



Cross Border Project 2023-2024

Final Report

Executive Summary

Fighting Words (FW) was established in Dublin in 2009. It is a creative writing organisation that works primarily with children and teenagers, giving them an opportunity to be truly creative with resultant benefits in terms of imagination, confidence, well-being and more. In 2015, in partnership with Young at Art, Fighting Words Northern Ireland (FWNI) was established, and in 2020 it became an independent charity and company registered in Northern Ireland.

The Story Seeds Cross Border Project commenced in April 2023 running until March 2024 as a collaborative cross-border project for primary schools, post-primary schools and community groups across Counties Antrim, Louth, Down, Monaghan, Armagh, Donegal, and Derry-Londonderry. Our goal was to bring workshops facilitated by FWNI in Northern Ireland and FW in Ireland to young people and create stories focused on the theme of placemaking and their local areas, with the intention of building connections with people and communities and to promote a positive sense of self and community through creative expression.

As a result of these workshops, our aim was to publish the work of the young people and to showcase this in a variety of ways:

- From working with primary schools, the finished stories were published and printed into a publication for younger readers, the zine *Story Seeds: Adventures Across the Border*.
- Working with post-primary schools, students created stories within the Gothic genre, published in the zine *Gothic Tales: Stories of the Mysterious and Macabre*.
- Working with community groups, additional needs groups and youth clubs, the majority of these groups created stories, plays, screen plays and radio plays which have been recorded and developed into two episodes of the Story Seeds podcast on *The Fighting Words Podcast* series. Additionally, some groups also contributed to the Gothic zine.

A short film, *This Story Might Be True*, was also created by artist and filmmaker Vivienne Byrne, giving a creative overview of the Story Seeds Cross-Border Project using illustrations by volunteers and artists and the voices of both children and adults involved with Fighting Words Northern Ireland and Fighting Words Ireland.

Overall, this has been an incredibly successful and enlightening project for both FW and FWNI to undertake, with glowing feedback from students, teachers, and group leaders.



Primary School children in Northern Ireland with FWNI Staff, A Story Seeds Facilitator and Volunteer/Mentor.

Introduction and Background

In line with the Creative Youth Plan and the Shared Island Initiative enabling all-island partnerships, the Creative Ireland Programme aims to increase opportunities for cross-community cultural and creative initiatives between children and young people. Under the first Creative Youth Plan 2017-2022, Fighting Words was supported to develop and implement a programme of creative writing activities with primary and secondary school children called Story Seeds.

The 2021/2022 project ran across the Republic of Ireland, with a particular focus on Dublin, Wicklow, Cork, Limerick and Louth. Over 19,000 children were involved, mainly in DEIS schools – 10,500 children from 126 primary schools, 6,000 students from 53 post-primary schools, and 2,500 young people from 54 youth and extended education partners. Together the young authors produced thirteen printed volumes of stories. For an overview of the 2021/2022 project, click [here](#).

The project was independently evaluated in 2022 and considering the success of the model and the strong relevance of the methodologies, it was agreed that it would work very well in a cross-border and cross-community context.

In late 2022, Fighting Words piloted the application of the Story Seeds model in a cross-border context, with three schools, one in Dublin, one in Belfast and one in Londonderry-Derry. The resultant shared creative story, [*Titan and Friends*](#), was animated and shown at the Shared Island Forum in December 2022.

Following the success of the pilot, a proposal to Creative Youth for a cross border creative writing project was prepared, based on this model, and as a joint initiative, co-managed by Fighting Words and Fighting Words Northern Ireland.

The agreed plan was to work with schools and community groups across six border counties – Donegal, Derry-Londonderry, Armagh, Monaghan Down and Louth with some activities in Belfast.

The proposal involved working with 120 schools, 60 on each side of the border, and community/youth groups, aiming to engage 10,000 participants over the year. Working with artist facilitators and local volunteers, the project aimed to bring young people together through stories, with a specific priority related to disadvantage and working with young people who are excluded and left behind. The concept was designed as a mass-participation project that was to maximise engagement in a post-pandemic context, and work at scale.

