



North East
Valley

northeastvalley.org

The Valley Project promotes our offerings, and builds community ties and whanau wellbeing by:

- Enhancing the life of the community, with a focus on child and family.
- Helping promote, coordinate and implement education, care, environment, action, initiatives and establish new charitable activities.
- A process to identify needs, prioritize, evaluate resources, enable activities and publicize them.
- The project emerged in response to social and economic factors such as poor housing's detrimental effect on child achievement levels. CLD shifted our focus from deficits to assets, creating a coalition with community-led priorities.
- These priorities in turn informed a plan identifying 11 key action areas with numerous potential ventures. Strategic partnerships between community groups and service providers saw new initiatives emerge, and grow to contribute back richly.
- A community garden was an early win, bringing scores together to transform a disused school field into a thriving productive garden. The garden became a fitting metaphor for our development, as interaction flourished, working bee gatherings germinated other ventures.

- By the time we joined the DIA CLD Pilot, a public process had incorporated a society with 70 founding members and a governing executive of ten. The pilot then enabled a part-time staff of an editor and two community facilitators.
- The Valley Project is governed by an executive board of ten volunteer members, elected by NEVCD Project Society of about 150 members. At the pilot's conclusion, a part-time staff of an editor and two community facilitators were appointed.

CLD shifted our focus from deficits to assets, creating a coalition with community-led priorities. I nuku a CLD I ā rātou titiro I ngā nama ki ngā rawa ka mahitahi ki ngā tino hiahia a te hapori arataki

Kaupapa Projects

Food security

Apple pressing and Fruit harvesting: 473 fruit trees not fully harvested were identified, owners approached, fruit harvested,

preserved, and made into pies, preserves etc and distributed. Excess fruit was processed into juice.

The Valley Project receives 10,000 kg of food annually from Foodshare and distributes to families in need and at community events.

Social inclusion

Key events built friendship and support as we worked and played together:

- Matariki Hunga Nui is becoming an annual highlight, with 2016 seeing a crowd of 500+, kapa haka groups and other art and cultural presentations.
- BYO community dinners are held three times each year.
- Christmas and Halloween parties are held, along with other events for children.
- The Creekfest, (crowd 1500+) was highly successful.

...the hub has been vital to our overall success. Ko te rito te kaha o ta mātou anga ana ki mua.

Connecting the community

The *Valley Voice* newsletter shares both stories and events. Our general Facebook page has attracted over 1000 likes. And a cross-pollination of posts across special interest Facebook groups Valley Kapa Haka, the Valley Youth Network, Community Gardens, Love the Lindsay, and the Valley Community Workspace ensures that people stay well-connected and events well-attended. A regular slot on local Access Radio adds to the media mix.

Child and family education

Classes include multi-cultural women's computing, English, Te Ara Reo Maori, Kapa Haka, Code Club, Cosy Homes workshops and Speed Dating With Scientists. A local scientist posts regularly in the Valley Voice.

The Community Gardens encourage learning by doing, as do the SPACE Programme and Parenting Toolbox courses. Parents' Coffee, Ecology Workshops at Creek Fest, Tinker School, Valley Community Workspace and The NEV Shed all encourage community care.

Environmental outcomes

We partner with the Valley Community Workspace social enterprise, which develops practical solutions for an oil-free future, including the Bike Library which we support directly and who are our primary tenant at 11 Allen St. The bike workshop and library are well well patronised with 'customers' lining up each weekend for repairs, instruction or to purchase a recycled cycle.

Creek Fest has been hugely successful and a launching pad for our *Love the Lindsay* project: raising the profile of the creek with community and stakeholders, and the creek clean-up is emblematic of Creek fests environmental focus.

The NEV Community Gardens has celebrated its 5th anniversary and a new community garden has started in Pine Hill.

Housing

Through our Cosy Home initiative, we have trained home performance assessors, run insulation workshops, flash-mobbed homes to make them warm, and gifted window film insulation.

Community rooms

Moving the existing rooms to school classrooms on an adjacent site and refitting as a community hub was our first serious venture. Now well-utilized and a significant bump space, the hub has been vital to our overall success.

