

Implementing the principles of kotahitanga/unity and manaakitanga/hospitality in community peace activism: an experiment in peace building.

Janine M Joyce and Joseph Llewellyn

Abstract

The group 'Peacing Together' formed in 2015 to encourage and promote the values and actions of peaceful community, through a series of events culminating in a festival celebration, held on World Peace day, in Otepoti/Dunedin, Aotearoa/New Zealand. 'Peacing Together' had a diverse conception of peace rooted in locally interpreted cultural concepts of kotahitanga/unity, manaakitanga/hospitality, alongside spiritual values (Buddhist, Yogic, Indigenous, Muslim) and a commitment to honouring the 'unity within our diversity'. This led us to use bicultural and anarchistic methods of organization to create the event called Kotahitanga Manaaki te kawa and in turn directed us to focus on community building as our key method of peace-building within this project. This paper is a case study of the event we created and facilitated.

First, we will explain the theoretical base for our activism based in the concepts of kotahitanga, manaakitanga and 'unity in diversity' and the kaupapa (agreed principles) we stood by in our organising to ensure that we stayed close to our theoretical and values base. Second, we discuss what was achieved in the actual event. Third, we discuss successes and failures of our organising process, which was based on an organically formed decision making process that honoured a peaceful kaupapa. Finally, we summarise our learning and discuss areas for continued reflection, as well as the future of 'Peacing Together'. This case study highlights the importance of agreeing core values as a practical base for peace activism through community building.

Keywords: kotahitanga, manaakitanga, peace, activism, self-reflection, community building, unity-diversity, Aotearoa New Zealand

Introduction

The group 'Peacing Together' came together to promote Peace in Otepoti / Dunedin, Aotearoa / New Zealand, through a series of events culminating in a multicultural festival, held expediently on the United Nations endorsed International Day of Peace 2015. The event was named Kotahitanga

Manaakitanga Te Kawa. This name described our peace kaupapa¹ as including an overriding hospitality towards our multiple identities and a shared commitment to unity. This event followed World Peace Day celebrations held in Dunedin and globally for many years, predating the 2001 United Nations endorsement. The day itself was very successful, with ninety cultures representing themselves through music, food and cultural sharing.

Activists engaged in several months of planning and organisation. This involved being hospitable to differences of vision and motivation that members represented. It involved human processes of socialising, laughter, respect, encouragement and visioning. We represented those interested in community wide peace-building processes, and those with with political and spiritual goals. We also represented those interested in creating an enjoyable, inclusive multicultural arts expression. Over time the group became more homogenous in its goals, which was aided by clear base principles that honoured our differences in identity, motivation and belief systems.

This paper as an opportunity for autobiographical self-reflection will share a critique of our own processes and feelings as peace-builders during one experiment in peace building, in particular the process of community building and partnership with local Māori tangata whenua,² using anarchistic principles. The organising group developed these principles organically, rather than borrowing them directly elsewhere.

We will critically examine this experiment in peace and its outcomes in four sections. First, we will provide some context for the event, elaborating on the concept of unity in diversity and kotahitanga. Second, we will describe what was achieved during the Kotahitanga Manaakitanga Te Kawa event and the experience for attendees. Third, we will provide an autobiographical critical self-reflection of our own peace community building-process and the issues that arose from this. Finally, we will conclude by summarising our own learning and discuss areas for continued reflection. In so doing we seek to balance our external action with careful awareness of our motivations, seeking new learning to carry forward. While the day certainly had many successes, no event is perfect. We hope that sharing our own reflections on successes and challenges of our experiment in peace may be helpful for others engaging in similar projects in the future.

¹Kaupapa: 1. Level surface, floor, stage, platform, layer; 2. (noun) topic, policy, matter for discussion, plan, purpose, scheme, proposal, agenda, subject, programme, theme, issue, initiative; 3. (noun) raft.

²Tangata Whenua: Local people, hosts, indigenous people - people born of the whenua, i.e. of the placenta and of the land where the people's ancestors have lived and where their placenta are buried. Māori: Meaning ordinary or ordinary people. The term is used to represent the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand who are made up of a diverse set of nations and sub-nations.

Context

World Peace Day: A time to commemorate and vision towards a non-violent humanity? Perhaps, yet for many in our local city this seemed irrelevant and impractical. One of our challenges was to bring ideas of practical peace-building alongside the joy of a multicultural arts event. When we conceptualised a way of drawing together the diversity in our community, we utilised Māori cultural ideas of Kotahitanga and Manaakitanga. These formed the basis of our vision. Kotahitanga refers to an underlying spiritual unity between all beings but more often, it refers to Māori political and ideological unity. It is often simply translated as unity. Manaakitanga refers to human rights, hospitality and generosity, which are seen as very important values.