Fighting Words in the Republic of Ireland had previously run a Story Seeds project in Louth, an agreed partnership was in place with Íontas Arts Centre in Castleblayney and had worked with Donegal Libraries. In Northern Ireland, the situation was different,

where the organisation had done some work in Derry-Londonderry, with the Playhouse and the Riverside Theatres, but had not worked in Down or Armagh. This project was an opportunity to widen the geographic reach of each organisation and work with new-to-us schools, groups, children, and young people.

The Story Seeds approach involves a number of groups working together – school classes, youth groups, or clubs – that link up to write a shared story. The process is facilitated by Fighting Words staff, artist facilitators and volunteers in local libraries, or arts centres. The first chapter is written by one group and is passed on for the second group to build and evolve the story in chapter two and so on. The emphasis is on local places and community, but the story can go wherever the young writers wish.

In addition to the story writing workshops, the Story Seeds model involves the publication of the stories in print and online. This brings a sense of pride and confidence for the young authors, together with the visible recognition of the connected stories. For this 2023/2024 project, it was envisaged that the work be available in print, online and that a video and podcast chronicling the shared work would be produced. Additionally, in-person activities were planned, to bring some of the participants together.

Staff Team

Over the course of the implementation phase, the Story Seeds Cross Border Project had a strong and dedicated team of coordinators, facilitators, artists and volunteers, supported by the directors of both FW and FWNI, without whom the success of the project would not have been possible. The project was managed by Colm Quearney (FW) and Hannah Armstrong (FWNI).

The Fighting Words staff both in Ireland and Northern Ireland played key roles in financial management and control of the funding received, the communication between forty primary schools, thirty-two secondary schools, forty-seven community centres and running the related workshops and our online presence.

Sixteen freelance artists and creative practitioners were recruited to use their range of experience and knowledge to facilitate and/or artistically contribute to the project. The most important element of Story Seeds was our participants. Our team worked with 9,030 participants from which we were able to invite 61 to our Celebration Event at the end of February.

Outputs and Outcomes

Fighting Words and Fighting Words Northern Ireland staff worked together to coordinate and deliver a programme of Story Seeds themed creative workshops for young people in 120 primary schools, post-primary schools, and other community groups. There was an allocation of three workshops to each school or community group, averaging 80 participants from each school or group. There was an equal amount of engagement with schools and youth groups in the north and in the south. The coordinators also created opportunities for participants to share their work and to

come together to create new work. Over the course of the project our team worked with a total of 9,030 participants.

Dedicated members of staff, one from Fighting Words and one from Fighting Words Northern Ireland, were responsible for jointly coordinating and delivering the Story Seeds programme. For Fighting Words Northern Ireland, additional delivery support was provided by a second staff person, a project assistant (part-time). Over the course of the project, Fighting Words and Fighting Words Northern Ireland staff, contracted facilitator/artists facilitated the workshops with support from volunteer mentors and illustrators.

The aim of the Story Seeds project was to promote a positive sense of self and community through creative expression, and we achieved this with the assistance of brilliant professional artists, writers, and facilitators from each area that workshops were delivered. These artists and facilitators brought their experience as teachers in arts practice and pedagogical principles that aligned with the Story Seeds theme and the Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI ethos.

As the scope of work was a new endeavour for Fighting Words NI, the team launched a social media call out for expressions of interest from artist facilitators in each of the regions identified: Newry, Armagh, and Derry-Londonderry. The coordinator met with each facilitator to brief them on the scope of work.

At Fighting Words, workshop facilitators were recruited using local networks and contacts in Louth, Monaghan, and Donegal. The coordinator met with each facilitator to brief them on the scope of work. Each coordinator delivered relevant training for the new facilitators, briefing them on safeguarding policies and procedures, and workshop methodology, approach, and delivery, acknowledging each organisation's differing policies in line with jurisdictional differences.

Publications

Working with **primary schools** from different locations on both sides of the border, chapters were exchanged back and forth with each school adding a chapter in response to what was written by the previous school; culminating in finished stories and the publication of the zine *Story Seeds: Adventures Across the Border*, which weaves together a refreshing and insightful description of community life along the border counties and beyond. Copies were provided free of charge to each student who participated.

