

## ***Inspiring Communities News No 23: June 2011***

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***Inspiring Communities and Core Learning Cluster News:*** From Mary-Jane's desk

***Community-Led and Community Driven:*** Unpacking April's Community Economic Development conference and Project ReGeneration.

***Learning Links:*** The Sydney Alliance (community coalitions), Brene Brown on the power of vulnerability (TED video), Hikurangi Foundation (helping kiwis take action on climate change) and Simon Sinek on why 'WHY' is more important than how or what (TED video).

***News You Can Use:*** Early themes from the Families Commission's 50 Key Thinkers Forum; why Marfell Community School stands out.

***Events:*** Mark Cabaj workshops, the *Lunchbox to Toolbox* forum in Auckland and the national Victory Village Forum.

## ***Editorial***

Kia ora tatou

As seen in recent emails, 2011 continues to be an exciting year for the *Inspiring Communities* development team and board. In the next months we have overseas visitors to welcome, forums to prepare for and a major Vacancy to fill as Mary-Jane Rivers transitions to her role on the *Inspiring Communities* Board (see some reflections from Mary-Jane below). The Development Team offer our thanks and congratulations for what Mary-Jane has achieved in her role as the founder and Development Manager of *Inspiring Communities* and we look forward to welcoming a new Development Manager and continuing to work with Mary-Jane in her Board capacity.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming back Mark Cabaj on his third visit to New Zealand this month. Mark (Community Engagement Director at Canada's *Tamarack, an Institute for Community Engagement*) will lead workshops around the North Island (see EVENTS below for workshop opportunities) before taking part in Inspiring Communities' annual Learning Forum with our Core Learning Cluster communities in Taranaki. He's a leading edge thinker and practitioner with a sharp sense of humour and a great presentation style. Anyone interested in community-led development practice and results will find value in these sessions.

Several of our team and board were delighted to join a group of 50 Key Thinkers with the Families Commission recently to discuss key social issues facing New Zealand families and communities. See the link below for an initial report from the day (News You Can Use). We see this as extremely important work especially in view of the growing inequality of incomes between New Zealand families. This situation highlights the importance of communities working together with the assets they have. It is exciting to see real leadership in communities, often coming from schools.

In particular, two schools come to mind: Victory School in Nelson has led its community through ten years of positive change (while remaining a “Decile 1” school). This journey will be celebrated, and learning shared, at the Victory Village Forum in July (see EVENTS below). And we link to the story of Marfell Community School in West New Plymouth - also rated “Decile 1”, yet a leader in many areas (see News You Can Use). These are inspiring reminders that much can be achieved with few material resources when there is shared local commitment and dedication. Among our Learning Links below, author Simon Sinek speaks about success and powerful leadership being seen, not necessarily when the “market conditions” are right, but when there is belief in why something is important. Perhaps these inspirations will lead to the thinking needed to close the widening income gap in NZ – as well as to more success stories from inspiring local communities that work together in the face of it.

Best wishes

Leigh Strange on behalf of the *Inspiring Communities* Development Team

## ***Inspiring Communities & Core Learning Cluster NEWS***

### **From Mary-Jane’s desk**

We’ve made space here for Mary-Jane Rivers to offer some key reflections and highlights for her last newsletter as Development Manager. Mary-Jane was the key founder of *Inspiring Communities* and has been the core contributor to much of its work and to this newsletter since its inception.

Working throughout the country in the early 2000s I couldn’t help but notice that some local communities were flourishing and others felt ‘hollowed out’. The difference in pride, sense of belonging and community connectedness was palpable. Practical indications like higher employment and less crime were noticeable in flourishing communities.

How come it was working for some and not for others? The questions became really important to a group of us. We couldn’t let go of the idea ... and so, supported by The Tindall Foundation and learning much from allied New Zealand and Canadian developments, *Inspiring Communities* was created 3 years ago - and the journey so far has been the most amazing privilege.

At the heart of *Inspiring Communities* is sharing information so that *communities that are inspiring can inspire other communities to be inspiring*. Just as important for us (but not always easy) is understanding what it takes to intentionally achieve significant local change and development for communities to be better places to live.

