**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

esports, sports, people, high schools,  teams,  Christchurch City Libraries,  League of Legends, rangatahi,

Clare

0:13

Kia ora and welcome to Ngā Kōrero Auaha Creative Stories, a podcast from Te Kete Wānanga O Ōtautahi, Christchurch City Libraries. This is a series in which we share some of our most impactful and interesting stories happening within libraries. I'm your host Clare. To carry on from our previous episode where we spoke with Henry Lawton, the CEO of Victory Up about hosting esports in the library, here's a conversation between Bridie and one of the teams who competed in the 2021 League of Legends tournament. These rangatahi, led by their coach Christal Leung, played competitively for Riccarton High School and use the Upper Riccarton computer lab for coaching sessions, sometimes twice a week. As a result of the high attendance within the library for esports training and some diligent work from Christchurch City Library staff sports Canterbury, through a Christchurch City Council grant, funded the purchase of some unique eSports equipment, keyboards and computer mice optimized for gaming. Access to this equipment for free has previously been inaccessible for many rangatahi. And we'd like to take this opportunity to thank Sports Canterbury for their willingness to get involved and tautako this kaupapa. Later on in the episode we'll hear from Evie Howell, an esports and events commentator about their experience with working within a growing industry in New Zealand. For now, we'll let the kids and Crystal introduce themselves.

Bridie

1:42

Okay, I am here with the coach and the Upper Riccarton High School League of Legends team. I'd like you guys to introduce yourselves starting with Vladimir.

Vladimir

1:52

I’m Vladimir, and I'm a high school student at Riccarton High School. I'm year 12 and I like math.

Christal

2:01

Cool, my name is Christal and I'm, I was one of the student teachers of Riccarton High School. And then I decided to join the esports team. And now I'm the coach of Riccarton High School esports team

Bryan

Speaker 5

2:14

anyways, I'm Bryan. That's me. I'm year 12 as well. From Riccarton High School. And unlike Vlad, I hate maths because I'm so good at it. (laughter) I know.

Bridie

2:29

So my next question is, Are you guys good? (Good. Yeah) yeah, you guys good at league?

(Good at League(laughter))

Clare

2:34

League of Legends is a strategy game with multiple players facing their opponents in an online battle arena, where each player controls a character who has a special set of skills.

Vladimir

2:48

I wouldn't actually say I'm good, but like, (Oh) I'll say I'm like, around average, I suppose. Because I'm, I'm currently playing three accounts. And those three accounts, I'm trying to get them to platinum and all. But yeah, tough, tough, tough.

Bridie

3:04

Christal, you're obviously good because you're a coach?

Christal

3:07

Well, it, I think it really depends on how you define good. Because my main role is a support but I reckon my map readings and concepts and like timings of stuff are pretty good. So I think that's why I'm still playing this game or else I would just be really jilted and deleted this game like ages ago. Yeah.

Bridie

3:29

I really wanted to talk to you Christal specifically about something which is the difference between coaching an esports team and coaching, like, a real sports team. And like what people say to you when you say “I coach, you know, I coach a League of Legends team versus what people might say to you when you say I coach a soccer team.

Christal

3:51

Yeah, to be honest, I think the concept of having an esports team is still being challenged nowadays, because people don't really consider esports as sports. But well, it really depends on the definition of sports. Some people think that chess is a sport, some people think pool, table pool is a sport but like both of those doesn't really involve like a lot of body movement, like really sweaty, you know how like your traditional sports is. But in my opinion, a esports team compared to a traditional sports team, esports team is way harder to coach than like a usual, let's say football team or a swimming team. Because esports is still new and not a lot of people have developed like a really good way to coach yet. It's not like hey, you, you need to run like three laps before you get into the football field. Like we didn't we don't really have that kind of warm up. And then, even though eSports is the easiest sport to set up, for example, like with League of Legends, you only need like five people in five computers and you basically, you can like roll onto the game. But the thing is, because it is so easy to access, the chance of failing and losing is more high as well. And it's, and this hits students way harder than a football game. Because one game is about, it takes about like 30 to 45 minutes, is pretty fast. And if, if the game is one sided, it can be finished and done in 15 minutes, like surrender early. So this kind of failure actually hits students a lot. And think about, if you, if you lose like one game, and then you have like, okay, nevermind, we can go can go for a second game. And then you go for the second game, and then you lose again. Still, okay, I can go for the third game, yeah? And then you go through the third game, you lose it. And then the fourth game, you lose it. And then the fifth game, you lose it, you lost five games in a row, it's so hard for students to pick it up again.

