

# Safe Beaches, Shellfish, and You

## NEST's Online Storytelling and Engagement Platform

The New England Sustainability Consortium (NEST) is a cross-institutional, interdisciplinary team of sustainability researchers in New England. NEST's goal is to enhance the use of science in decision-making in New Hampshire, Maine, and Rhode Island. Our first project was funded by a 3-year grant provided through the National Science Foundation. The project focused on the challenges and possibilities relating to sustainability for beaches and shellfish in Maine and New Hampshire, and ran from 2013-2016.

### ➔ The Goal:

#### Help people connect with NEST's work

As a University of Maine researcher on NEST, I became interested in how the public reporting of our research could complement the sustainability science goals of the project itself. NEST is dedicated to the important and challenging work of collaborating on key issues that



Photo by Bridie McGreavy.

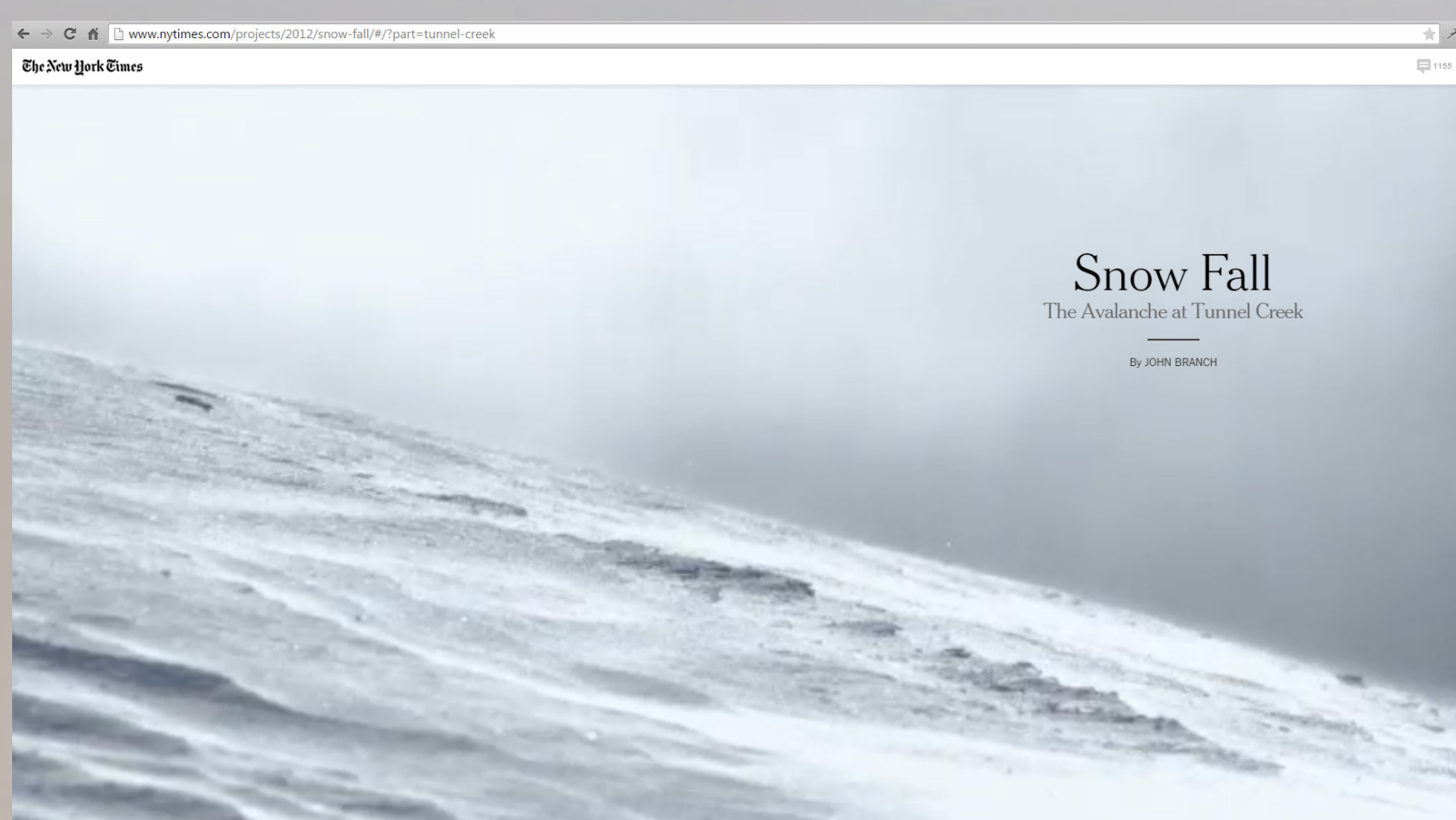
affect people across the region, and I quickly realized that as a storyteller I needed to go beyond telling people *about* our work and instead seek to involve them *in* our work. Sustainability science is about bringing people together to solve complex problems, so I wanted to use a similar approach in the way I reported about what NEST was doing.