Some people see the map of NZ as a set of tourist spots or sports venues. I imagine an Aotearoa NZ where no community is left behind and every community is flourishing. My map has multiple communities that are shaping their own futures. They are highlighted and dotted throughout the country with an increasingly robust thread helping to connect them – so communities can stop reinventing the wheel.

### What's Changed

So three years on and what have we been noticing? That we are not alone. The time does seem to have been right. Our sense is that people were ready to move from the individualism of the '90s into being better connected with each other and their communities.

In really practical terms we have noticed a tangible increase in locally-led development and communities becoming stronger and more resilient, which is a **real highlight**. With much of this we have been privileged to connect with, and learn from, several inspirational local developments such as Victory Village.

In many ways this nationwide growth and interest in community-led development has been phenomenal. The fact that this is slowly being joined up regionally and nationally is significant. Community-led development is noticeably on the national agenda and some regional agendas - **another highlight**.

And there are too many local developments to talk about here. Our newsletter is now read by 1,000s, and has featured stories of more than 40 communities shaping their own development. With some it is fascinating to notice the development and change over time.

A special milestone has been sharing some of our collective learning through the publication *What We Are Learning about Community-Led Development in Aotearoa*. The interest is hot with more than a 1000 copies distributed already.

*Inspiring Communities* is working closely with a small number of initiatives to learn together about:

- 'what it takes'
- 'what to look out for', and
- 'how to keep track of the changes occurring

for local communities to have a clear vision and intentionally focus on creating change they want. **(This learning together is a highlight itself.)**

Some of these initiatives, like Great Start in Taita, are producing amazing results. The story of why and how Great Start came about has been published as a case study. It includes some of the developments that have helped create Taita as a better connected community with multiple local initiatives. More than 60% of households are now connected with each other through Great Start. These numbers matter hugely – especially to reach a tipping point where it is the norm for everyone to be connected, neighbours to support each other and children to be encouraged to be the best they can. But nothing beats the buzz of seeing children, who are not usually included, designing and building a playground with the local Councillors and council landscaping staff.

Generosity and willingness of partners to work with us is a **highlight**. We always like to work with others and we treasure the 'working together' arrangements with more than 30 partners

locally, regionally and nationally. The openness, interest and support from our funders and partners has been fabulous – especially through challenging times. We really enjoy and appreciate a virtual network of supportive and ‘critical friends’, and generous people who volunteer.

At the heart of *Inspiring Communities* is a passionate, thoughtful, strategic and committed group which includes a newly expanded Board and a Development Team of 6 people working part-time to make up 2.9 FTEs. The skill, courage, innovation, team spirit, energy, and generosity of each person (who all give more than 200%) takes my breath away. It has been an amazing privilege to be part of this team.

We know that there is still much to do and to learn – especially noticing the really tangible changes and ways of growing this community-led development movement through connecting with others and ‘scaling across’ interest and initiatives into strategies and policies.

I will not be leaving *Inspiring Communities* entirely – it is too close to my heart. Every organisation grows through different phases. The next one will be an exciting one for community-led development, *Inspiring Communities* and its new people whom, I am confident, will sustain and extend the movement. I am looking forward to contributing in a Board governance role that supports the next steps, the new National Development Manager and the team.

**Mary-Jane Rivers**

## COMMUNITY LED & DRIVEN

### Unpacking April’s CED Conference

New Zealand's second Community Economic Development Conference was held in Waitakere on 19 - 20 April. The theme of the important and exciting conference was ***Making it happen: from possibility to profitability***. Young filmmaker and social entrepreneur Guy Ryan took out the 'Hothouse' Social Enterprise Competition at the conference.

[See our website for links](#) to various articles written before and since the conference and links to the [conference website](#) for presentations and notes.

### A closer look at ReGeneration and the Road Trip

ReGeneration is a national network for young change makers who are working to create positive change in their communities, workplaces, families, schools and the natural environment. Right now ten young New Zealanders from the ReGeneration Network, with different skills and backgrounds, are travelling the country in the Regeneration Roadrip. They are on the hunt for ideas, inspiration and stories of positive change!

Want to know more?