Post-primary schools' students chose to theme their writing in the Gothic genre and wrote fantastical stories that were full of creativity and imagination celebrating important local landmarks and investigating the folklore in their community. Their stories are published in the printed zine *Gothic Tales: Stories of the Mysterious and Macabre*. Copies were provided free of charge to each participant.

Digital publications of both the primary school and post-primary zines are available on both the Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI websites for viewing and download free of charge.

Working with **community groups**, additional needs groups and youth clubs, some of these participants contributed stories to the *Gothic Tales* zine. Many others created stories, plays, screen plays and radio plays that contributed to two dedicated episodes of the [The Fighting Words Podcast](#).



Copies of Gothic Tales (featuring the post-primary and community group stories) and Story Seeds - Across the Border (featuring the story seeds primary school stories). Photography by Joe Laverty

Public Engagement and Communications

With the Story Seeds Cross Border Project, Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI worked together to craft a joint communications strategy to promote the project and engage the stakeholders, as well as creating a lasting way to celebrate the achievements of all the participants.

To this end, the two organisations instituted a schedule of joint posts on social media, featuring broadly the same wording and tagging each other and the project funder Creative Ireland. The two primary platforms were Instagram and Facebook, but content was also shared across X (formerly known as Twitter) and LinkedIn. We averaged one joint post per month, as well as sharing posts of other schools and organisations that featured posts about their project on their own feeds.

The strategy also included the commissioning of a short film, *This Story Might Be True*, to document the project in a creative and engaging way and the creation of dedicated pages on the respective websites about the project.



Our first Story Seeds workshop with a group of young children writing a song at the Windsor Women's Centre, Belfast.

Communications Kick-Off: 31 August 2023

The communications programme commenced with an announcement of the project on 31 August across all platforms by both organisations, with a related News story on both websites (www.fightingwords.ie and www.fightingwords.co.uk)

The announcement post was particularly effective for Fighting Words NI - it was the most popular Facebook post of the project, reaching 721 people, from whom there were 43 interactions. This high level of reach may be due to the fact that the post was shared by one of the community groups that FWNi worked with, namely the Windsor Women's Centre; meaning that the post was made visible to people who had already enjoyed a workshop with FWNi. The post specifically referenced the workshop with this group and shared some of their work as a teaser of the sort of work that would be done as part of the project. This clickable link to view their work on the FWNi website also accounts for a high level of engagement with an estimated 28 clicks. Comparatively, the announcement post reached 355 people and had 406 impressions with 25 likes on the Fighting Words side.

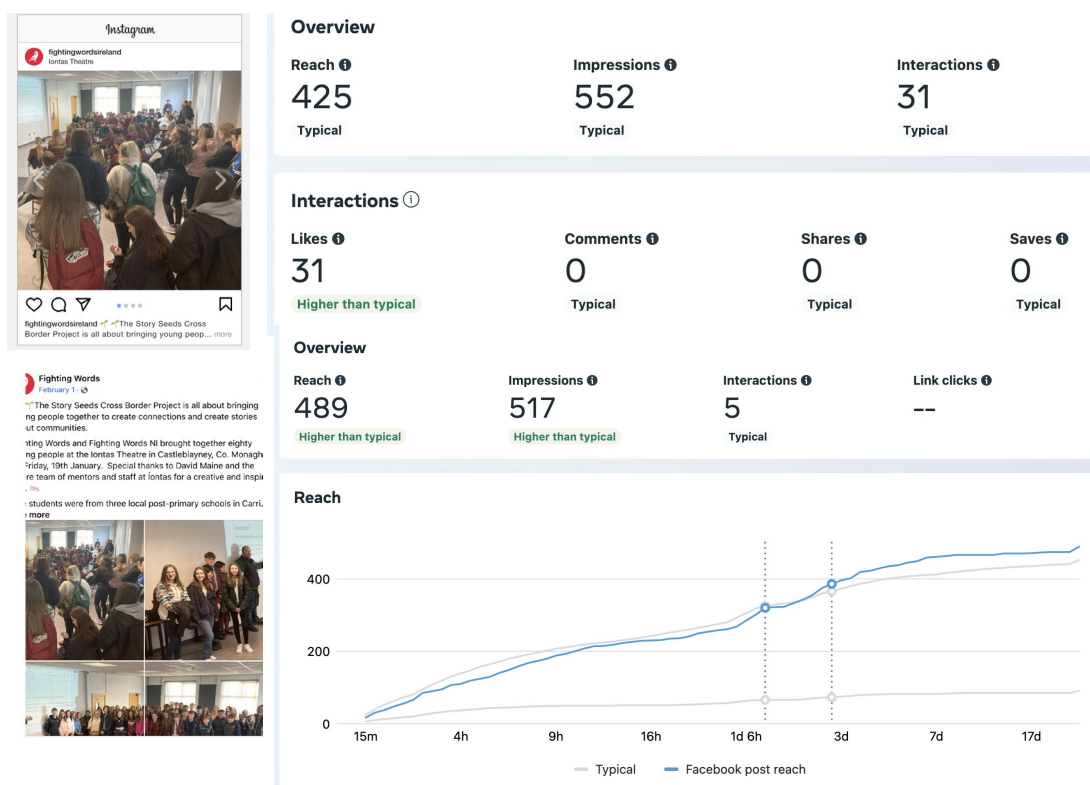
Posts Featuring Artwork and Participants

