

Case Study: National Stories/Education

In Our Words: Stories from Victorian Veterans

Australian Centre for the Moving Image

2011



Australian Stories of War

In Our Words: Stories from Victorian Veterans is a four year digital storytelling project by the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in partnership with the Veterans' Affairs Department and The Shrine of Remembrance which aims to capture over 200 digital stories of Victorian veterans and their families to create an important and accessible legacy.

ACMI believes that community story-making and the very act of creative production is amongst the most effective ways we can build community, social cohesion and Australian identity.

The project has taken its portable studio on the road to a range of sites including Swan Hill, Bendigo, Sale, Horsham, St Arnaud, Warrnambool and Morwell on a quest, with the assistance of local RSLs, to collect the diverse stories of veterans. A number of these sessions at which staff work closely with veterans to share their often emotional, and always personal stories of war, the project has also been assisted by groups of local students. This intergenerational approach, pairing history and media studies students with a local veteran to share the digital storytelling experience has worked extremely well.

As part of this project, ACMI has also captured stories from Indigenous veterans of war. Workshops brought together significant local families from the Healesville and Heywood regions in Victoria to share their personal stories of service in the Australian military. Several historically important and emotionally difficult stories were shared and captured, ranging from experiences of the Vietnam War to the repatriation scheme and the long-fought campaign to have Indigenous veterans recognised in RSL services. Indigenous students from Northland Secondary College worked with the veterans in what was a very successful mentoring process for all involved and a wonderful learning experience for the young people.

Ricky Morris' Afghanistan war story *Compression* was featured by *The Age* online as part of its Anzac Day coverage. Eric Peter's story *The Letters from Java* screened at the *From U-Matic to YouTube* indigenous film symposium at ACMI in June 2010. All digital stories live on well after the workshops in various forums, including the websites of ACMI, Veteran's Affairs and the Shrine of Remembrance. They are also shown in the Australian Mediatheque. Teaching kits have been prepared for Australian History classes; students can utilise the 'Generator' to repurpose material for class-directed digital projects.

<http://blog.acmi.net.au/index.php/2010/08/preserving-the-veteran-legacy-at-acmi/>