



SCIENCE COMMUNICATORS MIKHAL STONE AND JENNY RANKINE

Photo from Mike Stone, right, and Jenny Rankine

Mike Stone and Jenny Rankine are the dynamic duo who produced the NZASE Pānui for the last five years. In conversation with the current Science Communicator, Heather Goodey, they have shared their journey as former science communicators, their passion for their work and highlights from their time with NZASE.

Many science educators around Aotearoa will know Mikhal (Mike) Stone from professional learning and development workshops, *Mike's News*, articles in the NZASE *Pānui* and regular Facebook posts. However, you may be less aware of the other half of the NZASE Science Communication team; Jenny Rankine, journalist and graphic designer. Together they administered the NZASE's website, *Pānui* and social media presence for five years, before handing over the reins to the current science communicators.

Mike Stone



Mike at the Great Barrier Island

College and then Lynfield College, she moved to Team Solutions at the University of Auckland as a facilitator, providing professional learning and development (PLD) to science teachers. In 2019, Mike

became one of the NZASE science communicators. Mike was born in Wellington but brought up in the Hawke's Bay where she enjoyed a relatively 'outdoor' lifestyle. A Science and Biology teacher for over 25 years at Liston

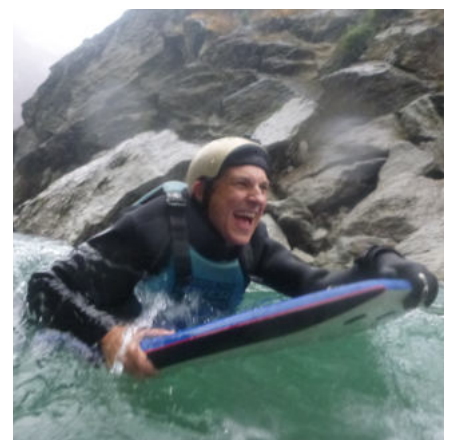
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Mike's News

Mike started producing *Mike's News* when she joined Team Solutions. Mike received large amounts of useful information she felt science educators would be interested in and needed a way to share it. Originally just a long list of disjointed information, one teacher told Mike to "sort it out!" By curating sections, *Mike's News* morphed into the resource we see today. The first issue was emailed out in 2006, and every school week since. That is an impressive total of over 740 issues!

Jenny Rankine

An experienced journalist and graphic designer, Jenny's background is in public relations in the NGO sector, primarily in health research. She has a passion for analysing how the media portray and report news. Jenny says it is important that we think carefully about what



Jenny riversurfing near Queenstown

information we receive from the media and how media can influence public perception with the way facts are presented.

Te Tiriti and the media

Of particular interest to Jenny was the way the Walker whānau story was portrayed by the media. The Walker family is a context commonly included in Biology classes when teaching genetics. Jenny worked for the NZ Health Research Council during the first round of research by Parry Guildford with the Walker whānau. The project resulted in life saving outcomes for the Walker whānau. Jenny witnessed a story about a pro-active Māori whānau who sought researchers who would respect tikanga during the process.

But Jenny says the media portrayed the story differently, as a poor, diseased Māori family passively looking for help. That racist media construction spurred Jenny to co-publish an article analysing the media coverage, and co-found the Kupu Taea (power of the word): Media and Te Tiriti research group - a Māori/Pākehā research group.



A discovery made by a Bay of Plenty whānau and University of Otago geneticists has saved the lives of hundreds of people in Aotearoa and around the world, including singer Stan Walker. Participants at the 2019 International HDGC guidelines meeting in Wairoa. Maybelle McLeod is in the centre in yellow, with Parry Guildford to her left. Photo: Han Kwang Yang.

Walker family's article in NZASE. Read it here.

She speaks of honourable kāwanatanga - the idea that tauiwi (non-Maori) make ourselves into the type of people that Māori believed they were entering Te Tiriti with. She works on this with media professionals and suggests parallels with the education profession. Jenny asserts that as non-Māori we need to be constantly thinking about, and reflecting on our own actions and practices, and the importance of creating reciprocal relationships with mana whenua and our Māori education colleagues.

NZASE Pānui

Jenny recounts her understanding of how the NZASE Pānui came about. Before the Pānui, NZASE used to produce a biannual newspaper through a contract

with NZME (owners of the NZ Herald) with short science stories. In 2018, NZASE took a brave new communication direction with a greater focus on education. "Sarah Hays, then president, approached Mike to start a new NZASE newsletter. Mike knew that this was a great opportunity but also could see the need for a combination of skills. Mike approached me to join her in job sharing the NZASE Science Communicator role", says Jenny.