The posts that performed best featured striking images or tagged participating groups and schools. Both Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI shared posts from schools and groups that participated in the project.

One of the posts with most engagement for both Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI was the illustration of an owl from the Gothic zine shared on 21 December 2023, which had a reach of 588 on Facebook and 368 on Instagram for Fighting Words and 275 Facebook/108 Instagram for Fighting Words NI.

The social media analytics for these posts indicate that they are seen most by women between the ages of 18 - 54, many of the viewers are probably also younger than 18 but that data is not shared by the Meta platform. The location of people viewing the posts were in Ireland and the UK, with an uptick of people from Belfast viewing Fighting Words posts on Instagram. Below are the details of a typical post of this type on the Fighting Words Instagram and Facebook pages from 19 January 2024, about a joint workshop with classes from Monaghan and Armagh.

Case Study: Classes at the Iontas Centre in Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan - Fighting Words



The teaser video summarising the project for the launch of one of the publications and the announcement of the celebration event on 29 February 2024 also drew excellent engagement: at the time of writing, there were 649 impressions and 19 likes on Instagram for Fighting Words NI and 640 impressions and 22 likes for Fighting Words.

Short form video often has more reach on Instagram due to the platform's algorithms and the reach may have also been increased by the interaction from the design company that worked on the zine and teaser video. They commented on the post, which would have made the post visible to their audience as well.

The average reach of the posts across the Meta platforms was between 250-500 users¹ with some posts exceeding those figures. The social media campaign finished at the end of March with joint posts announcing the publications of the various outputs: the two zines, the two podcast episodes and the short film *This Story Might Be True*.

On LinkedIn, posts about the project averaged an engagement of 200-250 engagements, with approximately ten likes per post for both organisations. On X (formerly Twitter), posts by Fighting Words engaged with an average of 300 users while there were fewer than 100 engagements on the Fighting Words NI side. This is likely due to the difference in the number of followers for each organisation - Fighting Words has 4700 followers on X while Fighting Words NI has 1400.

¹This metric counts reach from the organic or paid distribution of posts. Reach is only counted once if it occurs from both organic and paid distribution. This metric is [estimated](#). - source Meta



NIn VT Letterkenny

7 December 2023 · 🌐

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Students from both VT & RT classes recently completed a 3 week story telling workshop with 'Fighting Words' [Fighting Words](#) . Here are some of the participants pictured with their wonderful facilitator Valerie Bryce! We are all excited to see the final creative piece 📖📖

(L-R: Oisín Kelly, Aaron Kelly, Valerie Bryce, Anna Hennessey, Maire Gallagher)

Participant Testimonials:

'I really enjoyed this course'

'I liked the relationship between the characters in our radio play'

'Valerie and Brian and Colm are very nice!'