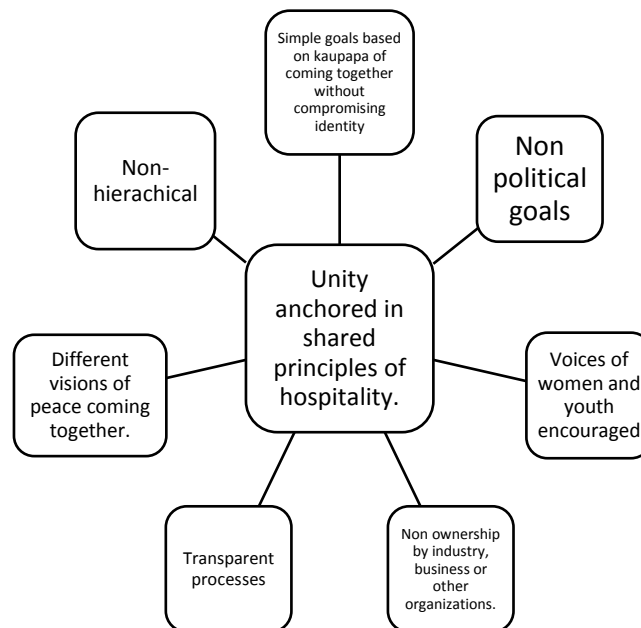
Historically the kotahitanga movement represented a Māori political movement focused upon unity of purpose regarding issues of justice around land, following Te Tiriti o Waitangi³ settlement with the British Crown in 1840. It was effective as Te Tiriti o Waitangi negotiation process has been, at 100 years, the longest legal case against the colonising British Crown. It has taken the energy and focus of Māori for generations. As the Treaty settlements legal process comes into its latter stages, we were aware that there remained much post-conflict tension, pain, bitterness, prejudice and inequality within our community. We recognised that we needed to show hospitality towards the idea of coming together as human beings, laying our political identities aside for one kind moment. This was a huge ask of all participants. We were curious about what kotahitanga might look like if it was expressed through the spiritual lens of unity within diversity. We wondered what would happen if we offered hospitality or manaakitanga to such a possibility. We explained our process simply as the counterintuitive ideal of celebrating the unity within our diversity. In so doing we were hoping to create a space of internal dissonance that might allow conflicting ideas and groups to be able to come together in a spirit of collaboration.

The phrase ‘unity in diversity’ may sound a little oxymoronic, however when viewed through the lens of kotahitanga (as we envisioned it), or from an anarchistic point of view, the opposite can be true. ‘Unity in diversity’ implies that we, as individuals or groups, can come together on an equal footing with a specific purpose. The purpose here was community building through peace. The groups and people involved in our project had different worldviews, skills, and dedicated their lives to a variety of different occupations. Through the kotahitanga lens, peace was not about homogenising these groups into one identity or unit that thought or acted the same. Nor was it about creating one group that led from a position as expert. It was about all groups coming together with unique identity, for a purpose, working together while recognising and celebrating our differences. A process of respecting and celebrating others difference and right to self-determination of expression and involvement. This

³ Treaty between indigenous Māori leaders and the British Crown

view of Kotahitanga was the root of our motivation, aim, methods of organisation, and set up of the actual event on world peace day (see figure 1). Kotahitanga was our vision of peace – the means to peace and the end of peace. As a result, our organisation was non-hierarchical. We had public meetings with all interested parties and community leaders. We encouraged community groups to put forward women and youth representatives alongside the men. In this way we recognised potential leaders, and other voices. In our public meetings we ensured that all Peacing Together spoke and shared their similarities and differences. Tau iwi⁴ worked with tangata whenua, tangata whenua worked with each other, and tau iwi worked with other tau iwi. Beyond this, peace was not defined – people held different views on exactly what peace was beyond recognising others rights to self-determination. We agreed that peace was a process of relationship. We agreed that relationship was about processes of being together, hospitality and shared principles.

Figure 1



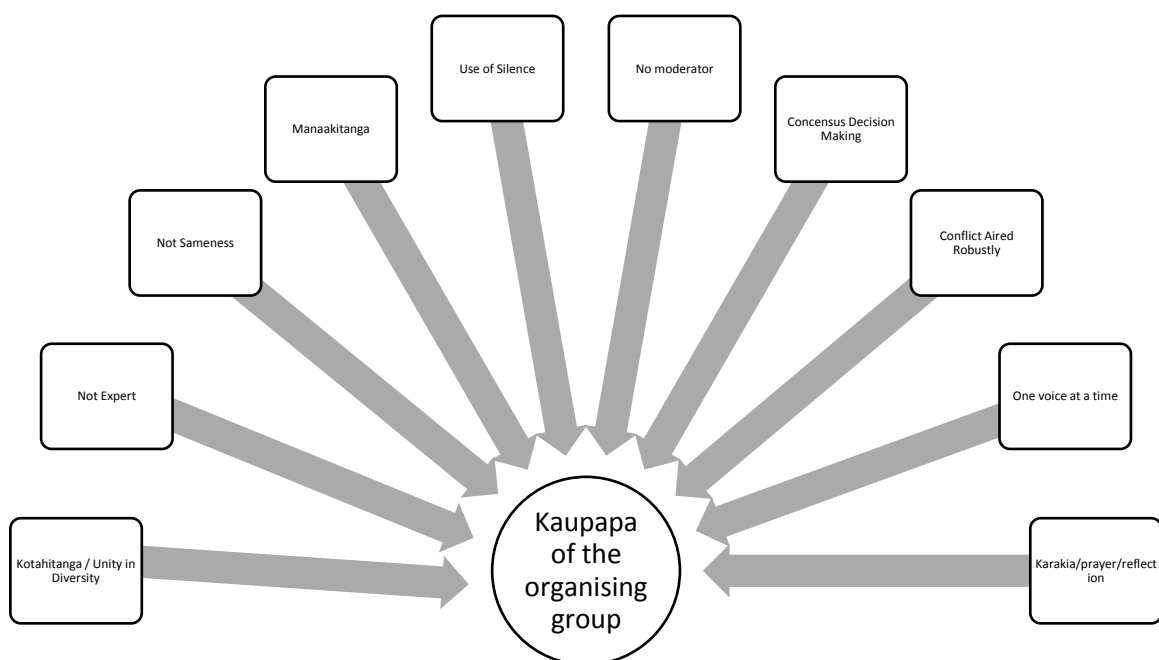
In order to keep this anarchistic kotahitanga vision at the forefront of our minds, the organising group developed a kaupapa to guide us in our organising (see figure 2). Kaupapa can be understood as agreed principles. The kaupapa in our group became an anchor point in times of crisis and conflict, and became a tool for retuning ourselves to nonviolent communication and remembrance of our unified purpose when we were exhausted. Nobody was put above anybody

