it was stretched so far." He concludes by expressing his outrage that the Apology had taken so long: "Why did we need to wait so long? If the sorry was said back then and that next step was taken, where would we be now?" [10]

[9] The story is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpJGyEx33As
[10] The story is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBVTiayNSRU

Sam Wagan Watson Jr is a leading Aboriginal poet, facilitator and mentor for the creative arts, whose work has won both the 1999 David Unaipon Award and the 2004 Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry at the New South Wales Premiers Literary Awards. His story begins with a refusal to "whitewash" the history of Indigenous people's treatment by the state of Queensland:

> One of my first jobs was a law clerk in the 90s for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services in Brisbane. I assisted the families of several people murdered in Queensland Police custody. There was always something genocidal about those instances. And in those instances no police officer was ever charged and no police officer or politician ever said sorry.

He goes on to recall working as a security supervisor on an industrial site the night before the Apology, and his doubts at the time about the meaning of the Prime Minister's speech:

> I actually slept through the apology. Seven hours deep sleep and then back to work. But when I got to work, and I worked on a site that was predominately staffed by Polynesian and Maori workers, the boys literally formed an honour guard when I walked in. Most of these guys had lived through significant political events involving indigenous rights in New Zealand. These men were ecstatic about the apology, where I was still trying to process it.

He concludes with a sense of aspiration, saying the Apology delivered a sense of "clarity" about Australia's national identity, and that the word "Sorry" by rights "belongs to a future of healing, compassion and hope".[11]

Nadine McDonald-Dowd is the Program Coordinator for *kuril dhagun* — the Indigenous Knowledge Centre at the State Library of Queensland. She co-directed a short film, *Binni's Backyard* in 2000. Nadine's mother, Veronica Anne McDonald, is a member of the Stolen Generations and was invited to sit in the Gallery of Parliament House for the Apology. Nadine accompanied her mother and father to Canberra. As footage shot on her digital still camera rolls by, she describes her mother's anticipation of the event, and the emotional atmosphere at Parliament House on the day. Her story emphasizes the deeply personal impact of the Apology on individual members of the Stolen Generations, using a small detail from her mother's experience of being removed and living in church-run institutions to convey the politics of invisibility and recognition that the Apology is bound up with:

> At the orphanage they'd celebrate the birthdays on one day, just, there were too many kids, too many cakes. They'd celebrate on the same day, get the same present and there was always a little a matchstick doll and a little matchbox. She was just a number, even when you get your freedom of information, you're just a number.

By contrast, McDonald-Dowd says, "The apology for her on that day was a final kind of recognition that I actually — I exist. And my name is Veronica Anne McDonald."[12]

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[11] The story is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Iu4H2_jTfQ
[12] The story is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3lYJknzXA4

Natalie Alberts is the Assistant Director of the Musgrave Park Cultural Centre in West End, which provides for the preservation, presentation and promotion of Aboriginal culture and heritage, and provides a platform for Indigenous artists to develop and display their skills. The Cultural Centre also provides cultural awareness and education for groups of the wider community. The Centre's programs provide employment and training opportunities for Indigenous people, and encourage mentoring by Elders and Cultural Teachers for Indigenous youth. She is a descendent of the Iman/Yiman/Jiman people of the Dawson River region, with traditional affiliations to Gambuwal people and Wakka-Wakka and Burrungum speaking people of the Darling Downs.

Natalie's family has endured the enforced practices of removal and displacement from traditional homelands onto Missions, Reserves and Industrial Schools; although the family groups have maintained their connections to country and to one another. In her story, Alberts describes how government policies affected her family, growing up at Cherbourg, Woorabinda and northern Queensland. She recalls organising an event at the Musgrave Park Cultural Centre on the day of the Apology, and the overwhelming response from the local community to the event. She talks about looking around at the young people who attended on the day (some of whom spontaneously joined others on stage for the corroboree as part of the event), saying:

> And looking at that group you can see that some of those kids have been affected, because their parents have been taken away. These kids grew up on missions, their families, their parents—but you see their spirit still in them there, they were keen to get up, and they're hungry for that.

This spirit of hope is translated into an explicit call for action:

> This is the start of it, saying sorry is the start, acknowledging what wrongs have been done. So we want to see some genuine commitment from this government […] to help and support in making a better—changes for the future for the children.[13]

Two additional digital stories were made with the Premier of Queensland, Anna Bligh (interviewed by Getano Bann)[14] and the then-Governor of Queensland, now Governor-General of Australia, Quentin Bryce (interviewed by Faith Baisden).[15] Speaking from a couch in her offices, Bligh shares her opinions on how past legislation has impacted upon Aboriginal people. She talks particularly about the removal of Aboriginal children from their families, and how a bipartisan apology is important for improving conditions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Quentin Bryce talks about her emotional response to the Prime Minister's Apology, her role in Indigenous issues and how she first learnt about the Stolen Generation in 1978, as a consequence of a personal friendship.

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[13] The story is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bK4Oh6YYeMo
[14] Anna Bligh's story is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryJkxgU6wtM
[15] Quentin Bryce's story is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvu5tXYxYis

In both cases, although the subjects of these stories are elite representatives of government institutions speaking from their positions in public office, the mode of discourse in these stories is far from officious—their voiceovers were edited together from material gathered as part of a one-on-one, conversational interview with Indigenous facilitators. The requirement that they tell the story of their response to the Apology, as a specific event, and from a personal perspective ameliorates the danger that their stories could end up as exercises in public relations.