Bridie

5:57

Whereas you guys can just keep playing and keep playing and keep losing or keep winning

Christal

6:02

Or keep winning. But, but there's, and I think like this is a really valuable lesson for everyone to learn. Because in real life, society, you don't always get to win. Like you always have a lot of hard times. Things, things are usually not in your way, you know, and I really hope that my students or even my team can learn this kind of, the add the good attitude or correct attitude to facing their failures.

Bridie

6:30

Resilience. Yeah. What about you guys? Do you guys struggle with, like, talking to your friends and being like, “Oh, I'm on the sports team, rather than the rugby team”, or your parents being like, “Oh, mum and dad, I'm joining, I'm joining a team where we play a video game versus I'm joining a team where we kick a ball around”?

Vladimir

6:49

Mmm, not really because my, my family supports me on playing games. (Cool.) And my friends do like playing games as well. And so like, they were actually surprised that I joined the esports team. And then they were like, oh, I want to join us well, and then they were like, maybe next year.

Bryan

7:05

My, my parents. I told them about the esports. And I don't think they care. But when I play video games at home, they get mad at me because you know, I don't do work and stuff. And like, for my friends, some of my friends just make fun of me, for like, being the esports, you know, team. And yeah, I don't know. Yeah.

Bridie

7:30

We talk, we've been talking a lot about like, destigmatizing. With gaming, like what is the stereotype of a kid who sits inside playing games all day versus like what we see at esports competitions, where you see like, the champions all, like, cheering for each other. Or like, after you guys have a really good game, you all are hugging and high fiving and hanging out. And you know what I mean?

Vladimir

7:53

For me, right, it's more like, a passion. And like, it's actually what you want to do. And like continuous game will, will make you actually very, very tired. It's just like, actually just playing like a real sport itself.

Bridie

8:13

Yeah. Do you get sort of like the mental exhaustion as well? Yeah. Clicking exhaustion. Your hands get sore? Yep. Yep,

Christal

8:21

Yeah, and I think, I kind of think the stereotyping of gaming has changed over the years as well. So since, since there is a thing called League of Legends world tournament some like some teams, some players are having like really amazing performance, they even come out and become one of like, the brand leaders of some kind of brand, does that make sense? Yeah, so it brings finances into, yeah, like that kind of thing. So I think the old stereotyping of gaming is kind of from like, our older generation saying that “Oh, you don't, you don't do anything, you just stay at home and play games, and you don't really see the sunshine. Yeah, you're basically drinking like Coke, and like, eating junk food and sitting in front of a computer, like that kind of stereotype. But, like looking at, looking at pro gamers nowadays, a lot of them are actually fit, like, physically fit.

Bryan

9:16

I've heard that some coach for the team, they actually make the players do exercise. Yeah, stay in, stay in shape.

Bridie

9:25

So have you guys been working out before your games then?

Vladimir

9:28

Um, yeah, I do some sports.

Bridie

9:30

So, so you play, you do physical sports as well. Because this is, I think people often think that you have to be one or the other. Like you have to do one thing or the other. Rather than that you can do both. But a lot of you guys have a lot going on. Like I know a lot of you guys have part time jobs. A lot of you do physical sports after school and then you come and play esports. Brian, you're laughing? Do you do sports?

Bryan

9:52

Yeah I do. Actually, I'm in the Ultimate Frisbee team. And I'm really good at it.

Bridie

9:59

There you go, confidence is important. What sports do you do?