⁴ Tau iwi: Other bones. A word that can be used for all non-Māori.

else; there were no experts. We embraced manaakitanga through the sharing of ideas and food, through respecting each other, though only having one voice speak at a given time, and through laughing. And sometimes through arguing and staying around the table until we could reach a shared way forward that was practical and felt good.

Feeling good was also the feeling of not having been transgressed at a human and spiritual level. We used our own model of decision-making which ensured that nobody held authority over another. There was no permanent leader or moderator, instead leadership arose and diminished momentarily. We aired, discussed and worked through conflict robustly. At the end of a meeting, people would share a karakia/prayer or reflection from their own background as a way to bring the group together and ground us. Mindful silence was also used at various points in the meeting to ground us and bring us back to the kaupapa if we started to stray. The need to ground was important when we became excited and overwhelmed with ideas or overwhelmed with stress and a sense of self-importance.

Figure 2



From the beginning of the process we recognised that agreeing and manifesting these concepts was a challenge, as we could not create events that were hospitable in the wider community, without first modelling this in our processes with each other. We were aiming to start enacting our vision of kotahitanga as peace within our community, and hoped that this would have knock-on effects into the future.

By doing this we were in some way representing what Amit (2002, 18) describes as an ‘imagination of solidarity’:

Community arises out of an interaction between the imagination of solidarity and its realization through social relations and is invested both with powerful affect as well as contingency, and therefore with both consciousness and choice.

The day: Kotahitanga Manaakitangi Te Kawa – the 21st of September 2015

The United Nations International Day of Peace is celebrated on the 21st September each year. Otherwise known as World Peace Day, this is an event that outdates its United Nations endorsement (complete recognition in 2001) by a number of decades, and has been celebrated in a diverse range of events around the world since. While there are official United Nation International Day of Peace celebrations, ours was not one of them. We, along with organisers of previous World Peace Day event organisers in Dunedin, felt that this limited the scope of the day and who would want to be involved. Many do not see the United Nations or its member states as instruments of peace, and the aim of the event was not to promote the United Nations. However, we see World Peace Day as appropriate for our celebrations, as peace was the focus of the event. We acknowledge productive peace work that is being done by people working for the United Nations, so we did not seek to exclude these people either. Other peace days, such as ‘Gandhi Jayanti’, may have produced other barriers to participation and understanding. In reality our event could have been on any day, but we saw World Peace Day as a day that made our motivations clear to the public.

The ‘Peacing Together’ organising group was comprised of seven people representing a range of cultures; Māori, Pākehā, Bosnian and Solomon Island. Each person embodied deep religious-spiritual identities including Buddhist, Muslim and Yoga alongside a range of political beliefs. In addition, the group was guided by a local Māori Kaumatua and Upoko. Ages ranged from 25 to 79 years, with four men and three women. All volunteered their time and had full family, community and work commitments.

As with any large scale event, months of planning and organising took place. Prior to the day there was a sustained level of community building. This involved the group approaching local Māori tangata whenua for guidance. In this process a local Kaumatua⁵ and Upoko⁶ agreed to join the group. ‘Peacing Together’ was welcomed by the Kaumatua at his home and formal introductions, personal perspectives, motivations for the day and food were

⁵ Kaumatua: Elder within Māoridom; one with knowledge and wisdom.

⁶ Upoko: Spiritual leader/head.

shared. Outside of roles in ‘Peacing Together’ many of the individual group members had had long, multiple and sustained relationships with representatives of local Māori Iwi from multiple hapu⁷ who were involved in many informal and formal ways.

As well as our own planning and consultation, we included the following lead-in events: i) community concerts in local cafes and bars, ii) a public community meeting to share the planning and invite community group involvement, iii) a formal public conversation at the local university entitled ‘Peace and Te Tiriti o Waitangi’, iv) linking with the local Hiroshima Day public commemorations, v) a radio show and radio interviews on other shows, vi) a public community talk with prominent anti-nuclear activists and academics, vii) facilitated art students joining together to print prayer flags with messages of peace, viii) facilitated high school students exploring the meaning of Kotahitanga as unity within diversity and assisting in speech making on the day, ix) an after the event community fruit tree planting at local rest home. During this time the ‘Peacing Together’ group was gathering volunteers for the day, sharing ideas with the community, diffusing conflicts between groups so they could support the day and writing grant applications. In addition, ‘Peacing Together’ was working hard to understand the kaupapa of peace through the lens of Kotahitanga and Manaakitanga. This involved working through ego manifestations, political and cultural identities and personal experiences of injustice, loss and trauma.

At the beginning there was no finance for the festival day. The initial successful procurement of a grant to hold the event at the large Forsyth Barr Stadium (the local rugby stadium) meant that it became a much larger event than was originally envisaged. Support trickled in overtime via small grants from: Community Trust Otago, Otago University Student Association (OUSA), Quakers Peace Award, Student’s for Free Tibet Aotearoa, Dunedin Multi-Ethnic Council, Peace And Disarmament Education Trust (PADET) and individual members of ‘Peacing Together’. However, it required considerable faith as the funding was never assured and the group relied a great deal on volunteers, personal relationships, alongside business community goodwill and support.

