



Ngā mihi o te Kirihimete from Inspiring Communities

In 2008, Inspiring Communities was created by a small group of people who believed in the power of place. It was heartening to hear leading world thinker Margaret Wheatley echo this belief. Spending time with her in Wellington reaffirmed that our collective work to unleash the potential of communities does matter!

A few highlights to mark the year's end :

- co-hosting with Treasury, a Community-led Development (CLD) learning workshop with central government officials in Wellington.
- sharing the world community development stage alongside other great Kiwis at the IACD Conference in Glasgow.
- co-designing and beginning delivery of a three year CLD training programme for DIA's Community Operations staff around Aotearoa
- working with Tamarack to prepare a [knowledge review](#) for the JR McKenzie Trust on the Potential of Collaborative Place Based Initiatives to Reduce Child Poverty.
- building our Inspiring [Neighbourhoods Action Plan from stakeholder priorities and ideas for strengthening Kiwi neighbourhoods](#)
- twice welcoming back Jim Diers who again inspired another 19 communities with his 'neighbour power' messages! The Auckland master class we co-hosted with Jim in Auckland was especially fantastic!
- seeing the [Neighbours Day Aotearoa](#) campaign thrive– including in the Bay of Plenty thanks to Bay Trust's support. We are looking forward to supporting NDA in its expansion to promote neighbourliness 365 days a year!

Thanks for being part of this journey - it's about all of us!

Safe and happy holidays to you and your whanau.

Barbara, Denise, David, Peter and Megan from the Inspiring Communities Team

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Inspiring Communities News

Ross & Kumara – together mining community gold

Two small rural West Coast communities - Ross and Kumara, have joined together to pave the way forward in building strong, sustainable and connected communities united by a strong connection to their proud Gold Rush history.

Their initiative is supported by The Department of Internal Affairs in a 3 year Community Development Scheme, employing a Community Development Officer.

Kumara Residents Trust and Westland Region Environment Network have formed a partnership, working closely alongside the Community Development Officer Mike Keenan (Mike having not long finished his tenure as Mr Wild Foods in Hokitika). Both communities envisage sharing ideas and opportunities as well as to further being able to learn off each other.

The West Coast Gold Rush history is what helps unite these two towns. The Chinese miners' history has given them both the opportunity to start Chinese Memorial Garden projects, which acknowledges their history on the West Coast. These gardens are being strongly supported by the Chinese community. In February 2014, the Guangdong Association hosted a Fund Raising Dinner in Christchurch, raising \$100,000 towards both planned Chinese Memorial Gardens.



Already, Kumara and Ross have begun to enhance their townships with plantings along their streets, Ross is lined by Flowering Cherry's and Kumara has Liquid Amber lining the main street. Both towns have community driven Information Centres promoting the important historic stories their towns have to tell.

These towns have small populations of roughly 350 people each; both communities have the opportunity to grow. Some years ago, neighbouring milling industries closed one by one and unfortunately so did the small businesses in the towns.

With now a change in attitude and focus, new business opportunities have already arisen in a short space of time. As momentum builds, the communities are exploring further opportunities to help

promote the towns along the newly formed West Coast Wilderness Trail. The trail is part of the National Cycle Trail network and runs through Kumara and finishes/starts in Ross.

Tourism is a big aspect of this new direction, both communities are working on upgrading walking tracks, historic cemeteries and utilising their assets; including domain venues, community halls, swimming baths etc. Rivers, lakes, the stunning coastline along the Tasman Sea, mountain biking, historical walks, tramping and gold are all on our door step. These are just some of the things that these communities want to share with visitors to the district.

The current prediction is that 400,000 Chinese visitors will come to the West Coast region in the 2015 tourist season. We we are excited that the Chinese Gardens will be a very special way to honour their Chinese history in our communities, giving them another reason to stop and spend time in our two small towns.

Kumara Residents Trust was the winner of the 2014 Trust Power Community Supreme Award in the Heritage and Environment category; mainly judged on the amount of volunteer hours on a monthly and yearly basis for transforming the visual of their township.