Vladimir

10:03

As of now? I'm trying to get into volleyball team, and I'm doing Taekwondo.

Bridie

10:08

Ah, that's wicked. Yep. Yeah, that's really cool.

Christal

10:13

The thing about esports is like, this is a really good way for you to contribute the school. Your high school life will be so different if you get to join the school, get through, get to, like contribute something to the school. And you're looking back and you're all like “Oh, yeah, when I was in high school, you know, my team made it into the national”, like, you got a story to tell people. And I think that's like the satisfaction for people to join, like a sports team.

Vladimir

10:39

I used to play League of Legends since like, back um four years ago. And so I learned that there's esports for League of Legends. And I was like, oh, I was interested. And I tried joining it. And yeah, it was actually fun. Very, very fun. (Hey, you sound so surprised!) Yeah. Because like, I didn't expect it to be like, very intense. (Yeah.) But then when you're actually in game, wow. It's like a different kind of mood. (Yeah.)

Bridie

11:04

Do you guys have any like future aspirations in gaming? Is it something you’re just thinking like, I'll just do it at school? Or do you think like, I'll join a university sports team, I'll become a streamer, I'll become the next biggest pro. You think about that ever?

Vladimir

11:16

I'm actually currently I'm streaming as well. (There you go.) I'm streaming on Twitch.

Clare

11:24

Twitch is a streaming service that enables people to live stream to others, especially to broadcast video games. The streamers are playing to the audience.

Vladimir

11:33

I'm trying to stream on Facebook as well. I'm trying to grow some channels, but slowly growing there, and yeah, surely, hopefully,

Bridie

11:42

Did you guys use the libraries before, you came into play esports?

Vladimir

11:46

Yep. Yeah, I use library for reading books and for studying as well. (Yeah.) And I also use it for to meet up with friends just to have a group study. (Hang out?) Yeah.

Bridie

11:58

Crystal did you use the library?

Christal

11:59

Um, I like to read but I only read nonfiction books.

Bridie

12:04

Bryan?

Bryan

12:05

I mean, for me, I don't really read a lot. (Yeah.) Well, I guess, to be fair, I don't read books a lot. I usually read like, books online, like, you know, like, manga, stuff like that. (Yeah.) I mean, I do read like, non-manga books, but I still do it online.

Bridie

12:26

We have a bunch of manga at the library, have you read, I bet you’ve read it all? (Yeah, laughter.) You must have taken out stacks and stacks of it. What do you guys think libraries are going to turn into in the future? Do you think that it's something that's dying? Or do you think, cos a lot of people say that, a lot of people are like “Oh, libraries are dying, libraries are dying.” Or do you think that if we work really hard, we can make some kind of new building that does really cool stuff? Have you guys ever thought about that before in your life?

Christal

12:56

I think library will slowly become a community centre.

Bridie

13:00

This is what I often think about too (Yeah,) sort of like, the word library may be being used to encompass something that is different than what we might imagine it as being. So like, yeah, there can be books, but maybe there's a gym, maybe there's a huge esports space with like a bunch of really cool tech, you know, VR kits and like all that kind of stuff.

Christal

13:21

Yeah. And especially like nowadays, people connect way easier than before, like we have Facebook, we don't, we don't really con, we don’t really contact people with like saying write a letter and wait two days until it arrive. We just flick them a text and then we meet up, right? So I think ah, same as reading books, reading books no longer become an individual kind of activity. Does that make sense? So I think library is going to slowly change into a community centre, which connects people with like, same hobbies or even reading the same books. That kind of idea. Yeah.

Bridie

13:57

It's really cool. I think that like, doing this with eSports is a really good way to, kind of like, spearhead that and kind of get it going and to get young people specifically into the libraries who are passionate about this, like you guys are, and to be able to, in the future, keep growing it and keep making libraries change. This is all really wonderful. Gery, you have some things you'd like to say? Do you want to hop on one of the mics?

