

Community Development & Community-led Development

What's the Difference???

*Prepared by Inspiring Communities for the Auckland District Council of Social Services upcoming publication on Community Development and Social Change
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Background

Recently, Inspiring Communities received an email from a community builder in Canterbury struggling to find references to community-led development in her literature searches. She asked “what is the difference between community development and community-led development?” A really good question!

Community-led development (CLD) is a ‘new take’ on the long established practice of community development. In this chapter we offer our insights on community-led development practice, principles and the kinds of outcomes communities are achieving.

While there are many ways to define community (sector, interest, affinity, online etc), CLD has a distinctive focus on communities of place. Place is increasingly recognised as a useful organising platform for community strengthening as those who live, work, play, care, invest or connect to a particular place tend to have a shared vested interest in making things even better. In this way, ‘place’ can be seen to transect many aspects of community.

Here in Aotearoa, the modern origins of CLD lie in a new wave of collaborative, place-based action projects that began emerging in the early 2000s¹. In part this was a response to the hollowing out of communities that had resulted from government-led economic and social restructuring in the two decades prior². This new wave of community action was marked by a conscious shift towards exploring more collaborative approaches between sectors, agencies and local people. It also recognised that a traditional ‘services’ approach to ‘fix’ people and problems was not resulting in the significant and sustainable change in many wellbeing indicators that both communities and governments desired.

In noticing key differences between communities that were gathering strength and flourishing and those that weren’t, two key factors were initially observed. One was the quality and style of leadership. What seemed to matter was their ability to engage with others to create visions and aspirations and a belief that change was possible. Importantly also, was that external support had been made available to help create the change the community itself had visioned.

In 2008, the Community-Led Development Trust (later renamed Inspiring Communities³) was created to support and strengthen New Zealand’s emerging community-led movement. The aim was to:

- better understand community-led approaches and their contribution to positive change;
- share and spread local stories, experience and learning so that everyone benefited; and
- amplify the impact of locally-led change by connecting people, places and systems change.

¹ For example Project Lyttelton and the Ranui Action Project in West Auckland.

² Key shifts included privatisation, corporatisation, deregulation and significant welfare reforms.

³ [Inspiring Communities](#) is a small national organisation actively championing community-led development in Aotearoa. We represent a network of 3000 supporters from multiple sectors, places and organisations who believe in the ability of communities to address core issues and create positive change.

What is Community-led Development?

The essence of CLD is working together **in place** to create and achieve locally-owned visions and goals. Rather than being a model or service, CLD is a place-based planning and development approach. From learning in, and with, a number of community-led initiatives⁴ in Aotearoa, five core principles of CLD practice have been discerned:



1. Shared local visions drive action and change
2. Utilising existing strengths and assets
3. Many people, groups and sectors working together
4. Building diverse and collaborative local leadership
5. Adaptive planning and action informed by outcomes

The recent rise of ‘localism’ both in New Zealand and internationally has resulted from, and in communities proactively wanting to influence local futures. Here in Aotearoa, CLD provides a framework for acting on what matters locally in ways that empower local people to work collectively with one another **and** with other groups and organisations that have a stake or role in that place. CLD also helps mobilise local community action, effort and potential. It can also be an effective way of working for agencies, governments and communities to tackle complex community issues like family violence, high debt levels, and vulnerable children. CLD is not a silver bullet for fixing things, neither is it an approach that stands alone. The greatest gains are likely to be made when CLD is integrated with other core strategies⁵ and into core practice within different sectors. Both will assist the process of transformation, especially when there is local capacity, capability, and resources.

While not all change factors are within local communities’ reach, many still are, and greater power sharing in problem identification and solution making is helping make the most of the diverse contributions that multiple stakeholders bring. Some examples of key community achievements and enablers of locally-led change are noted on page 7.

Both in theory and in practice, CLD is emergent, and ‘what works’ is situational. For example, CLD practice can involve a whole community⁶ coming together to define its vision and future action plan. Or it can be applied to bring multiple community stakeholders together to progress an opportunity or explore root causes of a problem, and then prepare next steps. CLD can be about local residents connecting in a street or neighbourhood, building relationships and undertaking tasks or projects they decide will improve their place. Or a social service agency may embrace CLD practice to intentionally grow active participation, leadership and community contribution.