After acquiring funding and completing the series of run in events we send out our press release. It went like this:

Kotahitanga Manaaki Te Kawa- World Peace Day 2015 – Forsyth Barr Stadium, 20th September. The group ‘Peacing Together’ will present Kotahitanga Manaaki Te Kawa - World Peace Day 2015. ‘Peacing Together’ is a not for profit group that formed in March 2015, consisting of Artists, Event Creators, Community Facilitators and students from the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. This event will be the first of its kind and a wonderful opportunity for everyone to

⁷ Iwi: Nation. Hapu: Sub-nation. Many translate the words Iwi and Hapu to mean ‘tribe’ and ‘sub-tribe’. A hapu is made up of a number of family groups and is traditionally where decision making takes place in Māori society.

come together celebrating our unity within diversity in Dunedin. Our kaupapa for this event is Celebrating Peace through Multicultural Diversity. Throughout the day there will be food stalls, a WOMAD inspired program of live music, dance, children's activities, great coffee, visual art, poetry, speakers, workshops, and stalls for all. There is plenty of opportunity for everyone to come and make this a memorable community experience. The United Nations' (UN) International Day of Peace is celebrated on September 21st each year to recognize the efforts of those who have worked hard to end conflict and promote peace around the world. The International Day of Peace is a day of ceasefire and we will acknowledge this day by inviting David Ellison, the Chief (Upoko) of Karitane, Puketeraki and Kaumatua of 'Peacing Together' to welcome the people on the day. A Dunedin City Councillor will join in opening World Peace Day 2015 for Dunedin City. For many of us peace can seem an unrealistic possibility. Coming together to celebrate music and arts for a community event with a common harmonious mind can help us appreciate the diversity within our community. It is another step towards remembering our common humanity and learning to respect and enjoy our natural diversity. 'Peacing Together' would like to thank all the community groups and organizations who have supported us thus far and invite any others who would like to support this kaupapa to contact us about their participation. We invite you to "come and join us and participate and create a place to share music, dance, laughter, culture, knowledge, inspiration, and passion.

The day itself began with a shared welcome from local Māori leaders and a locally elected City Councillor. This welcome was untraditional for the area as women Māori leaders spoke alongside the men. A local Kapa Haka group performed the waiata. The following link shows the way in which this event was opened: <https://vimeo.com/140144023>. The opening was an explicit demonstration of hospitality, tolerance and openness towards the human diversity that we each represent. It also represented an easing of tension between local iwi members and demonstrated a coming together in a culture post-colonisation with painful and tragic histories of loss and complicated modern legal battles of redress.

Over forty different community groups set up stalls and these included groups such as; i) Students for Free Tibet, ii) Dunedin multi-faith group, iii) Dunedin multi-ethnic council, iv) Red Cross, v) Oil free Otago, vi) Suicide prevention trust, vii) the Quaker Centre, viii) Pacific island communities and ix) local Buddhist Centre. Alongside these were commercial food vendors and groups demonstrating Yoga, Tai chi and Meditation. Throughout the day over twenty acts from all around the world shared traditional and modern dance, music, speakers and song. Vegetarian food was provided by the local Hare Krishna group and the logistics of the day, such as car parking attendants, stage set up etc., was done by a small group of volunteers, including many high school students. Hourly teach-ins also took place providing a space for discussion and learning around various peace and international conflict related topics.

A qualitative survey was undertaken during the day of 100 attendees. This

represented approximately 10% of those who attended the day. The feedback was that many local residents were surprised at the cultural diversity in their town. Many of the new cultures described themselves in the survey as ‘kiwis’ - perhaps representing a collaborative identity but this was not clear and is subject to conjecture. The following statement is illustrative of this view:

This day created a sometimes rare opportunity for cultures, genders, orientations and races to interact. This opportunity is sometimes not as available as it should be and this event provided this opportunity in a happy, safe, and joyful way.

In general comments from attendees were that the event was a fantastic idea and it was amazing to see such a wide range of cultures in Dunedin. Most were surprised that there was in fact a plethora of races, creeds, and colours within the Dunedin community and thus they strongly invited a repeat of the event annually. Everyone surveyed agreed that the venue was too cold and noisy. Many suggested having the event in November when the local weather was traditionally warmer.

Critical self-reflection of our model of peace community building

‘Peacing Together’ was the name given to the 2015 organisational group. World Peace Day events have been enjoying increased regularity since the 1980s, and now many events are happening globally with increasing frequency. The local community of Dunedin, New Zealand has also been joining this global trend by celebrating this day and encouraging a visioning of peaceful humanity. Past events have included; i) a central peace pole being built on the museum lawn which became the base for peace commemoration events, ii) multiple Yogamala events, iii) Centre of the city open event with a Yogamala, speakers, community peace stalls and sharing of food, iiv) a continuation of the centre of the city event with different people stepping in to participate, and now v) the Kotahitanga Manaakitanga Te Kawa World Peace day event.

