

What Is Your Water Story?

Workshop Discussion Toolkit
Spring 2020

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For New Jersey Council for the Humanities



NEW JERSEY COUNCIL
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HUMANITIES

WIYWS Workshop Set-Up Checklist & Tips

Workshop Set-Up

- Arrive 45 - 30 min early
- Check in with host librarian
- Use the restroom ;)
- Expect one attendee to arrive super early
- Workshop set-up (see Figures 1-2).
 - Leave a small stack of NJCH postcards, often near the librarian's accompanying display table (Figure 3).
 - Display filming consent form on the door or table somewhere
 - On the table
 - Display ribbon spools in the middle with the markers and scissors

Facilitation Strategies

Introduction (see Figure 4)

- Acknowledge that this is kind of a weird workshop - we are simply coming together to talk about a meaningful resource
- We're going to try and provide space for everyone to verbally share during the workshop, but if that's not possible, we have a website (on the half sheet) with options for how we can make that happen using the water story hotline.

Water Stories

- We're going to ask everyone to think of a water story this evening, and jot it down on a ribbon, but we won't force you to verbally share. We will ask you to volunteer to share (like a Quaker meeting) rather than going in seating order.
- As facilitator, share a water story first to help everyone feel comfortable and get a sense of the duration
- Consider asking follow-up questions in the beginning of the workshop (or depending on how many people/ time management) to communicate that you are listening and that this is really a space for conversation (I'm curious what that feels like? do you have a winter memory?)

Mental Map (see Figures 5-6)

- Use 2-3 objects to spatially orient the group mental map: e.g. notepad as Cape May, post-it note as NY and something as Atlantic Ocean (if needed)

If there are too few people...

- Invite library staff to participate
- Spend more time arranging ribbons and discussion of themes and observations
- It's okay to end early

If there are too many people...

- Talk to the host, find out if there are some people in attendance who want to listen but not share (local politicians) and these folks might want to sit just outside the main table if there is not room
- Spend less time on mental mapping (but make sure to include this activity, at least briefly) because it communicates the concluding sentiment of the workshop: that our individual stories are interconnected with each other, just like the water sources we depend on

Figures 1-2. WIYWS workshop set-up.

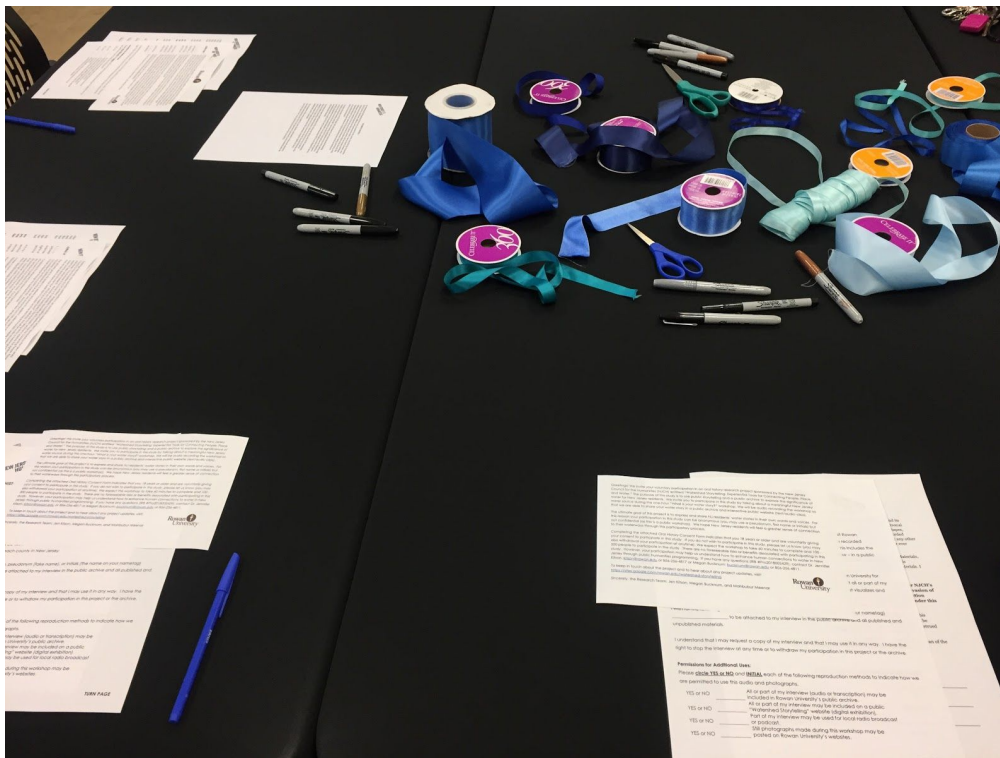


Figure 3. Accompanying display of water related books and literature curated by librarians.