The Ross group, WRENIS won the Heritage and Environment category; this was for replanting of Oak trees for servicemen and women of Ross Township, planting of memorial trees around the local domain and the mapping of the Chinese Gold mining trail in the surrounding hillsides.

These two groups are encouraged by their communities and look forward to many great projects and events to see the communities growing for future generations.

Story written by: Biddy Manera, Fiona Pollard, Kerrie Fitzgibbon & Mike Keenan.

Margaret Wheatley

We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting For

The recent “*Community is the Answer*” workshop co-hosted by Inspiring Communities and [Inclusive New Zealand](#) was fuel for the heart and mind. Not only did the 140 attendees get to learn from leading global thinker Margaret (Meg) Wheatley, we were also enriched by some of New Zealand's community-led change stories and emergent thinking.



The workshop, an extension of the [Community is the Answer](#) hosted by the International Association of Community Development Conference in Glasgow, brought people together from across the country. A key note speaker in Glasgow, Meg noted her own journey and quest to see who holds what wisdom in the world. She contrasted increasingly destructive modern western culture with its fast paced corporate, consumer focus and hierarchical nature that tells us to live alone, with the African notion of [ubuntu](#) which reflects we don't exist alone, that being human and connected to others is at the essence of our collective being.

The importance of relationships and connections was also reflected in three local stories and observations and learnings around resilient leadership from Margy Jean Malcolm.

The first story came from Gisborne. Manu Caddie from Te Ora Hou Tairāwhiti shared how [Tākina ō Tātou Tamariki](#), based in Kaiti, was making really great progress in increasing the capacity of local residents to care for each other. Now in year 4 of a 10 year timeframe, intentionally focusing on building relationships, trust and resident-led activities at street and neighbourhood level has resulted in positive increases to social capital indicators such as knowing the names of local children and levels of social contact with neighbours. This is making a real difference to life in the neighbourhood and is also a likely contributor to significant reductions in local crime statistics and fewer notifications to Child Youth and Family.

In the second set of local examples, Wellington City Council shared how by taking a proactive approach to connect local residents in local spaces and places is helping grow a stronger shared sense of community in Strathmore. Going to the local community and asking what they want help with, seeking multiple contributions and making possibility visible is all part of the change that's now happening in the suburb. Similarly, seeing tenants living in Council-owned housing as potential community developers has taken the Council's City Housing Team on a very different journey from traditional asset managers. For example, seventy Council hosted BBQs in different Council owned housing complexes has helped build a culture of a tenant-led action and local residents now lead community building projects themselves – from community gardens, to murals, to local newsletters, cooking programmes, Christmas events and much more. For more about City Housing's amazing success story see [here](#).



The final local presentation shared success through being brave, working collaboratively and giving people opportunities to participate and contribute in many different ways has also born amazing results for [Berhampore School](#). Faced with massive staff and student turnover and the realisation that no one was coming to save them, in 1997 new Principal Mark Potter and his courageous Board of Trustees made a decision to "help people no matter what."

This has seen the school:

- opening up the school's classrooms for after hours use by community groups
- starting up a playgroup in the school led by local Mums from a variety of ethnic groups to strengthen family connections with the school and learning opportunities for under 5s
- partnering with a private provider to upgrade the school's pool facilities
- staying open to all ideas that walk through the door – which have including keeping bees on the school grounds and creating a values based programme with the local golf club.
- supporting a “Whanau Army” approach that embraces parents who want to do things other than go to meetings. This has helped launch new initiatives such as the successful quarterly parent-led market days which provide new income earning opportunities for both local whanau and the school.

In the afternoon, Margy Jean Malcolm challenged some of our dominant assumptions about leadership, exploring leadership as learning and offering some frameworks and strategies for leading amidst complexity. As noted in her recent paper to the [ANZTSR Conference](#), good leadership is full of paradoxes and polarities – like being vulnerable and creating space for others to contribute, while at other times being decisive and leading from the front. Using the [analogy of tides](#) moving forward and back, she encouraged us to think how leadership responses are always ‘in flow’, and the shadow sides of leadership qualities when things are taken to extremes; and the resources we can draw on to work with those polarities.