### ➔ The Idea:

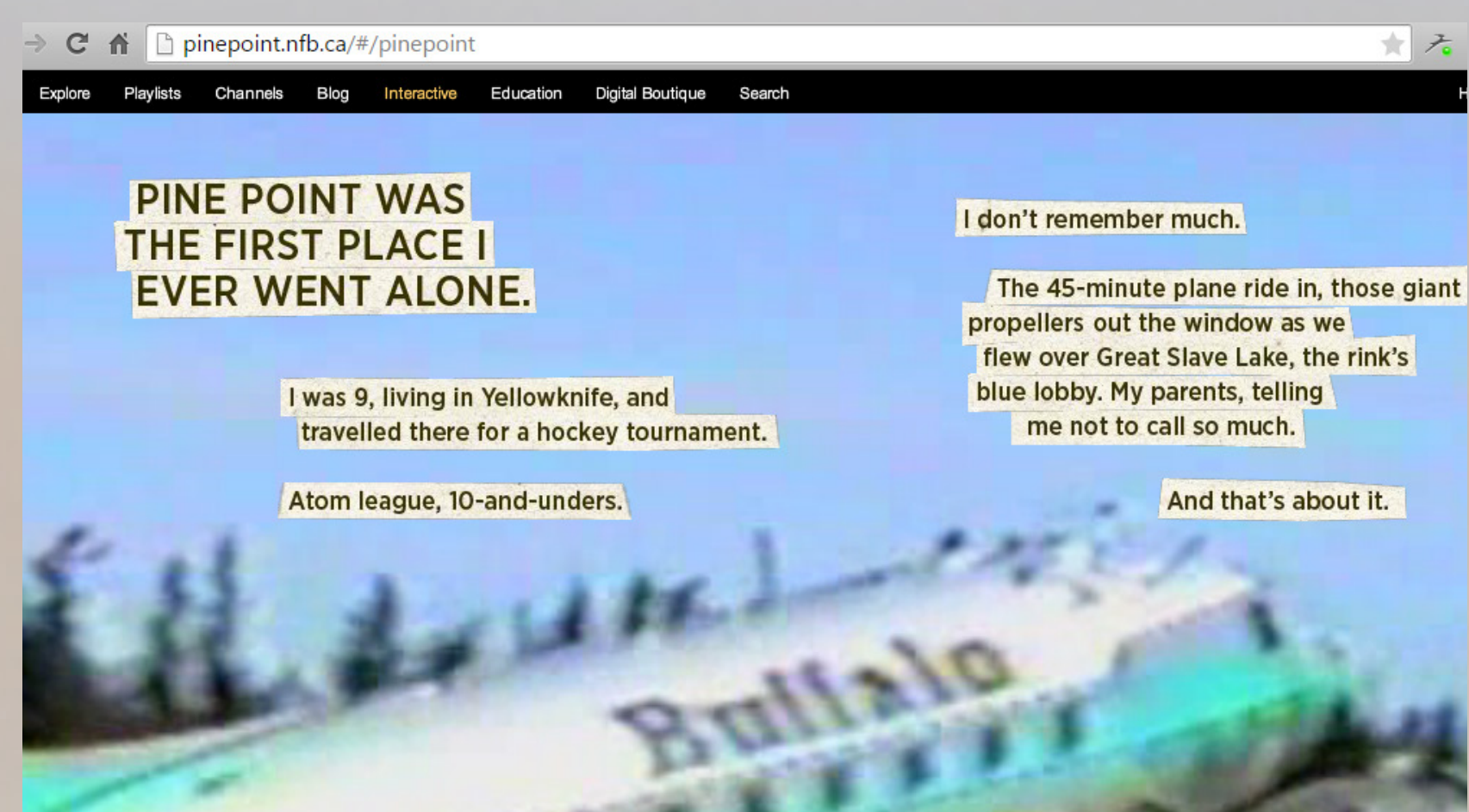
#### Using media production as applied research

I chose to share NEST's work through *transmedia storytelling*. Media scholar Henry Jenkins describes this approach as "the art of world making" (*Convergence Culture*, page 21). Unlike multimedia, where different types of media are collapsed into singular, rigid forms, transmedia storytelling lets each piece illuminate a different aspect of the story, with each unique fragment working with the others to provide a rich narrative.

To complete this project, I used a range of reporting methods to tell researcher and stakeholder stories, including video, audio, writing, photos, and interactive graphics. I like to think of transmedia as an ecological approach to storytelling, where a project is a habitat in which different "species" of story segments participate together in a larger system. This means that storytelling itself can be inspired by ecological concepts.



*Snow Fall* is an online in-depth news story by the New York Times. It is presented primarily through written text and supplemented by short videos, dynamic animated visuals, and photographs. *Snow Fall* delivers an in-depth account of a large avalanche near the Stevens Pass ski area in Washington state that claimed the lives of several skiers after they went into the backcountry on February 19, 2012.