Previous events did not focus directly on challenging elites. And neither did the ‘Peacing Together’ process. Instead we focused upon building collaboration between groups, consciousness raising and education, whilst providing a prominent space for many groups in the community, with similar concerns and interests, to meet. They came together under the kaupapa and hospitality towards unity within diversity, as one practical expression of peace, and in a spirit of multicultural celebration. The event was not about *directly* confronting and disrupting. This position does not indicate a rejection by organisers of nonviolent tactics that confront and disrupt – many people involved in the day have been involved in nonviolent direct action in the past - but these tactics were deemed inappropriate for the aim of the event which was community building, as explained below. The aim was to bring people together, to demonstrate hospitality, to make connections and to energise each other. We

saw this as a necessary. However 'Peacing Together' recognizes the vital importance of an on-going co-creation of a democratic just peace, which involves challenging violent systems of power in multiple ways. 'Peacing Together' contributes one aspect of this challenge which is the importance of bringing the ordinary people affected by violent global systems of power and control together in a hospitable way. Building a vision of community that can lead and inspire action. Facilitating a stronger collective shared expression of hospitable community. Showing what our values are.

At a pragmatic level our approach allowed us to be successful in receiving funding from central and local government. We successfully negotiated with corporates to meet alongside groups critical of their actions. We included local government leaders in our thinking and ideas. By doing so we hoped to encourage less prejudice and more interaction between groups. We also hoped to create an environment of welcome to refugees and other cultures new to our city. Did it stop us from taking a stronger voice on inequality and issues underlying conflict? It was perhaps an opportunity lost. Yet one that seemed justified for the kaupapa.

All members involved in 'Peacing Together' have a strong commitment to social justice and since Kotahitanga Manaaki Te awa have continued to be involved with multiple issues including but not limited to; mental health awareness, Te Heke (highlighting the issues with local river use and outstanding local Te Tiriti o Waitangi issues), refugee welcome, Muslim awareness, National peace hikoi, suicide prevention awareness, anti-militarisation activism, and the proposed TPPA trade agreement.

By organising the 2015 Kotahitanga Manaakitanga Te Kawa we saw ourselves as contributing in a small way to a global peace movement, while focusing specifically on the local level. Events in Dunedin have been organised differently each year by people sharing a similar vision. It has never been the aim to formalise the process by making an organisation. Rather than creating an event that could be owned; people and groups have come together and then left again, bringing their experience, time and resources at different times in order to contribute to the event. This 'organisation in flux' has led to events with quite unique contributions each year. The organisation of events has always been bottom-up. While there have been leaders, these positions have never been permanent, allowing different people with different ideas and skill sets to take the reins each year. Dunedin's World Peace Day events have focused mostly on community organising, bringing together many groups in the community who focus on, or have an interest in, peace related issues.

As stated above, we have seen ourselves as part of a larger global peace movement, and also as our own unique local peace movement. Van Seeters and James (2012, xi) write that:

Defining a social movement entails a few minimal conditions of 'coming together': (1.) the formation of some kind of collective identity; (2.) the

development of a shared normative orientation; (3.) the sharing of a concern for change of the status quo and (4.) the occurrence of moments of practical action that are at least subjectively connected together across time addressing this concern for change. Thus we define a social movement as a form of political association between persons who have at least a minimal sense of themselves as connected to others in common purpose and who come together across an extended period of time to effect social change in the name of that purpose.

We believe that we fit within this definition of a social movement. However, what brings us together – the term peace – is difficult to define. On the plus-side, this has allowed for lots of involvement from a wide range of people in both organising and orchestrating the event. The potential negative consequence of this is that conflict can naturally arise due to these differing conceptions. On the organisational level, where we were heavily involved, all of the activists clearly saw the need to promote ‘peace’. At no point in the organisation process did the group try to define this, which is probably one of the factors that allowed such a diverse group of people, with different voices, to come together.

As mentioned above, we took a community building approach toward peace. We will now explain our understanding of this. Community building at its most simple may be defined as: “forming collaborative partnerships among neighbourhood’s stakeholders to strengthen their internal capacity to solve their problems” (Eicher, 2007, 6). Our work towards peace was about bringing community groups together and working for peace from within, as opposed to appealing to or directly challenging an external group. We hoped that by bringing diverse, peace-focused, community groups together it would build connections, and reduce isolation. We agree with Eicher (2007, 6) who writes that groups without power suffer a particular kind of isolation; “...because people with these communities have been systematically isolated, they need to learn to trust one another, establish roles, and improve from within”. We hoped to contribute to this, strengthening our ability to achieve our shared aim of creating peaceful society. Within this we were mindful of our privileged status as academics and we were committed to creating an organisational group that was a mixture of community members and academics. We remained careful by not utilising our knowledge in a way that would create any imbalance in power. Again Eicher (2007, 7) reminds us:

Organisers may have to overvalue those with degrees and expertise and existing positions of power and, by default, leave out others. There is also some concern that the community building approach requires multiple trade offs and compromises to get everyone on the same page. Many problems are not challenged or addressed.

This was certainly the case in this experiment of community building. Multiple trade-offs occurred in order to focus on the event. ‘Peacing Together’ at times consciously devalued the academic voice in order to create a space for others to

step into. An example of this was the speakers on the day. They represented youth, an equal gender mix and people that had the capability to speak from within many multi-cultural communities. 'Peacing Together' encouraged cultures that would normally give a male voice to propose a female speaker. The group paid particular attention to our relationships with tangata whenua nurtured over many years and in many forms and also the relationships within the tangata whenua groups:

Attending to existing community relationships, revitalising or creating community identity and meaning, and encouraging participation and partnerships are integral, cohesive components of community building" (Hyland, 2005, 13).

