



Long term residents have insights to share: Tangi's story.

Location: Tamaki

Theme: Working together in place

Tangi has observed changes over a forty year period in housing, health and unemployment.

Tangi Teura is originally from Rarotonga but he has lived in Glen Innes for over forty years. He purchased his rented house from NZ Housing Corporation in 1986 which he sold eleven years later as his wife had passed on and his children were ready to leave home. He used to work for Fisher and Paykel in Mount Wellington and is now aged 70 years and retired. He is actively working in the Glen Innes community as a volunteer with charitable trust Ka Mau Te Wero. He says

"Glen Innes is very compact and everything you want is here"

Yet change is a real constant in Glen Innes and, over the years Tangi has noticed many changes in his community. For example, he says the shopping centre has changed with only half the number of banks remaining, but there are more bakeries, fish shops and butchers. There are more cars now too.

A seemingly ongoing change is around housing. Much of the housing in Glen Innes is owned by Housing New Zealand and back in the 1990s Tangi's street was part of a housing transformation project. The whole street changed. He looked forward to those changes because they were rebuilding homes and improving the street. He lived through the inconvenience of construction all around him, and eventually things returned to normal. He says it is good having more people in the area and knowing that more people have got a home.

He says he is not against change, but through his interviews in the community with the Community Action Research (CAR) project, he is disturbed by the amount of upset and disagreement over Housing New Zealand plans to move people. He says

"Housing New Zealand is doing their part in refurbishing and building new housing. It is very complicated because some want to move but others do not. The main problem occurs because people are told they will be able to move back onto their land but when it comes down to it, they are unable to, because the house has been given to other people. This happened at Madeleine Avenue many years ago where the land was sold and it was probably a special case, but it has happened again more recently at Talbot Park. There is a lot of mistrust and people are sceptical about their dealings with Housing New Zealand. If Housing NZ wants to move people, they should be allowed to return to new houses on the same land or in the same locality. When people have lived in a locality for much of their life; it is very unsettling to be told they have to move away."

Tangi empathises with them and recommends that Housing New Zealand allow people to relocate back to the land they were moved from if that is their wish.

Doing things locally is a key aspect of ensuring change for Tangi. He draws on his observations on changes in local employment to illustrate his point. When he arrived in Glen Innes 40 years ago, there were big factories in central Glen Innes employing local people. There was an electronics factory in Line Road where the funeral parlour is now located and large factories in Felton Matthew Avenue. They are now gone. Tangi believes that ensuring there are local employment opportunities is critical to the health of the local community. He says "there is no point training if there are no jobs available. People need jobs locally because this is where they live."

Living in a healthy place takes personal effort too. Tangi has attended the Healthy Kai workshops and been to health workshops in Glen Innes. While he is prepared to travel to other suburbs to learn skills, he says that is difficult for some people and he believes it would be useful to have more health workshops in Glen Innes. He has also read books about nutrition. He says

"God provided this community with everything, but people are making poor choices which are contrary to God's teaching and leading to ill health. The biggest concern is what we eat. I am glad that people are starting to pick up again and that we know to eat proper food. Ill health in our community is our biggest concern."

He says he is happy with the money being invested in health in New Zealand but says it would be helpful if there were more workshops in Glen Innes on health topics. He says whole families have changed their lifestyles as he and his wife did.

This local focus is the crux of Asset based Community Development (ABCD) as John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann (1993) wrote: "...significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort."

Tangi is one of those people. He cares about Glen Innes and if his wishes could come true, everyone would eat healthy and look after themselves as well as each other, there would be new local employment initiatives in Glen Innes and people who have to be moved from their homes would be given the option of staying in new homes in exactly the same locality or on the same land as their previous home.

Intent:

Contributing to healthy places means doing things locally to build the assets of the people in the community and the community collectively.

Learnings:

- Observations about long term changes in communities by our older residents give a unique lived perspective. We can learn from people who have already experienced change and be assured that a new "normalcy" will develop.
- Change is experienced most acutely at the local level. It is important local agencies come into the community, listen to residents who have insight and adapt programmes as needed.
- Working with local communities will help them to develop their own assets and pathways for positive change. Such efforts need to be multi-level and grounded in place.

Outcomes:

- Personal change is linked to community change and understanding this from an asset based perspective helps to identify what is already strong and what is needed, as well as ways to help change that can benefit, support and include the resident community to happen.

References

Kretzmann J. and McKnight J. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research

Story by Tangi Teura and Stephanie Burgess

June 2012