



A Report from the International Association for Community Development

by CHARLIE McCONNELL



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Conference Update

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Many readers of *Whanake* will recall the International Association for Community Development (IACD), from its highly successful conference held in Rotorua in 2001. This was the largest gathering of community developers for years in the Oceania region, attracting practitioners from across New Zealand, Australia, Pacific Islands and beyond. In 2009, IACD held a further conference in the region, attracting several hundred community developers in Brisbane. It appeared that community developer networking held a strong presence in the region.

A legacy of these conferences was the strengthening of regional networks for community development (CD) practitioners, building upon existing fora. However in recent years, a weakening of such associations across the region has been noted, reflecting huge cuts in posts across the public and non-governmental sectors. This weakening of networking by community developers has also occurred in other parts of the world.

But despite this weakening, growth in IACD membership since 2012 offers evidence that this trend is on the turn. The IACD conference in 2014 in Glasgow, Scotland attracted several hundred community developers from across the world. This year, the international *Community Development Journal* celebrated its 50th anniversary with a well-attended international conference of academics, trainers and researchers. As well, the Community Development Society (CDS) in the USA held a successful conference in Kentucky in July. CD networks are on the rise once again, through more diligent organisation, which could not be more well-timed.

The challenges and opportunities facing this discipline have perhaps never been greater. Clearly the attack on both public and non-governmental sector posts in many countries since 2008 has had a decimating impact and will take much investment to reverse. However the recently approved United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present huge opportunities for CD agencies and practitioners, to demonstrate their value in mobilising local communities in all countries to engage with and help shape local sustainable development programmes. If this can be demonstrated, it is hoped that financial investment will follow for our work in 'developed and developing' countries alike.

IACD is the only global network for professional community development practitioners. It is accredited with the UN, where it has been involved with others in promoting participative methods of development as part of the SDG agenda. IACD has a global regional structure where seven regions (including Oceania) are represented on its Board. The current regional director for Oceania is Mary Jane Rivers, who is based in Wellington, New Zealand. John Stansfield, Deputy Editor of *Whanake* has just joined the board.

A key priority over the next four years will be to support the establishment of strong national and regional networks and associations of CD practitioners and for them to have a greater say within IACD. Research recently undertaken by IACD has identified around forty such networks worldwide. IACD is also reaching out to the new generation of students seeking to take up a career in



'IACD Glasgow Conference June 2014,#2', by IACD

community development. We have identified more than one thousand graduate CD education and training programmes globally. Over the coming year the association will be contacting each directly, to encourage students and their trainers to join. IACD is also teaming up with CDS and Unitec in Auckland in 2016, to establish the world's first on-line platform for the sharing of CD teaching and learning resources. IACD publishes a magazine for practitioners called *Practice Insights*, has an active website and e-newsletter, and organises conferences and international continuing professional development programmes.

Individuals and organisations alike are able to join IACD. Those interested in becoming involved in any of these initiatives or generally within the association are encouraged to contact IACD. More information and contact details can be found at www.iacdglobal.org.

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