Fighting Words

(01) 894 4576

<https://g.co/kgs/R4QuN3>

<https://www.fightingwords.ie/what.../outreach-programmes...>



A playwriting workshop with young adults from the National Learning Network, Letterkenny.

Social Media Posts by Schools and Groups

The Story Seeds Cross-Border Project was also the subject of posts by participating schools on both sides of the border, including Abbey Vocational College in Letterkenny, Deelee College in Raphoe, the National Learning Network in Letterkenny, Finn Valley College in Stranorlar and St. Mary's College in Newry.

These posts, which were all liked and shared by Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI, extended the reach of the project, and celebrated the achievements of the young writers.

This Story Might Be True – A film by Vivienne Byrne

Both Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI wanted to create a lasting document of the Story Seeds Cross Border Project that would have a permanent home on the organisations' respective websites. Artist and filmmaker Vivienne Byrne was commissioned to make a short film to capture the collaboration between the participant groups and the creativity of the stories created. The film, [*This Story Might Be True*](#), is a delightful mash-up of many of the stories from the primary school and post-primary stories and also features photographs of the participants from across the counties where workshops took place. The stories all use settings local to the groups who wrote them as we take the reader on a fantastical tour of the island of Ireland. It allowed Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI to bring people who live miles apart onto the same page, personalised the stories in a meaningful way, and added an element of realism to the stories.

Websites

The Story Seeds Cross-Border Project featured in News stories included on the websites of both Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI throughout the project. Additionally, both Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI published dedicated pages for the project.

- Fighting Words Northern Ireland website: click [here](#)
- Fighting Words website: click [here](#)

All publications (zines, podcast episodes and the film *This Story Might Be True*) are available for viewing, listening and downloading on both [Fighting Words](#) and [Fighting Words Northern Ireland](#)

Volunteers

In total, 59 volunteers were trained across ten training sessions and 28 played a crucial role in the workshop sessions. Three of the training sessions were delivered in Belfast, Newry and Armagh and the remainder were delivered virtually through Zoom by both Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI. These training workshops demonstrated the Story Seeds model and Fighting Words ethos and included training sessions organised with a view to developing relationships with Libraries NI.

For Fighting Words NI these volunteers were integral to the workshops in areas outside of Belfast, by providing support in numbers but also an awareness of local areas and landmarks in a project driven by locality, filling a knowledge gap in our team.

At Fighting Words, over the course of the Story Seeds project, the relationship with Louth Library Service was developed beyond the existing ties with Drogheda Library

to work with library staff and volunteers in Dundalk. The Fighting Words presence in Donegal built on the foundation of our relationship with Donegal Libraries, particularly in Letterkenny, with staff assisting the coordinator to recruit new volunteer mentors. Fighting Words has had strong links with the libraries in both Donegal and Louth - seven librarians were trained in these two counties in 2021 and 2022. In Monaghan, the main hub for volunteers was the Íontas Centre in Castleblayney, where both staff and new volunteers were recruited and trained to work on the project in 2023.

Some of our Fighting Words volunteers are part of the creative cohort volunteer team and for the Story Seeds project one volunteer gave a significant amount of time in providing their expertise in graphic design.

While we did not reach the target of 100 volunteers, we did achieve success in building a volunteer base for current and future projects with new people and located in new places. The expansion of our volunteer base around the various counties is of great benefit to our work longer term, filling in geographical gaps which we can develop for future projects and programmes. Much of the interest from existing and potential volunteers was noted to be towards the end of the project timeline, meaning their engagement built through the project and we did not have enough time to get to a point where they were fully involved. We learned that coordinating new volunteers across several new locations and multiple activities needed more resources.

The Fighting Words programme at DCU and Queens University College (Stranmillis) will underpin the project.

The Fighting Words programme at DCU's Institute of Education includes activities on programme quality, and evaluation. A Community of Practice initiative with quarterly workshops for staff to reflect together on best practice included a session on Creative Ireland's Evaluation Framework. The experience from our work and collaboration with the Institute of Education contributed to development of the methodologies and the project evaluation. The links to teacher education students in Queen's University, and through Stranmillis Teaching College, provided an opportunity to involve the students as mentors for the project.

