



Child Rich Communities:

Aotearoa New Zealand's 'Bright Spots'



*Exploring Aotearoa New Zealand's 'Bright Spots'.
Local and community-led projects making a difference to children and families.*



Acknowledgements

Firstly, a tremendous thank you to all the people I interviewed and met through this project. Thank you for your thoughts and insights. I learnt something from conversation. I thank everyone doing their mahi to contribute to a better New Zealand/Aotearoa. I thank you for giving generously some of your precious time to this small project.

Some conversations were very thought-provoking and some were truly inspirational. Talking with so many people who are working in New Zealand's so-called 'high-deprivation' areas, has forever changed how I view 'poverty' and inequality. 'High deprivation' is a construct and a label, a short-hand, that masks other wider issues in New Zealand society today.

I would also like to thank the commissioning agencies, Inspiring Communities (David Hanna and Megan Courtney), Plunket (Claire Rumble), UNICEF (Deborah Morris-Travers) and Every Child Counts (Lisa Woods) for entrusting me with this work. At times, it felt like I was an explorer in an unknown territory, with no clear destination. Thank you for trusting me to produce something that is 'emergent' rather than 'prescribed'.

Michelle Wanwimolruk, 29 November 2015

Cover photo attribution: Colin Smith, Nelson Mail, of Victory Community Centre available at: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/nelson-mail/news/3293168/An-awesome-Victory>

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Disclaimer

The ideas in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the commissioning organisations or any of the other organisations or people referred to in the report. These ideas are provided in the spirit of enabling a free and frank exchange of ideas, and to begin a wider conversation.

Commissioning organisations:

- Inspiring Communities Trust: <http://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/>
- Royal New Zealand Plunket Society: <https://www.plunket.org.nz>
- UNICEF NZ: <https://www.unicef.org.nz/>
- Every Child Counts: <http://www.everychildcounts.org.nz/>

For more information about Child Rich Communities visit:

<http://www.everychildcounts.org.nz/resources%2BIndex/Community+led+development>

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Executive Summary

This report explores New Zealand's 'Bright Spots': – local places and community initiatives that are making a positive difference to children and families. Instead of asking about the issues and problems for 'vulnerable children' or 'high-needs families', we ask 'what's working?' What are 'bright spots' doing that is different from the rest of the country? Why are they having an impact?

A total of twenty-one initiatives were explored through informal interviews and conversations. The initiatives ranged in size and scale, age, geography, entity type (e.g. unincorporated community groups/leaders, not-for-profit agencies, corporations). Twenty of the twenty-one initiatives were based in areas that Statistics New Zealand would classify as 'high-deprivation areas' on the NZDep Index. Stakeholders from philanthropic and government sectors were also interviewed. (For a full list of interviewees see Appendix 1).

Ten key learnings from the 'Bright Spots':

1. See 'the poor' as the greatest asset, not a 'problem to be fixed'

- Local people in 'high deprivation neighbourhoods' ('the poor' in society) are the most important resource and the greatest asset. They are not 'problems to be fixed'.
- 'You can't build on broken' – if you see people as 'vulnerable', 'high-needs', or 'broken', positive change becomes very difficult. Instead, you have to build upon people's existing assets and aspirations.
- Bright Spots do not see people as 'in need' – instead they see people as strong.

2. If families are well, then children are well

Bright spots tend to work holistically. They see that children live in families, and that families live in neighbourhoods.

3. Counter the culture of disempowerment – "get people to 'dream again'"

Bright spots shared concerns about a culture of non-engagement or disempowerment that has built up in a whole section of New Zealand society. Bright spots work on shifting the 'disempowered mindset' by getting people to 'dream' again and helping people to uncover and talk about their aspirations.

4. Go beyond 'social service delivery' – walk alongside people, use 'soft doors', and ensure reciprocity

Bright spots argue that for long-term social change, we need 'more than service-delivery'. This 'more' comes through bright spots' philosophy and world view – their underlying beliefs; their approach to 'the community' and families; as well as their activities. Bright spots use 'soft doors'; they walk alongside people; they listen and ensure reciprocity. Bright Spots do not assume an 'expert role'.

5. No judgement. No stigma. Accessed by free-will

Bright spots have 'no judgement' in their work with people. In bright spots, people tend to choose to participate, rather than be coerced or forced to receive 'help'.

6. Change takes time – be there for the long-haul

All too often, funders want to see results; and they want to see them *fast*. However, real change for individuals takes time. And real change for a community takes even longer, sometimes decades.

7. Build on the positive first. (Generally, before tackling the 'negatives')

Build up positive relationships; build up a positive community identity before tackling some of the 'harder stuff'.

8. Relationships and individuals are key

There must be on-the-ground relationships of trust. The 'key person' who leads a community-led-development project is vital. However, this often means that this 'leader' is the project's "greatest asset and greatest liability".

9. Being a 'local' gives you a head start...

Some bright spots were started or championed by a member of the same community they are trying to effect change in. Being a local resident of a so-called 'high deprivation' community, gives you a strong head start.

"To do community-led work – you have to have someone from that community, who knows that community and can see its strengths"

10. ...But 'externals' can still make a difference

Some bright spots were started by an external person/organisation, for example, Te Aroha Noa, Great Start Taita, and the Common Unity Project. These bright spots had to work harder to build relationships and gain the community's trust and ownership.

Three other reflections:

1. Avoid 'either/or' thinking. Lots of different approaches work

There are some amazing neighbourhood projects, led by local-people. And there are some amazing 'social services' that are working in community development ways. Many different approaches can work.

It is important that people in 'high-deprivation' neighbourhoods recognise their own power, reignite their dreams and aspirations. And it is important to provide support for this, and resource this work. Avoid 'either/or thinking' when it comes to social change.

2. Be 'authentic'. And that's hard to replicate

'Authenticity' is important. It is about 'being real'. Not just 'talking the talk'. You need to be authentic about what you believe and say. While we live in an era that is all about 'scaling up' and replication, *authenticity cannot be transplanted*. We want to find the magic 'formula for success'. But success comes from a much deeper place – people's beliefs and world views; their approach to social change work.

3. 'We' all have a part to play in this

All of 'us' (who are 'privileged' middle and upper class people) have contributed to the culture of disempowerment. People 'shrug their shoulders' and 'give up' mainly because of the way they are looked at and treated.

People who are keen 'to help' are often, in fact, fueling the very problems they are seeking to address. This is because we have been trained to ask, and have become accustomed to asking *What are the needs? What are the gaps? What is lacking? What are the issues?*

In the words of Angela Blanchard, "we need to begin with a new question". Some new questions to start asking 'high deprivation' neighbourhoods: *What is working? What is strong? What is right? What do you dream about?* Let's start to see with 'new eyes'.

How do we know? Some stories from the bright spots

Particular bright spots highlighted in longer learning stories and learning snapshots were:

- Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki, Titirangi, Gisborne
- Te Aroha Noa Community Services, Palmerston North
- Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten's 303
- Raurimu Avenue Primary School, Whangarei
- Wesley Community Action in Waitangirua – Lizzie's story (see Appendix 2)
- Hikina te Ora! Mangakino Area School, Whānau Ora Navigation (see Appendix 2)
- Common Unity Project Aotearoa (see Appendix 2)

What helps and what hinders bright spots?

Factors that help bright spots were:

- Longer-term funding and flexible funders who are supportive, experimental, and keen to learn as well.
- Being able to measure and demonstrate impact and achievements. Assistance, guidance, capacity building in how to measure impact. Links with academics and researchers are often useful for both parties.
- Inspiration and support from other 'kindred spirits'.

What hinders bright spots included: key people leaving; the volatility of funding; and "failing to show your intent in order to engage your community and potential partners, including funders".

So what? Now what?

What might follow-on from the work of this story-gathering report?

- Engage the bright spots in what to do next.
- Share the learnings and ideas from this report – but consider the audience and audiences, and what you want the audience to do as a result.
- Foster 'critical connections' rather than 'critical mass' – "despite current ads and slogans, the world doesn't change one person at a time. It changes as new networks of relationships form among people who discover they share a

common cause and vision of what's possible".¹ This means that rather than worry about creating 'critical mass', we can instead focus on fostering "critical connections".

- Focus on spreading 'seeds', ideas/models that may be easier to replicate – in particular the informal parents group/coffee group at Titirangi's Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki; and also the model of Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten's '303'.

In any sort of work that is 'emergent' it is very important to be clear on its intention. As others say "purpose is the navigator in emergence".

*"Embrace the uncertainty of the journey, even as you remain clear-eyed about the destination...Be intentional in your efforts and curious in your convictions."*²

1 Wheatley, M. & Frieze, D. (2006) 'Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale', The Berkana Institute. Accessed at http://www.berkana.org/pdf/emergence_web.pdf

2 Kania and Kramer, 'Embracing Emergence: How Collective Impact Addresses Complexity'.



1.

Why this report?

1.1. What we focus on grows

This work, and this report, is about exploring the 'good stuff' – the 'Bright Spots' around New Zealand. Instead of the usual question of "what are the issues and problems for 'vulnerable children'/'vulnerable families'?", this report asks "what's working?". Where is there positive change for people who have been labeled 'high needs', 'vulnerable' or 'hard to reach'? What works when working with children and families labelled 'vulnerable'?

The focus of this report is about building on what is good. In technical terms, this project has used some 'Appreciative Inquiry' techniques. Appreciative Inquiry says that whatever we focus on, we empower, creating more of it. The four Commissioning Agencies³ wanted to explore the positive energy in communities. What local places and communities are improving things for children (in particular, those that are usually seen as 'vulnerable' or at 'risk')? Where are the 'Child Rich Communities'? What are their stories? What has been their journey so far? What can we learn from the 'Bright Spots'?

"Organisations and individuals grow in the direction of what they repeatedly ask questions about and focus their attention on.

The purpose of Appreciative Inquiry is therefore to build on the root causes of success – not of failure; to build on our strengths – not our weaknesses."

– David Cooperrider – founder of Appreciative Inquiry

1.2. Background of increasing concern for 'vulnerable children'

In the past few years, there has been increasing concern about 'child poverty' in New Zealand. The public and the Government continue to talk about the status of children who are struggling. Terms like 'vulnerable children', 'vulnerable families', 'child poverty', 'the hard-to-reach', 'high-needs families', and 'high deprivation communities' appear regularly in discussions and documents. Many reports, expert panels, and new initiatives have emerged out of this concern for "New Zealand's most needy and deprived children".⁴

The Commissioning Agencies have noticed that the responses to struggling children in New Zealand tend to fit within two strands of work. One strand of work is lobbying and advocacy – for example, the Child Poverty Action Group, UNICEF's 'Make My Future Fair' campaign, the work of Every Child Counts, the Tick4Kids network and the 1000 Days to Get it Right campaign. This work is focused on improving public policy to prioritise children and create the conditions for the social and economic wellbeing of families/whānau. Another strand of work is targeted intervention by Government, NGOs⁵ and the private sector – for example, the Children's Action Plan, Children's Teams, KidsCan, Fonterra Milk in Schools etc. Both these strands of work are very publicly visible. And the Commissioning Agencies sees that both these strands of work are important. However, the Commissioning Agencies have a 'hunch' that there is another strand of work that is not so visible, but equally important.

³ The four Commissioning Agencies for this Report are: Inspiring Communities, Plunket, UNICEF NZ, and Every Child Counts.

⁴ Term used by Jonathan Boston and Tracey McIntosh in Foreword of 'Solutions to Child Poverty in New Zealand: Evidence for Action' (2012), p. iii. Accessed at: <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/EAG/Final-report/Final-report-Solutions-to-child-poverty-evidence-for-action.pdf>

⁵ Non-Government Organisation.

The Commissioning Agencies' 'hunch' is that there are many people working in 'community-led' ways in 'high-deprivation communities' throughout New Zealand. And this work is improving the lives of 'struggling children' and their families. This work is 'on the ground' in neighbourhoods, suburbs, towns. It is small. It is local. It is generally unknown and invisible in public debate and discussions about 'child poverty' in New Zealand. However, this on-the-ground work is making a difference and transforming lives and communities. The Commissioning Agencies wanted to connect and learn from these 'bright spots'. They therefore commissioned this work.

1.3. What do you mean by 'Bright Spots'?

For the purposes of this report the term 'Bright Spots' refers to the 'bright spots' nominated for interview. The Commissioning Agencies (with input from their networks), suggested several initiatives as potential 'bright spots'. Twenty-one projects/initiatives were chosen to be interviewed. All twenty-one projects interviewed were purposeful and meaningful.

There was huge variety in the group of initiatives interviewed, in terms of:

- Size and scale – some were located at neighbourhood/street-level, some were town or district-wide.
- Age – ranging from less than one year to 26 years old.
- Geography (location in New Zealand).
- Approach – some were community groups, some were a collaboration of agencies, some were community development projects led by local residents, some were social service agencies working in community-led ways.
- Entity type – ranging from not-for-profit organisations, with charitable status, to unincorporated collective of agencies, to schools, to 'community hubs', to a company.

See the Appendix 1 for a full list of initiatives and people interviewed. See also Appendix 2 for a brief description of most of the initiatives. Four initiatives have been profiled as full 'Learning Stories' in Appendices 3-6.

1.4. Towards 'positive-based change'

The intention of this report is to be a 'conversation starter'. To perhaps influence people to think differently.

When used fully, Appreciative Inquiry is a positive-based change process. When seeking change, the Western cultural model tends to use a 'deficit-based model'. This means that we usually focus on problems, weaknesses and threats. This is well-entrenched in our way of thinking. This project takes a different viewpoint. It starts with the question of 'what's working?'





2.

What is working for children and whānau? Key themes and learnings

2.1. A word on 'language' and 'labels'

While this project is using an Appreciative Inquiry model as an alternative to the 'deficit-model', it is still important to be accurate about where the 'learnings' and themes come from. Twenty of the twenty-one initiatives interviewed were in 'low-income' communities. Many of these communities are seen by outsiders as 'high-deprivation' areas. Indeed, Statistics New Zealand and Government agencies' data refer to these areas as a 9 or a 10 out of 10 on the NZ Deprivation Index. As one interviewee noted:

"while the average income may be lower and some health statistics worse in these communities, they are also abundant in social capital and cultural wealth that is often overlooked by the narrow focus of official statistics"

This section of the report may receive criticism for some 'deficit language'. We acknowledge that the label 'high-deprivation' or 'low income' is not helpful. It is therefore always put in quotation marks.

2.2. What are the key themes and learnings from bright spots?

Learning One: See 'the poor' as the greatest asset, not a 'problem to be fixed'

The 'bright spots' tended to share a common world-view and understanding about people living in 'low-income communities'. This included the following thinking:

- Local people in 'high deprivation neighbourhoods' ('the poor' in society) are the most important resource and the greatest asset.⁶ Bright Spots do not see people as 'poor' or 'in need'.
- Local people in 'high-deprivation neighbourhoods' and 'vulnerable families', are not 'problems to be fixed'.
- 'You can't build on broken'⁷ – if you see people as 'vulnerable', 'high-needs', or 'broken', positive change becomes very difficult. Instead, you have to build upon what works — upon the existing assets and aspirations of individuals, whānau and the community.

6 Mia Birdsong's 2015 TED talk conveys the same message. See her talk titled 'The story we tell about poverty isn't true'. She says that in America's war against poverty, Americans have "overlooked the most powerful and practical resource – people who are poor". See: https://www.ted.com/talks/mia_birdsong_the_story_we_tell_about_poverty_isn_t_true?language=en

7 The term 'you can't build on broken' comes from Angela Blanchard, the well-known pioneer of asset-based community development. See: http://www.businessinnovationfactory.com/summit/story/you-can%E2%80%99t-tweet-changeand_also <http://angelablanchard.com>

There are a lot of well-meaning people in New Zealand concerned with asking “how are we going to fix these high-deprivation neighbourhoods? How are we going to make their lives better?” The bright spots had a common understanding that these are the wrong questions. It is the wrong starting point. The bright spots understand that we need to begin with some different questions.

Instead, the bright spots tend to see local residents in so-called ‘high-deprivation’ neighbourhoods as the most vital resource for change. Bright spots build on the assets that already exist within the community – for example, local leaders, local networks, local knowledge and culture. Bright spots tend to use a strengths-based approach and see people’s potential. This is regardless of whether they are ‘external’ to the community or whether they are local-residents. (See further discussion below on ‘locals’). What is important is the lens you wear in approaching the work.

“Always see the community as resourceful. Join with them where they are at. We are not the experts...Our vision has always been to help everyone discover their potential.”

– Bruce Maden, Te Aroha Noa Community Services.

“Everyone has a little flame in them – the wind ignites it. I am here to put the wind up them.”
– Paula MacEwan, Koha Shed – Cannons Creek.

“We’re all good at doing stuff...The most useful thing is when the community gets up and does stuff for itself.”

– Dennis Makalio, Mongrel Mob Porirua.

Learning Two: If families are well, then children are well

Bright spots talked about how when the parents are doing well, the children do well too. This is a very simple but powerful concept. It is different from current mainstream approaches.

Some bright spots noted that in New Zealand today, most approaches to ‘vulnerable children’ say they are ‘child-centred’. This means that the child is at the centre of the intervention and expert professionals ‘wrap around’ and help the child.⁸ This can be extremely disempowering for whānau. Bright Spots know that the ‘child’ is not something to be ‘worked on’, particularly not in isolation.⁹

Bright Spots tend to take a broader view. Bright Spots can see that children live in families. And families live in neighbourhoods.

Several bright spots noticed and had evidence for how positive changes in the parent/parents, were matched with positive changes for their children. For example, the Common Unity Project, Mangakino Area School, Raurimu Avenue School, and Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten all talked enthusiastically about this. Three of these bright spots are based at primary schools. It was their view that improvements in children’s levels in National Standards can be linked to parents’ engagement. (See further discussions in their learning stories.).

8 For example, the Interim Report on Modernising Child, Youth and Family (CYF) also advocates for a ‘child-centred approach’ to CYFs. Government’s Children’s Action Plan has established Children’s Teams around the country. Children’s Teams work in this ‘child centred’ way. As described on the Children’s Team website: a child is referred to the Team, “is assigned a Lead Professional to undertake one assessment and one plan of action for that child. The Lead Professional reports back to their Children’s Team on progress against that plan, which the Children’s Team monitors and reviews until the child’s needs are met. Lead Professionals can come from a range of agencies or services and are chosen for their ability to best support the child and their family”.

9 Please note that this interpretation of ‘child-centred approach’ comes from some Bright Spots interviewed. Some may disagree with how ‘child-centred approach’ has been described/interpreted. Some stakeholders have commented that “child-centred approaches have been adopted to place high value upon the rights, needs and wishes of children and to ensure that these are always taken into consideration. Too often in the past, children’s rights have been ignored. However, the intention is not to focus on the child in isolation from their families...”.

“If a parent is doing better – their children are doing better...If there is less stress in the home, there is more mental and spiritual energy in the whānau.”

– Leanne Karauna, Mangakino Area School Whānau Ora Navigator.

“The mahi [work] we’re doing is supporting the whole family – the parent, baby, siblings.”

– Annette Toupili, Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki.

“If we stretch out to the whānau, we’ll get better results for the children and all of society.”

– Sally Wilson, Raurimu Avenue Primary School.

Learning Three: Counter the culture of disempowerment – get people to “dream” again

Bright spots shared concerns about a culture of non-engagement or disempowerment that has built up over several decades. This culture of non-engagement and disempowerment is present in a whole section of New Zealand society. There are so many people who feel they cannot affect outcomes in their lives. They do not feel like they have any aspirations. They do not see that things could be different. Bright spots tend to work on shifting this mindset. Bright spots talked about similar ideas:

- Getting people to ‘dream’ again.
- Helping people to uncover and talk about the aspirations that are deep within them. Their aspirations for themselves and their families.