While the scale, drivers and start points for CLD in the examples above are all different, they still all incorporate CLD principles and approaches. Inspiring Communities has encouraged a broad ‘principles-based’ definition of CLD and expect that through practice, ongoing iteration and adaption of language, key concepts and terminology will be refined over time.

“CLD is common sense yet elusive. It’s hard to describe and capture because it never looks the same in two places. But it’s not what’s on the surface that counts – it’s what’s underneath that’s the most important.”

Inspiring Communities: Thinking out Loud, 2012 page 12

⁴ For more see <http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/research/understanding-and-accelerating-community-led-development-in-aotearoa-new-zealand/>.

⁵ For example local economic development, social development, service coordination, environmental restoration.

⁶ Stakeholders who live, work, play, learn, care and invest will vary depending on each community and starting point but over time will likely include a combination of residents, businesses, iwi, marae, schools, community groups and clubs, local government, government agencies, philanthropic funders and academics.

Principles in Practice

The CLD principles noted on page 2 provide useful insights on key elements of a community-led approach. With CLD however, it's not just the 'what' happens that matters, equally important is 'how' things are done. Local contexts, histories, priorities and aspirations determine how principles play out in practice as seen in the community-led stories below.

1. Shared visions drive action and change.



"Wow! E tu Mangakino! Let's Dream."

On the Same Page

Mangakino is a central North Island town of around 800. A four year Department of Internal Affairs supported "community-led development initiative" has enabled locals to work together to develop and implement local plans, reflect on changes and learning and feed these into the coming year's plans.

"Mangakino – community of choice" is their vision statement, and community engagement has been ongoing, starting with a locally designed process called "Wow! E tu Mangakino! Let's Dream". This resulted in four themes for collective action – Vibrant; Learning; Earning; Healthy, well and forward focussed.

Progress has included contributions to the Marae's re-opening, neighbourhood building, profiling local community organisations and services, creating and updating a community calendar, training and skill development for committees and locals, the establishment of new annual community events, new signage for both visitors and locals, a new heritage walking trail, more focus on youth development, and a new central township skatepark. Local organisations such as the Area School and Pouakani Marae are incorporating CLD into their practices.

Going forward there's a big focus on sustaining the good things that have developed, and more effort around youth development, enterprise, education and employment.

2. Focus on utilising existing strengths and assets



Growing Community Wellbeing

The Common Unity Project started in 2012. It is a self-funded model of community sharing, recycling and growing based on the beliefs that most of the resources required for the project are available within the local Hutt community and that every individual has something to offer.

Centred on a large garden and orchard at Epuni School that can feed every one of the 108 pupils every day, it involves local people, businesses and organisations who give of time, expertise, building and landscaping materials, seed and finance. As well as the garden, the project includes a wide range of other sustainable activities such as sewing, knitting, playgroup, fitness classes, craft and a recycled bicycle library. Often run by local people, these activities give families ways of interacting together that is educational, sustainable, fun and free of cost, and which grow strength and togetherness into the community.

3. Many people, groups and sectors working together.



Transforming Local Landscapes Together

The Kowhai Butterflies mural in Bright Street, Eden Terrace Auckland has been painted by local people working together with local businesses, the Local Board, Auckland Council and Auckland Transport. The idea started from conversations in a community garden and gathered momentum through a competition run on Facebook. The competition process kick started an upgrade for the reserve above the wall too. All these initiatives have been led by local residents.

To fund the actual painting, tea towels and pillowcases were printed to sell. Local businesses, the Albert-Eden Local Board and Auckland Council provided funds, goods and publicity. Wall owners, Auckland Transport, gave permission and are involved in the reserve upgrade. Passersby voted for the colour scheme from samples painted on the wall, with the project including a repaint of the underpass tunnel too. Here, smaller stencilled butterflies cover any tags that pop up. In the first month there has only been one tag – a butterfly!

