



Building Communities – Begins in the early years with early childhood services and professional teachers

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Objective of session

- Early Childhood Education and Care Services (ECEC) “natural places” for providing links between families within their communities
- Challenge to traditional child-centred pedagogy
- Strong communities, strong networks support strong families
- EC teachers, services, training providers rethinking how pedagogy, professionalism, and practices assist parents and communities



ECE and natural disasters: The NZ experience



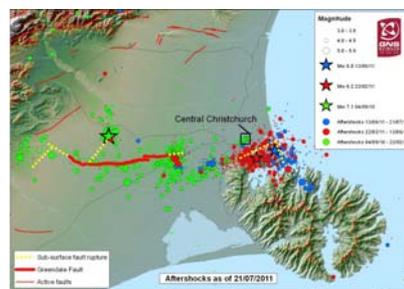
- Both NZ and Japan have experienced the power of earthquakes and water to transform all that we know, have felt safe and secure about, and to change our life experiences completely



The Christchurch Experience



- September 4th, 2010 - Earthquake 7.1
- December 25th 2010 - Earthquake 5.5
- February 22nd, 2011 - Earthquake 6.3
- June 13th 2011 Earthquake - 5.7, 6.2
- + more than 8000 other quakes over this time



Christchurch, New Zealand

- Loss of lives
- Liquifaction
- Destroyed homes
- Destroyed public facilities
- Ruined infrastructures
- Damaged and ruined educational facilities and buildings



New expression of community

Solnit (2009) –
'extraordinary
communities that arise
in disaster':

people do not act as selfish individuals, prone to violence, mayhem, looting, as supposed, but rather neighbours turn to one another, strangers become rescuers in the streets and the buildings, and whole populations turn their gaze to help stricken areas



Prime Minister of NZ: John Key (18 March 2011)



We have learned the power not only of individuals who have done more than they ever dreamed they could have, but also the power of a community, whether it's a neighbourhood, a school, a nation or the international community. We have witnessed in these past three weeks the very best of the human spirit. We have seen the coming together of a city, and of a nation. We have learned a lot about our capacity to do good. There is much talk that ours is a selfish generation, focused only on money and individual gain. What I have seen in our country, and especially here in this city since February 22 puts the lie to that. I have seen people who are resilient, capable, practical and compassionate. New Zealanders have been generous and brave.



Solnit (2009):

Power usually held by the elite, is devolved to people 'on the ground', and that localised responses demonstrate how as people we 'desire' connection, participation, altruism, and purposefulness



Studies within ECEC in NZ – supporting parents and community



- Duncan, J., Bowden, C., & Smith, A. B. (2005). *Early Childhood Centres and Family Resilience*. Report prepared for the Ministry of Social Development, December 2005.
<http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/evaluation/early-childhood-centres-and-family-resilience/index.html>
- Duncan, J., Te One, S. with Central Baptist Kindergartens Whānganui (ongoing). *Active adult participation in ECE: Enhancing child learning and community wellness*.
- Duncan (2008). *New Zealand Kindergartens - Just another early childhood service or a distinctive part of New Zealand culture?*
- Citizens Preschool and Nursery Centre of Innovation. (2008). *Collaborations: Teachers and a Family Whānau Support Worker in an early childhood setting*. Final report for Centre of Innovation Research (2005-2007). Prepared for the Ministry of Education, April 2008.

Networks and Linking



- Importance of trusting, caring and stable relationships
- Actively promoting the family as part of the centre community
- Introducing families to each other
- Connecting families and outside agencies



Urban Parent: I think there's a re – like there's the sense of community not just – just being part of a family, which I think is important, but the fact that you're networking, you might just walk home with another group of kids, you know, the same direction or ...you might meet up at the park and the kids – kids just feel like they – they know other people. And I mean my childcare, because I don't have family here, are usually my Kindy friends, you know, whereas I didn't even know any of the parents at the childcare centre.

Turning Isolation into Cohesion and Communication



- ECE is a micro-community
- Stable protective environment
- Just being there in the community.

No other factor has been identified as important for family support

There is a sense of being part of the community and meeting other people. You know, you get to meet other people who have got kids the same age...and maybe also someone that you can talk to if you are feeling really stressed or freaked out about something in particular and you don't really know where else to turn.

Participation as access to community

- Spending time at the centre:
- Increased friendships
- Links with others in the community
- Friendships for the children and play opportunities outside of centre



Earthquake - ECE



'Broken' centre shuts doors

A Christchurch playcentre in the red zone has shut its doors after 35 years. JO HICKENZIE-ACLEAN visited the once-thriving centre one last time with a devastated family.

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The playcentre, which had been open since 1976, was one of the last to close in the red zone. The centre was a place where many families had spent their children's early years. The closure was a significant loss for the community.

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It's like you are grieving because I don't have the parent support now.... I like being with other mothers and being supported.

(Debbi Agnew,
Dallington Playcentre)

Being a part of a community



- Connecting with the wider community
- Making social contacts
- Building links and relationships with future in mind

I have made friends who I wouldn't have met under any other conditions except from the [centre]. And because they live locally, it's very easy to have a true friendship. You start out just chatting and walking together ... and go to their houses, and they come to my house, and it's the children that know each other. It's something that I always thought was important. That you attend the facilities in your neighbourhood. That you don't live here and go to school across town. And it's for those very reasons, it creates, I don't know, a feeling of community, that you count, that you belong, that people notice you, that you notice them. (Parent #18)

Final thoughts

- Bonding
- Bridging
- Linking





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Conclusion

Disaster sometimes knocks down institutions and structures and suspends private lives, leaving a broader view of what lies beyond. The task before us is to recognise the possibilities visible through that gateway and endeavor to bring them into the realm of everyday. (Solnit, 2009, p. 313)





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UC Student Army – dug up liquifaction in NZ and then headed to Japan




- Acknowledgment to all those who have lost loved ones in 2011 disasters
- Thanks to the children of the Dunedin Hospital Childcare and Kindergarten Association for the use of their drawings and photos