“We are working to counter about forty years of non-engagement by residents and over-reliance on outside agencies...We want people to realise we’ve got what we need – and it’s right here within our streets and neighbourhoods – our people.”

– Annette Toupili, Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki.

“It has built up over years – where people say to themselves ‘This must be it. This is my lot in life.’ The aspiration is gone...The quiet types – they’ve been quiet because no one has ever asked them. But when they are asked, you can see them light up – it’s quite amazing really.” – Peter Fa’afiu, Tāmaki Redevelopment Company.

“Historically in this community people give up far too young...The way they are spoken to and treated. I can see why they [give up]...The Kaiārahi is working to instill positive beliefs. You can see that ‘give up attitude’ start to dissolve. And that is what we’re after.”

– Sally Wilson, Raurimu Avenue Primary School.



“The main problem is disengagement...They don’t feel they have the power to change things...With wealthier suburbs you have a lot more people who expect to change things...In Phillipstown, many locals don’t see themselves as people who can effect outcomes...Our work is to help change their mental perception.”

– MaryAnn Bell, Phillipstown Community Hub.

“I have emphasised all along that we are here to help people fulfil their dreams. We ask – do you have a dream?”

– Bruce Maden, Te Aroha Noa.

“The hardest part is getting whānau to dream again...The ‘goals’ that the whānau set when they work with me – that is an outcome in itself.”

– Leanne Karauna, Mangakino Area School Whānau Ora Navigator.

“The most fundamental part of our work is for people to cultivate a new belief about themselves.”

– Julia Milne, Common Unity Project Aotearoa.

“This way of working¹⁰ brings about an inter-generational change in the whole whānau because aspirations are lifted.”

– Royce Dewe, Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergartens.

¹⁰ “This way of working” refers to how people move from being a 303 participant to becoming a 303 facilitator, then they go on to other employment or study. This is a well observed and tracked process at the Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergartens’ 303. 303 is for all parents, but it has a huge impact on ‘vulnerable parents’. See further in the Learning Story on Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergartens.

Learning Four: Go beyond ‘social service delivery’ – walk alongside people, use ‘soft doors’, and ensure reciprocity

Bright spots begin with a view that sees people as capable and full of potential (see Learning One). This underlying view affects how bright spots work. It goes beyond a traditional ‘helping model’ – which is usually a one-way relationship. As well-meaning as the ‘charitable model’ is, an underlying message is this: ‘We, (with resources and skills) are here to help you (without resources or skills, but needy)’. This approach is both paternalistic and patronising.

Bright spots acknowledged that there is a place for emergency help to fill an immediate need. Social-service delivery is good and useful in many places. Many bright spots involve some sort of ‘service delivery’ component. But they recognise and argue that for long-term social change, we need ‘more than service-delivery’.

This ‘more’ comes through in many ways, as illustrated in the above learnings. Mainly, the ‘more’ comes through:

- Your philosophy and world view – your underlying beliefs. You do not label people as ‘high-needs’ or ‘vulnerable’, you do not see people as ‘broken’, ‘deprived’ or ‘in need’. Instead you see people’s strengths. You ask about people’s strengths, hopes, aspirations. You see what people have that they can build on and grow. You see their potential. (See Learnings 1 and 3.).
- Your approach to the ‘community’ that you are part of, and working in – you do not approach the community as a ‘problem to be fixed’, instead you see it as a place with local assets. (See Learning 1).
- Your approach to the family – you have a broader more holistic approach. You understand that when the whole family is well, the child is well. (See Learning 2).
- Your activities and things you do – see further below regarding ‘soft doors’, walking alongside people, listening and reciprocity.

There are some very good examples of projects that started out as ‘service delivery’ – then became ‘more’, for example Te Aroha Noa, Wesley Waitangirua, Raurimu Avenue School and Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten. These Bright Spots offer some social and/or educational services. However, they have intentionally taken a ‘community development

approach' and extended their work beyond providing counselling or education. These Bright Spots appear to have had a greater impact because they have become 'more than a service delivery agency'. They are not only a 'social-service centre', or a 'school' or an 'ECE¹¹ centre' – they have become a micro-community. They have grown into "an entity that is a seamless web of relationships, rather than an organisation that employs staff to work with clients".¹²

There are also very good examples of projects that started life as a community development initiative, or a 'community project' and remain so. For example, the Common Unity Project and Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki. These bright spots work in a way that is already 'beyond service-delivery'. They are focused on community building and building social capital. They do not provide any 'services'. Instead, such projects are about connecting people to each other – fostering relationships, friendships and bonds within the community. They are building on local assets and talents. They are activating people's hopes and dreams. (See their stories in Section 3).

Regardless of whether the bright spot originated as a social service or as a community project, they all go beyond 'service delivery' and talked about similar ideas:

- Be "alongside people", "walk beside people" – "we're here to guide, not rescue".
- Use 'soft doors' and conversations.
- Ensure there is reciprocity – people are capable of receiving and giving.¹³
- Always be listening and learning, not assuming the 'expert' role.

11 Early Education Centre.

12 Sanders, J., Handley, K., Munford, R., Maden, B. (2012) 'The Violence Free Community Project', p.6 – describing Te Aroha Noa's goal.

13 One case study looked at Te Aroha Noa's family counselling work with one struggling Māori whānau. The Māori whānau had cultural expertise that they contributed to the Centre. The Māori whānau recognised they were of value to the Centre. See Munford R., Sanders J., Maden B., "Evaluation of Sensitised Practice in a Community Centre in Aotearoa, New Zealand".

Some comments from Bright Spots interviewed about 'being alongside people':

"With 303, people can connect, disconnect, reconnect. It's not a social service agency... People are wary of social services. They spend some time testing us to see if we're real about this...We're guiding, not rescuing, it's about being alongside people for the distance."

– Royce Dewe, Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten.

"They [the community centre volunteers] tell us 'I have more confidence and more skills. I feel I can do stuff because if I wobble, there's someone there alongside me'."

– Kindra Douglas, Victory Community Centre.

"It's pretty simple...I sit here and listen. But they know they can count on me to be here and listen."

– Lizzie McMillan-Makalio, Wesley Community Action, Waitangirua.

Some comments from Bright Spots about 'soft doors' and conversations:

"Parenting groups and play groups are 'soft doors'. In the beginning, people need something they feel comfortable coming to. Then once they feel comfortable with you, they will start talking with you about the harder stuff in their life."

– Jeanette Higham, Great Start Taita.

"I'm working with people who don't want to go to agencies...They don't feel comfortable in a parenting course...We're doing the same thing [as a parenting course] in a really relaxed sense – so it's not a 'course' at all. They're learning without realising they are learning. It turns it into a conversation. The coffee group members are helping each other, learning from each other."

– Annette Toupili, Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki.

Some comments from Bright Spots about 'reciprocity':

"We're paying local residents who do work in the community. They are not volunteers. Payment is value. We value their opinion and input."

– Peter Fa'afiu, Tāmaki Redevelopment Company.

“People have become accustomed to being ‘service-provided to’...If I was a hungry, broken mother, there are fifty-three different organisations in my area that I could go to...At Common Unity, we are not here to ‘give out’ anything to people. We believe everyone has something to give, to share. We are asking people to join us and contribute.”

– Julia Milne, Common Unity Project Aotearoa.

“With some koha sheds you’re actually ‘feeding the poverty’. With Koha Shed Cannons Creek I say to people ‘Help yourself but above all help each other!’”

– Paula MacEwan, Koha Shed – Cannons Creek.

Learning Five: No judgement. No stigma. Accessed by free-will

Bright spots talked about how important it is for people to let go of judgement, and the importance of non-stigmatised help or support. Making something open to everyone was also important. Bright Spots also stressed that people must choose to participate, rather than be coerced or forced to.

“Our kaiārahi is here to be a positive force in people’s lives. There is no negativity, and most importantly there is no judgement.”

– Sally Wilson, Raurimu Avenue Primary School.

“It is important that the Waimate Parenting Hub is accessible to everyone. That people come because they have chosen to come. Not because they were forced to.”

– Jane Denley, Waimate Parenting Hub Collective.

“Not all people feel comfortable going to parenting courses that they are referred to by an agency. They’ve all had the experience of you have to jump so high to just get a benefit. Being forced to go learn some parenting skills; being ‘talked to’ by a teacher standing up the front – it does not work for most people here...With our parenting groups, people share knowledge and experiences. It is non-stigmatised peer support. There’s no judgement – if you’re having a hard week – that’s OK.”

– Annette Toupili, Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki.

Learning Six: Change takes time. Be there for the long-haul

Bright spots emphasised that change takes time. All too often, social services, or new government initiatives “pop up and disappear after a few years”. Funders want to see results; and they want to see them fast. However, real change for individuals takes time. And real change for a community takes even longer. For example, Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki is five years old and has made a ten-year commitment in the community of Titirangi; Te Aroha Noa has been in Highbury for 26 years, since 1989; Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten has also been around since 1980.

“Change takes time. Change needs time. At 303, our facilitators have been significantly alongside some people for fifteen years...We’ve seen people go from being a participant at 303, to being a facilitator, to being employed as a facilitator and from there further employment.”

– Royce Dewe.

“We need to be up for taking a longer-term view. And we need to be patient...Change takes a long time. Sometimes it is a 5-10 year journey, sometimes it is a 20-30 year journey. This often does not sit well with the way the funding system is structured.”

– Nicola Brehaut, Department of Internal Affairs.

Learning Seven: Build on the positive first. (Generally, before tackling the ‘negatives’)

Bright spots have learnt to start with the positives first.

In Highbury, Palmerston North, Te Aroha Noa worked on a lot of positive community building for the first 15-16 years, before turning to some difficult issues. It was necessary to build and foster the community’s positive identity before tackling harder issues. In Highbury, playgroups were started, an Early Childhood Centre built, the local park was redeveloped by locals, an annual ‘Celebrate Highbury’ event was started. All of this, and more, contributed to locals feeling that they can and do shape their community. All of this, fostered a sense of belonging for Te Aroha Noa too. Te Aroha Noa became accepted, embedded and part of the community. Then in 2007, Te Aroha Noa turned its mind to some of the things of concern – in particular family violence. This led to the ‘Violence

Free Community Project'. Bruce Maden emphasises that it was necessary to only do this after a positive identity and strong relationships had been built. (See Learning Story on Te Aroha Noa at Appendix 4).

With the Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki project, they are building positive relationships and social capital to 'keep kids safe'. The project aims to build "trust and care" so that residents "notice and care whenever someone has reason to celebrate, worry, or grieve". They have had lots of community events, got people together to draft a Neighbourhood Plan, coffee groups/parent groups and more. All of this builds a positive and strong community identity for people in Titirangi, Gisborne. (See Learning Story on Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki at Appendix 3).

Similarly, Dennis Makalio is getting the Mongrel Mob families to organise positive events for the Mob community – for Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, etc. He is building up positive momentum in his community first. He is at the beginning of a longer journey. (See his story in Appendix 2).

Learning Eight: Relationships and people are key. Leaders/'Key people' can be both an asset and a liability

Everything happens because of relationships – this may be a cliché but it is a theme that comes through strongly from the Bright Spots. Individuals and people are key to success. This theme plays out in a couple of ways:

- There must be on-the-ground relationships of trust. Whether this is an 'outsider' coming in to work on community development, or whether it is an 'insider'. The person doing any form of community development work must have the trust of the people they are working with. To stand beside someone, or walk alongside them, there must be trust.
- The 'key person' who leads and champions a community-led-development project is absolutely important. However, this often means that this 'leader' is the project's "greatest asset and greatest liability". Some amazing Bright Spots have fallen over, or stalled, or lost their way, when the 'key person' moves on.

"Personnel are absolutely key to the success of 303. Because it is not a programme or a social service, the 303 coordinator needs to have the skills to be alongside, mentoring and coaching in such a way that participants are making the changes for themselves. This adds to the participants' strengths and builds capability and capacity in the parent group."

– Royce Dewe.

“Relationships have to be at the core. I have been incredibly frustrated by people [in other organisations] moving on... Build relationships one by one... Somehow, later on they knit together.”

– Bruce Maden, Te Aroha Noa.

Learning Nine: Being a ‘local’ gives you a head start...

The bright spots tend to be started or championed by local residents. However, this is not always the case, and some examples show that ‘external people’ can still help (see next Learning). Being a local resident of a so-called ‘high deprivation’ community, however, does give you a strong head start. Some comments below:

“To do community-led work – you have to have someone from that community, who knows that community and can see its strengths... I do not want professionals coming in – people who have not walked in our shoes. I want space to grow this from the grassroots.”

– Lizzie McMillan-Makalio, Wesley Community Action, Waitangirua.

“We bought our house two years ago, my Mum and Dad live down the road. I really love my neighbourhood... It’s not ‘Jane, who drives a nice car and lives on the other side of town’, coming in to do ‘community development’ work. It’s me. They know who I am, where I live. I’ve got their trust and they know I’m here for the long-term.”

– Annette Toupili, Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki.

Some examples of bright spots championed by local residents were: Mangakino Area School’s Whānau Ora Navigation, Titirangi’s Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki, Wesley Waitangirua, Porirua Mongrel Mob Memorial Marae Project.

Learning Ten: ...But ‘externals’ can still make a difference

Some bright spots were started by an external person/organisation, for example, Te Aroha Noa, Great Start Taita, and the Common Unity Project. These Bright Spots had to work harder to build relationships and gain the community’s trust and ownership.

“You have to break down the barriers. We were a church coming in, buying property and running small services. Some people were suspicious...You have to persist and persevere and show you are trustworthy and true to your vision...Never take an ‘expert position’...always be willing to learn from the community.”

– Bruce Maden, Te Aroha Noa.

“Great Start Taita was born from lots of door-knocking in the Taita neighbourhood. There were hundreds of services in the area... The message we got was that people don’t want another ‘service provider’. They wanted a ‘connector’...A lot of what we do is about building relationships. Although we run programmes and activities it is based on what people in Taita have asked for.”

– Jeanette Higham, Great Start Taita.

“If I went back and did it again, I would have spent a lot more time LISTENING. Really digging to understand what’s going on. The slower you can go with that, the more carefully you can listen, the better. I went in thinking the community was ready – but in fact they were not. I had made assumptions. (Much like the old-thinking of implementing a new ‘service’ or programme). The community (of parents) was not ready – they did not want to go and garden and dig up their own backyards. It was quite humbling for me. It made me ask WHY? What stops people from taking a spade to the earth and doing their own food production?”

– Julia Milne, Common Unity Project Aotearoa.

2.3. Other Reflections...

Below are three additional reflections/learnings from me as the 'external learner' on the project. These are presented separately as they are not directly from the 'Bright Spots'.

Reflection One: Avoid 'either/or' thinking. Lots of different approaches work

A major learning for me, as the external learner on this project, is that lots of things can work. That it is not either/or. And there is a need in discourse and debate to avoid 'binary thinking'.

It is important to recognise two different things can co-exist and both can be true:

- There are some amazing neighbourhood projects, led by local-people. And there are some amazing 'social services' that are working in community development ways.
- It is important that people in 'high-deprivation' neighbourhoods recognise their own power, reignite their dreams and aspirations. And it is important to provide support for this, and resource this work.

It is not about how 'vulnerable families' or people in 'high-deprivation' neighbourhoods should be 'doing things for themselves'. Community-led development can spring up on its own, but it generally grows with some outside resourcing, funding or infrastructure.

For example, the Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki project grew from local residents, but it has been supported and anchored by a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) - Te Ora Hou, and with funding from other NGO and philanthropic sources.

Some insightful comments from some funders/stakeholders about how a range of different approaches work:

"It's not about what works or does not work. It's not an 'on/off switch'. It is more like a dimmer. It depends on the particular context and dynamics...I'm both a believer and a skeptic about community-led-development. What does 'community' mean? People can get quite romantic about what 'the community' means."

– Iain Hines, J R McKenzie Trust.

"The phrase community-led-development (CLD) is something I have struggled with. The way the term is used in New Zealand is a bit vague. I think the term – 'CLD' – is a problem. It is a problem of clarity of definition...If the claim is that something is inherently better if it is CLD, then I would disagree...We have seen some very 'programmatic' things delivering good results. We have also seen some great 'service delivery' models that are getting great results."

– Dave Richards, Tindall Foundation.



Reflection Two: Be 'authentic' – and that's hard to replicate

I have also observed that 'authenticity' is important. Authentic people. Authentic intentions. It is about 'being real'. Not just 'talking the talk'. Some bright spots and stakeholders explained that there are many projects claiming to be 'community-led development' these days. It is becoming 'fashionable'. However, it is often very unclear 'who' the 'community' is. When you dig a bit deeper, you can see the old 'we're-here-to-fix-the-poor' way of thinking.

The key to real change is being authentic. Be real about what you believe and say. It is hard to find people who truly see 'people who are poor' as full of potential, full of skills and strengths. Most people see the poverty, the needs, or the challenges. It is much harder to see the skills, strengths and assets of a community, or an individual.

Also, we live in an era that is all about finding the 'factors for success'. We look for things that can be 'scaled up' and replicated. We want the 'quick fix', the 'formula' that we can duplicate. What we do not realise, and fail to see, is that authenticity cannot be transplanted.

If Bright Spots are so determined by 'key people', 'individuals' and 'relationships' – how easy is it, really, to replicate it? If Bright Spots are so much determined by their underlying philosophy, approach and world view – is it possible to transplant this? Is it possible to get people to see things differently?

Some comments from external stakeholders:

"You cannot isolate the ingredients of a particular successful project. It is hard to replicate things...As funders, we often have to rely on being found by good people and trusting them to get on with it."

– Iain Hines, J R McKenzie Trust.

"It is 'heart stuff'. It does not fit into a funding application."

– Nicola Brehaut, Department of Internal Affairs.

Reflection Three: 'We' all have a part to play in this

Another major and very personal learning for me is that all of 'us' (who are 'privileged' middle and upper class people) have contributed to the culture of disempowerment. Whether we sit to the left or right of the political spectrum, we have all, in our own ways, contributed to a culture of disempowerment. As discussed in Learning Three – a culture of 'non-engagement' or 'disempowerment' has built up over years in certain neighbourhoods. There is a whole section of New Zealand society that feels like they do not have the power to effect outcomes in their lives. They 'shrug their shoulders'; they 'give up'. And why? Because of the way they are looked at and treated. Because of the attitudes the rest of New Zealand society has about them.

"It's the attitudes that are actually the barriers...People don't go and get help because of the judgement. If you go down to WINZ there is instant attitude of the receptionist towards people on benefits. I stay at home because then I don't have to deal with people who put me down because I'm already down enough."¹⁴

"Gang members do not want to put their [good] stories out there because all they get is ridicule, and they're slammed back down."

– Lizzie McMillan-Makalio, Wesley Community Action, Waitangirua.

Even people who want to 'do good', in the social services sector, philanthropic sector or the government sector, have contributed to this culture of disempowerment. People who are keen 'to help' are often, in fact, fueling the very problems they are seeking to address. This is because we have been trained to ask, and have become accustomed to asking the same questions when we look at a 'high-deprivation neighbourhood':

¹⁴ Anonymous quote from interviewee in 'Wellington Region Collective Impact Feasibility Study 2014'. Accessed at: http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/formidable/Wellington-Region-Collective-Impact-Feasibility-study_Final_v1.3.pdf

- What are the needs?
- What are the gaps?
- What is lacking?
- What are the issues?

In the words of Angela Blanchard, “we need to begin with a new question”. Some new questions to start asking the so-labeled ‘high deprivation’ neighbourhoods and people:

- What is working?
- What is strong?
- What is right?
- What do you love doing?
- What do you dream about?