Ko ngā painga mō mātou What worked for us

Mentoring relationship with DIA staff

Having a key funder representative provide ongoing liaison helped develop a healthy partnership with DIA, enabling:

- An outside voice to balance parochial interests.
- A wide knowledge of the community space and successful case study models, stimulating imaginations rather than imposing.
- Knowledge of the state sector and means to access resources.
- Relationships brokerage with other groups and funders
- Initial and ongoing consultation

Feedback

Becoming proficient with a variety of feedback tools has been essential. These have included:

- Postcard mini-questionnaires sent to households and shops; returned via drop-off points.
- Tea parties and street parties with informally directed conversations.
- Community dinners with a feedback opportunities, from display boards through to tablecloth and place-mats writing.
- Community forums with world-café-style engagement.
- Larger community events with post-it notes, Christmas tree star wishes, written prayers, feedback stall/table.
- 'Folding Guild' chats amongst people folding the community newsletter.
- Questionnaires added to the Valley Voice.
- Focus groups for University of Otago projects and DIA feedback.
- Pop-up shops with display boards and open-ended questions.
- Community leader forums to discuss development.

- Guided conversations with various established groups.

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I te matatau i ngā momo taputapu urupare ka tau.

Asset mapping

Our early focus on assets leveraged community feedback to identify gifts, strengths and resources, and developed new connections and directions.

Each school was identified as a community hub and children, with staff and parents engaged creatively to tell their stories; as were business and community group stakeholders. Leads were followed up organically, creating networks and new initiatives such as the Community Garden. Community assets were represented visually on a wall map, and in scrap books, focussing on education centres.

Results were fed back through public meetings and informed our developing vision, creating criteria for our collective involvement. And with ongoing consultation that's a dynamic process rather than an inflexible plan.



A diverse and representative executive

From the outset, the Valley Project has aimed for diversity in governance appointments. Having a rich range of experience on the executive made for some robust discussions, leading to our seeking help to achieve respectful and productive meetings. Ultimately diversity has resulted in increased collective wisdom and good decision-making processes which consider the whole community.

Society incorporation

An incorporated society model has allowed a wide membership base with effective governance elected from within. Solid legal advice aided the constitution's development and we consulted extensively with prospective members through the incorporation process. After six years, the constitution is due for review, and we find this legal model longer suits our current practice.

Building on an existing foundation

Community activity and support programmes are not new to our area, and so from the outset the Valley Project leveraged existing people, programmes and resources that could be brought together to meet common goals.

Typical was our merging the Valley Project with the NEV Community Programme: After two-decades of running school care and art classes programs, NEVCP was finding its top-down

approach ineffective, and struggling with government community funding changes. The Valley Project merged with the NEVCP, taking over operations including the successful then-titled *Valley News*, introducing a dynamic CLD approach.

Bringing people and groups together has been key to our success – we find what the community is passionate about and where the requisite skills are, and connect them with resources, space and a wider community.

Social events

Social inclusion was prioritised early, to meet



a need for low cost family-friendly, multi-generational gatherings.

We expanded dinners organised by the Community Choir and dance groups for a wider audience, giving special focus on welcoming new immigrants, such as with an international cuisine dinner. Even early on, Christmas Gala events attracted large crowds and provided groups with showcasing opportunities.

All social events include an update on the Valley Project and provide opportunities for ongoing conversations. Each month a 'Folding Guild' gathers to prepare the Valley Voice for distribution. It's very much a social occasion, where up to twenty gather, share food and talk about local matters – often stimulated by the content of the Valley Voice itself.

And we're learning to take Jim Diers' motto seriously: "Why have a meeting when you can have party?", so we try to include food and fun at AGMs, Society and executive meetings. And having intentionally social gatherings outside of business meetings has been healthy for the executive.

A growing partnership with iwi and our effort to incorporate tikanga has helped us to value

whakawhanaugatanga over and above Westminster processes.

The Valley Voice

The Valley Voice is flagship and front window – the most visible encapsulation of our work and of the many opportunities to participate. The Voice has grown in step with the Valley Project in scale, production quality, and reach. Along with the printed newsletter, a website, e-zine, a thriving Facebook page, and community noticeboards are all well utilised.

Community ownership, leadership and action

A key cornerstone was laid in 2008 with our commissioning a 6-month asset-mapping exercise.