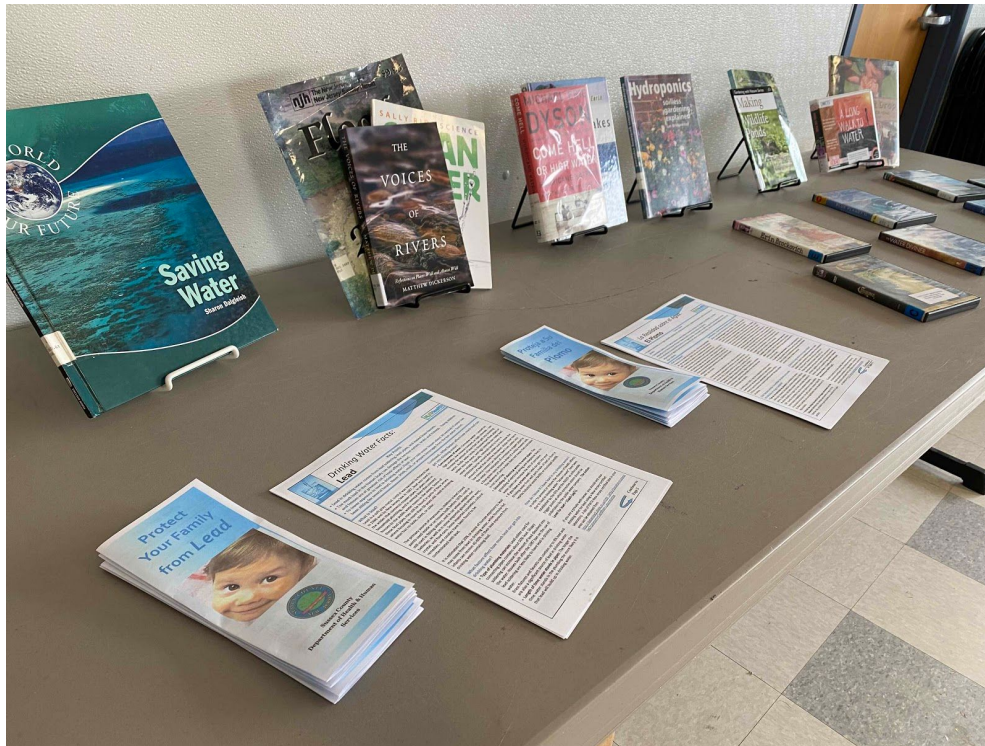
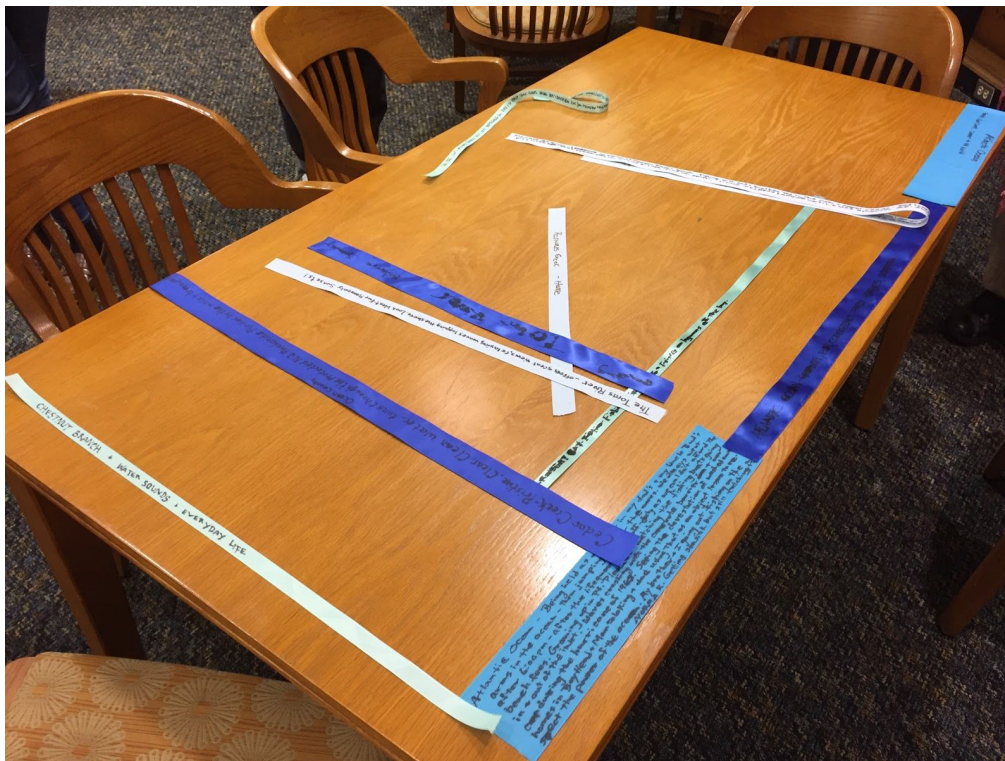