Blanchard also explains, “as it turns out, it’s all about beliefs. What we believe about ourselves and others determines how we respond to people”.¹⁵

¹⁵ Angela Blanchard, ‘Recruiting for a movement’. Accessed at: <http://angelablanchard.com/recruiting-for-a-movement/>

If some of the ‘Learnings’ were hard to read for you, or you don’t ‘get them’ ask yourself – ‘What do I believe about people? What do I believe about myself?’

Through completing this report, I now see that:

“It’s not about giving voice to the voiceless. It’s about giving EARS to the earless.”

– Angela Blanchard¹⁶

If we want to really make New Zealand a great place for all children and families, then we have to do a lot more listening. Listen to understand. Let’s shift our mindsets, so we can understand what is being said. Start to see with ‘new eyes’.

¹⁶ Angela Blanchard’s TED Talk at TEDx Houston 2011. Accessed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAl-Z6lcgzw>





3.

How Do We Know?

Some Stories from The Bright Spots

Some highlights from the bright spots are presented below:

- Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki, Titirangi, Gisborne
- Te Aroha Noa Community Services, Palmerston North
- Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten's 303
- Raurimu Avenue Primary School, Whangarei
- Wesley Community Action in Waitangirua – Lizzie's story
- Hikina te Ora! Mangakino Area School, Whānau Ora Navigation
- Common Unity Project Aotearoa

For full learning stories see the individual Appendix referenced. For stories of all initiatives interviewed, see Appendix 2.

3.1. Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki, Titirangi, Gisborne

Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki started because local residents wanted to reduce child abuse and maltreatment by taking a very different approach. There are no 'programmes', 'clients' or 'services' here. Instead, the project aims to build 'trust and care' in the Titirangi neighbourhood – so that residents "notice and care whenever someone has reason to celebrate, worry or grieve". The project was inspired by the evidence from Professor Gary Melton's Strong Communities initiative in South Carolina. Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki believes that building trust and care within the neighbourhood will increase children's safety and help all whānau flourish in the context of a supportive community.

The project currently employs a number of part-time "Community Animators" who originally acted as catalysts for activities and now support residents to drive resident-led developments instead. The Community Animators live in, and are from, the local

area of Titirangi/Kaiti South. Some of them grew up in the neighbourhood; so have a depth of understanding and strong local connections. Community Animators support residents to do a wide range of things – ranging from running a Kids' Christmas Party in the park, to calling and facilitating a community meeting about an issue, to helping a neighbouring whānau in a time of crisis. The project has tried not to just focus on activities for children because one of the principles is that efforts should engage and inspire the adults who are responsible for caring for children.

What changes have been noticed?

Five years into the project, Manu Caddie, Project Manager, says that he has noticed:

- Residents taking a lot more initiative in organising things themselves. Community Animators are now rarely the initiators of ideas, events and projects in the neighbourhood - residents are stepping up and initiating most things. This change has been noticeable in the last 12 months.
- People are more positive and seem more hopeful.
- There is pride in the neighbourhood.
- That physical changes in the environment provide new inspiration and optimism. For example, getting the local neighbourhood playground revamped, replanting natives, painting a mural – has helped to bring the community together.
- People such as school principals and police officers have noted positive changes in local families, including an increase in participation at school and a decrease in crime and Police callouts.

Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki has also been collecting data to capture changes in social capital. Local statistics that highlight changes between 2010 and 2013 survey periods include:

- In 2010, 67% of people surveyed said they “enjoyed living in this neighbourhood”. In 2013, this increased to 100%.
- In 2010, only 41% of people had shared phone numbers with their neighbours. By 2013, this increased to 72% of people reporting they had shared phone numbers with neighbours.
- In 2010, 84% of people knew their neighbours’ names. In 2013, this increased to 97%.

The change in key social capital indicators is very encouraging. They show more positive interactions between neighbours, and residents trusting their neighbours more. Residents also feel more optimistic about their community, with fewer wanting to leave anytime soon. Importantly, these positive changes in community correspond with falling crime statistics, with assaults in Titirangi decreasing by 67% in the period, compared to a regional average decline of only 11%.

See Appendix 3 for the full learning story on Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki.

3.2. Te Aroha Noa Community Services, Palmerston North

Te Aroha Noa is translated colloquially as ‘Love without Tags’. It means ‘Unconditional love’ in Te Reo Māori. Te Aroha Noa believes that there is more to people than people see about themselves. Its vision is to “unleash the potential of all people(s)”. Te Aroha Noa has been working with, and in, the community of Highbury for over two and a half decades. Today, local residents of Highbury say that the “suburb’s dark past is history” – instead, Highbury is described as a place of “heart, unity, safety and whānau”.¹⁷

Te Aroha Noa Community Services was born in 1989, when Palmerston North’s Central Baptist Church leased some space in Highbury to offer some counselling services. Highbury was chosen because it was a ‘high deprivation neighbourhood’ and the church wanted to translate its concern into action. From humble beginnings of two staff members, Te Aroha Noa is now an integrated community development organisation with 63 staff and 150 volunteers.

¹⁷ Quotes from: The Manawatu Standard, 2 July 2015, accessed at: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/69862148/Highburys-dark-past-is-history-community-is-heart-of-Palmerston-North-suburb>

What does Te Aroha Noa do?

Since the beginning Te Aroha Noa aimed to be an inclusive and responsive place that supports local people. It sought to ask people “Do you have a dream? Do you see a need?” The goal was to grow “an entity that was a seamless web of relationships”, rather than an “organisation that employs staff to work with clients”. Over time, Te Aroha Noa has grown to include a huge range of activities/services – playgroups, an early childhood centre, community building and community development, teen parents centre, work with disengaged youth, family and individual counselling/therapy, adult learning centre, aerobic and fitness programmes, craft group and more. The blending of all of these from a locally situated community centre makes it a very unique centre in New Zealand.

What changes have been noticed?

In 2015, at the time of writing – Te Aroha Noa has been going for 26 years and Bruce Maden, Chief Executive Officer, has been there from the beginning. He reflects on some of the changes that he has noticed through various activities:

- “It has been a remarkable change in 26 years. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Highbury was seen as a very negative place, a place of violence. Today it is seen as an innovative place with a strong sense of community”.
- There has been a drop in offending and crime.
- Physical changes reflect community changes. In particular, Farnham Park: back in 2003 families would not be seen in Farnham Park. It was a dangerous place. Today, Farnham Park is equipped with a new BBQ, new Gazebo, limestone running track. People play touch rugby at the park. It is a gathering place for children, families and local residents.

See Appendix 4 for the full learning story on Te Aroha Noa.

3.3. Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten's 303

Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten (CBK) believes that the best outcomes for children are achieved by engaging with the whole family, not the child in isolation. Since its beginnings in the early 1980s, CBK's philosophy is one of "responding to the needs and aspirations of families". Today CBK is a 'community of learning' – and is much more than an early childhood centre. CBK has grown to incorporate a range of parent support and development activities. The Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten has moved beyond 'service-delivery' to intentional community-building.

CBK does much more than provide early childhood education and care for children. It works holistically with families. Sitting alongside the early childhood centres are activities that support and involve parents. These include 303, SKIP (Strategies for Kids, Information for Parents), Awhiawhi (weekly sessions for newborns and parents), and HIPPY (Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters).

303 – A place of sharing and support

303 is one of the ways CBK has actively and intentionally involved itself in its community. It is named after the street address where the drop-in sessions are held. Through 303, CBK is intentionally building relationships with parents, connecting parents to other parents, and connecting parents to services. To the outside observer, it can be described as an informal drop-in session for parents. But in fact, 303 is a community, a web of inter-relationships that supports significant change in the lives of people involved.

CBK's Director Royce Dewe, says, "with 303 people can connect, disconnect, and reconnect. It's not a social service agency...What makes it work is the skilled coordinator and parent facilitators who work alongside parents and are there for the distance".

303's approach is to "walk alongside people" on many levels. It is about "guiding but not rescuing people" and "being alongside parents for the distance". A parent may come to 303 and engage a bit, then not come for a while, and then come back. 303 does not have a 'service delivery model' - rather it is a 'place and a space' for connecting.

CBK has collected parents' stories as evidence of 303's impact on parents' lives and how they parent

their children. 303 receives referrals from a diverse range of community agencies and services. 303 has had its greatest impact on people who are struggling or 'at risk'. Below are some comments from parents who have been involved in 303:

"You never gave up on me – thank you for bringing me here. I felt useless, worthless, a failure to myself, my children...I isolated myself from anybody who tried to be around me. 303 Parent Support Centre came to me and offered their services to help me...I thought I was fine. What could possibly be so good about connecting with other people?...But 303 stayed persistent, determined to reel me in...[I thought] what was the point of this stupid place?...I thought 'well she seems really friendly'...so after several times I finally go see what this place is all about. It was really scary to walk into a new place for me. But the more I came, the happier I got. I grew to actually love the place...303 built me up with positivity..., and raised my spirits and made me feel good about myself."

– Parent Q.

"My family is in a much, much better situation now. I wouldn't have been able to do it on my own. I'd hate to think about what my life would have been like if I didn't come to CBK...I wouldn't be who I am and feel proud of who I am today...I just feel that 303 and CBK have contributed to that, it's been huge for me."

– Parent A.

What changes have been noticed?

The CBK team has tracked the progress of participants who stepped up and became facilitators at 303. The evidence shows that being a 303 Facilitator has led to further employment and positive changes for all parents involved. Out of the 20 parent facilitators tracked over time, all have since gone onto further education or employment. For example, since being a 303 Parent facilitator:

- A single parent who had completed only Year 12 at school, went on to work full time for an educational organisation and has completed a Bachelor of Social Work.
- A single parent who had her first baby at age 16, went on to complete a Bachelor of Communications and Marketing.

- A parent who had left school early and was working in cleaning jobs has gone on to part-time employment as a HIPPIY tutor, and volunteers in the community and is involved in restorative justice.

See Appendix 5 for the full learning story on Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten.

3.4. Raurimu Avenue Primary School, Whangarei

In just two years, Raurimu Avenue School has shown that change is possible in a low-decile school community. Principal Sally Wilson believes that a school is a community of learners – and that learning goes wider than the students. “If we stretch out to the whānau we’ll get better results for the children and all of society”. Raurimu Ave School has been doing just that – “stretching out” to whānau. It has employed a Kaiārahi (guide/mentor) in the school to work with whānau and students. The Kaiārahi supports the parent/s and the child in their learning, health, engagement and Te Ao Māori.¹⁸

This is how Sally describes some of the Kaiārahi’s work:

- She walks alongside families. “It is an educative model, it is not a ‘hand out’ or a social service. Rather, the Kaiārahi turns everything into a learning conversation”.
- She is there for them when things go wrong. “People need people. We’re saying ‘we’re here for you, we’re right behind you’”.
- She helps whānau to become more involved with the school – making sure that they feel part of the school and are included.
- She helps parents stay ‘one step ahead of their children’ so the parents feel self-pride rather than whakamā/shame. Through working with the Kaiārahi, parents feel more empowered and motivated to help their kids. For example, a Whānau Symposium about different educational apps was organised for parents. The Kaiārahi worked to show parents how to use these apps, especially working with parents who had limited literacy.

¹⁸ Te Ao Māori denotes ‘the Māori World’. While simple in definition, it is rich in meaning and vast in breadth and depth. Te Ao Māori usually refers to three key areas, including Te Reo Māori (Māori language), tikanga Māori (protocols and customs) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi).

- She helps whānau connect with other whānau.
- She is a positive force in people’s lives. She lifts the spirits of the whānau. There is no negativity, and most importantly there is no judgement.

What changes have been noticed?

In the last two years, with the work of Raurimu’s Kaiārahi, there has been noticeable change. These changes include:

- Behavioural changes in the children.
- Improvements in children’s self-image.
- Student attendance rates have improved.
- More whānau (especially those who have never previously come to appointments) are now attending appointments with teachers.
- In terms of National Standards, children have moved from ‘well below’ to ‘below’, or from ‘below’ to ‘at’.
- More families participate in the school. For example, the school’s hall was packed with people for the school show.
- There is a “healthy vibe in the school and it really flows through to children”.

See Appendix 6 for the full learning story on Raurimu Avenue School.

3.5. Wesley Community Action in Waitangirua – Lizzie’s personal story

Lizzie McMillan-Makalio is someone who has a foot in two worlds. She works for Wesley Community Action as Team Manager of Wesley’s Waitangirua centre in Porirua.¹⁹ In the Wesley world, Lizzie is a manager of ‘social services’ and a community development practitioner. Lizzie is also from Waitangirua, it is her home. She has connections to the gang community and knows first-hand what it is like to be a ‘gang mum’ and a ‘gang wife’. She has lived deeply in that world and still walks in that world today.

¹⁹ Wesley was established in 1952 by the Methodist Church. Since then, it has been “pioneering innovative approaches to social justice” across the Greater Wellington Region.



Waitangirua is located in Eastern Porirua. Outsiders think of it as a ‘high deprivation neighbourhood’. People see it as a place of ‘run-down state rentals, poverty and neglect’.²⁰ However, look a little closer and a different picture emerges. Lizzie talks of how “everyone here has grown up together”, how people help each other out. She talks enthusiastically about all the successes and strengths in the Waitangirua community – for example the ‘gang mums’ built the local playground.

Lizzie has strong views about ‘child poverty’. Lizzie emphasises that despite what the media portrays about low-income families “people do do everything they can for their kids”. And that parents do want what’s best for their children. Perhaps, the secret to Lizzie’s success with the ‘hard to reach parents’ in Waitangirua is that she has actually walked in their shoes. She understands their experiences because she has lived it, and still walks in their world. But Lizzie is a ‘change agent’ in both the worlds she walks in. She can see the strengths and limitations of each. She brings her unique understanding and experiences from one world to the other, enriching both worlds in turn.

For Lizzie’s full story, see Appendix 2, ‘Wesley Community Action’.

²⁰ <http://www.livebeyond.co.nz/suburb/waitangirua>

3.6. Hikina te Ora! Mangakino Area School, Whānau Ora Navigation

Leanne Karauna is Mangakino Area School’s Whānau Ora Navigator. She works as a guide/navigator/mentor with many families of the school, and also from the wider community:

- The whānau and Leanne start off by looking at the “dream”. They work together to create a plan and then some goals with specific actions. Goal setting is key. Leanne says, “dream it, plan it, do it”.
- Leanne helps to write down the plan. Leanne helps whānau to identify any barriers and how to get over the barriers. She also helps the whānau identify their strengths and what they are good at.
- “The goals are the main outputs” of the work.

What has been achieved so far?

- 18 families have started Whānau Ora plans.
- There are 70 plus individuals (adults and children) connected to, or part of the 18 families. This is almost 11% of Mangakino’s population.
- It is growing. As more whānau become aware of the support, more whānau are asking to do a whānau ora plan with Leanne.
- In the 18 families, 91 goals have been set – of these 25% relate to education; 20% relate to whakawhānaungatanga (relationships); and 11% relate to employment (for example, to get “WINZ-free”).

- After less than one year, over 60% of the goals set by whānau had been achieved.
- Six people have gone into part-time work – many of these people had never had a job before, or have a criminal record. They previously only saw barriers to employment.

Some key learnings from Leanne and the Whānau Ora Navigation work:

- The work Leanne is doing with families, one-by-one, is very “private work”.
- It is positive work, a positive force for change. Leanne would like to see other schools adopt it more. There needs to be a more holistic approach that is truly whānau centred towards learning.
- “The hardest part is getting whānau to dream. They don’t want to fail”.

For Hikina te Ora’s full story, see Appendix 2, under ‘Hikina te Ora! Mangakino Area School, Whānau Ora Navigation’.

3.7. Common Unity Project Aotearoa

The Common Unity Project Aotearoa is a community-based, urban farm project that grows food, skills and leadership with local families. Common Unity is based at, and also works collaboratively with, Epuni Primary School, in Lower Hutt. It is known for growing food on a disused soccer field – enough to feed the children of Epuni School three times each week. Parents and the wider community are invited to come to school each day and learn, share and educate one another. In turn, this has become “a collective response to meeting the needs of our children and developing our own resilient solution within our community”.

Beyond the garden, parents, whānau and wider Epuni community are also involved in a range of activities, including Koha Kitchen; a playgroup for 0-5 year olds; ReCycled Rides – a community bike library; One Small Piece Knitting Group; Sew Good; \$100 Challenge – ‘How to feed a family of four on \$100 a week’.

What changes have been noticed?

- Friendships and more communication between the parents. Before Common Unity started, Donnell Jensen (Bike Librarian) recalls that parents would “just drop off their kids and go, and then pick up their kids and go”. These days, parents talk with each other more and friendships have blossomed between parents.
- The school has “opened its gates fully”. The school has a very welcoming atmosphere – it feels like it is a place for parents and whānau to learn and grow too.

Parents and whānau are much more involved in the school – there is more engagement and interactions between the parents and teachers, more parents help out in the classroom.

- “If a parent is doing better – their children do better”. Julia Milne has observed that the children of parents engaged in Common Unity are doing better at school.
- Children have changed their food preferences. Children who never or rarely ate any fruit or vegetables, now love vegetables. Their involvement in gardening, growing the vegetables and cooking, has changed their attitudes to food.

Some learnings from Julia and Donnell:

- Julia says that “the most fundamental part of our work is for people to cultivate a new belief about themselves”.
- Donnell emphasises the importance of “getting out and getting to know your community”. She says “you can then form friendships and go from there”. She says “Don’t just keep to yourself. Get to know people, get to know your neighbours”.
- People often do not realise they have many skills. For example, Donnell’s role as the Bike Librarian has rekindled her love of fixing things and bikes. Donnell speaks very positively about her job as Bike Librarian “I saw that I have some skills. I can put them to use by taking this job and still be involved with my kids at the school”.
- How we often tell very limiting and incorrect stories about one another. Both Donnell and Julia explained how they made mistaken assumptions about people.
- When setting up a community-led project, it is important to go slowly and really listen, and begin with the positives or ‘happy places’:

“You need to be very slow and thorough. Help people identify what they’d like to do. If I was doing it again, I would not have started with the garden. I would have started with SPORTS – that is people’s ‘happy place’. It is a brilliant place to start.”

- Change takes time. Julia says “funders often have great expectations that you will deliver something and deliver it really quickly. In reality, changes are not going to be noticeable for a long period of time.”

For Common Unity’s full story, see Appendix 2, under ‘Common Unity Project Aotearoa’.





4.

What Helps Bright Spots Grow Brighter? And What Hinders?

As part of the interviews with the nominated organisations, community groups and initiatives, I asked people about what has helped and what has hindered. Below are some key themes.

4.1. What helps?

Longer-term funding and flexible funders

- Supportive and understanding funders who want to learn as well.
- A high-trust relationship with funders.
- Funders who are flexible, risk-oriented and experimental.
- Funding that is longer term- i.e. 3-5 years.

Being able to measure and demonstrate impact and achievements

- Showing the evidence for the positive changes in communities. Help with 'measurement'!²¹
- Some assistance or guidance or capacity-building around 'measurement' is helpful because often initiatives do not think about baseline measurements when projects begin. They have not thought about the following key things:
 - What to measure
 - How to measure
- More use of quantitative and official sources of data – i.e. official statistics. Official statistics are powerful if you want to influence 'officials' and the Government. Ruapehu Whānau Transformation Plan and Titirangi's Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki are good examples of using official statistics.