Gery

14:22

I do want to go back to the stereotypes, (Yeah, let's talk about stereotypes) gaming and how it is like stigmatized a lot. But as we're starting into, as we're like, going into more of like, because we have the League of Legends World Cup, that's starting to be more popularized. I'm pretty sure this one for 2K as well basketball game and Valorant.

Clare

14:49

Valorant is a shooter game in a shooter universe with a five person shooter team.

Gery

14:56

As it becomes more mainstream, a lot of people are more, are introduced and exposed to it. And they start to see that, oh, maybe this isn't so bad for our kids, because it really isn't, well, too much of anything is bad. But with gaming, it's, it's like you can use it for companionship and meeting new people, experiences like that. And it's really good to just like, have real world experiences and like, even developing your social skills, even if it's just through a mic. (Yeah, that's lovely.)

Clare

15:38

Our final conversation is between Bridie and Evie Howell. Evie is an esport commentator, one of the many new careers to fall out of the growing esports industry. Much like other sports commentators, Evie commentates during live streams, often with a co-host, and uses their knowledge of the games being played to break down what's happening for the audience, as well as build excitement. This is even more crucial during video game events, as the knowledge gap between enthusiasts and casual audiences is often higher than that of traditional sport.

Bridie

16:09

First of all, Evie thank you so much for speaking with me. You are of course a commentator for Victory Up and various other gaming, gaming outlets. I wanted to talk to you first up about commentary as a technical skill. What kind of training did you have to do to get into that industry, a specific industry like this, which is so niche in New Zealand? And how was that for you?

Evie

16:33

I think I was very fortunate in how I got into it. I think a lot of it was right place right time. I had a background in comedy and in improvisation. In high school, the only thing that got me through it really was theatre sports. It was really fun to do little, you know, three to four minute, kind of improvised skits on, on stage for, as a part of, a little competition, as well as some, up to hour long performances just completely improvised. I guess it's a huge skill, because you never know what's going to happen when you're commentating esports. So you've got to be very flexible and agile in terms of what's going on. And I guess the other part is just having an, a huge interest in esports in general.

Bridie

17:24

I have talked to you about this before, but I am a library assistant. And so I was helping to host the Upper Riccarton and Burnside High School teams. And like, you talk about your experience in high school, with your friends doing this and it is exactly what I witnessed. Basically, was like walking into this room, seeing all these kids together, the, the teamwork, the communication skills, like all of these things these kids are able to do as a result of, of gaming, and it's in a space that they might not be otherwise accepted in.

Evie

17:59

I think it was on my final years of high school. We were in a psychology class, and we were kind of talking about what makes a sport. But yeah, we had all the jocks like throwers, footballers, and I played football as well, so like, I understood that sport aspect. Um, but I well because the conversation was brought up of “Is esports a sport?” Because we were talking about, kind of, how labels and things work in the psychology class or something. Yeah, sport is defined as a, I’m not going to get this exactly right, but I think if you Google it, it's something like a competition between a, an individual or a team resulting in a common goal that exerts physical energy. Yeah, I don't know. It's just something that I've been so adamant about, that sports is a sport that provides that community, it provides that teamwork, the game day preparation that practices the, you know, intense moment of that, you know, victory really

Bridie

19:03

Yeah, I think the teamwork thing is something I am a big fan of. As someone who works in a library, you know, and cares about community primarily over, over anything else, watching these kids form these really powerful bonds. And like, yes, they can be critical of each other. Because, you know, that's what people do when they're in a team and everyone, everyone's driving each other to be to be the best, but like when they win, and there's the hugs, and that (well not in Covid times) but usually, most of the time, there's the hug. Yeah, ideally, ideally, there's the high fives and it's just, it's just all, it's so, it's so wonderful, and something that I really wanted to do. Talk about destigmatizing gaming and, you know, wanting people to take it seriously as a, as a sport and as something that as a competition exactly, and as something that organizations like libraries or city council should, should endorse and should be, should be a part of and I think that voices like yours are extremely powerful in, in doing that.

