

Caban Sgriblio- A Peak Project

Creating Better Worlds

'Caban Sgriblio stretches the limits of your creativity, and ignites a flame inside of you, it starts off small and dimly lit but once it's started it can no longer be tamed'.

Caban Sgriblio (or Scribbling Cabin, in English) was a creative writing and digital media project designed to support the health and wellbeing of young people in Powys, Monmouthshire and the Valleys. Over a three-year period, Caban Sgriblio workshops reached nearly 500 young people experiencing rural isolation, family breakdown, illness or poor mental health. Each workshop encouraged participants to draw inspiration from their memories and experiences as well as the environment, objects and poems. Caban Sgriblio offered young people a safe space to express themselves creatively. Each participant was also invited to perform their work, either to an audience or a film camera.

'The feeling when your freezing hands / touch something warm' – J, from their poem 'Winter'

Managed by Peak, the Caban Sgriblio project was delivered by Emma Beynon with support from Uschi Turoczy, both professional writers and teachers. Emma believes that creative writing is a tool people can use to 'realise themselves'. With this in mind, her workshops focused on facilitating creative expression and building young peoples' confidence in themselves and others. In order to measure the impact of this project, both Emma and Uschi maintained reflective journals and collected poetry as well as filmed performances from the participants; key workers and teachers completed pre- and post-evaluations of the workshops; and young people were surveyed and interviewed about their experience.

'I love this all so much and can't wait until tomorrow to start again. I was so scared I would not make friends but now I have one ... I am so much more confident.'

After reviewing these reflective journals, evaluations and interviews, it is clear that the young people involved in Caban Sgriblio improved their self-expression, their confidence and their interactions with each other. Participants who were once unable to identify and articulate their feelings were, by the end, able to talk and write about sensitive issues such as bereavement. Those who were initially lacking in confidence were able to make new friends, speak to adults, rise to challenges and perform their work. Young people who were once isolated, shy, defensive or prone to emotional outbursts showed progress through constructive interactions with peers and adults. These improvements were well-documented and demonstrate the powerful impact creative writing can have on disadvantaged young people.

'It feels quite relieving to do work that doesn't have to be perfect and it's more freeing than regular work we do in college because we know that it doesn't have to stick to any boundaries.'

Emma Beynon attests that these workshops showed participants that *'writing can be their friend, a place where they can create a world that they want to live in'*. This sense of agency—the desire and discipline to create better worlds—is evident in the participants' feedback too. Caban Sgriblio was often characterised by the young people as a place where they found inspiration and freedom: *'I find I am much more creative and expressive*

than I used to be—Caban Sgriblio has freed my imagination.’ The immediacy of writing—the ability to see or think about something and respond through poetry—also allowed participants to document their progress and chart their own growth.

‘I was one but now I’m another.’ – C from their poem ‘Changes’

In addition to the positive impact creative writing had on the young people involved, Caban Sgriblio also benefited Peak as an organisation. Peak’s Creative Director, Rebecca Spooner, noted that the organisation had traditionally focussed on visual media, so this project was key in helping them explore a cross-disciplinary approach to working in the arts. Caban Sgriblio also challenged staff to learn how writers and artists work differently and consider how creative writing could be embedded across Peak’s entire programme.

‘I enjoyed the ability to add visuals to my poems and use that to create humour.’

A key aim for Peak is to encourage rural communities in Wales to be seen and heard. Caban Sgriblio did just that. This project saw organisations working together to bring writing into isolated areas where young people do not often have a voice. Professional writers and an Oscar-nominated cinematographer brought expertise and quality to this project while its funders, Children in Need and Ffilm Cymru, assured clear governance and accountability. The poetry produced by the young people speaks to the inclusiveness and creativity fostered in each Caban Sgriblio workshop.

‘Caban Sgriblio is like being embraced by warm, cosy, familiar sensations when you are lost in the dark.’

Justine Wheatley, Peak’s Chief Executive, believes that writing projects like this one can encourage critical thinking and creative risk-taking as well as facilitate important conversations about sustainability and wellbeing. There is now scope to build further relationships with professional writers who can model what creative careers look like for young people in rural Wales. Caban Sgriblio was an undeniable success and has laid a strong foundation for future writing projects at Peak and beyond.

‘And again, I rise higher’ – L, from their poem ‘The Balloon’

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All poetry and quotations come from young people who took part in Caban Sgriblio in 2019