Mike says it took them a while to find their feet. Mike and Jenny have been producing newsletters for NZASE for five years, read by thousands of science educators around Aotearoa.

Highlights from the time working on the NZASE Pānui

Jenny says she valued the opportunity to interview around 39 Māori and Pasifika scientists, learning something new from each one. She says, "I admire how each scientist was generous with their time because they felt that communicating with students and teachers was important. I wanted the stories to be interesting for teachers and students and enjoyed the challenge of getting the reading level right to make them accessible to students, while keeping the science context at the right level to cover all years." She hopes that the profiles and the posters continue to be a great resource for teachers and students. Jenny says she found coming to SciCon, meeting the executive and teachers face-to-face, was a really important experience. Her highlight was when Mike received the Peter Spratt Award at the conference in 2023.

Mike has appreciated the generosity of the sector. She says people are always willing to share expertise or point her in the direction of someone who could help. She confesses to learning how to write on the job, and having less edits as she gained



Many schools use the term kaitiakitanga to mean caring for our environment as a responsible NZ citizen. While a worthwhile aspiration, nevertheless it can unintentionally ride roughshod over a Māori tikanga with deeper meanings which need to be considered. In consultation with Nick Bryant (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whatua) Mike Stone learns more about kaitiakitanga and tiakitanga.

Tiakitanga article in NZASE. Read it here.

experience. Mike welcomed the opportunity to increase her knowledge on mātauranga Māori and feels that the NZASE article on Tiakitanga was her best yet.

"The terminology had just changed in the standard. The difference between kaitiakitanga and tiakitanga was a really important value to get across. How those two ideas are really different, that kaitiakitanga is embedded with spirituality and mana whenua." She is grateful for the input into articles from everyone involved, especially Pauline Waiti and Nick Bryant.

Facilitation of professional learning

Mike has been part of the PLD team for NZASE since 2019. Facilitation has focussed on level one Science recently, but Mike and the team also provided PLD for all levels. Mike explains how facilitation is about providing some information and getting teachers to interact, share their experiences, ideas, what works and nutting it out together.

She recalls facilitating online at the start of COVID. "Online was a real challenge - we rely on body language to get a feeling of where people are at. We were very fortunate at that time to have Greta Dromgool join our team. She brought online facilitation expertise and allowed the team to upskill to the online platform during the COVID years."

Mātauranga Māori

Jenny interviewed a range of Māori and Pasifika scientists. She notes how the stories were diverse but also followed common themes. That the science research space is still dominated by Pākehā and that each scientist had their individual struggles. The scientists shared innovative ways they were engaging mātauranga Māori with standard science disciplines and taking them in new directions.

Mike understands that mātauranga Māori has been a journey for all of us. She explains how PLD changed: "We now approach things differently. Initially the focus was on how we taught to connect with different student communities, but this has changed to what is Science and what do we value in Science alongside what we teach in Science."

Mike is really pleased to see teachers getting to

grips with mātauranga Māori, and connecting to local contexts and issues that are relevant to the students. Mike says it has been a pleasure to hear all the great stories from educators on what they are doing to engage with their local area and the mātauranga Māori of that area.

Thoughts on the curriculum changes and the new standards

Mike says, "While changes are perhaps not perfect, I think the general direction is right and it will sort itself out in the wash. Thirty-two standards was over the top, teachers and students were buckling under the load."

"I really like the NoS flavour of the Science standards; I am pleased with how they came together and that you can apply them across any context. I wasn't as involved in CB or PESS - but I felt that they make sense. The key to moving forward is to get teachers together and working collaboratively. We only have the words of the standards and supporting documents to use to help figure it out."

Mike compares the changes in education to science. "Science is about that really - changing the way we look at the world, changing our understanding of what is happening as new evidence comes through. We need to do the same in education."

What is next?

While Jenny is continuing contract work with other organisations, Mike says she is officially retiring - she has a long list of jobs to get finished around the house.

But she is not giving up supporting ASTA or *Mike's News* just yet. She enjoys reading about science and connecting with scientists greatly, and she still has a string of articles she wants to write where she sees a need to support teachers. We can look forward to *Mike's News* each Sunday morning as she sends it out before her morning walk.

NZASE have been very fortunate to have two such insightful individuals, who have brought so much passion and integrity to their roles as science communicators.

NZASE PLD will now be carried out by Linda Haycock for secondary and Greta Dromgool for primary.