Figure 4. WIYWS Workshop underway



Figures 5-6. WIYWS group mental mapping activity exploring, at the conclusion of the workshop, the connectivity of water stories the waterways they depend upon.



WYWS Workshop Script

[5 min] NJCH Acknowledgement

Welcome to this What's Your Water Story Workshop! This program is funded by the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, an independent non-profit organization and state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Council serves as a grant maker, program provider, partner, and convener that works with statewide and community organizations to bring dynamic public humanities programming to the local level throughout our state.

Public humanities programs allow for community members to have a shared exploration of history, culture, values, and beliefs. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of the NEH or NJCH. If you'd like more information about the Council and to view their calendar of events, please visit njhumanities.org.

Our host organizations may want to take a few photos of the workshop this evening to share on social media and with NJCH. There is a filming notice posted on the table. Please just let us know if you'd prefer not to be photographed.

[5 min] Part 1 – Overview: Everyone has a water story.

This workshop tonight will involve simply reflecting upon and talking about meaningful water sources in New Jersey. In this one-hour group conversation, we'll be inviting you to verbally share your personal water story this evening as a compliment to an ongoing statewide water story archive and digital exhibition exploring the connective role of water in the state currently in development by Rowan University. The goal of this project is to express NJ residents' water stories in their own words and voices.

This workshop is about providing dedicated space for conversation about a valuable resource and public good. It's simply about listening and sharing our meaningful experiences with water. We're going to try and allow everyone to share during the workshop if they would like.

[30-35 min.] Part 2 – Telling water stories

First, we'd like for you to *think* of a source of water in New Jersey that is meaningful to you.

Next, we'd like you to select a ribbon to represent this water source.

Now, please write a few words on the ribbon describing the significance of this water source. What does it mean to you?

We'd then like to go around the room and allow for each of you to verbally share (in about 2-4 minutes) the water source you selected and why it is meaningful to you.

I'm going to turn on the recorder. A couple of words about the recorder. The microphone on this is very sensitive, so it will pick up all the noise we want, but also all the noises that we don't want. The noise it picks up the most is any tapping on the table. I will be wearing my headphones so I will be able to hear any noises that distract from your own story. If I'm picking any of these up, I'll make this gesture to quietly let you know that there is background noise without interrupting anyone.

[5-10 min.] Part 3 – Mental mapping water stories & the connective role of water

We'd like for everyone to spatially place and arrange their ribbons on the table according to the location of their actual water source in NJ.

In an open discussion format, we'd like to hear what kind of themes or patterns you observe in either the sources of water (type of water source or location) that have been mentioned and the significance (meanings, role, importance) of each water source.

As the mental map reveals, our individual water stories are interconnected, just like the water sources we depend on.

[1-5 min.] Thank you and Wrap-Up

We'd like to stop here and thank you for your participation this evening! This program was funded by the NJCH whose mission is to harness the power of the humanities to strengthen our pluralistic society. Programs like this one further that mission. If you enjoyed today's program, then be sure to check out the njhumanities.org website for other events. We will be reaching back out to all the participating sites to hopefully bring a curated collection of recorded stories back to the places where they were recorded by setting up a listening station and sharing the website.