



A Report on the Community Development Conference 2015

by JOHN STANSFIELD and ABHISHEK MASIH



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Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology,
Auckland, New Zealand, in 2015



This publication may be cited as:

Stansfield, J. and Masih, A. (2015) A report on the community development
conference 2015, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community
Development*, 1(1), 87-90

ISSN 2423-009X



Conference Update

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INTRODUCTION

The Community Development Conference 2015 was an effort by the Department of Social Practice at Unitec and Community Development practitioners to bring together practitioners, academics and students to share their knowledge, research and stories about community development.

We realised that the community development movement in New Zealand has not had an opportunity and platform to share and learn from each other for a very long while and no one was holding a space for this.

The conference was organised on 18, 19 and 20 February 2015. The first day (18 February) started with a traditional welcome haka pōwhiri performance by Mātātupu (Unitec’s Student Maori Association). Our overseas participants were mesmerised by the beautiful carvings on the Marae, and also appreciated the traditional welcome.

The welcome was followed by a panel of elders speaking on ‘That was then, this is now, my reflections of good community development practice and the opportunities ahead’. Chaired by Gavin Rennie, this panel set the tone for the conference. Panel members’ reflections on their past experiences were very much appreciated by the delegates.

The panel discussion was followed by cocktails and a reception, which gave participants an opportunity for networking and sharing.

Day 2 of the conference (19 February 2015) began with a conference plenary by John Stansfield, which was followed by 5 concurrent sessions.

There were poster presentations during the lunch break and then concurrent sessions continued until the end of the day.

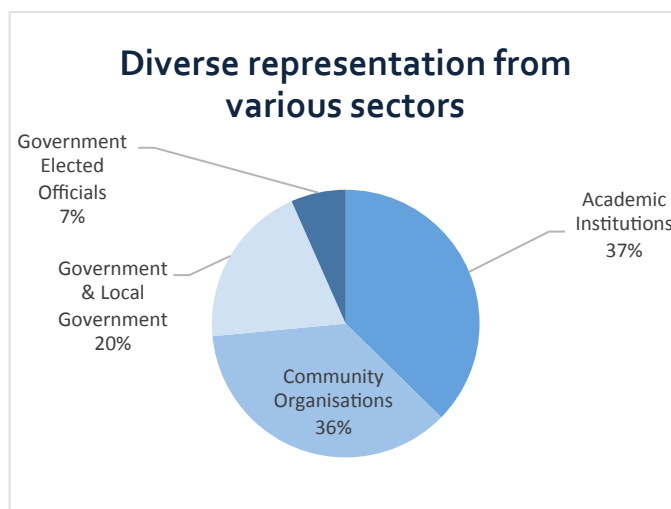
Day 3 (20 February 2015) again began with a conference plenary by John Stansfield. The session before the lunch break saw the launch of Hui E! Community Aotearoa by Peter Glensor, and our new community development journal *Whanake*. Gavin Rennie was introduced as the editor of *Whanake*, which will be published by ePress.

The conference was concluded by a panel of youth consisting of members of the Auckland Council Youth Advisory Panel, who facilitated a lively and interactive discussion on the need to involve youth in community development and how to achieve this.

The conference was catered by the WISE Collective, a social enterprise comprised of women from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Their sumptuous ethnic food kept conference participants going.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- The conference sold out weeks before opening, as we were restricted by available plenary space