We do not suggest that we are qualified to comment on the complex or historical and modern areas of conflict within tangata whenua relationships, however we can say that this event was successful in bringing together leaders from multiple local hapu onto the welcoming stage. In doing so the tangata whenua involved demonstrated and offered an example of manaakitanga/ hospitality towards all the cultural groups and peoples in the Dunedin community.

We had a common view within 'Peacing Together' that tangata whenua status was to be honoured. We were mindful of not offending anyone and relied upon our Kaumatua to guide us in areas of cultural import. Whilst we welcomed the best channels that came forward to organise this event, we also acknowledged that we were all flawed by non-peaceful principles at times. 'Peacing Together' members explicitly came back to the kaupapa of a non-defined peace or the concept of the unity within our diversity to reset our commitment to the event:

One cannot talk about community and community building without, first, acknowledging the existing relationships within the community and examining the myriad other relationships that develop, either consequently or intentionally, and, second, considering the various political, economic, and cultural factors that are divisive in all the processes involved in building and sustaining communities (Hyland, 2005, 11).

It was these dynamics that were the most confronting. Individuals and groups required discussion and time to agree to put differences aside. Some cultural groups harboured resentment for the way they had been treated by the Dunedin community. At times our simple wish to celebrate together seemed beyond the willingness of others.

Finally our experience of community building was flexible, fluid and not repeatable or formulaic:

The essential contingency of community, its participants' sense that it is fragile, changing, partial and only one of a number of competing attachments or alternative possibilities for affiliation means that it can never be all-enveloping or entirely blinkering. Community is never the world entire, it is only ever one of a number of recognized possibilities (Amit, 2002, 18).

Forming a unified vision of peace was not possible, yet creating and experiencing a peaceful celebration of multicultural diversity was. Ultimately a healthy community is one in which there is an acceptance of diversity, a degree of equity, competence (i.e.: collaboration, working consensus to achieve goals, agreeing ways and means), strong networks and sense of community exists between people (Wass, 2000).

A vision of peace

While 'Peacing Together' never defined 'peace', it was clear from the beginning that a key part of our conceptions of peace was the ideas of Kotahitanga and manaakitanga. This meant involving many different cultural groups – artistic, activist, and academic – in one space to celebrate, discuss, learn and be. In many ways the make-up of our organising group was reflective of this. It also came at a time where we are seeing a rise in xenophobia, especially through Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments globally. Our assertion of unity in the event was to offer an alternative vision of the world to these increasing right-wing sentiments. While focusing on unity we had an equal focus on diversity. Explicit in the 'Peacing Together' kaupapa, was the celebration of peace through multicultural diversity. For us it was clear that peace did not mean all being the same, but rather accepting and celebrating difference. This was inclusive of political difference.

We aimed to promote peace in the positive sense. By this we mean that we clearly envisioned peace as the absence of direct and hidden violence in its structural and cultural forms (Galtung, 1964, 1990). This is opposed to negative peace that is merely that absence of direct physical violence. It was a proactive peace (Benford & Taylor, 2008) aimed at promoting peaceful society rather than directly challenging violence. Kobi and Fishman (2012, 7) summarise this nicely:

The condition of positive peace can be created when social justice mitigates structural and cultural violence. Cultural violence occurs when the political leadership of a movement or state incorporates continuous incitement to hatred and violence into a society's public discourse. In contrast to negative peace, positive peace is not limited to the idea of getting rid of something but includes the idea of establishing something that is missing and changing the societal and political structure.

‘Peacing Together’ members shared the perspective that there was the need to work alongside tangata whenua. This was acknowledged as a key part of working for positive peace in Aotearoa/New Zealand. We recognised the un-peaceful founding of Aotearoa/New Zealand through colonialism, which still has effects today, and we were clear that for a peaceful society to be achieved, this must be a key focus from the beginning of the process.

However, there were differences in the ‘Peacing Together’ vision of the day. This was significant as it led to subtle misunderstandings about what Aldous Huxley (1939, 9) called ‘means and ends’ within our community development. He wrote, “The end cannot justify the means, for the simple and obvious reason that the means employed determine the nature of the ends produced”. Whilst ‘Peacing Together’ members shared the same language about the event, the underlying expectations and assumptions were never fully articulated. The day was shared with the public as a ‘WOMAD’ inspired event. ‘WOMAD’ is a world music festival with the stated aim being to “celebrate the world's many forms of music, arts and dance.” ‘WOMAD’ (2015) “aims to excite, to inform, and to create awareness of the worth and potential of a multicultural society.” Yet for us we were less interested in a WOMAD inspired event and more committed to an expression of peaceful community building. Accordingly, we held the view that peace is made through peaceful inner and outer practices, which in turn may have peaceful long-term effects.

Organising Kotahitanga Manaakitanga Te Kawa, openly, without hierarchy or ownership, was itself an experiment in peace. This is true as much for the organisation process, as the event itself. ‘Peacing Together’ struggled with this concept, as titles were more easily understood by funding agencies and the responsibilities of having such titles, better understood by individuals. On reflection it seemed to us that as we got closer to the event, we at times surrendered an equal organisational style for a top-down and centralised leadership style. ‘Peacing Together’ met on a number of occasions to explicitly discuss and attempt to rectify this mind-set but members never reached consensus. The main concern was that the workload would not be covered, mistakes would be made and reputations potentially affected. It was felt that relationships within the community were held by individual members and would suffer if they became shared. We experienced this dynamic as a lack of transparency and a lack of commitment or knowledge of peaceful process. This tension was present throughout, and continued for some time after the event.