Evie

20:09

Thank you. Yeah, I'm, I'm so stoked that I can, I can be around to, to build that. Yeah. Because like, if you look at professional like CSGO or Valorant, you see it and in between each of those rounds, they're like fist pumping, they’re high fiving each other, yeah let's go. Yeah. Yeah. It's, it's yeah, togetherness in that spirit. That's, um, so I'm really glad I can, I can build that.

Bridie

20:33

I wanted to talk to you as well about your experience hosting for Victory Up and hosting for Canterbury as well.

Evie

20:39

Yeah. It was well above my expectations. Honestly, like, so I am studying at the University of Waikato and the esports, kind of, club and the presence there is amazing. It's something that's growing and yeah, should really be taken seriously. And as a kind of message to other universities to have that community. I was, I was kind of blown away with how much support there was for, for these high school kids.

Evie

21:11

I think, I think also, gaming as a whole and certainly esports legitimizing gaming and giving kids a career path to follow through. It's, I think, a refuge for some kids. Certainly, some of the kids I know and have helped just to build, make accounts, or even just like explained the very, very basic tenants of the game. These kids are not sometimes welcome on the field, or if they're not welcome, they don't feel comfortable.

Evie

21:43

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. I wanted to talk about that as well. But yeah, not every, not every, for some people, PE is your least favourite subject. For some, for some kids, it is a nightmare to go and have to run around. And so, in my opinion, as long as you're, as you're, as you're , physically, if you're walking the dog, or if you're, you know, riding your bike to school and back, why not spend your afternoons practicing esports and whatnot.

Bridie

22:13

I was wondering, we were wrapping up soon, but I wanted to know, is there anything you'd like people to know about? Is there anything that you are commentating soon or casting for soon or working towards at the moment that's really exciting?

Evie

22:27

Yeah, so Victory Up. We're doing another one in December, I think.

Bridie

22:34

Yeah, that's right.

Evie

22:36

Yeah, as I'll be, I'll be coming down to Christchurch to do some events and you can see my face there as well as, ah, Auckland Armageddon as well. Assuming that all is all thumbs up and good, we'll be casting the finals of the New Zealand Rocket League. Yeah, the New Zealand Rocket League Championship, I think I think it's called but um, yeah, University of Waikato is hosting it. So we'll have a stand there. And we'll be, I think it's on the Saturday of Auckland. As we'll see. Yeah, teams that have been working hard for… there was a split that lasted ten and there was a split that lasted seven or eight. Yeah. And so the top four teams to be split have been into a knockout stage. And yeah, we've got our final three. We've got a loser's bracket final and our grand final coming up. So that is going to be super exciting to do live in Armageddon. (Oh, wow.)

Bridie

23:40

That sounds really pumping.

Evie

23:41

Yeah, so that's, that's, that's what's on the card for the rest of the year. As for next year, I'm, I'm an open book and I'm ready for it.

Bridie

23:50

That's awesome. That's what I like to hear. I think you crushed it. Thank you so much.

Clare

23:56

With that, we conclude our episode. Since the 2020 tournament reference throughout these two podcasts, the libraries have launched straight back into hosting esports training and placement sessions for new tournaments. In the coming year, we expect to see rangatahi using our facilities to train for League of Legends, Valorant, Teamfight, Tactics, Rocket League, and more. We've also seen the establishment of Esports Ōtautahi, led by programming specialist Danny McNeil. Esports Ōtautahi aims to continue to grow and cultivate esports throughout Canterbury. You can get involved and find out more of them at [EsportsŌtautahi.nz](https://www.esportsotautahi.nz/). You can follow along with the upcoming Victory Up hosted tournaments at [Victory-Up.com](https://www.victory-up.com/) where you can view placements and register for workshops. There's also heaps of information about esports in New Zealand on [esf.nz](http://esf.nz/), the official esports New Zealand Federation. Thank you for listening to our exploration of esports and Christchurch City Libraries, Te Kete Wananga O Otautahi. You can find more episodes of [Ngā Kōrero Auah](https://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/library-stories/)a on our website, [Christchurch City libraries.com](https://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/) and most podcast platforms. Until our next episode, ka kite ano.