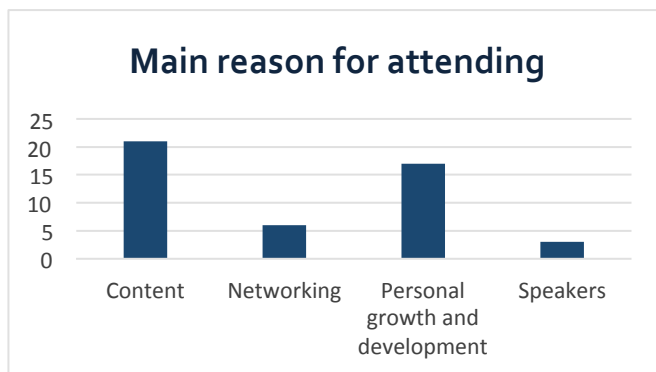




- A total of 170 participants attended
- The conference attracted participants from throughout New Zealand, Malaysia, Australia, Japan, Kenya and South Africa
- 63% of the participants were women
- The conference included 5 streams:
 1. Community development practice in diverse communities
 2. Community economic development
 3. Place making – the art of localised community development
 4. Community development education
 5. Community development reclaiming democracy
- The conference featured 53 paper presentations, 17 workshops, 1 conversation circle and 1 panel discussion
- 21 full papers based on conference presentations were received before the conference; these have undergone (or are currently undergoing) peer review, and we are expecting another 33 paper submissions

- c. Personal growth and development
- d. Speakers
- e. Other

The feedback is as follows:

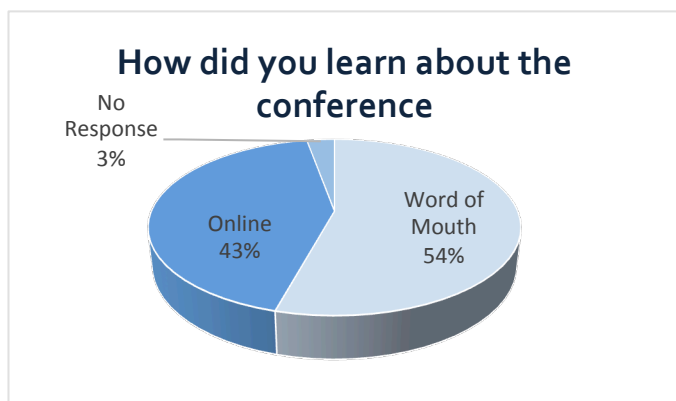


3. *Which speakers were of greatest interest to you:* Delegates appreciated a large number of speakers. The most popular conference contributions are listed below:

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Thirty-five completed feedback forms were received. A summary of the feedback is as follows:

1. *How did you hear or learn about the conference:* The majority of participants said that they got to know about the conference through their networks.



- Conversation on: 'Contemporary approach to citizenship in Taranaki' by Vivian Hutchinson
- Paper: 'Do we really need to park democracy in the doorway of NGOs' by David Kenkel and Paul Prestidge
- Paper: 'Towards a theory for Community Development' by De Wet Schutte
- Panel of Elders
- Youth Panel
- Paper: 'Citizenship, democracy, and professional ideals for a sustainable future' by Jay Hays
- Paper: 'First, revive the spirit' by Denis O'Reilly
- Workshop: 'Transformational neighbourhoods - feeding the flax roots' by Jenny Tanner
- Workshop: 'Telling the story to make the story' by Moya Sayer-Jones
- Workshop: 'Evaluating through storytelling: how we measured the soft stuff' by Rosie Gallen and Mondy Jera

2. *Main reason for attending the conference:* Though the idea was to identify only one main reason for the participants attending, some participants chose more than one option out of the following:

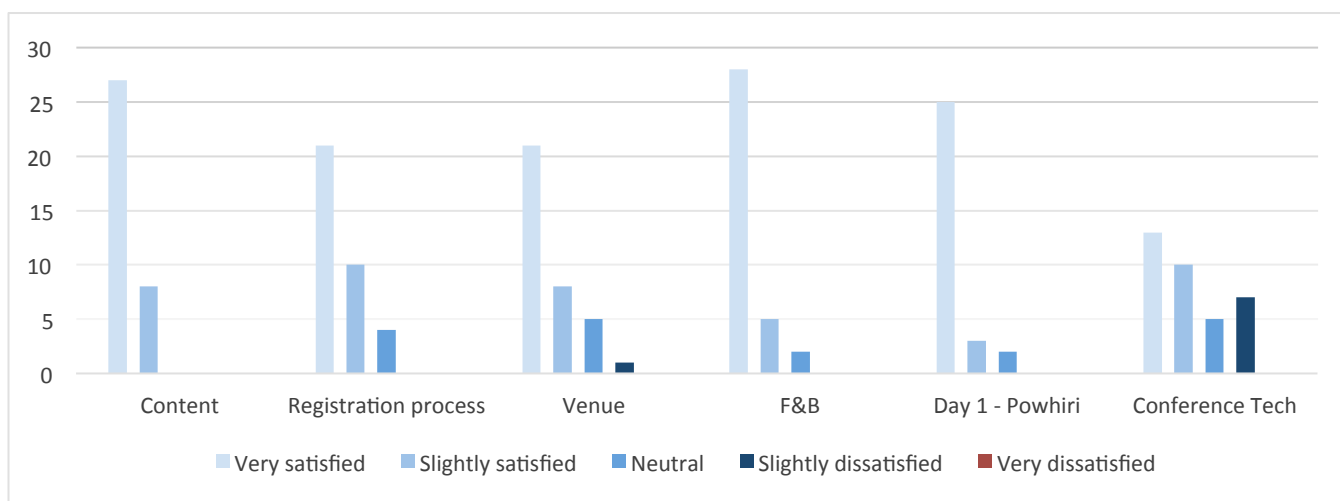
- a. Content
- b. Networking

In addition, a huge number of delegates appreciated topics related to social housing

4. *Did the conference fulfil your reason for attending:* All participants stated that the conference had satisfied their reason for attending, and some stated that it had exceeded their expectations.



5. *What was the most beneficial aspect of the conference:* though there were a variety of responses which emerged out of this question, they can be grouped under the following heads:
 - a. Learning and sharing of challenges participants are facing, getting to know what has worked for others and what has not worked
 - b. Re-energising and reaffirmation of the value of community development
 - c. Intellectual insights surrounding community development work; depth of knowledge/experience to draw upon
 - d. Broadening one's focus; learning about the multi-faceted nature of projects
 - e. Hearing from educators and hearing about research
6. *Qualitative feedback was sought on conference content, the registration process, the venue, food and beverages, the day 1 powhiri and conference technology.* The responses of the participants are displayed in the graph below. (Note: There was an hour of downtime during the conference during which H drive, where all presentations were saved, was not accessible.)
7. *Next time you attend this conference, would you like a field visit to community development projects or agencies:* Most participants responded in favour of a field visit, however some also pointed out that this could be done with the use of technology, without having to actually go out in the field. Some participants felt that this would eat into a lot of conference time.
8. *If you know of any colleagues who might be interestd in any upcoming community development conferences, please provide their names and organisations:* some participants provided names and email IDs. These will be kept in mind for the next conference.
9. *Please provide any comments you have on future conference topics or speakers, and provide any general suggetions you may have regarding the conference:* there were many suggestions which emerged; a few common ones are listed below:
 - a. Conference awards and dinner
 - b. Breaks between sessions and fewer concurrent sessions
 - c. Longer duration for sessions
 - d. More on housing
 - e. More chairs in rooms
 - f. A later start time, perhaps 9am for participants who have to travel some distance
 - g. Improved technology (technology failed a couple of times)
10. *When we run this conference again, what is the one thing you would like more of:* There were a range of responces to this question; some common ones are listed below.
 - a. More written papers
 - b. More time per speaker
 - c. Hearing from youth
 - d. Ethnic community representation/research
 - e. Handouts with more details on speakers/topics
 - f. Evening social
 - g. More from educators and students





GOING FORWARD

The conference involved huge learning for us and we were overwhelmed by the support of our community of practice. As well as a strong and generous staff and volunteer crew, we were ably assisted by friends from around the country, including many who could not attend. Feedback from participants was very positive and we will be holding future events.

Shortly after the conference we collaborated with Community Waitakere to host a breakfast with Max Rashbrooke, editor of *Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis*, and we plan to collaborate with Hui E! to develop an Auckland presence for the organisation which was launched at the conference.

Delegates indicated an interest in a Community Development association; John Stansfield is looking at models around the world, and he will visit two international associations in July.

NEXT STEPS

The first issue of the journal *Whanake* will be published on 1 May.

Video transcribing is complete for the e publication 'Illuminate: not the proceedings of the 2015 Community development conference', and we hope to launch this in June.

June will also see further paper submissions and other contributions for the spring edition of *Whanake*.

In August there will be a Unitec-hosted next steps workshop to discuss the development of an association and future conferences.

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