We wonder whether this division in the group can be understood also as a tension between anarchistic visions of peaceful society, and less radical or critical visions of peaceful society. Anarchist visions of peaceful society favour non-hierarchical organisation based on mutual aid that aim to create equitable, transparent, open structures. Anarchist visions of a peaceful society are (commonly) non-utopian. They aim to create ways of being and organising that do not impinge on others, and where we support each other. In other words, they see peaceful societies as ones where people are free to pursue what they want to in their lives; providing they are not harming others; without being

restricted by others who hold more power; while at the same time acknowledging that freedom can only be achieved when we come together as communities. In many ways the kaupapa of 'Peacing Together' reflected the logic of an anarchist affinity group. These groups are:

a (usually small) group of anarchists who work together to spread their ideas to the wider public, using propaganda, initiating or working with campaigns and spreading their ideas within popular organisations (such as unions) and communities. It aims not to be a 'leadership' but to give a lead, to act as a *catalyst within popular movements* (AnarchistFAQ Collective, 2016).

However, Anarchistic groups would usually share an explicit common goal and underling motivations. To have peace from an anarchistic point of view, centralised, permanent, restrictive authority must not hinder people. Anarchistic organisation recognises the connection between means and ends, and therefore aims to find ways to organise without any one member of a group holding power-over another. Colin Ward (1966) wrote this of anarchy and organisation:

You may think in describing anarchism as a theory of organisation I am propounding a deliberate paradox: "anarchy" you may consider to be, by definition, the opposite of organisation. In fact, however, "anarchy" means the absence of government, the absence of authority. Can there be social organisation without authority, without government? The anarchists claim that there can be, and they also claim that it is desirable that there should be. They claim that, at the basis of our social problems is the principle of government. It is, after all, governments which prepare for war and wage war, even though you are obliged to fight in them and pay for them; the bombs you are worried about are not the bombs which cartoonists attribute to the anarchists, but the bombs which governments have perfected, at your expense. It is, after all, governments which make and enforce the laws which enable the 'haves' to retain control over social assets rather than share them with the 'have-nots'. It is, after all, the principle of authority which ensures that people will work for someone else for the greater part of their lives, not because they enjoy it or have any control over their work, but because they see it as *their only means of livelihood*."

We were concerned with holding an anarchistic perspective and needed to debate many questions. For example; was running a peaceful voluntary community organisation all about consensus and agreement in decision making? Was there space for a peaceful group to use confrontational means in group communication and organisation? Is it even possible to prevent hierarchical knowledge and informal power structures forming within organisational groups? It would be fair to say that we did not successfully answer these questions. However, it was agreed that we would use certain techniques to try and organise without hierarchy and power-over.

Our learning

‘Peacing Together’ group formed over eight weeks and the early meetings were characterised by excitement, vision and over-talking. The strength at this stage (and throughout the next ten months) being the groups’ capacity to speak frankly to each other with a commitment to staying together as a group. Early in the process ‘Peacing Together’ agreed that we would commit to running our discussions in a collaborative and respectful way, as laid out in our kaupapa. This resulted in an organic form of consensus organising which arose from the members of the group. We did not take a method or theory of consensus decision making from elsewhere.

As mentioned briefly above, consensus decision-making was implemented in order to work together non-hierarchically, without giving any one person authority, while at the same time ensuring that everyone’s voices were heard. We are aware that there are negative critiques of consensus decision-making made by some activists, and it is not within the confines of this article to fully engage with them. However, we acknowledge that we did not have immediate time constraints that demanded fast action, and as a result never worked through how this kind of situation should be dealt with. For example, we were not occupying a building and were about to be evicted by the police as has happened in other peace movements. We were also aware that changes may have had to be made in a larger organising group, as meetings may have gone on for too long for some of us to attend. Also, as it has not been tested, we do not know how this organising structure would have worked with larger groups or with groups of people that have different needs, for example, different time and work commitments. Having said this we must also note that we were not hindered in creating a large event by our consensus decision making process, rather it was what kept us together and committed to the organising process.

The following process evolved within the first few weeks. The meetings began with a blessing and traditional karakia/prayer. This was followed by a simple tuning together exercise. Attendees would shut their eyes, quieten their nervous systems and move into a shared space of silence. In this space attendees would access a sense of connection with each other, and to the shared purpose. Sensitivity and awareness of this varied according to individual’s prior training/guidance in meditative traditions. Back et al. (2009, 1114) describe the type of communication that Peacing together endeavoured to create as a group:

Compassion in contemplative traditions is transmitted through a quality of mind and requires active intentional mental processes - it is the opposite of passive, receptive activity. These compassionate silences arise spontaneously from the clinician who has developed the mental capacities of stable attention, emotional balance, along with pro-social mental qualities, such as naturally arising empathy and compassion.

We had previous experience with large diverse multicultural groups where this style of communication had led to efficient and light hearted community building (Joyce, 2015). It seemed reasonable to aim for congruence between the inner embodied peace of organisers and the outer expression of peace through the day itself. Everyone within 'Peacing Together' agreed to this.