Throughout March 2024, time was allocated by both FW and FWNl teams to come together to review the project in terms of: Coordination, Delivery, Staff, Coordinator and Volunteer Performance, Outcomes and Outputs of the project. Documents were prepared for an independent evaluation by Paula Phelan.

A summary of the evaluation is set out below and the full evaluation will be sent separately and made available soon on both websites. These reflections, this report and the evaluation will inform our organisational plans and practices. In addition, the outcomes of this phase of our joint work will inform future cross border creative writing programmes we hope to organise.

Targeted support to seldom heard children and young people and those at risk of disadvantage.

All workshops were free of charge and in certain circumstances, funding was allocated for travel expenses for groups that needed to travel to cross border events.

In Ireland, Fighting Words prioritised workshops with DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools at both primary and post-primary level. We worked with a total of 17 DEIS primary schools across Louth, Monaghan and Donegal and we worked with 11 DEIS secondary schools across from Louth, Monaghan, and Donegal.

Fighting Words worked with additional needs groups in alternative educational in settings, marginalised groups and groups such as Youthreach programmes across Louth, Monaghan and Donegal, the National Learning Network, the Milford Resource Centre Youth Project, Letterkenny Youth Project, RISE (Students on the Autistic Spectrum), Include (Youth Support - Youth at Risk), youth theatres, Scouts, Beavers and Cubs groups, AbleVision, the Irish Wheelchair Association, Red Door Addiction Services and John of Gods - Order of Malta groups of adults with intellectual disabilities.

In areas such as Donegal, where there is a wide geographical spread and where small country schools had lower numbers of children, we invited those schools to take part in the workshops online via Zoom. In these cases, the premise for the workshop delivery and sharing of story chapters crossing back and forth across the border was the same as the in-person workshops.

In Northern Ireland, priority was given to primary and post-primary schools from the Extended Schools Programme (DEIS equivalent), with schools located in postcode Areas of Multiple Deprivation and/or schools with 40% or more pupils with Free School Meals.

New relationships brokered with community groups that support youth work and individuals outside of the mainstream education system or at risk of marginalisation, such as Woodlands Juvenile Detention Centre or Drumcree Community Trust, were of note as breakthrough work for FWNI. Creative writing workshops were new experiences for these young people and satisfying for our team to engage with over the course of the project. Similarly, some intergenerational opportunities arose to work with older people at risk of loneliness or exclusion, such as Connswater Men's Shed, who expressed joy at writing their own stories, many for the first time, and are keen to engage in longer term activities around writing in response to their neighbourhood and memoir.

Other community groups engaged in NI border counties included: 1st Mounthorris Rangers, Concorde Community Centre, Donegal Pass Community Centre, Epicentre Armagh, Give & Take Project, Include Youth, Newry Hockey Club, Damolly Football Club, Newry Scouts & Venturers, North-West Home Education Group, R.E.A.C.H. Across, Southern Regional College Newry, and Windsor Women's Centre.

Existing partnerships were deepened, with Libraries NI offering support through in-kind venue use and hosting workshops, especially in areas of high need, such as Rathcoole Library in Greater Belfast.

Enthusiasm and uptake in rural schools was significant, indicating a need expressed in rural areas where high quality arts education engagement is less accessible. We reached some of the largest and smallest schools in the country. The pupils and

teachers in the country schools really appreciated our facilitators travelling out to them to deliver the workshops.

Cross-Border Events

On Friday, 19th January 2024, Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI curated a day-long series of workshops with three post-primary schools from cross border communities: St. Patrick's High School, Keady in Armagh, St. Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen in Down and Inver College, Carrickmacross in Monaghan.



Over 80 students come together for a fun collaborative day of creative writing at the Íontas Centre in Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan.



Primary school students from St Joseph's Convent Primary School in Newry, Co. Down and St Tiarnach's Primary School in Clones, Co. Monaghan at the Story Seeds Celebration at Connswater, February 2024. Photography by Joe Laverty

On Thursday, 29th February 2024 two border county primary schools attended the Story Seeds celebration event at the Fighting Words NI centre in Belfast. Primary school children from St Joseph's Convent Primary School in Newry, Co. Down and St Tiarnach's Primary School in Clones, Co. Monaghan and worked together on the third chapter for a story that they had already begun working on remotely and was published in the zine *Story Seeds Adventures Across the Border*.