21 Since the time of the interviews (June-October 2015), the 'What Works' website has been launched to help community initiatives evaluate their work. The focus is on helping community groups gather robust data and information to tell a real story about what they are doing and the difference it makes. See: <http://whatworks.org.nz/>

- More use of the 'significant change story' approach to demonstrate impact. Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten and Great Start Taita have both used this evaluation technique.
- Working with researchers/academic organisations is helpful for both parties – the community initiative and the researchers. Building strong reciprocal relationships means that joint research work can be done together to evaluate impact. Some good examples of this are:
 - Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten's work with University of Canterbury's Professor Judith Duncan.²²
 - Te Aroha Noa's work with Massey University (including Professor Robyn Munford and Professor Jackie Sanders).²³

Inspiration and support from other 'kindred spirits'

- Getting together with and meeting 'like-minded' was mentioned by several interviewees. Interviewees talked enthusiastically about how they were encouraged by other people's work and thinking. For example:
 - Several people talked about how the 2011 Victory Village Forum²⁴ was incredibly inspiring.

22 See "Innovations" section of Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten's website for publications and presentations on joint research work over several years. <http://www.centralbaptistkindergarten.org.nz>

23 See "Research" section, under "What we do" of Te Aroha Noa's website for research publications. <http://www.tearohanoa.org.nz/research.html>

24 See <http://www.confer.co.nz/VictoryForum/> for further information on the conference, as well as links to press releases. Also see SUPERU's 'Victory Village Forum: An Overview' – report available at: <http://www.superu.govt.nz/publication/victory-village-forum-overview>

- Bruce Maden talked about how going to Canada with a small group of Community Development Practitioners several years ago was a key part of his development.
- Peers, colleagues, local networks – meeting face-to-face with people who provide support in real life. Community Development is sometimes hard work. Interviewees emphasised the importance of local community development people getting together to support each other.

4.2. What hinders?

- Key people leaving.
- People in other organisations moving on. It takes a long time to build relationships with other organisations for collaboration.
- “Having to prove your impact every time there is a funding round” – comment from a community initiative.
- The volatility of funding. How it is hard to build up any cash reserves.
- “Failing to show your *intent* in order to engage your community and potential partners, including funders” – comment from a funder.
- One funder stressed the importance of ‘intent and planning to achieve impact’ to the success of any initiative, including community-led-development initiatives. While the funder understood the importance of ‘flexibility’ and ‘emergence’ – intent and purpose is still vital.



5:

So What? Now What?

Consultants are often asked to gather information. This project has been about gathering the stories of 'bright spots' and learning from them. I will always ask – 'So what? Now what?' Once you have the information in a report – what will you do with it?

The below are some thoughts on what may follow:

5.1. Engage the bright spots in what to do next

Spend some time talking with each of the Bright Spots interviewed to get their views on 'where to next?' (If anywhere?) At the time of the interviews, most people interviewed did not have any expectations of further work, or follow-on phase from the interviews. People are accustomed to being interviewed for reports, or research, with little follow up, or anything afterwards.

At a minimum, share the report, and engage people in their reactions/thoughts on the report.

5.2. Share the learnings and ideas from this report

A natural step is to share the learnings and key messages with a wider audience. It is important to consider what points to communicate and WHY. Some questions:

- Who is your audience? Who are the audiences?
- What do you want them to do as a result of hearing about the 'learnings' or the stories?
- Where do you want to make the greatest impact?
- What would success look like?

5.3. Foster 'critical connections' rather than 'critical mass'

Margaret Wheatley says that "despite current ads and slogans, the world doesn't change one person at

a time. It changes as new networks of relationships form among people who discover they share a common cause and vision of what's possible".²⁵ This means that rather than worry about creating 'critical mass', we can instead focus on fostering "critical connections". Wheatley explains that we won't need to convince large numbers of people to change; instead we need to connect with kindred spirits. Through these relationships, we will develop new knowledge, practices and courage to lead broad-based change.²⁶

So perhaps, one of the next steps from this report is to intentionally connect people, and foster a network of 'Inspiring Communities'. I would recommend to begin with the willing and focus on 'light touch connecting'.

Other points include:

- Ask interviewees specifically if they are willing to share their story in a gathering or with a 'buddy' project? Are people interested in partnering-up? Are people keen to host visitors?
- Ask if people/interviewees are interested in regional hui to meet people closer to them?
- However – please note, I have observed that there seems to already be a bit of an informal national network already. Loose connection of individuals who know each other and talk to each other and recommend people to each other.

25 Wheatley, M. & Frieze, D. (2006) 'Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale', The Berkana Institute. Accessed at http://www.berkana.org/pdf/emergence_web.pdf

26 Ibid.

5.4. Focus on spreading 'seeds', ideas/models that may be easier to replicate

There are several examples of things that may be easy to set up and replicate in other settings. In particular:

- Informal parents group/coffee group as part of Titirangi's Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki.
- Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten's '303'.

Both the above are special places for parents, especially parents who have having a hard time. A playgroup is very 'fundable'. More playgroups and parent groups – with skilled facilitators/coordinators – who have the trust of the community, would make a huge difference.

A note of caution – this is not a 'quick win' or 'silver bullet'. Both the parents group in Titirangi and 303 were a part of something larger and connected to a larger kaupapa. While this is not essential, it certainly gave both the Titirangi playgroup and 303 an advantage in its sustainability and impact.

Some comments from people involved in the two initiatives:

"Key personnel role is trainable which does mean you have a sustainable and ongoing framework. It is all in the intentional scaffolding and building of capability and capacity. Always keeping an eye out for the X factor in the parent group and then training."

– Royce Dewe, Director, Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten.

"The beauty of playgroup is it's not professionals – yes there are better and worse playgroups depending on the skills and personalities of the facilitator/coordinators but the point is any parent/whānau member can help set on up and run it provided they have some basic knowledge, skills and commitment."

– Manu Caddie, Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki.

"Yes, I agree with the above, however there is the important role of a skilled coordinator/ facilitator alongside guiding and mentoring parent facilitators as to how to manage unhealthy conversations and reframe in to more healthy conversations or manage complex happenings that do occur. Some of this happens in training and supervision of Parent facilitators which all of the 303 Parent facilitators have weekly. This gets them to a place where they have the skills to be self-managing as a parent group."

– Royce Dewe, Director, Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten.

5.5. Purpose is the navigator

With work that is 'emergent', it is very important to be clear on its intention. As others say "purpose is the navigator in emergence". While it is unclear what may follow from this knowledge-gathering report, it is important for people involved to be clear on the purpose of any follow-on work.

"Embrace the uncertainty of the journey, even as you remain clear-eyed about the destination...Be intentional in your efforts and curious in your convictions." ²⁷

27 Kania and Kramer, 'Embracing Emergence: How Collective Impact Addresses Complexity'.



Appendix 1: Interviewees

The below community initiatives/groups/projects were interviewed. For more information, and a brief 'learning snapshot' on each one, see Appendix 2.

1. Anderson Park Community Group – Paul Grundy (Principal Lucknow School)
2. Common Unity Project – Julia Milne (Project Coordinator) and Donnell Jensen (Bike Librarian)
3. Great Start Taita – Jeanette Highman (former Manager, Early Years)
4. Gore Children's Hub – Jo Brand (Project Manager)
5. Hikina te Ora! Mangakino School Whānau Ora Navigation – Leanne Karauna (Kaiārahi)
6. Koha Shed – Cannons Creek – Paula MacEwan (founder of Cannons Creek branch)
7. Love to Live – Marilyn Kelly (Project Coordinator)
8. Mairehau Neighbourhood Project – Ginny Larsen (Manager and New Projects Worker, Parenting and Community Development)
9. Phillipstown Community Hub – MaryAnn Bell (Community Development Worker)
10. Porirua Mongrel Mob Memorial Marae Project – Dennis Makalio
11. Ruapehu Whānau Transformation Plan – Erena Mikaere Most (Project Manager)
12. Raurimu Avenue School – Sally Wilson (Principal)
13. Safe Families Motueka (formerly Motueka Collaboration of Agencies) – Linda Glew (Strengthening Families Coordinator, Family Works)
14. Tāmaki Regeneration Company – Peter Fa'afiu (General Manager, Corporate Affairs and Engagement)
15. Te Aroha Noa Community Services – Bruce Maden (Chief Executive)
16. Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki Te Ora Hou – Manu Caddie (Project Leader) and Annette Toupili (Community Animator)
17. Toi Tū Kids – Tracy McKee (Nurse Specialist)
18. Victory Community Centre – Kindra Douglas (Director)
19. Waimate Parenting Hub Collective – Jane Denley (Community Services Leader, Mid and South Canterbury Plunket)
20. Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergartens and Learning Centres – Royce Dewe (Director)
21. Waitangirua Wesley Community Action, Waitangirua – Lizzie McMillan-Makalio (Team Manager)

External Stakeholders interviewed:

1. Tindall Foundation – Dave Richards (Projects and Strategy Manager)
2. Todd Foundation – Susie Schwartz (Strategic Advisor – Family and Community)
3. Department of Internal Affairs – Nicola Brehaut (Manager, Community Operations Northern Operations)
4. J.R. McKenzie Trust – Iain Hines (Executive Director)
5. Anna Kominik – former Inspiring Communities Board member
6. Linda Biggs – independent

Appendix 2:

'Bright Spot' Snapshots

What follows are snapshots of community initiatives interviewed as part of this report.

Anderson Park Community Group – Paul Grundy

Anderson Park Community Group started out of a concern for the children of Lucknow School. Lucknow School is a decile five school. It has a mix of very affluent families and very low-income families. In about 2008 Lucknow School staff and parents started discussing how to improve some of the negative things in the community and the lives of some of the school's children, and so they started the 'Lucknow School Community Group'. After some discussions with the Hastings District Council, it gained wider support and the initiative is now called the Anderson Park Community Group.

The Anderson Park Community Group includes representatives from local churches, public health, Red Cross, local Police, the high school, kindergarten, local residents and Kōhanga Reo. They have started a community garden – initiated by a local parent; as well as a 'Community Tool Box' – where people can borrow a lawnmower, trailer and other tools. They have also had many successful events and activities such as a Matariki Celebration, a weekly sausage sizzle at the garden, and working bees in the neighbourhood, for planting, beautifying walkways, and improving street lighting.

See: <https://www.facebook.com/AndersonParkCommunityGroup/>

Common Unity Project – Julia Milne and Donnell Jensen

The Common Unity Project Aotearoa is a community-based, urban farm project that grows food, skills and leadership with local families. Common Unity is based at, and also works collaboratively with, Epuni Primary School, in Lower Hutt. It is known for growing food on

a disused soccer field – enough to feed the children of Epuni School three times each week. Parents and the wider community are invited to come to school each day and learn, share and educate one another. In turn, this has become "a collective response to meeting the needs of our children and developing our own resilient solution within our community".

Julia Milne is the founder of Common Unity. It started with a personal friendship between Julia and Epuni Primary School's principal, Bunnie Wiling. Julia had previously been involved in building a very successful community garden at Great Start Taita. Bunnie invited Julia to put in a proposal to build a garden at the school. Julia says she "took quite a while putting a proposal together...I didn't want to go into a 'hard to reach community' and do any harm". Julia's proposal to build a garden was approved by the Board of Trustees. The Ministry of Education also approved the use of the land. So in 2011, they had a disused soccer field, an idea and no funding. And that is how it started.

Since then Common Unity has grown and blossomed. The children of the school along with volunteers have turned the disused soccer field into a vibrant garden, and through this many families have made friends and connected with each other.

"One hundred beautiful little children were allowed to come and garden each week...This garden has absolutely, authentically been built by the children. It was their ideas, their desire to have something beautiful and magical" explains Julia.

Some people were cynical at the start, thinking that any garden or any thing of beauty would be vandalised in Epuni since Epuni is known to be a 'high-deprivation neighbourhood'. However, this unexamined assumption was proved wrong. Julia says, "the children have absolutely claimed the space".

Julia explains that the garden is not so much a “community-led development project” but a “child-led development” project. They have put children at the heart of the conversations to develop the garden.

Beyond the garden, parents, whānau and wider Epuni community are also involved in a range of activities, including:

- Koha Kitchen – students, whānau and community members come together to cook in the school hall kitchen every Wednesday morning. The kitchen has proved to be a wonderful meeting place for parents as they prepare the food, talk, share and learn new things.
- Playgroup for 0-5 year olds – alongside Koha Kitchen every Wednesday morning.
- ReCycled Rides – a community bike library offering rescued, fixed-up bikes to Epuni and the wider Hutt Valley community. Donnell Jensen runs ReCycled Rides and the Bike Shed.
- One Small Piece Knitting Group – volunteers knit with the children of Epuni Primary School every Thursday morning. The children learn how to knit, stitch and make a blanket.
- Sew Good – a sewing cooperative where experienced mentors teach new learners using donated fabrics and machines. They make clothing and other things for their families. Their vision is to build Sew Good into a social enterprise that produces clothing and textile goods for sale.
- \$100 Challenge – Parents and whānau meet to explore ways of living and providing on a shoestring budget. The challenge is: ‘How to feed a family of four on \$100 a week’. They look at how to grow, cook, make and create their own solutions together.

What changes have been noticed?

- Friendships and more communication between the parents. Before Common Unity started, Donnell recalls that parents would “just drop off their kids and go, and then pick up their kids and go”. These days, parents talk with each other more and friendships have blossomed between parents.
- The school has “opened its gates fully”. The school has a very welcoming atmosphere – it feels like it is a place for parents and whānau to learn and grow too.
- Parents and whānau are much more involved

in the school – there is more engagement and interactions between the parents and teachers, more parents help out in the classroom.

- “If a parent is doing better – their children do better”. Julia Milne has observed that the children of parents engaged in Common Unity are doing better at school.
- Children have changed their food preferences. Children who never or rarely ate any fruit or vegetables, now love vegetables. Their involvement in gardening, growing the vegetables and cooking, has changed their attitudes to food.

Some learnings from Julia and Donnell:

- Julia says that “the most fundamental part of our work is for people to cultivate a new belief about themselves”. This is especially true for “mothers who hold everything together for their family”. It is important to create some “new head space” for them.
- Donnell emphasises the importance of “getting out and getting to know your community”. She says “you can then form friendships and go from there”. She says “don’t just keep to yourself. Get to know people, get to know your neighbours”. Donnell is a mother of three. She used to drop off her kids in the morning, go home, do housework, then pick up her kids again. She explains that previously she did not know any of the parents at the school. She was a little “iffy” about Common Unity at the start, but she came along to a cooking class at Koha Kitchen and “quite liked it”. Since then, she has made new friends and become the Bike Librarian for Common Unity.
- People often do not realise they have many skills. For example, Donnell’s role as the Bike Librarian has rekindled her love of fixing things and bikes. Donnell speaks very positively about her job as Bike Librarian “I saw that I have some skills. I can put them to use by taking this job and still be involved with my kids at the school”.
- How we often tell very limiting and incorrect stories about one another. Both Donnell and Julia explained how they made mistaken assumptions about people:

“You’ve got to get to know people, instead of stereotyping them...You hear lots of negative stuff about the gangs. But then you get to know a gang person and it’s completely not like that.”

– Donnell Jensen.

“Donnell and I had not shared our stories in the first year. I then realised she liked to fix bikes, so approached her about becoming the Bike Librarian. We now joke about how she used to see me as that ‘white Pākehā do-gooder’ and how I was a little bit intimidated by her. We can share our stories and laugh.”

– Julia Milne.

- When setting up a community-led project, it is important to go slowly and really listen, and begin with the positives or ‘happy places’:

“If I went back and did it again, I would have spent a lot more time LISTENING. Really digging to understand what’s going on. The slower you can go with that, the more carefully you can listen, the better. I went in thinking the community was ready – but in fact they were not. I had made assumptions. (Much like the old-thinking of implementing a new ‘service’ or programme). The community was not ready – they did not want to go and garden and dig up their own backyards. It was quite humbling for me. It made me ask WHY? What stops people from taking a spade to the earth and doing their own food production?”

– Julia Milne.

“You need to be very slow and thorough. Help people identify what they’d like to do. If I was doing it again, I would not have started with the garden. I would have started with SPORTS – that is people’s ‘happy place’. It is a brilliant place to start.”

- Change takes time. Julia says “funders often have great expectations that you will deliver something and deliver it really quickly. In reality, changes are not going to be noticeable for a long period of time”.

See: <http://www.commonunityproject.org.nz/>

Gore Kids Hub – Jo Brand

The Gore Kids Hub started in May 2014 when three local parent leaders Shelley Lithgow (Playcentre Chairperson), Bronnie Grant (Toy Library Chairperson), and Bernadette Hunt (Parents Centre Chairperson), all realised that they had either unsustainable or expiring leases. The three women decided to join forces and started investigating various options. After some investigation, they decided to “start from scratch” and go for a purpose built building. Since the original conversation, the Charitable Trust has raised \$1.6 million of the needed \$1.7 million for the new Gore Kids Hub.

The three organisations – Playcentre, Toy Library and Parents Centre – could see the benefits of working collaboratively in a joint space. They realised that they complemented each other and all offered services to the same parent community. Sharing a space not only means reduced overheads, but it should also foster working together better.

Gore Kids Hub will also include a specialised under-5s playground alongside it, as well as two additional meeting rooms. So far these extra rooms have been leased to Barnardos/KidStart.

Their vision is to be a complete ‘one stop shop’ for families of the Gore community. Since the initial 2014 conversations the Gore Kids Hub vision has grown substantially. Jo Brand has been employed by the Gore Kids Hub Charitable Trust, with the support of a ‘Working Together More Fund’ grant. Jo has been working on getting everyone together and is starting up a Kids Hub Network. The original trustees of the Gore Kids Hub Charitable Trust recognise that most people involved in building the Gore Kids Hub so far are predominantly ‘Pākehā and middle-class’. The trustees therefore employed Jo Brand to help make the Gore Kids Hub a community resource for everyone and increase the diversity of people using the Hub. A grant from the Ministry of Social Development also supports increasing wider community engagement. For example, Jo is working on widening the participation in the hub beyond the current brand users (Playcentre, Parents Centre, Toy Library). She is working to ensure the Hub engages local iwi (through Te Reo sing along classes and a possible ‘homework hub’), new migrants, teenagers (through free sexual health clinics) and more.

Gore Kids Hub is set to open in early 2016.

See: <https://www.facebook.com/GoreKidsHub>

Great Start Taita – Jeanette Higham²⁸

Great Start Taita began with a 'door-knocking exercise'. Barnados planned to set up a new 'centre' and it wanted to know about what people in the Taita community actually wanted. The door-knocking soon found that there were 'hundreds of services' and people were 'swamped with services'. (Taita is typically seen as a 'low income suburb' in Lower Hutt, with state houses from the 1950s). Taita people did not want another service. They wanted something to connect residents to each other. So Great Start Taita was born – with a range of programmes and activities based on what local people have suggested. There are play-groups, a toy library, and a community garden.

Great Start Taita has a clear community that it works with – low-socio-economic Māori, Pasifika, Pākehā and refugees. Even though it works from a strengths-based perspective, it is 'clear-eyed' on who it works with; and who it does not. Jeanette Higham, former Early Years Manager, has found, from experience, that if an activity or programme starts to be dominated with the "worried well" from other middle class suburbs then it is much harder for Taita people to engage.

"People tend to access things that they feel comfortable going to. If a Pasifika mum walks into a group and sees a sea of white faces, she may not feel so comfortable. But if there is a mix of Pasifika, Māori, white and other ethnic faces, then it is much easier for her to engage" says Jeanette.

Jeanette said that Great Start Taita has been strong on collecting 'significant change stories' as a way to demonstrate the impact of Great Start Taita on people. She said people were very happy to talk about their experiences and how Great Start Taita affected their lives and their families. In the difficult world of 'measuring impact', storytelling is one way to demonstrate impact.

Great Start Taita has also been the recipient of the Todd Foundation's 'Partnership Funding' – a by invitation only fund for five years' worth of funding. Jeanette said this type of long-term funding was very valuable. But, it was not just about the money. Jeanette explained that through being a Partnership Funding recipient Great Start Taita gained access to mentors and a whole network of people doing amazing things. The Hui hosted by the Todd Foundation was a great experience to look at the issues various groups and organisations were dealing with, and how they can tackle them together. Jeanette says she hopes that even when the Todd funding has finished, "hopefully the relationship that has developed between funder and fundee and the other grant recipients, particularly the organisations in the same cohort, will continue".