From a calmer atmosphere we would take turns to speak, often utilising a taonga/treasure (a traditional process which was suggested by our Kaumatua, modified for our meetings, whereby whoever has this on the Wharenui/meeting-house is afforded uninterrupted talking time, alongside respectful listening). 'Peacing Together' members would often need to remind each other to come back to this simple communication process. This became increasingly necessary as the event became larger, more complicated and people more exhausted and stressed. In the later stages, especially as members of the public were invited to join in the meetings, 'Peacing Together' would use a traditional agenda and minute taking process. Throughout the entire process we needed to utilise collaborative intelligence and a range of conflict transformation skills:

In other words, conflict management, conflict resolution and problem-solving are never-ending processes which have to be continually rediscovered and reapplied to new problems and new sets of relationships (Clements & Ward, 1994, 6).

Despite the above, members often transgressed each other in terms of gender and cultural expectations. Bruhn (2005, 156-157) reminds us that the on-going dynamics of cultural inclusion and exclusion experienced in our small group, may be a tension found within modern societies:

In today's society there is no longer a stable environment that shapes an individual's identity or develops a sense of belonging to society, but rather individuals participate in various independent social systems... Therefore, it is possible for individuals to be included in and excluded from various social systems at the same time.

We consider that it was to be expected that philosophical differences remained unbridged, as a result of the different platforms that the event represented for individual members of 'Peacing Together'. In our opinion, pragmatically and in hindsight we developed 'just enough tolerance', 'just enough respect' and 'just enough unity' to create an event of peaceful diversity. Perhaps 'just enough love and kindness towards each other'.

Yet one of the strengths of 'Peacing Together' was also the source of its greatest tension and conflict. Internal group processes were designed to allow for peaceful organising, the non-hierarchical nature of the group was at times challenged. It may be beneficial for future events to dedicate time at the

beginning of the process to have discussions around what a peaceful process looks like and how we could enact it. While we implemented various techniques, which were accepted by the group, it is unclear whether this has much of an effect on the organisation process outside of the formal meetings. It may also be beneficial to return to these philosophical discussions throughout the process to remind ourselves of them. This would allow for a self-critique where we could examine if the steps we were taking are really peaceful. At times (admittedly partly because of time and energy constraints) people ploughed on, organising specific parts of the event, without consultation with the rest of the group or without considering how it would contribute to peace or community building. This led to identities based upon self-important i-ness rather than a collaborative we-ness. People began to count the hours of volunteer service, rather than delegating and up skilling others. There were moments of irrationality and burn-out. We believe that reflection periods could have been built in to the process in order to allow each person to think about whether or not they were acting to create peace, or from our own sense of ego. As we live in a world that does not, in large, operate on anarchical principles, this may be unsurprising. It is likely to take many more experiments in peace before we can expect to free ourselves of hierarchical and i-centred thinking that is accepted and encouraged in so many of the social relationships in our society.

Following the events success, Peacing Together is left with a responsibility for future celebrations of World Peace Day. Or is it? There are different ways an event like this could be continued. On the one hand 'Peacing Together' is situated to easily replicate a similar event and perhaps even grow it. Seed funding exists for future events so it has the potential to become a part of the cities festival timetable. The alternate view is that 'Peacing Together' does not need to be perpetuated. For future events new organisers can adopt 'Peacing Together', use it and redefine it, or reject it completely. From a community building perspective the goal is that members of the public continue to come forward to value, promote and enact peace. From an anarchistic peace building perspective, different people can do this in different ways and at different times.

If 'Peacing Together' continues as the vehicle for peace day event management, then there are some potential issues. Any solidification of the group; by defining what it is, what it can do, and what its events should entail – as generally happens with formal yearly events - has the potential to threaten the flexible influx organisation of Dunedin World Peace Day events that have been organised by the wider community up until now. Ownership of the event of World Peace Day potentially shuts out others who may hold different visions of peace. However, it does not need to and this will depend upon the theoretical understanding of community building and peace that the group gives preferential awareness to.

We consider that Dunedin's peace events have been, over the last few years, representative of a particular dynamism. In this process many expressions of peaceful vision have occurred, according to the membership and heart of community members. The lack of a rigid leadership group has enabled a shared,

organic celebration, promotion and experience of peace. No community group has dominated the other, nor have particular personalities. In the future, we would be concerned if community groups were subsumed under one leadership group, with any sets of expectations including; what can and cannot be done; what peace is and is not; or even what is an acceptable World Peace Day event. We hope that this natural movement towards the values of peace will continue.

Conclusion

We recognise that our critique is only one perspective on the experience of creating Kotahitanga Manaaki Te Kawa World Peace Day and perhaps takes a less political lens than others would like. Yet we value the opportunity to describe the processes involved as these were the base for the festival itself. We focused our energy on creating a multicultural festival.

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About the authors

Dr Janine Joyce finished her PhD, entitled *Human Spirituality and Coming Together in Peace, Looking Through Two Lenses (Māori and Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga)*, at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago in 2015. Janine has received a Peace Builder Fellowship (2014) with Monterey University, USA, which took her to Myanmar to research stories on water conflict and climate change, and a Commonwealth Scholarship (2012-2013) for Postgraduate study in Yoga Therapy and Stress Management at Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha Tirupati in India. As a health professional Janine has over 30 years experience in various fields including clinical/ professional supervision, trauma counseling, stress resilience workshops for organisational change, workshop facilitation/ teaching and complementary therapies. Email: janini.nz AT gmail.com

Joseph Llewellyn is a PhD student at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago. His research focuses on nonviolence, pacifism and anarchism. He has been involved in activist circles since he was a teenager, mostly focusing on peace work; anti-war and anti-militarisation campaigns; and nonviolence; as well as working on issues such as Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Free Tibet activism. Before starting post-graduate study, Joe trained as an occupational therapist. Email: JoeWLLlewellyn AT gmail.com