At both events young participants had the opportunity to work with artists, writers/facilitators receiving positive feedback on the writing and illustrations that they created.

There were two cross border workshops scheduled for primary school pupils from the North-West Home Education Group in Ethical Way, Eglinton, Co. Derry on Monday 22nd January 2024. This school works with families from Donegal and Derry-Londonderry. Unfortunately, these workshops were cancelled due to national weather warnings and adverse weather conditions.

Relevant findings

The relationships established with schools and community groups in the border areas should be sustained, ideally with plans to maintain a programme of creative writing activities. This initial project with a cross community focus demonstrates the potential and benefits that shared creative writing activities bring for integration, relationships, and community building.

Further consideration for future project work should consider if a shift to longer workshops and more workshops with each group, with more time and depth, would be advisable. Given the aim to build community understanding and shared stories, the level of contact time is important. The feasibility and cost will always be factors, and where possible we should consider focussing the resources on fewer participants with increased engagement.

The recruitment and training of facilitators in the three regions, collating of school lists and community groups and coordination of workshops with teachers and community groups took considerable time and investment of staff resource but the groundwork has been laid for future work, e.g. templates have been created such as generic emails schools, excel sheets with contacts for school and community group lists, sharing digital content etc.

The collaboration between Fighting Words and Fighting Words Northern Ireland to implement joint initiatives where the geographical or thematic aims are shared should continue as a priority. There is significant potential to organise further all-island creative activities together.

The developing group of volunteer mentors, some in new locations, particularly in Northern Ireland, is a significant outcome that will need ongoing management to maintain momentum. The new volunteers will need ongoing contact and engagement to ensure retention.

The work with children and young people in the community through extended learning groups and clubs demonstrates the significant potential for Fighting Words and Fight Words Northern Ireland to build its outreach and community programme of creative writing outside the formal school system in the border areas. There is scope, desire, and interest to design a project that works with youth community groups on both sides of the border alone, sharing the work produced between groups and/or bringing them together.

Feedback from one facilitator was that her perception is that some participants/group leaders (and parents of participants, hearing about it second hand) would not be enthusiastic about a cross-border project. Some approaches made to new-to-us community groups in NI border regions were not accepted, opening questions about how we support facilitators to introduce the project to groups working in isolation, in single-identity areas, in rural areas where inter-group projects are less common, and for whom segregation plays a factor where cross-border/all-island connections are less well received. Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI should be aiming to deliver a strong cross-border integrated approach in the future, where we are working medium to long term to build local presence in these border counties/regions, with the aim of using high quality creative writing projects as tools to connect individuals, build connections between segregated areas, and to explore personal expression around cultural and political identity issues.

Breakdown of costs

Overall - Full Project Expenditure				
Budget Line	Total	FW	FWNI (Euros)	FWNI (GBP)
Project Coordination and delivery Jan-Mar	€ 88,466.88	€ 44,999.84	€ 43,467.04	£37,429.51
Fees for Professional Artists	€ 24,946.08	€ 12,502.00	€ 12,444.08	£10,724.88

Publications (films, performances, podcasts)	€ 20,988.94	€ 11,059.01	€ 9,929.93	£4,492.50
Travel and events	€ 10,606.99	€ 3,926.02	€ 6,680.97	£5,765.19
Communications	€ 9,991.11	€ 5,013.13	€ 4,977.98	£4,299.34
Evaluation	€ 5,000.00	€ 5,000.00	€ -	£-
Total	€ 160,000.00	€ 82,500.00	€ 77,500.00	£62,711.42

Evaluation

An independent evaluation of the project was carried out by Paul Phelan and is available separately.

Conclusion

The Story Seeds Cross Border Project was successfully delivered. Measured against the plans and expected outcomes, the project achieved the results we anticipated with children and young people. The story seeds model where different groups can work together on a shared story is well suited to cross-community and cross-border creative activities.