Some learnings from Jeanette:

- Relationships are key. A lot of the work is about building up relationships with people, and this can take a very long time.
- Parenting and playgroups are "soft doors". They bring in all sorts of people. Parenting groups and playgroups open up the beginnings of relationships.
- You have to develop the relationship for a while before people feel comfortable to ask for 'extra help' or talk about harder issues.
- "It is ok to let things go" that need to be let go. It is no good pushing things that are not working. This was a learning that the Great Start team took on board after attending an Inspiring Communities workshop in 2011 where Mark Cabaj introduced his "Loop of Change". "It gave us confidence in our own feelings that we needed to let some things go rather than to push at them to succeed. The breast feeding support group was one of these initiatives due to it appealing to women who we felt didn't need Great Start's support and from noticing that local women from Taita were not attending. (Wharekai Pēpē has since successfully moved and flourishes in a different location)".
- It is okay to have a clearly defined 'target audience'. It is good to be clear about who you are there to work with, and who not. During Jeanette's time at Great Start Taita they focused on working with low-income people and families – who were predominantly Māori, Pasifika or refugees. The activities, services, groups were for Taita locals, not for the "worried well"/middle-class families.

²⁸ Disclaimer: Jeanette was on her last week of work at Great Start Taita at the time of the interview. These views are her own, and not necessarily the views of Great Start Taita.

- ‘Reflective practice’ is important. You need to stop and ask ‘so what?’ Ask ‘what difference have we made?’
 - A ‘services hub’ that works in community-led ways is one of many models for working in low-income neighbourhoods.

See: <http://www.greatstart.net.nz/>

Hikina te Ora! Mangakino Area School, Whānau Ora Navigation – Leanne Karauna

Leanne Karauna has had a history and association with community-led-development (CLD) practices and approaches. Through her CLD journey, she could see that her local kura (school) could become a key support in the community. She has also been involved in and understands ‘Whānau Ora’. She sees that Whānau Ora work at Mangakino Area School is extremely beneficial. Ninety percent of families at the school are Māori, and the school is rated as decile 1. ‘Whānau Ora’, as a term, has come to have two meanings in New Zealand, and the meanings are often used inter-changeably:

- Whānau-centred service-delivery – which refers to service providers working with the whole whānau to address challenges, rather than with individual clients in an atomised way;²⁹ and
- Whānau ora – translates as ‘family wellbeing’.

Following on from another NGO’s Whānau Ora support in Mangakino, Leanne came up with a proposal for the Mangakino Area School to be the fund and project holder. The project would be ‘Whānau Ora Navigation’, for the whānau of the school and also for whānau from the wider community. The purpose of the Navigation is to “inspire and enable whānau to make positive change”. Leanne says the end goal is that we do not need Whānau Ora Navigation in our community – i.e. it should do itself out of a job!

Leanne explains that in the beginning she did not think she could continue the Whānau Ora work in Mangakino. She says “often we wait for the Government, or the money to arrive before we can do the work”. Leanne realised that she had the skills and passion to continue this, and even without the money, she wanted to do this work. The role of a

Whānau Ora Kaiārahi (guide/navigator/mentor) was established, and Leanne was employed as the Kaiārahi. With some synchronicity, some Te Puni Kōkiri Whānau Ora funding became available.

How does Whānau Ora Navigation work in practice and what does Leanne do as the Kaiārahi (navigator/guide)?

- Whānau are referred to Leanne (the Kaiārahi), or they can self-refer.
- The whānau and Leanne start off by looking at the “dream”. They work together to create a plan and then some goals with specific actions. Goal setting is key. Leanne says, “dream it, plan it, do it”.
- Leanne helps to write down the plan. Leanne helps whānau to identify any barriers and how to get over the barriers. She also helps the whānau identify their strengths and what they are good at.
- “The goals are the main outputs” of the work.

What has been achieved so far?

- 18 families have started Whānau Ora plans.
- There are 70 plus individuals (adults and children) connected to, or part of the 18 families. This is almost 11% of Mangakino’s population.
- It is growing. As more whānau become aware of the support, more whānau are asking to do a Whānau Ora plan with Leanne.
- In the 18 families, 91 goals have been set – of these 25% relate to education; 20% relate to whakawhānaungatanga (relationships); and 11% relate to employment (for example, to get “WINZ-free”).
- By April 2015, about 30% of the goals had been achieved.
- Then by September 2015, over 60% of the goals set by whānau had been achieved.
- Six people have gone into part-time work – many of these people had never had a job before, or have a criminal record. They previously only saw barriers to employment.
- Whānau, who were previously not engaging with the school, now get more involved.

Some key learnings from Leanne and the Whānau Ora Navigation work:

- The work Leanne is doing with families, one-by-one, is very “private work”. It is really at the grass roots.

²⁹ Productivity Commission (2015) ‘More Effective Social Services’, Appendix C – Case Study: Whānau Ora, accessed at: <http://www.productivity.govt.nz/inquiry-content/2032?stage=4>

- “There is a big level of having people trust me” says Leanne. She is a Mangakino local and Tangata Whenua.
- You need to walk beside people for a while.
- It is positive work, a positive force for change. Leanne would like to see other schools adopt it more. There needs to be a more holistic approach that is truly whānau centred towards learning.
- Ko te tamaiti te rito o te pā harakeke, the child is the centre and the heart of a whānau.
- “People realising things for themselves is key to success” – for example, Leanne insists that a person must ask Leanne to refer them to a drug and alcohol counsellor. Leanne will not encourage them nor coerce them into it. “If the parent comes up with the ideas themselves, they are more likely to be successful”.
- “The hardest part is getting whānau to dream. They don’t want to fail”.
- “All parents want the best for their children. People do want their children to succeed. And most families understand that education is a key to a better life”.
- In this kind of work, it is important to keep asking – “How is this work enabling this whānau?”
- It is humbling work.
- Working one-on-one with families to help them on a pathway of wellness has a huge ripple effect. It means they are more engaged in their community. It breaks some intergenerational patterns for the family. It leads to a better Aotearoa.

Koha Shed – Cannons Creek – Paula MacEwan

Paula MacEwan, a Cannons Creek local, says her mantra is “recycle, reuse, reduce” and she is encouraging others in her neighbourhood to do the same. Paula set up Koha Shed Cannons Creek two years ago. She hosts a ‘koha table’ once a week and people drop off items, and take away items.

While the original Koha Shed was started to ‘alleviate poverty’, Paula says Koha Shed Cannons Creek is not about that. Paula explains:

“I don’t call it poverty – we have running water and a roof over our heads. There is a poverty in my neighbourhood – but it’s the poverty of the mind/spirit/being. People are just ‘existing’ in my neighbourhood.”

Furthermore, Paula says:

“People are always singing the ‘poverty song’. They have sensationalised poverty. It is a plaster. They need to dig deeper.”

Paula emphasises that this ‘existing’ mode has come about through colonisation. It is not just Māori people who have been colonised, but a whole section of society. This section of society is ostracised and segregated. Our current system has created ostracised people who act like “zombies – they just chug along in life”. Paula believes there is a better way, and a better life for everyone.

Paula sees her purpose as about igniting people, nudging people who are currently only ‘existing’. She says “I am here to put the wind up them”. She explains that:

“After struggling to light a fire one day, I realized that this is a healthy thing (blowing air to ignite it). Everyone has embers, and a little bit of wind can ignite it into flame, not everyone wants a flame, and in some cases it ignites a fire. A soul on fire is the most powerful force on earth. So I like to think one of my purposes is ‘feeding the souls through wind’.”

Paula is very firm about the importance of people ‘helping themselves and helping each other’. She does not believe in handouts that disempower people. She emphasises that the difference is in the approach taken. She approaches her work as about empowering people – she is trying to engage people in what is happening in their own neighbourhood.

Paula is part of a very active network in Eastern Porirua that is about community collective responsibility. Paula explains that she and others have helped to shut down the local liquor store. They have also raised issues with the local council when the council sprayed the local blackberry plants right before picking time.

Paula recommends keeping community work simple, having faith and dreaming big.

See: <https://www.facebook.com/The-Koha-Shed-Cannons-Creek-116889755162910/?fref=ts>

Love to Live – Marilyn Kelly

Te Atatu Peninsula is an Auckland suburb that has really defined physical borders. Geography has worked in favour of Te Atatu Peninsula and there is a strong sense of community there. Love to Live was born from some money raised at a community event in 2010. The money was raised to upgrade the local playground, but then the upgrade was postponed. The local organisers decided the money should go back into the Te Atatu Peninsula community and the Love to Live Charitable Trust was born. It has two aims – to empower children and connect the community. One of Love to Live’s projects is ‘Biz Kids’ – which is about encouraging entrepreneurship in children. Love to Live also organises an annual community fun day.

Coordinator Marilyn Kelly says the biggest change she has noticed in the community is that there is a lot more communication and connection between different people. All sorts of people will come up and talk to her in the shops. Much to her surprise she has become a ‘community connector’.

See: <http://lovetolive.co.nz/>

Mairehau Neighbourhood Project and The Neighbourhood Trust – Ginny Larsen

Mairehau Neighbourhood Project is in its beginning stages but it is the fruit of a much wider work by The Neighbourhood Trust. Neighbourhood Trust has been working in three Christchurch suburbs of North St Albans/Mairehau/Shirley since 1999. It was established by the St Albans Baptist Church to identify and respond to the needs in the community. The Trust uses a “strengths-based approach to community development, believing each person has God-given potential”. The Trust works mainly with families and the elderly, providing a wide range of activities and services focused on empowering and strengthening the community.

The Mairehau Neighbourhood Project has its origins in 2007 with a research project. The research project found that people in Mairehau did not feel a sense of identity or belonging. They wanted help with parenting skills as well.

In response to this the Trust started two things: a monthly community paper and the annual Mairehau Community Day. It was building up positive momentum and then the Christchurch Earthquake hit

in 2010. Mairehau is now seen as a ‘high-deprivation’ neighbourhood – with a highly transient population, one of the local school’s roll has a one-third turnover rate, about a fifth of the population are single parent families, and about a third do not have access to the internet.

In 2014, Neighbourhood Trust starting working more intensively with schools and formed a partnership with two other like-minded organisations, Te Ora Hou and Kingdom Resources. With support from The Tindall Foundation, the Mairehau Neighbourhood Project first engaged the community by asking “what things do you like?, what things should be changed?, what things are you concerned about?”. The brokenness of the physical environment came through as a strong theme, and the lack of colour. People wanted to see more flowers – people said “everything here is grey or brown”. So one of the things the Project would love to do is “bring new life into things”.

Some learnings:

- Connecting people to each other is important. Ginny explained that previously, the school staff, Early Childhood Education staff, and NGO³⁰ and Church organisations working with families at the school had hardly talked with each other. They were all doing really valuable work, but they knew little about what the others were doing. The Mairehau Neighbourhood Project Partners brought them together to talk about their work and to see where the Project Partners could be most helpful.
- Showcasing positive stories in the media about the neighbourhood is important.

“Most stories in the general press were very negative about Mairehau – ‘it’s a bad place, full of vandalism, theft, etc’. But there is actually some amazing people here. We wanted to show the stars of our community. This has filtered out to mainstream media as well. People now were having positive stories about Mairehau reflected back to them. There has been a change in attitude – that our community is actually pretty great.”

- Take your time in setting things up. “If we don’t have the buy-in, it won’t work”. Go where the energy is – timing is everything!

³⁰ Non-Government Organisation.

Since the interview took place, several new activities have come about. Ginny added the following points to this summary:

- “A group of parents at Mairehau Primary have got together and with a bit of support have created several patches of garden with vegetable and fruiting plants, as well as adding some flowers to brighten up the environment.
- Kim Button (our main social worker) has started ‘Snackbox’ – a weekly time for parents to get together after dropping off their children, with a parenting ‘snack’ amongst it on a particular topic. She is supported by a worker from Te Ora Hou, another member of our staff and monthly, a children’s psychologist (who is also a parent from the school).
- In partnership with Te Ora Hou, we have completed a ‘Children’s voice’ project – photos of children, by children from Mairehau Primary, with speech bubbles showing what they are thinking. We launched the exhibition last week at Shirley Library (at The Palms) with 13 of the best photos – large poster-size photos on the outside of the windows”.

See: <http://www.nht.org.nz/>

Phillipstown Community Hub – MaryAnn Bell

The Phillipstown Hub is made up of community groups, organisations and agencies working towards a better Phillipstown. The Phillipstown Community Hub was born after the closure of the Phillipstown Primary School in late 2014. Today, the Hub is home to Phillipstown Community Centre, Canterbury Youth Development Program, Otautahi Creative Spaces, MP Pottery Group, ICEcycles and Phillipstown Neighborhood Policing Team.

Phillipstown is one of the oldest suburbs in Christchurch. One of its famous landmarks was the Edmonds Sure To Rise factory, demolished in the 1980s. It is one of the poorer socio-economic areas, with a higher Māori, Pasifika and migrant population than other parts of Christchurch. Due to the lower-cost rentals and aging houses there is a higher than average transient population; with lots of young families and lots of single parent households.

While the Phillipstown Community Hub is relatively young (since 2015), the Phillipstown Community Centre (PCC) has been around since the late 1990s. The PCC came about from a local Residents Group which got seed funding from the Canterbury Community Trust and the Council. The Centre was

based in a relocatable house put on the northern edge of the Phillipstown Primary School grounds.

Today, the Phillipstown Community Centre is a part of the wider Hub. The PCC’s main activities include:

- Being a place for locals to have representation, to socialise, to get information and assistance.
- OSCAR program.
- Youth Group.
- Older Adults Leisure Group.
- Fruit and Vegetable co-op distribution centre. About 30 families get their orders here weekly.
- A Partnership Community Worker, funded by Pegasus, who liaises with local medical centres for better outcomes for clients.
- Phillipstown Neighborhood Policing Team (PNPT).

The Hub is still growing and is in its early stages. There is a Community Garden developing, and an increasing number of groups which use the community lounge spaces at the Hub both in the day and evenings.

See: <http://phillipstown.org.nz/>

Porirua Mongrel Mob Memorial Marae Project – Dennis Makalio Makalio

Dennis Makalio is a leader in the Mongrel Mob, he is a driver of change. He has been in the Mongrel Mob for forty years, and has spent 25 years with the Porirua Chapter and the last 15 years with the Rogue Chapter. He is providing some leadership, and most importantly he is providing vision. He has been working with the Mongrel Mob to turn their “pad” into a “Memorial Marae”.

Dennis’s eyes light up talking about the plans for the Memorial Marae. He explains that it is much needed because the Mob needs “somewhere they can turn their dead to”. There is usually a rule of “no patches” on Māori maraes. He does not understand this rule and asks – “why are they turning their own people away?” (Some maraes have banned ‘patches’ – meaning gang members). This leads to years of built-up hurt and grief that has had no outlet. Dennis wants to provide a way for the Mob to honour their fallen whānau.

Dennis and the committee of Mongrel Mob members are renovating to build a Memorial Marae on Mongrel Mob land. They have architectural plans for the building. He shows me photos of the site that has

been cleared for construction. Dennis understands that owning property is powerful. He wants to put the Mongrel Mob's property to better use.

He explains that the committee is drug-free. He has made that clear to all committee members. He is also teaching committee members what he sees as some 'basics'. That we need to "do one door at a time" – "close this door first, before moving on to the next door".

Dennis epitomises the best of 'community-led-development'. He sees the strengths and potential of his community – the Mongrel Mob members and their whānau.

"We can do it ourselves. There are talented carvers among us...There is so much we can do if we own something...It's about opening up their eyes..."

"I can see 10-20 years down the track but they can't (yet)...We've got to start thinking about what we want to do."

Dennis also demonstrates that you have to build on strengths. In particular, you have to build up the "good stuff" first. He shows me the year planner for next year. He says that there will be a planning committee for each key event in the year: Wellington Anniversary Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, etc. The events will be "for the whole family – members and children – and alcohol-free". Dennis explains that the women of the Mob will get together as a "committee" to organise some of these events. It is about changing old beliefs about what a "pad is all about". It is about getting people to see differently. To create positive events of their own making. Dennis envisages that these positive family events will become permanent fixtures on the Porirua Mongrel Mob's calendar.

There is, however, a wariness. Dennis explains that there are roughly 30 Mongrel Mob chapters around New Zealand. And so often, there are lots of club members who are doing good things. These stories do not get out to the public. Instead, we hear only one story – gangs as sites for drugs, organised crime, violence.

"There are just as many clubs [Mongrel Mob clubs] into good things as there are bad ones. A lot of the clubs are into body building, sports, league etc... But do we hear about those?"

"Every time we do something successful, no one wants to hear about it."

Likewise, Dennis knows he is dogged by his history and some people like to use his darker history to discredit him. Any Google search will reveal that he is often featured in media articles to do with gangs. He is a leading spokesperson giving a 'club member's perspective'. But one thing that journalists sometimes include for 'context' is his previous convictions. Even though they date back more than 25-30 years.

"If you've got a criminal record. It's for all your life...Would you give someone with a real bad criminal record a job?... How about if they have been clean for ten, twenty or thirty years?"

"Wesley is the only organisation in New Zealand that will employ me. I'm 54 years old and this is the first job I've had."

Dennis believes that employment is the key to unlocking some of New Zealand's social issues. He says we should be thinking about what people can do. People who have not had much education and have a criminal record. What sorts of jobs, trades can they go into? Where is there a shortage of workers – bricklaying, concreting, truck drivers, electricians.

"The question to be asking is why isn't there the opportunity to learn a trade supported by work brokers and case managers (WINZ) for people with criminal records? This could lead to change and possibilities of people owning their own businesses."

Regarding officials, bureaucrats, politicians, policy makers – Dennis says "They've always got an answer, but it's not a solution". So what is the solution? "Give us jobs, give us opportunities" says Dennis. Or are Dennis and the Mongrel Mob already creating their own solutions? If community-led-development is about local people building on what they have, and using their strengths to create their future, then this is what Dennis and his team are doing. This is what true leadership is about. Being able to make leaps of the imagination. Being able to find solutions that others do not have the vision to see yet.

Ruapehu Whānau Transformation Plan – Erena Mikaere Most

The Ruapehu Whānau Transformation Plan (RWT) started with three key people of Ngāti Rangī descent (or connection), inspired by an iwi think-tank they had recently attended, asking 'what are we going to do

about our community?’ They had noticed that the community in the Ruapehu region were not thriving, and not connected like they used to be.

RWT has an underlying approach of ‘Stats – Stories – Solutions’. The team working on the RWT from the start, have a strong policy, statistics, and business background, as well as being Tangata Whenua. The core implementation team includes Erena Mikaere Most (Project Manager), Danielle Vaughan (Operations Manager) and Kathy Pyatt (Project Lead).

The RWT started with a research project to find out what the “current state” was. The research project was funded by Te Puni Kōkiri. During the research phase the RWT team focused on getting “the stats”. They wanted accurate data from government sources. They saw that using central government sources of statistics on education, employment, housing, health and social-wellbeing, would be more powerful in influencing government – i.e. using government’s own data. The team sent in 19 Official Information Act (OIA) requests for information that was not publically available. These 19 OIA requests were across 19 portfolios covered by 13 Government Ministers. Erena says they got all their questions answered.