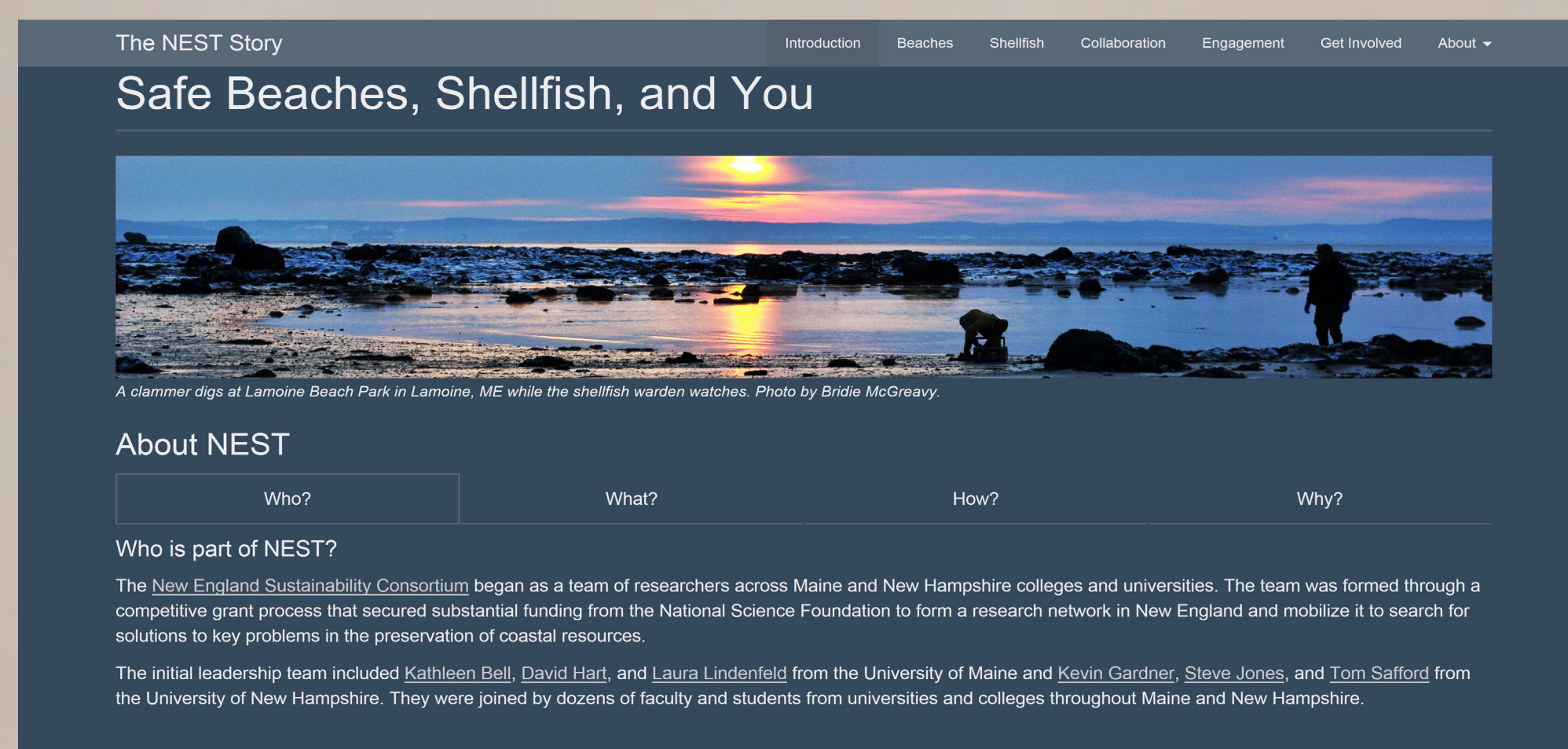


*Welcome to Pine Point* is an online documentary by Paul Shoebridge & Mike Simons. It recounts the rise and fall of a small mining town in Canada's Northwest Territories. Using a range of narrative approaches, the site weaves the life stories of past town residents with those of the producers themselves and explores how the mine's closing caused a national diaspora as residents lost their hometown.

### ➔ The Result:

#### A new transmedia storytelling website

After making media stories with NEST researchers and stakeholders, I used a web development framework called *Bootstrap* to compile and present these story fragments in an interactive package. The final website includes 9 pages organized by topic and invites the visitor to explore the story in whatever manner they wish. For example, you can simply skim the text, focus on the interactive material, or work your way through the entire website linearly. I hope that through your interaction with the site, we can remake the story together.



Transmedia is important because it engages people. Beyond simply telling about or even showing the collaborations already going on through NEST, this website embraces a transmedia philosophy that allows you as a reader, visitor, and co-producer to put yourself in the story, participate in its telling, and imagine your Consortium differently. The final and most important piece of this transmedia story is you and what you will do after having heard about NEST.

## Visit the site: [nest.maine.edu](http://nest.maine.edu)



To explore the project, simply point your web browser to the link above. You can use any device that has access to the internet, including a desktop or laptop computer, Android or Apple tablet, and even your smartphone. I've designed the website so that it will automatically scale the content to the screen size of the device you're using.

### Acknowledgements:

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