Further Developments

SLQ Oral History and Digital Storytelling Coordinator Gavin Bannerman reports that the Responses to the Apology project is currently being expanded to Mt Isa, Hope Vale, Cairns and Cooktown (Bannerman 2009a). In the initial phase of this regional roll-out, a number of similar digital stories were made in a collaboration between SLQ and local community media organisations in Mount Isa. Like the stories made as part of the pilot, these stories are largely unscripted, relying on recorded dialogue and video material from interviews.[16] Following on from these sessions in Mount Isa, 11 stories were produced in Cairns, Cooktown and Hope Vale. As well as providing personal responses to the official Apology, the many details drawn from personal experience that are included in the stories also evoke a sense of place and the rich diversity of everyday life for contemporary Indigenous people around Queensland. Because they draw on the personal experiences and local lifestyles of different people from around the State, these projects contribute to the cultural diversity of SLQ's heritage activities as well as capturing community responses to a historically significant event.

According to Bannerman (2009b), recent interviewees range from Val Schier, Mayor of Cairns, to Frankie Deemal, local Hope Vale figure, to Herman Banbre, traditional owner of Hope Vale. Bannerman notes the distinctive experience of conducting the Apology project within Indigenous communities: "essentially everyone becomes a candidate for a story, due to the cross-generational effects of previous government policies" (2009b). Investigations are also being undertaken into ways to capitalise on the momentum from these stories by, for example, including digital storytelling training as part of SLQ's ongoing Keeping Culture Strong initiative.

Responses to these spin-off projects indicate the importance of drawing on existing social networks to build participation as more effective than a top-down approach. There have been several crossovers and flow-on effects from these extended networks becoming aware of the digital stories made as part of the original pilot project. Bannerman (2009a) reports that one participant in the regional project is a relative of two of the participants in the pilot project and so may be able to expand on aspects of their family history already captured in previous digital stories. Another potential participant who is a friend of Quentin Bryce and lives on Mornington Island said she knew the female friend that Bryce mentions in her own story, who, she says, introduced her to the

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[16] The Mt Isa stories are available at: http://qldstories.slq.qld.gov.au/home/digital_stories/mt-isa_response

term "Stolen Generation" in the 1970s. While their generous contribution of time and personal stories benefits the public good more than it benefits the participants individually, some of the participants also report personal benefits. In correspondence, Bannerman (2009a) reported that in the Mt Isa sessions, a participant spoke about how "telling her story had given her a lot more confidence" in an upcoming job interview.

Conclusions

By asking participants to focus on their own experiences of the event, whether experienced 'live' in Canberra or via the television coverage, political responses to the Apology are grounded in the perspectives of the participants, creating a form of public remembrance that is distinct from the 'official' record. They also remind us that the Apology itself, while enacted at the centre of settler power, was actually the product of and a response to a rich and detailed tapestry of the stories of individuals, families and communities who had been affected by past government policies, and whose stories had come to light over the past decades. Because they are being collected and published by Queensland's institution of public memory, they are not only comments on an event in public history, they are themselves explicitly part of the public record. They are a permanent reminder that the conversation is far from over, and a record of the vocal insistence by several of the participants that the Apology represents not only an opportunity for listening but also the need for meaningful action.

This was a project with multiple stakeholders and participants, and as such carried with it the challenge of balancing different aims, motivations, and needs. Consciously negotiating these diverse, complementary aims and motivations is always a challenge in participatory projects (see Tacchi 2009). In the context of capturing contemporary heritage materials, it is doubly important that this process not only involves a range of stakeholders in the gathering and production of heritage materials, but also allows their voices to be heard above the 'institutional' voice of the sponsoring organisation. Like all co-creative media projects, this opportunity was taken up within temporal, financial and institutional constraints. However, it serves as a further experiment in the adaptation of digital storytelling, as a co-creative media practice, for the purposes of participatory public history. SLQ's involvement in the project is a modest step toward making personal voices matter in the creation of Queensland's heritage, connecting the stories and political perspectives of Indigenous Queenslanders with the ongoing process of cultural memory across the broader Queensland public. Additionally, the potential uses of digital storytelling extend—in practice and in potential—far beyond this particular case study. As a low-cost, participatory mode of media production, it may be particularly appropriate to the community broadcasting sector, including Indigenous media organisations, as they continue to provide essential information, communication and cultural services to their communities.

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About the authors

Dr Jean Burgess is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, Queensland University of Technology. She works on cultural participation and user-led innovation in new media contexts, focusing particularly on digital photography, online video and applications of digital storytelling. With Dr Helen Klaebe, Burgess has designed and delivered a large number of co-creative media initiatives in partnership with cultural institutions and community groups. With Joshua Green, she is the author of *YouTube: Online Video and the Politics of Participatory Culture*, published by Polity Press in 2009. Email:je.burgess@qut.edu.au

Dr Helen Klaebe is Director of Postgraduate Studies in the Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology. Her research has developed new approaches to participatory public history using multi-artform storytelling strategies. In addition to several articles on digital storytelling and participatory community engagement in the context of urban redevelopment, she is the author of: *Onward Bound: the first 50 years of Outward Bound Australia* (2005); and *Sharing Stories: a social history of Kelvin Grove* (2006). With Jean Burgess, in 2008 Klaebe completed a major strategic review of multimedia heritage, including the key areas of oral history and digital storytelling, for the State Library of Queensland. Email: h.klaebe@qut.edu.au