The outcomes and outputs of the project reflect the shared creative talent of young people across the border counties and their openness to collaboration in imaginative and cultural storytelling. The feedback from the children and young people involved reflects the positive creative experiences, enjoyment and benefits they took from participating in the project.

The theme represents the shared ethos of both organisations and provided the first opportunity for the two organisations to engage on a large project with children and young people in a longer-term partnership. The coordinated strategy allowed both organisations to achieve set targets while building stronger relationships between staff, volunteers, contractors, and interns.

Through the process of designing and delivering this programme each organisation has learned the nuance of the other's approach and ethos and together we are developing a singular approach that is effective and efficient.

Both organisations learned a great deal from each other, including:

- Sharing key strategies and approaches to scheduling workshops with schools and community groups
- Building and training volunteer team

- Planning cross border events
- Interviewing for key facilitators and artists
- Delivering training to facilitators
- Financial planning and reporting over multiple budget lines and in two currencies

The project has allowed both organisations to cultivate relationships and connections north and south with primary schools, post-primary schools, community groups, library services, additional needs groups, volunteers, facilitators, and artists. The publicity around this project has attracted a new cohort of volunteers north and south. The shared island nature of the project has piqued the interest of new people e.g. retired teachers in the region, and they are happy to be involved.

Both communications teams extended the reach of all messaging as the two organisations tagged participating organisations, the project funders and each other. The dedicated web pages on both organisations' websites will be repositories of the achievements of the project for years to come.

As a result of the Story Seeds Cross Border Project, Fighting Words and Fighting Words NI have strengthened our creative engagement programme with children and young people, with a specific focus on community building and cross border sharing. Both organisations look forward to building upon the foundations of this project with further cross border and all island projects.

APPENDIX

Key Staff - staff costs covered by Creative Ireland for this project

Hannah Armstrong and Colm Quearney (FW) - Project Coordinators

Molly Martin (FWNI) - Project Assistant

Staff - costs covered by in-kind contribution and funded by FWNI and FW

Hilary Copeland (FWNI) and Colm Ó Cuanacháin (FW) – Project oversight and governance

Sara Bennett (FW) - Financial control and overall grant financial contact point for Creative Ireland. Communications and social media

Pierina Campbell (FW) Workshop facilitation

Marnie Kennedy (FWNI) Workshop facilitation

Aoife Osborne (FWNI) Volunteer Training

Talitha Taylor (FWNI) Financial control

Sam Savage (FWNI) Communications and social media

Facilitators and Creative Practitioners

1. Natasha Geary – FWNI
2. Fionnuala Cassidy – FWNI
3. Julie Blain – FWNI
4. Adeline Henry – FWNI
5. Paul Hutchinson – FWNI
6. Mícheál McCann – FWNI
7. Dan Leith - FWNI
8. JJ Harrington – FW
9. Fiona Longmuir – FW
10. Valerie Bryce – FW
11. Vivienne Byrne – FWNI/FW
12. Marisa Brown –FWNI/FW
13. Hugh McElveen – FWNI/FW

Volunteers recruited directly by FW and FWNI

1. Clare Cavenagh – FWNI
2. Clare O'Hare – FWNI
3. Sucheta Thakkar – FWNI
4. Siobhan Dignan – FWNI
5. Helen Evans – FWNI
6. Susan Burrows – FWNI
7. Hannah Eyon – FWNI
8. Conal McManus – FWNI
9. Holly Fitzpatrick – FWNI
10. Kathy Lynch – FWNI
11. Finn Monaghan – FWNI
12. Carmel Smith – FWNI
13. Katerine McAllister – FWNI
14. Philip Elliot – FW
15. Nancy Udodenko – FW
16. Paul Browne – FW
17. David Maine – FW
18. Niav Fisher – FW
19. Margaret Timoney – FW
20. Patrick Hathaway - FW
21. Mary Cate Flynn – FW
22. Jessica Skavicus - FW
23. Aidan McDermott – FW
24. Sarah Lou Ryan - FW
25. Pauline Clarke – FW
26. Vera McGrath – FW
27. Niamh Stevens – FW
28. Melissa McPhillips - FW

Note: An additional 31 volunteers were recruited through the libraries and arts centres we worked with as part of this project.