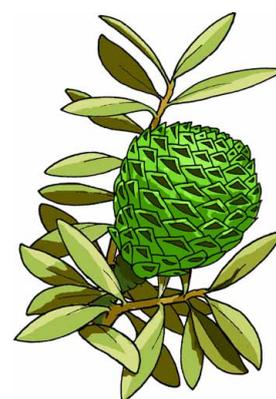


VIVIAN HUTCHINSON

ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR THE COMMON GOOD



*“And we needed to find
a like-minded someone
Who had no idea
that it couldn’t be done.”*

— Tim Finn, “*Couldn’t Be Done*”

Entrepreneurs are change-makers. They make innovations happen. They are a special variety of leader who can sense and seize opportunities and deliver new possibilities.

Entrepreneurship is the restless generative force of the world of business. It creates and animates everything that happens from the small enterprises in poor slums to the complex multi-national corporations run out of the glass towers in all our major cities. Entrepreneurship has been behind every significant progress that commerce and our consumer society has delivered over the past two centuries.

The business entrepreneur has always been with us, but it is only in fairly recent history — possibly since the middle of the last century — that we have started to recognise this particular form of leadership for what it is, and see more clearly how it operates. Universities and academic leaders, politicians and government departments, the media and popular culture now universally celebrate the central role that the business entrepreneur plays in economic development. There are serious long-term studies into how entrepreneurs make things happen. And policy-makers and investors understand and appreciate the conditions in which entrepreneurs thrive, and how important it is to foster many more such leaders.

Journalists tend to describe business entrepreneurs in much the same terms: they are passionate, creative, focused, and can imagine things “outside the box”. They can also be stubborn, provocative and disruptive. They love that particular form of creativity that we call

the deal. And they just keep on putting these deals together until they make their ideas happen. They may seem “unreasonable” ... but that’s because they tend to live in a mindscape that has *no idea that it cannot be done*.

Most business entrepreneurs don’t assume that their new businesses will sail smoothly into existence. They expect set-backs and are not afraid to fail. When they do fail, they focus on what they have learned. They treat “No” as a question. They see obstructions and resistance as stones which will hone the blade of their ideas, and refine their thinking and their strategies.

When business entrepreneurs are successful, they seem to make a lot of money. Yet it is a myth, or perhaps merely a caricature, that entrepreneurs are in business simply to make money. Their motivations are much more complex than this. They are *compelled* to make a practical difference. They are absolutely *driven* to be creative in a world that has needs to be satisfied, problems to be solved, and action-points to be delivered.

- *Social* entrepreneurs are also change-makers. They make *social* innovations happen. They are a special variety of leader who can pioneer solutions to our toughest social and environmental problems.

Social entrepreneurs are entrepreneurs in service *to the common good*. They are our most important agents for delivering new ideas into welfare and healthcare, education and employment, housing, the environment, and in many other areas of community and economic development. Social entrepreneurs are catalysts for social change. Their programmes and services can create the role models that become “patterns for change” that are later picked up by government, businesses, community groups or by other active citizens who are also trying to address similar issues.

Social entrepreneurs have also always been with us. They can be found right across society — at the most innovative edges of the voluntary and community sector, in the traditional public sector, in some large private sector corporations, and also in small businesses that have a social purpose.

Social entrepreneurs share all the characteristics of business entrepreneurs: the drive, the focus, the thinking “outside of the box” ... and yes, the stubbornness, the disruptiveness, and the unreasonable determination to pursue their vision for change until it becomes a reality society-wide.

Yet it is a myth that the social entrepreneur is motivated simply by a social conscience, or to bring compassion and generosity to our serious social problems. The social entrepreneur is *driven* to be as creative as any other type of entrepreneur. When they spot an unmet social need, they are *compelled* to mobilise the under-used resources, people, buildings, and equipment that can address these needs.

Just like a business entrepreneur, they too delight in *the deal* – which for them often involves building the networks, forging new relationships and linkages, delivering on the details, and generating the goodwill needed to make their programmes and services happen.