- [See the article on our website under Change Makers](#) kindly provided by Lani Evans, ReGeneration Project Co-Convener.
- You can follow the Roadtrip's progress through [Lani's updates on Happyzine.co.nz](#)
- If this all sounds familiar - we mentioned Roadtrip partner Inspiring Stories in [our April newsletter](#).

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

### Early themes from the Families Commission's 50 Key Thinkers forum

Several members of the *Inspiring Communities* Development Team and Board were pleased to take part in this session exploring key thinking on social issues, led by the Families Commission. According to its website: "If there was one phrase that summed up the Families Commission's 50 Key Thinkers forum at Wellington on 11 May 2011, it would be this sentence: *There is nothing wrong with New Zealand that cannot be rectified by using what is right with New Zealand*".

You can read more and download an initial report from the forum (more to come in following weeks) from the [50 Key Thinkers page on the Families Commission website](#).

### Marfell Community School and its community – why they stand out

In its March newsletter the Marfell Combined Culture Trust looked at the Marfell School and its role in the community over its 50-year history. Trust Coordinator Nigel Bates spoke about what makes Marfell Community School unique and stand out amongst other schools in the West New Plymouth area. Its Special Needs Unit is accessed from outside Marfell and enrichment and extension opportunities are impressive for a "low decile" school. Highlighted are the schools' relationships with the community including young leaders from the local college, and the commitment of many dedicated parents. Nigel has kindly shared his overview from a conversation with School Principal Janet Armstrong. This and the full March 2011 My Marfell newsletter are [on our website under Schools Families & Communities](#). Other schools and parents may benefit from Marfell Community School's example.

### Preview of Victory Village Forum 26 – 27 July 2011

As part of Victory Village Forum a range of concurrent streams will explore difference settings or starting points for family-centered community-led development. Here's a preview of one stream:

**Kari Beavan from Rakiura Stewart Island on Environment:** This workshop will focus on the reciprocal relationship between the role our families can play in conserving and enhancing our environment, and the role that our environment can play amongst our families. We will discuss the importance of our environment to the development of our sense of self, of pride and our connection to our place; to the social wellbeing of communities worldwide and to our economic survival, with stories from the Rakiura/Stewart Island community.

On Friday 27 July, at the Victory Village forum, *Inspiring Communities* chairperson David Hanna will lead a World Cafe conversation exploring how change occurs when we share the goal of a family-centred, community-led development “Working Together for Family Centred, Community-Led Development”. This session will draw out both the best of learning from the Forum itself, and from the participants gathered from all over Aotearoa New Zealand. [Read more in the programme online.](#)

## LEARNING LINKS

### **Community Coalitions: the Sydney Alliance**

The [Sydney Alliance](#) brings together diverse community organisations, unions and religious organisations to advance the common good and achieve a fair, just and sustainable city. They do this by providing opportunities for people to have a say in decisions that affect them, their families and everyone working and living in Sydney. These are opportunities for people and organisations to come together and respond to problems collectively. This involves three main activities:

- Relationship building: the work of the Sydney Alliance begins with one-to-one relational meetings - ‘possibility-filled conversations which provide the possibility of making real change’. The aim is to intentionally work on building understanding, respect and sense of reciprocity between our organisations and our active participants. Too often in the busy work of organisational life we lose our sense of vision, mission and purpose. A goal of the Alliance is to rekindle these values as a foundation for joint action.
- Leadership development: the Sydney Alliance provides several opportunities for participation and training over two or six day periods; and
- Action and Reflection: the Sydney Alliance consolidates relationships between organisations and individuals by asking them to take action. Action may involve coming to coalition meetings, running listening campaigns or helping to strategise and implement an agenda for the common good in Sydney. The Alliance has many action teams made up of members from participating organisations. We reflect on every action to learn, develop and improve.

### **Brene Brown: The power of vulnerability (TED Talk video)**

Brene Brown is a ‘researcher-storyteller’ and this is very open and honest talk on how vulnerability is necessary for connection. Her ideas are drawn from observations of individuals and they are applicable to all kinds of relationships, including those involved in community-led development. For example, what people with strong effective connections have in common is:

- the courage to not be perfect
- the compassion to be kind to themselves first and then to others
- connection as a result of authenticity, because they are willing to let go of who they thought they ‘should’ be, in order to be who they really are - they embraced vulnerability.