The research team also asked local people what they saw as the real problems facing their community. Local people’s insights and views made up the ‘stories’ part of RWT’s approach. To be able to truly design local solutions their insights were critical. Stats only tell one side of the story, and their experience and perspectives gave ‘life’ to the numbers. They also drew together a wide range of people from local families, iwi, businesses, local government, agencies etc., to form the Community Reference Group. The Community Reference Group provided further insights and contributions that resulted in the 23 ‘solutions’ contained in the Plan.

Two key documents have been produced that guide the RWT: the Ruapehu Whānau Transformation Plan and the Scoping Report (see links on RWT’s website).

The RWT Plan has five focus areas with opportunities under each, and solutions. The 23 solutions are the actions to take and achievements to be made. They are mostly very specific and practical. The five focus areas and some of the solutions are:

- Education – e.g. whānau reading, literacy and numeracy programme.
- Employment – e.g. community work broker, trades training, local skill needs analysis.
- Housing – e.g. property WOF, sponsored home ownership programme.
- Health – e.g. Hauora Navigator.
- Social – e.g. ‘Street by Street’ initiative, tech hub.

Erena Mikaere Most, Project Manager, says that Ngāti Rangī recognised that for long-term sustainable change, it had to go beyond the iwi alone. Their people live in the wider community. Therefore “our future, is our future together”. A lot of the RWT is about changing a system that does not work for Māori.

Some key learnings from the RWT Plan are:

- Statistics are important. Use government sources of statistics for greater impact and influence on government.
- Getting the facts right is important. For example, there was a big perception by local residents that ‘there are no jobs out there’. At the same time, local businesses had a perception of ‘there’s no one to employ’. So when RWT discovered this, RWT could counter these stories and show it was not true with ‘here are the facts and here are the statistics’. One of RWT’s key projects is to connect local workers with local jobs.
- Come up with detailed solutions. It is better to focus on something specific, and get as specific as you can about what you want to achieve. When actioning/implementing, use a ‘Design Thinking’ mentality. You can be flexible in your approach, rather than flexible with the descriptor of the goal.
- One of the biggest benefits of the RWT Plan has been a ‘spin-off benefit’. That is – people have been reconnected to each other. The Community Reference Group includes people from across all different sectors – social services, health, education, iwi, local business, district council, church, Police, the Army, and several more residents who bring more local voices in. They now connect outside of the reference group forum, which has such important benefits for the entire community, and the sustainability of the RWT ‘movement’.
- Put effort into promotion and marketing. Take a professional approach to publications and design.

It sets a professional tone right from the outset.

- Political relationships and political influence is important. Essential relationships, and the OIA requests at the start of the process got the RWT work onto the government's radar.

See: <http://ruapehuwhānautransformation.com/>

Safe Families Motueka – Linda Glew

Safe Families Motueka started life as the 'Motueka Collaboration of Agencies', some ten years ago. It began as a network of agencies that were involved directly or indirectly in family violence. The network met monthly to share learnings and issues. A few years later, it won a small grant from the Ministry of Social Development. This enabled them to do a small scoping project to see if something larger could come out of the network.

Safe Families Motueka (or the Motueka Collaboration of Agencies) has run a number of initiatives including:

- Agency Open Door Hui – since 2013, agencies within the collaborative network take turns to open their doors to other NGOs³¹ or government agencies. This has been key to building relationships in the social sector in Motueka.
- Motueka Good Men Project – public awareness raising by local sportsmen, businessmen, fishermen, clergy, and the Police, about paying attention to tension, and that 'violence is not OK'.
- A pilot project of "Shared Case Management" – a pilot model for how social sector agencies can better work together to actively support change in a family.

Safe Families Motueka is working towards co-ordinated and combined population-based evidence. They have people experienced in Results-Based Accountability ('How much? How well? Is anyone better off?'). The Safe Families Motueka initiative also provides a model of how a network of agencies can be run without a 'coordinator'. All agencies share responsibility, they meet monthly, and the workload is shared around. Some work can be contracted out to other groups or individuals according to their area of knowledge and expertise. Safe Families Motueka does have one paid administrator, but it has deliberately not created a 'coordinator' role.

See: <http://www.safefamiliesmotueka.nz>

31 Non-Government Organisation.

Tāmaki Redevelopment Company – Peter Fa'afiu, General Manager Corporate Affairs and Engagement

The Tāmaki Redevelopment Company (TRC) describes itself as "New Zealand's first community-based urban regeneration company". It was established in 2012 to drive a programme of regeneration across the Auckland suburbs of Glen Innes, Pt England and Panmure. (All three suburbs are high-deprivation areas central to Auckland, and are surrounded by affluent suburbs). TRC is legally owned by the New Zealand Government and the Auckland Council.

Urban renewal in Tāmaki has a much longer history than TRC's establishment. Its origins can be traced back to 1998 when a three-day hui was organised by the Glen Innes Community Development Project Team. The people of Glen Innes discussed the needs of the community and positive change for the area. In 2007 the 'Tāmaki Transformation Programme' was established, and the next three years saw a groundswell of community-led support. However, the redevelopment of such a large area was a massive project which required significant investment from both the Government and Council. It got beyond what the Tāmaki Transformation Programme had been structured to deliver e.g. it did not have the necessary levers to ensure changes occurred with the government service delivery system. The Government pressed "pause" on the programme so that it might take into account the necessary levers and what aspects of international urban regeneration best practice could be transferred to New Zealand and the Tāmaki context.

In 2011, the Government looked at some overseas models of urban regeneration or 'urban renewal' for high-deprivation areas. It saw the interconnection of four key strands of work and the need for all elements to be operationalised concurrently:

- Housing redevelopment: to make more efficient use of government land held by Housing NZ.
- Place-making: community-driven, along with Government and local council.
- Social transformation that required adapting the current government system of service delivery to the needs and aspirations of the Tāmaki community.
- Economic development: including catalysing elements such as good transport links, two town centres, under-utilised industrial areas,

and support services for large scale housing redevelopment in the area.

The Government therefore established the Tāmaki Redevelopment Company to use an “urban renewal” approach. TRC is “like an intermediary” – a commercial buffer between the community and government system ensuring there is leadership throughout the lifetime of the programme that has diverse and complex objectives.

Peter Fa’afiu, General Manager Corporate Affairs and Engagement, explains that “our job is to lead, catalyze and enable...It is top-down and at the same time bottom-up”. Peter explains that while TRC was established by Government, its origins are from the Tāmaki community’s desire for a better future.

TRC has had to go back to the grassroots community level to “regain the social license” to do this urban regeneration work with the Tāmaki community of 16,000 current residents. Peter is clear that it was not a consultation process, but an “engagement process”. Peter says – “the community must deliver something in return if there is to be true partnership. Projects of this type require joint delivery and shared outcomes but also joint accountability and responsibility. If things go wrong then it’s not about blaming each other; but finding joint resolutions for the betterment of current and future residents. For some community groups, joint accountability is difficult”.

Since 2013 TRC has seen community groups gathering momentum on how they can leverage the regeneration opportunity for their groups. There will be thousands of houses being built so local groups take the opportunity to support current residents or develop their own social enterprises. Before TRC was established, various community groups had already started that journey of collaboration. For example, previously in Tāmaki nine different entities were funded to deliver financial literacy. These nine are now collaborating to create one organisation – GFIT – and work together more closely.

On 31 March 2016, the 2,800 Housing NZ social homes in the area will be transferred to TRC. The Government and Auckland Council have mandated TRC with replacing the Housing NZ houses with a minimum 7,500 houses built over 10-15 years. The plan is to have a greater mix of houses for private home buyers and affordable housing providers. The Government has made it clear that the number of

social homes will not be less than 2,800. However the social homes could be managed by community groups or NGOs³² or community housing providers who know their clients or customers better than a government system. Tāmaki is at the forefront of the Government’s social housing reform policies.

Some learnings/key points:

- Peter Fa’afiu grew up in Tāmaki and still has strong ties to the area. He is of Pacific Island descent. Fifty percent of Tāmaki residents are Pasifica. He says “it helps that I was raised here. They know me and my family”. Beginning from a position of mistrust by some local residents about TRC, Peter and the company have worked hard to ensure the community understands that TRC is here for the long-run, and that everybody needs to get on board.
- Sometimes “brave conversations” with the community are needed. Peter notes that he has delivered some direct messages like “if people want to be part of the change and influence it, they need to get involved, not criticise from the sidelines”. He notes that often community development practitioners “go softly, softly... but being frank, honest and direct is also being supportive. People value the directness of it so they know where they stand”. Tāmaki is also fortunate to have the TIES (Tāmaki Inclusive Engagement Strategy) Framework which is part of TRC’s way of working and well regarded throughout the area.
- “You must walk the talk” and “ensure you deliver with action”. Peter understands that it is the local residents who will measure TRC’s real success and performance in the end. Peter explained that lessons learnt from previous Housing NZ developments was that it impacted more than just that family. Redevelopment impacted the church, school and extended aiga or whānau. So TRC negotiated with Housing NZ and the Ministry of Social Development to implement the Tāmaki Commitment – those impacted by redevelopment will have the opportunity to remain in the area. Peter says “once people are given the choice then they choose depending on their family circumstances. The first five families we asked to move into our first new homes said they wish to leave the Tāmaki area because of employment, church and whānau needs”.

³² Non-Government Organisation.

- “Once the residents are empowered, you really do find talent”. Peter understands that talent in high-deprivation communities is often untapped, invisible and unseen. So TRC works to catalyse the opportunity for this talent to rise to the surface.
- “The biggest hindrance is political games. One doesn’t need to be a politician to be playing politics. It’s hard for a community which is so familiar with a certain way of doing things and fighting for funding to then be asked to give up some of their identity or brand to ensure collaboration and partnership” says Peter. Peter emphasises that like other urban regeneration entities, “TRC is commercially and community focused and is apolitical in its outlook”.
- Regarding community-led development, Peter notes that many people “talk the talk and use fancy language around community-led development, but lack the ability to implement or deliver for shared outcomes. Inputs and outputs are easy to measure particularly when it involves funding; implementing for outcomes requires a different mind-set”. He says that TRC has received some criticism from a small group in the community about what TRC knows about Tāmaki. However, he points to how 50 percent of TRC’s staff are from the area or have whakapapa to Tāmaki.
- When people from the community do work on projects for TRC, TRC makes the point of paying for their services even though many community people don’t wish to be paid. “Payment equates to value, we value their opinion and input so they should be compensated for it”.
- Notwithstanding the big development projects, it’s equally important for TRC to support the community initiatives which become a ballast for community-building and place making. For example, with groups like the Community Watch Patrol – they are local volunteers. TRC funds their training and their vehicle. TRC has a background role – “working behind the scenes to empower them. We don’t promote our contribution; we just promote their work”.
- TRC has and continues to have hard conversations with community about what Peter calls “real empowerment”. How can they become sustainable and ensure that they get off the government system? Like individuals, organisations can also become overly dependent on government funding.

- Peter says that urban regeneration is the best model of high-deprivation areas – but only if “the starting point is community driven”. Peter emphasises that it has to begin with the community saying “we have to do better”. Peter explains that “if they are unable to say that the first time, then it’s up to ‘the system’ to make a succinct, sound and well articulated argument for change. When faced with the facts, communities will often choose what is best for their residents”.

See: <http://www.Tāmakiregeneration.co.nz/>

Toi Tū Kids – Tracy McKee

Toi Tū Kids is a pediatric outreach service. It is a partnership between Starship Hospital and Te Hononga (a Māori NGO).

Generally, pediatricians can often only see a family for a 30-minute appointment. This is not enough time to do everything needed to enable long-term changes in the family. Also, often many families do not show up to specialist appointments at the hospital. There are often cultural barriers, or time and transport barriers. Toi Tū kids was born from a desire for deeper involvement and engagement with families. In particular to help “Māori, Pacific and high needs” children, adolescents and their families. Its aim is to reduce inequality in health outcomes. They therefore target the service at Māori and Pacific people.

Toi Tū Kids operates only in the Auckland District Health Board catchment area. It is staffed by Tracy McKee, registered nurse (Pākehā); as well as Priscilla Williams (Māori Whānau Support Worker for Toi Tū). Tracy and Priscilla always visit families together as there is a large “cultural support” aspect to the work. They take the time to talk with families to gain a deeper understanding of a child’s chronic condition. Where the team make a big difference is around health issues that can be ‘self-managed’, for example children’s eczema. Tracy and Priscilla take a lot of time to explain the self-management routine for eczema. They have seen a lot of success with this.

Tracy says that they are “just a drop in the ocean” as the need out there is so large. Tracy and Priscilla make up a total of 1.3 FTE (full-time equivalents). She also sees the need for a Toi Tū service in East Auckland and West Auckland.

See: <http://www.tehononga.org.nz/services/toi-tu-kids-services/>

Victory Community Centre – Kindra Douglas

Victory Community Centre's theory when it began in 2007 was: "if people are engaged in social, recreational activities, and also have easy, affordable access to health and social services (like what people have asked us for), then it will improve people's health and wellbeing". And since then, this has been shown to be true. Victory Community Centre has gained a national reputation for its community development work and won numerous awards. It is a 'community hub' supporting families. It is based on the campus of a primary school and in a low-income part of Nelson. Victory Community Centre has grown to be a central part of the community. Victory Community Centre either provides or facilitates access to services, such as, counselling services, legal advice, budget advice, and health. However, the Victory Community Centre is more than a service.

"Many families say to us 'what would it be like if you weren't here?' Whenever families are not sure what to do next, we're the first stop" says Kindra Douglas, Director of Victory Community Centre.

The programme of activities at the community hub has grown over the years. Victory Community Centre asks people 'what are the things you'd like to see happening here?'. They have started an 'active play group' called 'Liberate Your Limbs' along with many other fun ways to encourage participation.

Kindra explains the changes she has observed in Victory over the past eight years:

- Local residents look out for each other a lot more.
- People know more about each other's lives and care about each other.
- Volunteers are stepping up, initiating things, taking charge – they have more confidence and are now running their own groups. Volunteers say they have more confidence and skills.
- People know they are not alone, and that they have someone to advocate for them if they are in a difficult situation.

See: <http://www.victorycommunitycentre.co.nz/>

Waimate Parenting Hub Collective – Jane Denley

The Waimate Parenting Hub Collective began in July 2012. Adam Rivett, the local school's principal, called people together to talk about how to address the social and economic issues facing Waimate – such as high unemployment and low education outcomes. From this early meeting, a collective of different organisations plus a parent voice, has grown. It is a cross-sector collective – including midwives, Plunket, local government, schools, and other social-service providers.

Jane Denley, Community Services Leader, Mid and South Canterbury Plunket, has been involved since the beginning. She explains that as Waimate is a small rural community, a lot of external service providers come in for the day to deliver services (albeit fantastically) and leave again. This meant there was little collaboration between the different service-providers. Plunket did some research at the beginning. Through talking with Waimate people, Plunket identified which areas local people and families needed help with. Since 2012, progress has been made in the following areas:

1. Pre-birth and early years – these days there are antenatal classes run locally in Waimate; there is an 'Early Reading Together' programme.
2. Database/stocktake of existing ECE (Early Childhood Education) settings – Electronic and hardcopies of this produced and distributed so people know what is available.
3. A place to support 'people who need something extra' – the local school (Adam Rivett as principal) offered a spare classroom for what has become the 'Parenting Hub'. A lot of different groups use this 'adult and child-friendly space'. For example, Women's Refuge, Incredible Years, Playcentre playgroup (following the closure of the Playcentre).

Jane Denley believes the Parenting Hub Collective has continued and is successful because it is an action-oriented group. "We're not a group that sits there and moans; we get stuff done".

Jane says that it is an exciting project to be part of. One that is very transferable and is led from the community's needs or desires.

Some learnings from Jane:

- "If Plunket were to work in isolation, we would never achieve a sense of the work we could

contribute to. We would be working on our own agenda. By working with other organisations, we have a far greater impact. Everyone in the Collective brings a strength to the team. We have really robust conversations and we come up with solutions that work” says Jane.

- When working in a collective model, you need to be true to your own organisation and also be adaptable to other people’s agendas. A memorandum of understanding is quite important to have in writing for a collective.
- It is important to keep listening to the community, and be led by those needs and desires. It is important to respond to the community.

Jane says to be responsive you need to be willing to go in a different direction from the one that is planned, while staying true to the original vision. This is what the Waimate Parenting Hub Collective has done. It is still staying true to its vision of ‘supporting parents in the Waimate district’.

See: <https://www.facebook.com/Parenting-Hub-Waimate-Family-Centre-424426954335675/>

Wesley Waitangirua Youth and Community Centre – Lizzie McMillan-Makalio

Lizzie McMillan-Makalio is someone who has a foot in two worlds. She works for Wesley Community Action as Team Manager of Wesley’s Waitangirua centre in Porirua.³³ In the Wesley world, Lizzie is a manager of ‘social services’ and a community development practitioner. Lizzie is also from Waitangirua, it is her home. She has connections to the gang community and knows first-hand what it is like to be a ‘gang mum’ and a ‘gang wife’. She has lived deeply in that world and still walks in that world today.

Waitangirua is located in Eastern Porirua. Outsiders think of it as a ‘high deprivation neighbourhood’. People see it as a place of ‘run-down state rentals, poverty and neglect’.³⁴ However, look a little closer and a different picture emerges. Lizzie talks of how “everyone here has grown up together”, how people help each other out. She talks enthusiastically about

all the successes and strengths in the Waitangirua community – for example the ‘gang mums’ built the local playground.

Since 2009 there have been “massive changes” in the community of Waitangirua. Lizzie does not believe that any one person or organisation can claim credit for this. She says “having a social service up here does help. But everyone does their part”. Lizzie explains that the positive changes are because of a range of things: two local gyms have been built (Muay Thai and a boxing club), the local pub closed down, local sports teams, and Wesley too.

In terms of Wesley’s contribution, they provide a Teen Parent Social Worker, a Youth Worker, a Social Worker/Link Worker in courts for people aged 17-24 and their families, Community Social Worker, a Social worker in schools (SWIS) based across three schools in the Horowhenua region, and Wesley have been delivering the Incredible Years programme for local parents. But perhaps, most importantly Wesley’s greatest asset is Lizzie McMillan-Makalio. Waitangirua is her home, and her community. She is accepted and trusted by the local people.

Lizzie is at the beginning stages of developing Wesley Waitangirua as a “Parenting hub”. It builds on her passion for parents and families, and her belief that change can be created “by the people, for the people”. Lizzie believes that change happens at the grass roots, not through outside expert help. She sees that local people can drive their own changes.

For example, the annual ‘Families in the Park Day’ shows local residents as leaders. The day sees about 1600 people in the local park – there are relays, dances, sausage sizzles, music and prizes. It is a celebration of the Pasifika culture. It is a day of celebration for families.

“It is created by the community, driven by the community and cleaned up by the community. What I love about it is that it gets the local parents together to shape that. I’ll help coordinate it but it is driven by them.”

Lizzie brings this ethos to all her work. She sees herself more as a “facilitator” of people, than a manager of social services. She says:

“All we need is a cup of tea and people will do it for themselves. They just need the space to do it.”

33 Wesley was established in 1952 by the Methodist Church. Since then, it has been “pioneering innovative approaches to social justice” across the Greater Wellington Region.

34 <http://www.livebeyond.co.nz/suburb/waitangirua>

“My overall vision is about teaching the life skills that are lacking in this neighbourhood. But I say we are not the experts. We want you to drive it. We want you to kōrero with each other and come up with your own solutions.”

Lizzie, like others interviewed, is skeptical about the ‘child poverty debate’ in New Zealand. She sees it as more about ‘the haves’ wanting to come and fix the ‘have nots’. Lizzie takes a more practical view. Lizzie believes everyone has the power to change and make their life better. She sees the potential in people, and their thirst for learning and growth once they get together.

“It’s not about poverty – just because you’re poor doesn’t mean you need to make bad choices.”