Reflecting on patterns emerging from stories she'd heard, Meg offered the following insights:

- too many people have been given up on, declared as ‘broken’ and impossible to fix. Having been defined as collective needs, syndromes and illnesses, experts have blamed people for their own ‘misfortunes’, taking no responsibility themselves for failed programmes and processes. In this way, experts have distanced themselves from people with problems as human beings and in doing so, have put “their potential in a box.”
- the human spirit is never extinguishable. It can be illuminated and ignited – energy is created when we bring people together.
- humans want and need to be together, we also want to care and serve one another. “What benefits you, benefits me, I exist through you – you exist through me”. There is an inherent faith in human goodness, and we are keepers of the faith, despite the detractors often around us.
- we are curious inventors who want to learn things that benefit our children – we want to find a better world for them.
- in creating connections, none of us can be fixed in a role and in fact, no one role is big enough to do all the things that need to be done! We also need to be willing to ‘let go’ our professional labels and see our own gifts, talents and potential.
- there is never just one problem or solution – there are many. The key is to develop connections and see how things can be strengthened as a result.
- major change will not be led by big government systems, it will come from locally-led action. Even heroic individuals within governments can't save nation states. [“We are the ones we've been waiting for”](#) – a gift from the Hopi Elders.
- we need to continue working from where we are to:
 - create “human spirit sanctuaries”
 - create beauty – not just functional public spaces but ones that invite the human spirit to engage
 - reclaim the understanding and language of community and multiple meanings of success
 - be in relationship with the earth
 - notice the companions all around us
 - persevere and keep going.

“When an old culture is dying the new culture is born from a few people who are not afraid to be insecure.”

Rudolf Bahro

Click here to view [Margaret Wheatley’s Wellington interview.](#)



A Review- Jim Diers Auckland Masterclass. 21 & 22 October 2014.

There are some great locally-led projects in Auckland involving many local people, groups and organisations. Projects such as community gardens, revitalisation of shopping centres, community dining, little libraries, and enterprising waste reduction efforts - are all helping to make the places we live in, the places we want them to be.

As this movement is growing, more and more people have been calling out for some help to further develop their community building skills so they can make their places even better! So, earlier this year, Inspiring Communities developed the idea of running a masterclass on community building. A small working group that included Community Waitakere, Auckland Council, Department of Internal Affairs and Auckland North Community and Development formed and linked with Auckland Community Development Alliance, Jim Diers and three local community initiatives (Te Karanga Trust, New Zealand Ethnic Women’s Trust and Avondale Community Action). Together, contributing time rather than money, we created a two-day course for 30 practitioners who wanted to develop visioning, asset mapping and community activating skills.

Presented by Jim Diers and Denise Bijoux, with some fantastic guest appearances from Fresh Concept, Generation Zero and the Auckland Community Foundation, the workshop shared successful strengths-based models and approaches (international, national and local), built on the experience in the room and taught new skills in an ako ako manner with and in the selected communities (the Central City, Puketapapa and Avondale). Participants worked in place-based groups and spent half of a day out in the communities of their choice applying their skills in ways that were useful to the local initiatives. Thank goodness the sun shone!

As well as everyone growing new skills and friends, the local communities gained detailed knowledge and information about their places, including the beginnings of an asset map and kickstart funding of a new project each. Te Karanga Trust are developing a local newsletter, the Ethnic Women’s Trust have a food festival in mind and Avondale Community Action will populate a library of tools and stuff for community members to borrow. Starting small, using what we have and working with others to do what we can helps to make stronger, more resilient communities as well as plenty of fun!

Comments from participants;

“It was such an informative and exciting exercise, touching base with the community and looking at our community issues from their perspective. Was awesome and inspiring!”

“So many ideas generated! Lots of energy, change is do-able”

“Starting projects seems less daunting now. I feel more confident approaching people because it is with little that we can do so much.”

We think we may do it again. If you want to find out more, please contact denise.bijoux@inspiringcommunities.org.nz