

**Aotearoa Community Development Association & International Association for
Community Development**

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

February 15-17, 2017

The Conference's goal was to address the challenge of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals to Community Development practitioners, agencies and academics. It was particularly well attended by district council and local government representatives spanning from Northland to Southland.

Aligning my portfolio responsibilities and interests to the practice streams and programme I attended workshops concerned with Community led economic development, Disaster preparedness and community response, Community safety, Housing and Indigenous knowledge in practice.

A number of workshops concerned with these themes were especially useful and indicate the quality of programme are outlined below.

ABCD CoLabs: Innovative and Sustainable approach to Community Building

This workshop provided an overview of place-based framework for exploring how ABCD and Participator Leadership practices achieve real outcomes to support change in communities. Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) builds on existing strengths and focuses on the resources already present in community. Combined with Participatory Leadership, the ABCD Co-Labs encourage community members to respond to challenges. The workshop drew on experiences from Northland communities.

Innovation in Council-Community Relations: Far North Thrive Programme

There is strong awareness that the Far North District features badly in employment and income statistics, as well as in poverty, health and poor housing reports. Council's consultation work for Community Planning, District Vision, and Long Term Plan indicated that people were willing to work their way out of the situation. They didn't want a handout; they wanted support for a 'hand-up'.

Following the 2013 Local Body Elections, the incoming Far North District Council decided to include 'Community Economic Development' (CED) as a core component of its Economic Development activity for the district. Council hosted a two day Resilient Economies Conference in Kaitaia, (June 2014) to introduce and explore aspects of CED and the process of 'localising' an economy.

A resolution from the conference prompted Council to partner with the Akina Foundation to create a Social Enterprise training programme to encourage and support the establishment of Social Enterprises and create a climate of 'CED optimism and opportunity'.

Measuring Outcomes Using the Balanced Scorecard

Evaluating the effectiveness of policy initiatives in the social services sector is inherently problematic from a quantitative measurement perspective. The question is *how do we know our programmes are effective and having the predicted outcomes?* This workshop looked at the use of the 'Balanced Score-card,' a methodology I have used in the past and familiar with. More empirically based than qualitative evaluation I took the opportunity for a short refresher of this assessment tool.

Perceptions of Community Safety and White Fragility

Unitec and Community Waitakere have recently completed a project looking at the contemporary issues affecting the perceptions of safety in West Auckland communities. A review of eight recent surveys or research reports between 2012 and 2016 into community safety in West Auckland show that the negative perceptions we have about the safety of our community and the people who are part of it, have more impact than the actual amount of crime that is reported in our community. The workshop presented by Dr Geoff Bridgman reviewed the findings of a questionnaire to 159 people covering the age-span, female and male gender, Pākehā/European/Kiwi, Māori, Pacific Island and Asian/other cultures. The research showed that despite a clear fall in reported crime rates in West Auckland people generally believed that crime had increased and was worse than in the rest of Auckland. The data suggests that perceptions of safety in the community are influenced by culture and that one or more cultures are likely to be seen as the problem by the dominant culture. This raises the issue of the role white privilege and, particularly, white fragility in addressing community safety. The workshop also outlined the use of Facebook and social media to heighten anxiety and rely on anecdotal reporting as evidence of increasing crime. I was particularly interested in this workshop as I have suspected this gap between perception and data existed. That leads to me asking the question about what steps can be taken to close this perception gap so that citizens feel more secure. I have arranged for Dr Bridgman to meet with the Local Board and suggest strategies for the future.

What role does the church have in promoting SDGs?

This presentation used as a case study of The Community of St Luke, a local church attended by the presenters and explore the way it promotes SD Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The church has often been accused of being part of the problem but we will explore the ways in which it promotes peace, inclusivity, and social justice. It does this through being an inclusive community; running programmes on progressive theology, interfaith development and restorative justice; and taking action on issues such as sexuality. I was particularly interested in this workshop given the number of churches and faith-based centres in our LB area and asking the question of how they might be better engaged and equipped for supporting social development.

The Politics of Fruit

This workshop reviews the initial findings of a study into community and roadside fruit tree planting over 30 years. The researchers have interviewed participants, conducted a focus group, and reviewed written records including council minute's reports and press cuttings. Participants reported on the value of community planting projects as a tool for building neighbourhoods and enabling further action for sustainability.

Dialogue practices within community development: In Conversation with Steinbeck

This was the little gem of the conference tucked into late afternoon and led by Dr Peter Westoby of the University of Queensland. How do we understand the role and practices of dialogue within community development? And what has the philosopher Martin Buber approach to an I / Thou relationship and the critical literacy theorist Paulo Freire got to do with dialogue and community development? Drawing on a passage from the literary classic *Grapes of Wrath* (set in the Great Depression) by John Steinbeck, this workshop considered some theory and grounded practices of dialogue within community development and how we listen and understand to facilitate empowerment and collaboration.

Manaaki Tangata, an indigenous response to Aotearoa's Homelessness Crisis

Aotearoa New Zealand currently faces a crisis in housing and homelessness that has been unprecedented in recent years. In contrast to the stereotypical picture of homelessness as affecting single adults with addictions and/or mental health difficulties, what has been revealed is entire families, including with parents who are working, living in very temporary accommodation in garages or even in cars. Government response in provision of public and/or social housing has been criticised as being totally inadequate.

In response to this crisis, in May 2016 the Te Puea Memorial Marae, Mangere, Auckland, opened its doors to homeless families to come and stay on the marae for the winter months. Along with accommodation and food, families and whanau were provided with intensive services to address other social and health needs. Over 62 families, including 77 adults and 104 children, were assisted over a three month period. This initiative received substantial positive media attention.

In this presentation the team from Te Puea Marae told the story of their experience in providing this service. Beyond this immediate crisis a question arises on the relationship between state responsibility for social services, and having room for community based and especially indigenous responses.

The conference was particularly valuable for networking with colleagues throughout the Auckland and the country, sharing insights and being presented with well organised research, applied practice and methodologies.