“...I got twenty five ‘gang mums’ together. Society looks at them as ‘failures’ – that they are not capable of learning. But when they were together as a group they were crazy-hungry for new learnings.”

Lizzie emphasises that despite what the media portrays about low-income families “people do do everything they can for their kids”. And that parents do want what’s best for their children. Perhaps, the secret to Lizzie’s success with the ‘hard to reach parents’ in Waitangirua is that she has actually walked in their shoes. She understands their experiences because she has lived it, and still walks in their world. But Lizzie is a ‘change agent’ in both the worlds she walks in. She can see the strengths and limitations of each. She brings her unique understanding and experiences from one world to the other, enriching both worlds in turn.

See: <http://wesleyca.org.nz/what-we-do/community-initiatives/waitangirua-youth-community-centre/>

Appendix 3:

Learning Story: Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki (‘Keeping our kids safe’)

Building neighbourliness to ‘keep kids safe’

The ‘Why’

Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki started because local residents wanted to reduce child abuse and maltreatment by taking a very different approach. There are no ‘programmes’, ‘clients’ or ‘services’ here. Instead, the project aims to build ‘trust and care’ in the Titirangi neighbourhood – so that residents ‘notice and care whenever someone has reason to celebrate, worry or grieve’. The project was inspired by the evidence from Professor Gary Melton’s Strong Communities³⁵ initiative in South Carolina, USA. Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki believes that building trust and care within the neighbourhood will increase children’s safety and help all whānau and families flourish in the context of a supportive community.

History/Background

The neighbourhood of Titirangi – or Kaiti South – in Gisborne has been viewed as a ‘rougher part’ of town. The neighbourhood was created with the building of state houses in the 1950s; the area becoming home to many Māori workers employed by the Kaiti Freezing Works, Wattie’s and other factories in Gisborne. With the departure of Wattie’s and closing of the freezing works, the area was left with a high rate of unemployment. Today, the average household income is in the lowest decile, leading to a label of ‘high-deprivation’ by outsiders. However, that is not the full story. A fuller and much richer story, would include the resourceful, hardworking, innovative and inspiring people who live there.

³⁵ In Strong Communities, the penultimate goal is to create the conditions necessary for every child and every parent to know that, if they had reason to worry, celebrate, or grieve, someone would notice, and someone would care. The primary goal of prevention of harm to children can also be stated positively as the ‘assurance of children’s safety’.

What’s been happening, what does Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki do?

The Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki project was started in 2010 with a ten-year vision from locals, and three years of funding from J R McKenzie Trust and the Todd Foundation. Over the previous ten years a residents association had been active in the wider community. While the new project built on some of the successes of previous work, it was much more focused on an area of nine streets that is home to about two hundred households. The project was established with the ultimate goal of ‘Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki’, or ‘Keeping our kids safe’. A related goal is that “every parent and every child in our neighbourhood will be confident that someone will notice and someone will care when they have cause for joy, sorrow or worry”. The project aims to:

- Help neighbours reflect on ways to ensure that residents (and visitors) in their street are safe and confident to support each other in ways that promote positive change in the neighbourhood.
- Mobilise volunteers to strengthen bonding and build social capital in the neighbourhood.
- Create knowledge within the neighbourhood about the place and the people who live there (i.e. its local history, current situation for residents/ environment, and future plans).
- Learn from the project and make recommendations on neighbourhood policy and investment to local and central government and Non-Governmental Organisations.

The project is based on ten principles that have been adapted from Strong Communities to better suit our context in Aotearoa:

1. Activities used to engage the community should be related to strengthening positive relationships in the neighbourhood and the ultimate outcome of keeping children safe and cared for. An activity

“fits” if it naturally brings people together so that connections among families are enhanced and isolation is reduced.

2. Plans and approaches should be directed toward the transformation of community norms and structures so that residents “naturally” notice and respond to the needs of children and their caregivers.
3. Activities should continuously promote the core kaupapa. The objective is not to provide programmes or services but instead the continuous creation of settings in which the core messages of the project are heard and applied.
4. Available resources should be directed toward volunteer recruitment, mobilisation, and retention.
5. Activities should be directed toward the establishment or strengthening of relationships among families or between families and community institutions.
6. Activities should include a focus on the development of widely available, easily accessible, and non-stigmatising social and material support for families of young children.
7. Although the ultimate goal is the safety and care of children, project activities will mainly involve parents and extended whānau.
8. Activities should be undertaken in a way that enhances parent leadership and sustainable community engagement.
9. Whenever possible, activities should facilitate manaakitanga and reciprocity of help.
10. Activities should be designed so that they build or rely on the assets (leadership, networks, facilities and cultures) of the community.

The project currently employs a number of part-time “Community Animators” who originally acted as catalysts for activities and now support residents to drive their own development instead. They live in, and are from, the local area of Titirangi/Kaiti South. Some of them grew up in the neighbourhood; so have a depth of understanding and strong local connections. Community Animators support residents to do a wide range of things – ranging from running a Kids’ Christmas Party in the park, to calling and facilitating a community meeting about an issue, to helping a neighbouring whānau in a time of crisis. Community Animators are an intentional ‘presence’ in the community – involved in everything that’s going on. Community Animators are focused on increasing:

- neighbourhood knowledge;
- neighbour interactions;
- neighbourly trust;
- volunteering; and
- care, concern and celebration.

This has seen the Community Animators and local residents involved in a wide range of community activities, such as:

- Forming of ‘Street Legends’ – a group of representatives from each street in the neighbourhood. This group meets monthly to plan and organise neighbourhood activities.
- Community events for the neighbourhood – in five years dozens of community events have been held, for example:
 - ‘Give-It-Away Day’ (residents sharing pre-loved household items and clothing with neighbours).
 - Street Clean Up Day (large skip bins provided for residents to dump tonnes of household rubbish).
 - Neighbourhood planning and consultation events in partnership with the local authorities.
 - Christmas, Easter, ANZAC, Childrens’ Day, Mothers Day and many more.

Renaming local streets to reflect traditional tupuna names. When Kaiti South was developed as a housing area, authorities ignored the Māori history of the area and chose to name the streets after British cities, and European scientists.

A neighbourhood Facebook group – members are local residents. Residents share information and news. Local resources – local people and local knowledge is grown.

Drafting the Titirangi Neighbourhood Plan – the plan has been put together by residents for residents and other stakeholders in the neighbourhood. It is designed to be a starting point to build agreement amongst residents and stakeholder organisations about how to work towards the vision of “Titirangi people love living here, care for the place and each other”.

A local history project – local history nights have been hosted by the local hapū, Ngāti Oneone, on significant days (e.g. Waitangi Day, Titirangi Accord Anniversary).

The project has tried not to just focus on activities for children because one of the principles is that

efforts should engage and inspire the adults who are responsible for caring for children. Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki is working to increase trust and care among residents and improve the overall neighbourhood environment. Priority is given to activities that encourage conversations in the community about what 'safe' means to residents, how 'safe' children are and what more can be done to keep kids safe. Over time, this has impacted positively on a growing local desire to "keep kids safe".

Engaging parents and other local adults

Annette Toupili's role as a Community Animator is part-funded by Plunket and the Tindall Foundation to promote parenting skills to parents who are not comfortable with the usual agencies – these families are often labelled the 'hard to reach'. Annette explained that many people do not want to go to agency-led parenting courses, even if run by a community organisation. People have had negative experiences of attending courses where they are "talked to", by someone standing up the front and trying to teach them something. The approach Annette uses instead is to host a *conversation*. She hosts coffee groups for parents at the local school, in the neighbourhood park or sometimes at her home.

Through taking a more informal approach, "people are learning without realising they are learning" says Annette. It is "non-stigmatised peer-support". People come to the coffee groups to connect, to share, to ask questions. Parents know a lot already, and Annette is also able to bring that knowledge out. Annette also shares her learnings and thoughts.

"We're doing the same thing as a parenting course would, but in a really relaxed setting – so it's not a course at all" says Annette.

"There's no judgement. If you're having a hard week that is OK". There is no stigma attached to attending the parents coffee group and this is seen as a very important factor for its success in engaging people and drawing people in. Annette says that when the coffee group started up only two people would come along. These days, a lot of people come along – sometimes up to 15 people at a time, and residents are now running the group themselves. More than 100 parents have been involved over the last two years, making friends with one another, and being supported to take on board new ideas to try with their kids at home.

Who's involved in Tiakina ō Tātou?

Most importantly it is local people, local residents of the Titirangi neighbourhood. Formally, Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki is held by Te Ora Hou Aotearoa, with another partner project in Whanganui. The initiative has received support from JR McKenzie Trust, The Todd Foundation, Plunket, Gisborne District Council, Safe Tairāwhiti Community Trust, Department of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Social Development. They are also working closely with groups like Inspiring Communities, Wesley Community Action and Great Start Taita to share learnings about a very different approach to social change and community-led development.

What changes have been noticed?

Five years into the project, Manu Caddie, Project Manager, says that he has noticed:

- Residents taking a lot more initiative in organising things themselves. Community Animators are now rarely the initiators of ideas, events and projects in the neighbourhood – residents are stepping up and initiating most things. This change has been noticeable in the last 12 months.
- People are more positive and seem more hopeful.
- There is pride in the neighbourhood.
- That physical changes in the environment – for example, getting the local neighbourhood playground revamped, replanting natives, painting a mural – provide new inspiration and optimism.
- People such as school principals and police officers have noted positive changes in local families, including an increase in participation at school and a decrease in crime and Police callouts.

Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki has also been collecting data to capture changes in social capital. Local statistics that highlight changes between 2010 and 2013 survey periods include:

- In 2010, 67% of people surveyed said they "enjoyed living in this neighbourhood". In 2013, this increased to 100%.
- In 2010, only 41% of people had shared phone numbers with their neighbours. By 2013, this increased to 72% of people reporting they had shared phone numbers with neighbours.
- In 2010, 84% of people knew their neighbours names. In 2013, this had increased to 97%.

The change in key social capital indicators is very encouraging. It shows more positive interactions between neighbours and residents trusting their neighbours more. Residents also feel more optimistic about their community, with fewer wanting to leave any time soon. Importantly, these positive changes in community correspond with falling crime statistics, with assaults in Titirangi decreasing by 67% in the period, compared to a regional average decline of only 11%.

What's enabled the changes?

1. Having dedicated local Community Animators who take an asset and strengths-based approach to their work and a commitment to supporting community-led changes in their local neighbourhood.
2. Continued funding for the Community Animator roles from a range of sources.
3. The skills, attitudes and āhua (disposition) of Community Animators themselves. Being local residents, or from the area adds a certain legitimacy. Annette says "I'm here for the long-term...I really love my neighbourhood and this community".

What does this story tell us?

Annette says that there are a lot of people in New Zealand concerned with the question of "how are we going to fix these people". The approach in Tiakina ō Tātou is certainly not about "fixing people". Rather, it sees local people, local residents as the greatest asset and a key resource to mobilise positive change. The most important resource is the people. Tiakina ō Tātou is also all about action being locally-generated, rather than plans and expectations being externally imposed. There is a big difference.

Tiakina ō Tātou is also working to counter a culture of exclusion and dispossession that has been built up in Titirangi. It is about changing a culture of non-engagement and over-reliance on external agencies. Tiakina ō Tātou is about shifting mindsets. The project works to get local residents to understand that they have all the skills and resources necessary to care for themselves within the community. Professional helpers can be useful, but the most vital resource already exists in every street and neighbourhood – it is the people. The project therefore builds on and relies on the assets that exist within that community (for example, leadership, networks, knowledge and culture).

"It is about getting people to be more neighbourly and care about one another again...It is going back to what it means to be a neighbourhood" says Annette.

"People can speak out, take care of one another, and create a better future than what we have now. We are rich in so many ways, we just need to realise it" says Annette.

Some key learnings from this project include:

- Being there for the long-haul. Tiakina ō Tātou is based on a ten year commitment. It is important to understand that sustainable change takes time. It is slow work undoing decades-old culture that is steeped in non-engagement, unhealthy self-belief and distrust.
- The importance of local residents being employed as Community Animators. This lends a legitimacy and mana to the project. Ideally these roles are best as part-time, so the workers are not set up as more professional 'experts' to help the community. The Community Animators are simply residents who have the opportunity to dedicate some significant time to organising and encouraging other residents.
- Funders need to be flexible – open to taking risks and being more experimental. Tiakina ō Tātou has benefitted from supportive and understanding funders who were also keen to learn and be open to new approaches.
- There are limits to traditional service approaches that pour money into fixing problems faced by 'hard to reach families'. The approach used in the Tiakina ō Tātou project is about seeing the neighbourhood as the client (or locus of change), rather than a family or individual. The project is focused on building up positive relationships within the community. It is about the community's ownership of change. It is transforming the community's norms and structures so that the environment in which individuals and families live also change.
- To achieve the ultimate goal of the safety and care of children, the child cannot be the centre or target for "interventions". Rather Tiakina ō Tātou Tamaraki involves and works with parents and extended whanau –employing the philosophy of "it takes a village to raise a child".

See: <http://www.teorahou.org.nz/index.php/resources/community-development/>

Appendix 4:

Learning Story: Te Aroha Noa Community Services

Unleashing the potential of all people

The 'Why'

Te Aroha Noa, translated colloquially is 'Love without Tags'. It means 'Unconditional Love' in Te Reo Māori. Te Aroha Noa believes that there is more to people than people see about themselves. Its vision is to "unleash the potential of all people(s)". Te Aroha Noa has been working with, and in, the community of Highbury for over two and a half decades. Today, local residents of Highbury say that the "suburb's dark past is history" – instead, Highbury is described as a place of "heart, unity, safety and whānau".³⁶

History/Background

Te Aroha Noa Community Services was born in 1989, when Palmerston North's Central Baptist Church leased some space in Highbury to offer some counselling services. Highbury was chosen because it was a "high deprivation neighbourhood" and the church wanted to translate its concern into action. From humble beginnings of two staff members, Te Aroha Noa is now an integrated community development organisation with 63 staff and 150 volunteers.

What does Te Aroha Noa do?

Since the beginning Te Aroha Noa aimed to be an inclusive and responsive place that supports local people. It sought to ask people "Do you have a dream? Do you see a need?". The goal was to grow "an entity that was a seamless web of relationships", rather than an "organisation that employs staff to

work with clients".³⁷ Over time, Te Aroha Noa has grown to include a huge range of activities/services – playgroups, an early childhood centre, community building and community development, teen parents centre, work with disengaged youth, family and individual counselling/therapy, adult learning centre, aerobic and fitness programmes, craft group and more. The blending of all of these from a locally situated community centre makes Te Aroha Noa a very unique centre in New Zealand.

Early childhood – the Centre, HIPPY, SKIP, playgroups

A playgroup was started in the 1990s at Te Aroha Noa. This grew and became a fully-licensed ECE (Early Childhood Education) centre in 2003. Today, the Centre has a team of parents and trained early childhood educators who work together. Te Aroha Noa encourages a model of 'Parents as Involved Educators' and work creatively to provide seamless education between home and Centre.

Early childhood centres can often be the "spine of the resource" for community centres in poorer neighbourhoods.³⁸ For example, a troubled Māori whānau with some complex dynamics, felt comfortable accessing Te Aroha Noa's family counselling services because their child attended Aroha Noa's Early Childhood Centre. Through being a part of the Childhood Centre, the whānau knew that Te Aroha Noa is a place that is sensitive to their cultural needs. And more importantly, they have a sense of belonging there.

³⁶ Quotes from: The Manawatu Standard, 2 July 2015, accessed at: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/69862148/Highburys-dark-past-is-history-community-is-heart-of-Palmerston-North-suburb>

³⁷ From: 'Community Responses to Violence', accessed at: <http://www.tearohanoa.org.nz/research.html>

³⁸ Warren-Adamson, quoted in Munford et al (2007) 'Blending Whānau/ Family Development, Parent Support and Early Childhood Education Programmes'.

HIPPY and SKIP are also key parts of the early childhood offering at Te Aroha Noa. HIPPY (Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters) is designed to empower parents in their role as their child's first educator. SKIP (Strategies for Kids, Information for Parents) at Highbury is about creating a community of great parents. The Incredible Years Playgroup has been run by four local parents.

Farnham Park Regeneration

A lot of community building has occurred in recent years through rejuvenating a small neighbourhood park called Farnham Park. Local residents, in partnership with Palmerston North City Council and Housing NZ, were involved in the planning, building and planting of Farnham Park.

Through the project, and through working with the City Council, residents began to feel that they had knowledge and expertise. As Te Aroha Noa's Chief Executive, Bruce Madden explains, "people began to see themselves not as recipients of services, but as people with expertise". The residents knew what would work in Farnham Park. Local people's participation in rejuvenating Farnham Park was a key aspect of building up the Highbury community's positive identity.

"People began to feel like they were able to shape their community. People gained a real sense of creating *their* park" says Bruce.

Events – "Celebrate Highbury"

Celebrate Highbury is an annual event to celebrate Highbury's cultural richness. Children's groups, cultural groups, church groups, and many local residents get involved. It is planned for about six months ahead by a team made up of local residents, Police, Housing NZ, and others. It brings very different groups of people together to work on something that is well defined – an *event*. This in turn builds relationships between people who would normally have very little to collaborate on.

Since Farnham Park's redevelopment, several fun events have been hosted – for example Wet and While Aqua Day, Bikewise, Planting Day, Zumba in the Park, music concerts and Christmas in the Park. Celebrate Highbury and the other community events have been an important factor in building a positive community identity as well as building relationships between residents and external agencies.

Community response to violence – The Violence Free Community Project

After, nearly two decades of working on building positive things in Highbury, ranging from the playgroups, Early Childhood Centre, to Farnham Park and Celebrate Highbury – Te Aroha Noa began to turn its mind to the negative things that persisted. From 2007 to 2010, a community-based violence prevention programme was developed and run at Te Aroha Noa. A detailed research project documented the journey of the Violence Free Community Project.

The Violence Free Community Project was seen by many as an "extraordinary project". It was unique in that it sat "in between" the two traditional forms of family violence prevention – advertising/marketing campaign and therapeutic work with individuals. Instead the Project was about creating community-level conversations. It harnessed the energy and expertise of local people (named 'community consultants' in the project). Te Aroha staff and people from the neighbourhood (the community consultants) came together on an equal basis to share their experiences and expertise to develop the project.

The community consultants were absolutely vital to the project. These local residents acted as ambassadors for the project. They brought in their experiences, knowledge and networks. And then in turn, they also took out their learnings from the project to their networks.

The project shook up the cultural norms of the neighbourhood – including the norms of "don't nark on your neighbour", "their home is their castle". After two years of the project's work, a Highbury resident called up Te Aroha Noa to ask for help for some neighbours who were arguing. This was a significant sign that the project was having a ripple effect in the wider neighbourhood. Te Aroha Noa staff member, Brad Rapira, went to the home where parents were heatedly arguing and a young baby was crying on the floor nearby. He was able to calm things down, but was deeply disturbed by the incident. The next day Brad took his voice to the local Farnham Park and with a loud speaker system, he spoke out publicly against family violence. He told of his own violent past as a Māori male. He invited others to come out and join him. Two brave women did come out to join him. And Brad continued this every Friday afternoon for several months. This was the beginning of a huge local movement in the Highbury community to take a collective stand against violence. Slowly, the cultural

norm of “not narking” was shifted to a cultural norm of “standing up for our children”.

Youth – young parents centre, programmes for disengaged youth, Sio’s dance

He Ngākau Mātua Young Parents Learning Centre was established in 2014 for young parents and their children. It interweaves a learning hub (for parents) with a licenced ‘under twos-ECE³⁹ centre’. He Ngākau Mātua is focused on the holistic development of the parents through parenting skills, life skills, self-discovery and academic studies. There is a focus on personal development to build a young parent’s confidence to achieve their dreams.