Getting our heads around CLD was helped by pioneers including Peter Kenyan of *Bank of*

...the activities and programmes with the greatest degree of community ownership and leadership are the most successful.
Ko ngā kaupapa kua takoto mai i te hāpori arataki ka ū ka anga ki mua.

Ideas, the Victory School team, and Jim Diers' talk in Invercargill.

Both outside agencies and community members often view us as service providers, so it's a challenge to stay focused on the ultimately more valuable task of enabling the community to provide its own solutions.

And the activities and programmes with the greatest degree of community ownership and leadership are the most successful.

Matariki huanga nui and Creek fest are highly valued events for our community, which has contributed hundreds of volunteer hours to them. And these have spawned other highly valued projects such as the Lindsay Creek Clean Up and Valley Kapa Haka Group. Such events demonstrate the value of contributing, and so the community has gained agency.



Iwi partnership

Given the importance of developing a relationship our local iwi, we were fortunate to have a strong young wahine on our executive who could lead us in tikanga. Adopting tikanga such as mihi, karakia, manaaki, the importance of kai and upholding the mana of each person has helped us to work together in a more life-giving, sustainable and productive way.

This path lead us to a noho marae where the executive spent the weekend at Puketeraki Marae. The support of a local kaumatua and Ūpoko of the marae, David Ellison, has provided an opportunity to listen to the heartbeat of iwi and gauge iwi priorities for the Valley, chief amongst them being local awa and the realizing a partnership to promote the mauri of the awa. From this arose our *Love the Lindsay* campaign, our inaugural Creek fest and a Creek clean-up day. In appreciation, we received two beautiful tukutuku panels lovingly woven by people of Puketeraki, which now adorn our community rooms.

This growing relationship, along with other initiatives such as annual Matariki celebrations has seen local Maori people develop confidence to work within the Valley Project on new initiatives. A kapahaka group was launched by young

local Maori welcoming a wide range of ages and ethnicities. An adult Te Reo programme has now run for three years, and waiata and basic te reo has been taught at the local play group.

Ngā taki Challenges

Keeping focused on core business

We want to make life better for children and their whanau here. We want to do it with people rather than for them. We value everyone's gifts and work hard to be inclusive in actions for a positive future. So constantly reminding ourselves who we are and why we exist and how we do things is crucial. We try to keep focused on CLD and remember our core values and vision.



Maintaining values and vision

Current practice needs to be examined and values and vision needs to be reflected on regularly to keep the team on task. The tyranny of the urgent often distracts from the ultimately important. Regular reviews and team retreats, along with an almost ritualistic retelling of the values and vision, are highly recommended.

Lessons from accounting

Finding a treasurer is a challenge for many NFPs including ours. Good support from a friendly accountant notwithstanding, it's an

expense that we'd like to reduce. We now enjoy an effective financial committee with a volunteer accountant, a skilled fundraiser and day-to-day staff bookkeeper, with our systems transitioned to Xero and soon to be augmented by Thank You Payroll – all aiding management, simplifying, and reducing overhead.

Learning from mistakes, appreciative inquiring, and employer challenges

Our process has been far from plain-sailing – entailing sleepless nights for some, but providing opportunities for reflection and learning. The *appreciative inquiry* process is a useful tool, and we sought external help to improve decision-making processes. The fruit of this is a more mana-enhancing, way of running meetings.

He aha atu? What next?

A sustainable, enabler model

The DIA funding partnership allowed us to make a immense progress in just five years. Now we're becoming more independent and

looking for new ways to make what we do sustainable we are more intentional about being enablers, more focused on building, supporting and unleashing our volunteer base.

A fundraising strategy

A more complete and sustainable fundraising strategy with an emphasis on strong mutual relationships with funders has new priority, while we also explore innovative funding ideas from within our base.

Engaging with Otago University

We have New Zealand's best university on our doorstep and many students and academics living near our valley. We've hosted classes as students have engaged in a joint research project. They have both interned in our office and pursued post graduate research on aspects of our work. Similarly, a student-lead business advisory group developed a business plan for one of our social enterprises. The Community Accounting Service (an Otago Business School and Council of Social Services partnership) has provided accounting and IT support. Our engagement with Otago has been important and fruitful and will be going forward.



Photo: Tūro whakamuri hei ānga ki mua