TED Talks (Technology Entertainment and Design) is a series of short lectures aimed to disseminate "ideas worth spreading." The talks are filmed at conferences held annually in [Monterey, California](#). The speakers are given 18 minutes to present their ideas. Listen to Brene Brown’s talk at the [TED website](#).

### **Hikurangi Foundation**

The Hikurangi Foundation's mission is to catalyse positive and effective action on sustainability and climate change in New Zealand. They are focused on creating more action, more resources to

enable action, and more people feeling that they can take action that will make a difference. As a matter of principle they prioritise action which “makes sense” for a whole range of reasons: personal wellbeing, natural resource conservation, community cohesion and national prosperity.

They work in three main ways:

- Seeing the big picture: always learning “what works” in New Zealand
- Creating action: by giving financial and logistical backing to those people and projects that make good things happen
- Having a voice: so that they are part an informed public conversation about what action is good for New Zealand.

Check out the Foundation's [projects on its website](#).

### **The Golden Circle: Simon Sinek on Why 'WHY' comes before how and what (TED video)**

This is a fascinating discussion. Simon Sinek [talks at TED](#) about his discovery of “the golden circle” to explain how leadership can inspire action. It’s not so much what you do, or even how. It’s about WHY: people who are most effective at inspiring action begin by focusing on why they are doing something—not on what they want others to do. They lead by example, they leading by getting on and doing it. In 2009, Simon Sinek released the book "Start With Why" -- a synopsis of the theory he has begun using to teach others how to become effective leaders and inspire change. [Sinek’s](#) successful examples include Apple, Martin Luther King and the Wright Brothers but they could also include any number of community-led development initiatives.

## **EVENTS**

### **13 and 15 June: Workshops with Mark Cabaj: “Communities Leading – Working Together in Place” (Wellington/Waikato)**

Anyone interested in community-led development practice and results will find value in these sessions. The workshops will focus on the knowledge and skills needed to work effectively “in place” with local people leading – including:

- Designing and supporting collaborative, community-led initiatives
- Recognising and working with simple, complicated, complex and chaotic issues - what’s useful to know and what do we need to do differently?
- How to understand and measure community change and results.

[See our website for full details to register](#)

### **14 June: Auckland Community Learning Hubs Forum: “From Lunchbox to Toolbox” (Auckland)**

If we believe it takes a village to raise a child, what does that mean for relationships and collaboration between learning hubs and local communities? This forum is to connect those working in the community/whanau/education space. It’s to inspire us, challenge us and think creatively together about what the future could look like.

See full details on our website’s [Events Calendar](#)

## **27 – 29 July: Victory Village Forum NZ's first Family-centred, Community-led Development Conference (Nelson)**

Does your organisation work in a family or whanau focused way? Are you committed to helping communities to lead their own development? This is your chance to connect with others working in the family centred, community-led development space in Aotearoa NZ.

The Victory Village Forum is being co-hosted by Inspiring Communities, the Families Commission and Mark Brown and Kindra Douglas from Victory School & Community Centre. It's a chance to learn more about the ground breaking work that's been happening in Victory over the last decade, AND to be inspired by innovative speakers, thinkers and practitioners from across the country!

See the website for full details and registration [www.confer.co.nz/victoryforum/](http://www.confer.co.nz/victoryforum/)

## **October: Communities Collaborating Institute: Leadership that Transforms Communities. (Calgary, Canada)**

Tamarack's signature week-long learning event is being hosted in Calgary, Alberta from October 3 - 7, 2011. "The event has been designed to provide you with the inspiration, information and tools you need to offer the leadership required to connect, engage and mobilize citizens to generate a shared vision and action plan for change. Throughout the event, you will also have the opportunity to learn from, and work with, renowned and respected authorities on collaboration from across North America."

See the [Tamarack website for full details](http://tamarackcommunity.ca/ci.html) and registration <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/ci.html>

## **ABOUT INSPIRING COMMUNITIES**

To find out more about Inspiring Communities, our approach to learning, our framework for Community-Led Development, and more, visit: [inspiringcommunities.org.nz](http://inspiringcommunities.org.nz)

For all our latest news you can go straight to our [Community News](http://www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz/community-news) online (<http://www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz/community-news>)

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