He Ngākau Noa, meaning “Unconditional Heart” is for young women, and He Ngākau Toa, meaning “Warrior Heart” is for young men. Both He Ngākau Nao and He Ngākau Toa work with youth aged 12-17 who have disengaged from formal education. It provides a space where these young people can discover their strengths. The focus is on helping these young women and men to discover opportunities, their dreams and realise their potential, while building life lessons and friendships. He Ngākau Noa began in 2012. After a successful year, He Ngākau Toa was started. These both came about through a collaboration between Te Aroha Noa and Child, Youth and Family (CYF).

Te Punanga Haumarū – Highbury Style is an initiative aimed at children and youth 5-19 years of age. It is aimed at producing positive, respectful relationships and reducing bullying. Sio Vaelua, a highly accomplished dancer, musician and youth development worker, uses his creative skills to teach the kids hip-hop at a free weekly class at Te Aroha Noa. Music, dance and connecting with youth at their level is what ties it all together at Sio’s dance.⁴⁰

What changes have been noticed?

In 2015, at the time of writing – Te Aroha Noa has been going for 26 years and Bruce Madden, Chief Executive Officer, has been there from the beginning. He reflects on some of the changes that he has noticed through various activities:

39 Early Childhood Education.

40 From: The Manawatu Standard, 20 August 2014, accessed at: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/lifestyle/10403587/Getting-the-beat>

- “It has been a remarkable change in 26 years. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Highbury was seen a very negative place, a place of violence. Today it is seen as an innovative place with a strong sense of community”.
- There has been a drop in offending and crime.
- Physical changes reflect community changes. In particular, Farnham Park: back in 2003 families would not be seen in Farnham Park. It was a dangerous place. Today, Farnham Park is equipped with a new BBQ, new Gazebo, limestone running track. People play touch rugby at the park. It is a gathering place for children, families and local residents.

What’s enabled the changes? And what does this story tell us?

Te Aroha Noa has always had an asset-based/ strengths based approach to their work. Bruce Madden says to “always see the community as resourceful. Join with them where they are at. We are not the experts”.

“I’ve been emphasising here all along, that we are here to walk alongside people. To help them fulfil *their* dreams” says Bruce. A key enabling factor for Te Aroha Noa is its strong belief that the community is enormously resourceful and has strengths.

Some key learnings from this project include:

- Change in communities takes time. It was necessary for Te Aroha Noa to work in a very positive way with the community for the first 15-18 years. Building on the neighbourhood’s strengths and potential and building relationships of trust. It was important to build a positive identity before tackling the harder issues of violence and disengaged youth.
- Active reciprocity and also a sense of reciprocity is key. There is a reciprocal nature to the interactions between the locals and Te Aroha Noa. Even in the counselling/therapeutic services it is not about ‘experts telling families how to change’; nor is there a sense that families are ‘objects of intervention’. Rather local people feel a sense of belonging to the Centre, and a sense that they contribute to the Centre.
- Te Aroha Noa sees families as competent and able to give as well as receive support and resources. This is a very different orientation and mindset for a social-sector organisation to have.

- The importance of building relationships. Building collaborative relationships with government agencies has been key to many of Te Aroha Noa's projects. Te Aroha Noa fostered a "let's make it happen culture". Te Aroha Noa became known for being constructive. Bruce Madden says "it takes a good degree of perseverance and persistence!" Some of the work, such as He Ngākau Nao and He Ngākau Toa programmes, were the results of six plus years of relationship building.
- Being an outsider wanting to do community development was hard at first. "You have to break down the barriers. A church coming in and buying property and running services. People are initially suspicious. You have to be present and trustworthy to gain people's approval".

See: <http://www.tearohanoa.org.nz/>

Appendix 5:

Learning Story: Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten and Learning Centres

Early Childhood Centres as a “Platform” for community wellness

The ‘Why’

Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten (CBK) believes that the best outcomes for children are achieved by engaging with the whole family, not the child in isolation. Since its beginnings in the early 1980s, CBK’s philosophy is one of “responding to the needs and aspirations of families”. Today CBK is a ‘community of learning’ – and is much more than an early childhood centre. CBK has grown to incorporate a range of parent support and development activities. The Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten has moved beyond “service-delivery” to intentional community-building.

What’s been happening; what does Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten do?

Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten (CBK) has four early childhood learning settings/centres for children ranging from birth to 5 year-olds. However, CBK does much more than provide early childhood education and care for children. It works holistically with families. Sitting alongside the Centres are activities which support and involve parents. These include:

- 303 – a daily, weekday morning informal drop-in session for parents of all ages and stages.
- SKIP (Strategies for Kids, Information for Parents) – free parenting resources for children birth to five years old, connecting parents with community agencies offering parenting courses.
- Awhiawhi – weekly sessions for newborns and their parents in a friendly and relaxed environment.
- HIPPY – a Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters.

This Learning Story will focus on 303, SKIP, and CBK more widely.

303 – A place of sharing and support

303 is one of the ways CBK has actively and intentionally involved itself in its community. It is named after the street address where the drop-in sessions are held. Through 303, CBK is intentionally building relationships with parents; connecting parents to other parents, and connecting parents to services. To the outside observer, it can be described as an informal drop-in session for parents. But in fact, 303 is a community, a web of inter-relationships that support significant change in the lives of people involved.

CBK’s Director Royce Dewe, says, “with 303 people can connect, disconnect, and reconnect. It’s not a social service agency... What makes it work is the skilled coordinator and parent facilitators who work alongside parents and are there for the distance”. The 303 Coordinator is funded by the Central Baptist Kindergarten and Crèche Trust, with support from Lottery Community Grants and other grants as available.

CBK has collected parents’ stories as evidence of 303’s impact on parents’ lives and how they parent their children. 303 receives referrals from a diverse range of community agencies and services, indicating the broad level of trust and credibility that 303 has built up within Whanganui. 303 has had its greatest impact on people who are seen as struggling or ‘at risk’.

303’s approach is to “walk alongside people” on many levels. It is about “guiding but not rescuing people” and “being alongside parents for the distance”. A parent may come to 303 and engage a bit, then not come for a while, and then come back. 303 does not have a service delivery model – rather it is a place and a space for connecting. 303 also has a ‘home

visiting component', another way of engaging with people who may find it harder to walk in off the street. 303 has been part of a research project to collect 'significant change stories'. Below are some reflections from some 303 parents:

"You never gave up on me – thank you for bringing me here. I felt useless, worthless, a failure to myself, my children...I isolated myself from anybody who tried to be around me. 303 Parent Support Centre came to me and offered their services to help me...I thought I was fine. What could possibly be so good about connecting with other people?...But 303 stayed persistent, determined to reel me in...[I thought] what was the point of this stupid place?...I thought 'well she seems really friendly'...so after several times I finally go see what this place is all about. It was really scary to walk into a new place for me. But the more I came, the happier I got. I grew to actually love the place...303 built me up with positivity..., and raised my spirits and made me feel good about myself."

– Parent Q.

"My family is in a much, much better situation now. I wouldn't have been able to do it on my own. I'd hate to think about what my life would have been like if I didn't come to CBK...I wouldn't be who I am and feel proud of who I am today...I just feel that 303 and CBK have contributed to that, it's been huge for me."

– Parent A.

SKIP Whanganui

SKIP Whanganui is a collaboration of 60 agencies, organisations and groups. It includes representatives from early childhood, kindergarten, public health and social service agencies. Funding from the SKIP Local Initiatives Fund (Ministry of Social Development) pays for a shared SKIP co-ordinator role to liaise with the different groups, organise training, promote SKIP resources and work with groups to organise community-wide parenting events and courses.

Royce Dewe, initiated the collaboration in 2004 and says it's gone from strength to strength. She recalls that in the beginning, there was some distrust and some agencies were cautious. Working collaboratively was a change for many people who

were accustomed to a competitive funding model.

These days, the SKIP Forum is a strong collaboration with people "learning from each other, breaking down barriers and understanding what being 'collaborative' is all about". Forum meetings rotate around the premises of the different Forum participants. People involved now have a greater understanding of the other groups and the work they do. This has been really useful when parents are referred between the different groups.

"We're sharing knowledge and expertise across the groups, and find we're more likely to pick up the phone to one another when there is an issue" says Royce.

"Over recent years we have been running more Parent to Parent forums and giving pioneering parent champions tools to influence their communities" says Royce.

There are many benefits for Whanganui parents. They get consistent messages from everyone involved and more exposure to SKIP resources from lots of different places. SKIP Whanganui is known for its resources and coordination of workshops and seminars.

Royce explains that another benefit of the SKIP Whanganui Collaboration is that these 60 agencies have their "ear to the ground". Agencies come together and share this knowledge so that they can better respond to what Whanganui parents need or want. For example, grandparents as primary caregivers of children were identified as a growing cohort in Whanganui that had little support.

"The work we're doing is based on what the community needs. We are continually listening to the needs of families and being responsive to that need...Ideas emerge from the ground up, and as a result of our relationships with parents".

Whanganui Central Baptist Kindergarten (CBK)

CBK is an innovative early childhood centre and has taken part in much ground-breaking research. In particular, Judith Duncan's (University of Canterbury) research about how early childhood centres are early places for building communities. Duncan's research "challenges the traditional child-centred pedagogy" of early childhood centres that has focused on responding to the needs of "the child" in early childhood education. Duncan and CBK believe

that early childhood centres could and should work alongside the whole family.

“It is about responding to the families, not just the child...It is about working holistically with families.” says Royce. “We are building integrity, relationships and trust with families through SKIP, HIPPY and 303...It is not in isolation”.

It is clear that CBK is working to build social capital – the glue that holds communities together; the key ingredient for resilient and successful families.⁴¹ CBK does this by:

- Introducing families to each other, connecting parents with other parents, and enabling new friendships to be developed.
- Actively promoting the whānau as part of the Centre community.
- Connecting families to outside agencies for help and support as needed.

Duncan’s research showed that the more confident the parents/whānau were in the Centre with teachers and other parents, the more settled and socially confident their children also were. CBK staff work to build links, networks and community connections.

What changes have been noticed?

The CBK team has tracked the progress of participants who stepped up and became facilitators at 303. The evidence shows that being a 303 Facilitator has led to further employment and positive changes for all parents involved. Out of the 20 parent facilitators tracked over time, all have since gone onto further education or employment. For example, since being a 303 Parent facilitator:

- A single parent who had completed only Year 12 at school, went on to work full time for an educational organisation and has completed a Bachelor of Social Work.
- A single parent who had her first baby at age 16, then went on to complete a Bachelor of Communications and Marketing.
- A parent who had left school early and was working in cleaning jobs has gone on to part-time employment as a HIPPY tutor, volunteers in the community and is involved in restorative justice.

⁴¹ Duncan, J, Dewe R, et al (2013) ‘Active adult participation in early childhood education: Enhancing child learning and community wellness’. Accessed at: http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/projects/9279_summaryreport.pdf

Regarding the eleven-year long SKIP Collaboration, Royce says that these days “people are accessing parent resources, information, attending parenting courses – it is just ‘what you do’. Compared to years ago when going to a parenting course was so stigmatised”. An example of the impact of SKIP Whanganui has had is illustrated in the below story:

“There was a time when I had a low point...on my own with four young children under 5 1/2...I was a bit lost. I was drinking every night...I came to one of the SKIP seminars on Brainwave with my counsellor...I learnt that my youngest son was displaying signs of neglect and head banging on the floor...I (had been) totally oblivious to the fact that I wasn’t coping and my kids were suffering...Once I recognised it, there were huge steps and progress made...I was able to step out of it. Information from SKIP and their ongoing seminars over time helped me improve my parenting skills and get back on track. Huge.”

–Parent S.

What does this story tell us?

This story tells us that an early childhood centre can be an amazing place of community building. With a community development philosophy and approach, centres can be more than “child-centred education services”. The shift in thinking that is required is to see the early childhood centre as *embedded in a community*. CBK has expanded its outlook to be one of working alongside parents and whānau, not just the child. CBK has also intentionally focussed on “linking whānau to whānau” and on “linking whānau to other services and supports” in the community. Supporting parents and whānau leads to better long-term effects for the whole family.

Some key learnings from CBK’s experience include:

- To really bring about change you have to be alongside parents and whānau for the distance. Building in depth relationships with people and staying connected with people for many years matters.
- What is unique about 303 is that it is not a social service agency.
- The right personnel are key.
- Funding is critical - having ‘untagged’ funding allows the freedom to work with people in ways they need. 303 does not fit into any “funding

buckets” – Royce says the “funding model has not caught up with what we’re doing!”

- A key to CBK’s success is that it is multi-layered. There are many different places people can access CBK. Because of this there are many different doorways and levels of engagement.
- Collaboration among agencies and organisations has a positive impact on the wider community.

See: <http://www.centralbaptistkindergarten.org.nz>

Appendix 6:

Learning story: Raurimu Avenue Primary School

Shifting mindsets and growing a community of learners

The 'Why'

In just two years, Raurimu Avenue School has shown that change is possible in a low-decile school community. Principal Sally Wilson believes that a school is a community of learners – and that it goes wider than the students. “If we stretch out to the whānau we’ll get better results for the children and all of society”. Raurimu Avenue School has been doing just that – “stretching out” to whānau. It has employed a Kaiārahi (guide/mentor) in the school to work with whānau and students. The Kaiārahi supports the parent/s and the child in their learning, health, engagement and Te Ao Māori.⁴²

How it came about and what’s been happening?

In 2013, Raurimu Avenue School’s Board of Trustees began talking about issues for the school’s whānau. Like other low-decile schools, these families have complex issues. Some parents have gang associations, drug and alcohol addiction, gambling issues, intergenerational unemployment, and people who have disengaged from their own whānau. In recent years, Raurimu Avenue School students have witnessed drive-by shootings, suicides, and other violence. At one stage, Sally Wilson explains, the school was “losing a father a term”.

School teachers do not have the time, skills or mandate to work with such issues. As a result of this many such families disengage. They can see that their child or their problems are too hard for the teacher, and an “invisible wall goes up”.

The staff started discussing these issues with the students. “The children were very honest and very frank. They were, in fact, a big driver for all of this. A lot of children can see life’s lessons well before the adults do” explained Sally.

So Raurimu Avenue School partnered with the JR McKenzie Trust to employ the Kaiārahi (guide/mentor). More colloquially she is known as “our J.R. Worker” by the parents. The Kaiārahi works with some of the school’s toughest families. This dedicated role has been instrumental in supporting change. The Kaiārahi’s work is turning a built-up culture of disengagement around.

This is how Principal Sally Wilson describes some of the work of the Kaiārahi’s work:

- She walks alongside families. “It is an educative model, it is not a ‘hand out’ or a social service. Rather, the Kaiārahi turns everything into a learning conversation”.
- She is there for them when things go wrong. “People need people. We’re saying ‘we’re here for you, we’re right behind you’”.
- She helps whānau to become more involved with the school – making sure that they feel part of the school and included.
- She helps parents stay ‘one step ahead of their children’ so the parents feel self-pride rather than whakamā/shame. Through working with the Kaiārahi, parent feel more empowered and motivated to help their kids. For example, a Whānau Symposium about different educational apps was organised for parents. The Kaiārahi worked to show parents how to use these apps, especially working with parents who had limited literacy.
- She helps whānau connect with other whānau.
- She is a positive force in people’s lives. She lifts the spirits of the whānau. There is no negativity,

⁴² Te Ao Māori denotes ‘the Māori World’. While simple in definition, it is rich in meaning and vast in breadth and depth. Te Ao Māori usually refers to three key areas, including Te Reo Māori (Māori language), tikanga Māori (protocols and customs) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi).

and most importantly there is no judgement.

Sally says that historically in this community “people give up far too young”. Once children start to disengage it is a downward spiral. The Kaiārahi works to break this cycle by shifting this mindset in both adults and children. The Kaiārahi works with any whānau. She drops in and visits parents at home and she works with children in the classroom.

“She can see when a child starts to struggle and needs a breather. The child takes a breather and then she gets them re-engaged. She’ll say ‘look at this mahi (work)!’ She is working to instill positive beliefs. You can see that ‘give-up-attitude’ start to dissolve. And that is what we’re after”.

Sally says she can understand why people do give up. “The way they are spoken to and treated...I can see why they shrug their shoulders”. But Sally also says “it has taught me about what you can do. That people can change...When people do fall, we say ‘you’re falling forward, so you can get back up’. It’s about building up that sense of belief in themselves”.

What changes have been noticed

In the last two years, with the work of Raurimu’s JR Worker, there has been noticeable change. These changes include:

- Behavioural changes in the children.
- Improvements in children’s self-image.
- Student attendance rates have improved.
- More whānau (especially those who have never previously come to appointments) are now attending appointments with teachers.
- In terms of National Standards, children have moved from ‘well below’ to ‘below’, or from ‘below’ to ‘at’.
- More families participate in the school. For example, the school’s hall was packed with people for the school show.
- There is a “healthy vibe in the school and it really flows through to children”.

What’s enabled the changes?

Sally highlights two factors as key:

- Funding from the J R McKenzie Trust and the “incredible relationship” established between the Trust and the school. Sally says she found the J R McKenzie Trust “empowering and enabling” for Raurimu Avenue’s work. Raurimu Avenue School

could do what was needed/wanted. Sally says the funding from J.R. McKenzie “gave us the freedom to work with people in ways that was needed – as opposed to a set criteria. There was no pressure to meet preconceived milestones”.

- Employing the right person for the Kaiārahi role. Raurimu Avenue’s ‘J R Worker’ is a local person in the community and a “positive and bubbly person”. All the work is “face to face...so relationships are vital”. The community of parents and whānau have grown to trust the Kaiārahi and the school.

What does this story tell us?

The story of Raurimu Avenue School in the last two years tells us that primary schools are important places for social change. Here, ‘disadvantaged parents’ benefitted from a different approach. The approach was not one of “social service delivery”. Rather it was an approach of having a trusted person “believe in them” and instill in them “a sense of self-belief”. Being positive and non-judgemental was key. It was important that there was no stigma with receiving help/support from the Kaiārahi.

The Kaiārahi’s work is somewhat hard to quantify or explain, but its effects can be clearly seen in the positive changes at the school.

This story also tells us that when ‘disadvantaged people’ “give up at a young age” it is both because of how others see them, and how they see themselves. It is both internal and external prejudices at work. Shifting this self-belief is a powerful way to break intergenerational patterns.

See: www.raurimu.school.nz

Appendix 7:

References & useful resources

This is organised by subject area/geography (weblinks for the Bright Spots are included in Appendix Two).

Community-led development in New Zealand

Department of Internal Affairs, 'Community-led development' information page. Accessed at: <http://www.dia.govt.nz/Resource-material-Our-Policy-Advice-Areas-Community-led-Development>

www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz – New Zealand's 'peak body' on 'community-led development'. Its mission is to support and strengthen the emerging community-led development movement in Aotearoa

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Productivity Commission (2015) 'More effective social services'. Accessed at: <http://www.productivity.govt.nz/inquiry-content/2032?stage=4>

Wanwimolruk, M. (2014) 'Wellington region collective impact feasibility study'. Accessed at: http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/formidable/Wellington-Region-Collective-Impact-Feasibility-study_Final_v1.3.pdf

About SKIP (Strategies for Kids, Information for Parents)

SKIP – 'Organising Community Action: Case Studies'. This section of the SKIP website includes examples of events that have taken place. Accessed at: <http://community.skip.org.nz/supporting-parents/organising-community-action/case-studies/index.html>

List of SKIP funded projects throughout New Zealand: <http://community.skip.org.nz/get-support/funding/what-we-funded.html>

SKIP Whanganui Youth Bullying Prevention: <http://www.tph.org.nz/what-weve-supported/round2/skip-whanganui/>

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