4. Building diverse and collaborative local leadership



Shared Leadership for Future Change

Ōpōtiki is an Eastern Bay of Plenty community of about 8,500. Te Whakatōhea are tangata whenua of the township where around 4,500 people live. Once a thriving port and community, low incomes, benefit dependence and de-population have typified the area in more recent years.

Over the past decade, huge effort has been made to deepen relationships and understanding, and to progress a joint commitment to create local jobs, wealth and a prosperous future.

Iwi, along with their partners, have gained consents to farm 3,800 hectares of ocean 8km off the coast. They, and other locals, have co-invested in research and farm infrastructure and are now harvesting spat and growing mussels at a rate and quality beyond expectations. To maximise gain for Ōpōtiki, marine produce needs to be processed locally. However, the Ōpōtiki Harbour needs to be redeveloped in order for this potential and vision to be realised.

To this end, Council has brought together Iwi, regional council, community funders, economic and community development agencies to gain consents and generate support and funding for the Harbour's development. Through this long term process, leadership has been spread and shared, with input and involvement sought from many people and agencies locally, regionally and nationally. The local community have been engaged and hugely supportive at every step. There's now a united movement for positive change.

6. Adaptive planning and action informed by outcomes – learning by doing



From Reducing Debt to Creating Financial Wellbeing

Taking a community-led approach to debt reduction has meant an evolutionary journey for Good Cents Porirua, and its host organisation Wesley Community Action. Over the last 8 years, Good Cents has undertaken wide range of activities ranging from exploring debt consolidation with major banks, to convening big picture summits, to bringing all parts of the 'debt system' into the room, to creating a highly successful 8 week course.

Aimed at empowering participants to become agents of their own change, the Good Cents course itself has evolved and been refined through participant feedback. A Partners for Change Outcome Management System (PCOMS)⁷ approach also means course participants are constantly evaluating their own learning and change, as has Wesley Community Action.

As a result of learning from the Good Cents journey, Wesley Community Action has made some fundamental changes at its Cannon Creek site. Its foodbank is now a community pantry, with land surrounding the social service site turned into a large community garden. In addition, 95 new back yard gardens have been supported and a new 600 member food co-op catalysed in just 10 months.

Three Observations on Community-led Change

Despite the lack of place based policy at a national level, a wide range of community-led change efforts have sprung up throughout Aotearoa in communities large and small. These efforts are helping trigger a 're-learning' and 'remembering' about the power of local people and local places. Communities are actively inspiring other communities about what can be done!

The process of understanding, spreading and embedding community-led change in Aotearoa continues to be an evolutionary - and occasionally revolutionary one. We conclude by sharing a few key observations on the pace and process of locally-led change:

One thing leads to another - we notice that while strategic planning usefully assists the identification of outcomes and first step actions and projects, it's a process that needs to be held lightly and reviewed regularly. In practice, what people plan to do and what they end up doing can change. The 'what next' is in response to the capacities, capabilities and interests that CLD ways of working have revealed in local people and local communities as they work together. Community-led initiatives develop through harnessing the particular skills, inclinations, resources and opportunities that are available locally, or within easy reach.

Communities need to be ready – CLD is hard work, time consuming and requires some skilful and inspirational local leadership to generate momentum and participation. Where communities have little experience of collaboration, community-led development doesn't just magically happen. Effort and energy must first be spent on building the conditions for

⁷ For more see <http://www.whatispcoms.com/>

locally-led change – including strengthening relationships, establishing trust and good will, developing community conversation skills, and growing a shared sense of belonging and connection. Before people can contribute to their community, first they must feel they belong.

Small is big – in our keen desire to see progress that addressed the complex challenges communities are facing, we are often conditioned to expect and look for ‘big’ shifts that demonstrate value from our efforts and investment. The danger in looking for the big and significant shifts is that we often downplay or overlook the small yet significant changes that may have occurred for individuals, organisations and/or streets. Transformational change takes time.

Focusing first on large scale changes or projects can also risk disempowering and overwhelming people. Small, achievable projects that have visible results provide both a platform for celebration of success and encouragement for bigger next steps. It’s the iterative and cumulative effect of these small shifts that really counts – the power of the small!

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

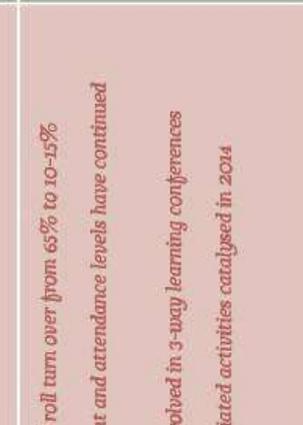
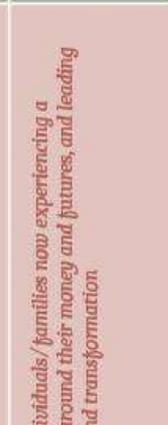
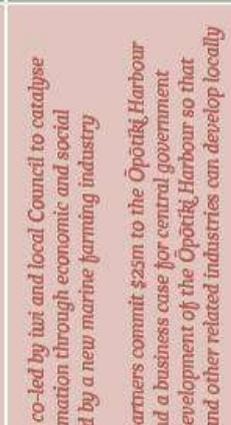
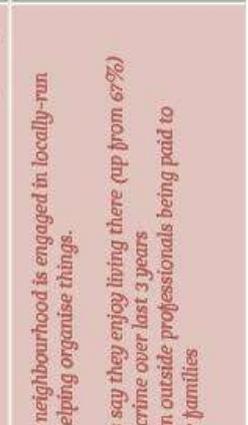
Margaret Mead

Barbara MacLennan, Denise Bijoux and Megan Courtney

Inspiring Communities, March 2015.

www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz

COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT HELPS COMMUNITIES THRIVE

THE SITUATION:	WHAT'S CHANGED:	WHAT'S ENABLED CHANGE:
<p>Small towns in decline <i>Mataura</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's readiness for school increased from 20-30% in 3 years • Community events engaging 85% of local people • Community garden feeds 65 families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest, open and transparent communication • A local task force that set priorities and championed strengths based action • New collaboration between residents and agencies/organisations
<p>Failing schools and disconnected communities <i>Victory Village, Nelson</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in school roll turn over from 65% to 10-15% • Student achievement and attendance levels have continued to increase • 90% of families involved in 3-way learning conferences • 13 new resident-initiated activities catalysed in 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School philosophies of enrolling a family and everyone matters • A community hub (co-located school-health-community facility) committed to being 'the first stop' & supporting local families • Proactively supporting and enabling local residents' needs and dreams • Local people believing in their own capacity to better manage health and wellbeing
<p>Breaking poverty cycles <i>Good Centes Porirua</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150+ low income individuals/families now experiencing a fundamental shift around their money and futures, and leading their own change and transformation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping those with debt own their situation and be their own change agents • Professionals not problem solving for people • Intentionally building relationships and having fun
<p>Transforming a local economy and community <i>Ōpōtiki</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated planning co-led by iwi and local Council to catalyse community transformation through economic and social development enabled by a new marine farming industry • Local and regional partners commit \$25m to the Ōpōtiki Harbour development plan, and a business case for central government co-investment in redevelopment of the Ōpōtiki Harbour so that seafood processing and other related industries can develop locally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturing collaborative cross-sector leadership around a common local vision • Investing in relationships locally, regionally and nationally • Persistence, patience & long term commitment • A willingness and processes for dialogue and negotiation, while keeping the aspirational local vision in focus
<p>Creating neighbourhoods that care <i>Tiakiŋa ō Tārou Tamariki - Kaiti, Gisborne & Gonville, Whanganui</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Gonville, half the neighbourhood is engaged in locally-run activities, with 1/3 helping organise things. • In Kaiti: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% of residents say they enjoy living there (up from 67%) - 31% reduction in crime over last 3 years - reduced reliance on outside professionals being paid to support vulnerable families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilising resident-led action and leadership • Intentionally building social capital (trust and relationships) in streets, which has catalysed local self help networks • Accessing statutory agency data at street level