The difference is that social entrepreneurs also have their eye on *the ideal*. They want to reduce social needs rather than just be in the business of treating or servicing the symp-

toms of these needs. And they want to permanently alter the perceptions, behaviours and structures that are creating the social problems in the first place.

- On a global scale, New Zealand is a wealthy country. But, like all prosperous countries, we have large sections of our population struggling to have “a fair go” at sharing and enjoying this good fortune.

Beneath the surface of our green, clean environment — and the thriving and creative communities we like to show our visitors — there are a whole range of social, economic, and environmental problems that continue to be complex, stuck and resistant to change.

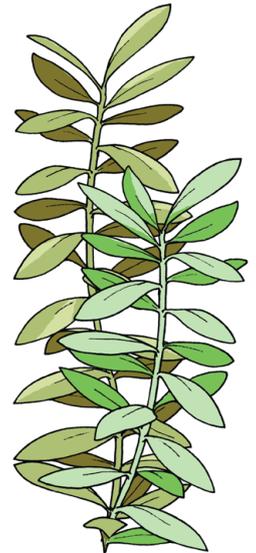
Scratch the surface, and we can make a list:

- we’ve got a widening gap between rich and poor, and many of our most important indicators of well-being are deteriorating
- employees are working long hours at the expense of their families, and our young people are continuing to find it difficult to make the transition to adult life
- we have a shameful record of family violence (particularly towards children)
- we’re still struggling to fully include in our communities those people with impairments and disabilities and mental health challenges
- we can’t build enough homes that are affordable to live in
- our prisons and justice system are over-loaded
- we’ve got increasing problems with drugs and substance abuse, and problem gambling
- we have an appallingly low level of citizen participation in our democratic processes
- and we have yet to take our fullest responsibilities as a country for our own polluting behaviour and a way of life that contributes to climate change.

It’s a list that could go on ... and if it sounds familiar, it is because this list reminds us that these problems have been with us for some time. They are problems which force us to question and reflect on some of the harder challenges facing our country:

- *What can we do to ensure that the opportunities of New Zealand are available and accessible to all New Zealanders?*
- *How do we create enough well-paid jobs for everyone?*
- *How do we create enough houses for everyone who needs a home, and at affordable prices?*
- *How do communities reconsider their approach to crime and punishment? and the way we deal with addictions?*
- *What can we do to create communities that embrace our diversities?*
- *What more can we do to restore and regenerate our natural environment?*
- *How do we awaken the active citizenship needed to address our most complex social and environmental issues?*

It is questions like these that are the starting point for social entrepreneurship.



Kauri leaves and cone ... are the logo symbols chosen for the New Zealand Social Entrepreneur Fellowship initiatives. This New Zealand native bush giant (agathis australis) can live for several thousand years, and the tree was chosen to symbolise long-term thinking on our social and environmental challenges.

- I'd never heard the term "social entrepreneur" until the year 2000, when I was invited to join a three-year support scheme for New Zealand's social entrepreneurs run by the Tindall Foundation, New Zealand's largest private philanthropic foundation. This informal scheme included people working in education, job creation, parenting support, community sector management, organic horticulture, waste reduction and energy efficiency.

Like many of the people participating on this programme, I had been chosen because I had been involved for several decades in community economic development initiatives, and I had brought some significant innovations into the community sector.



vivian Hutchinson

I started off in the mid-1970s as an activist on Maori land rights. I was drawn to this issue because I didn't believe we were going to fully address poverty and social justice issues within Maori communities unless we stopped the continuing alienation of the land which was their main economic and spiritual asset. Our nation also needed to address the underlying historical grievances over land that had been stolen by war and legislation.

I got involved in organising the 1975 Maori Land March led by Dame Whina Cooper. This protest march (from Cape Reinga to Parliament Grounds in Wellington) significantly raised the profile of land rights issues in New Zealand, and eventually influenced the establishment of the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal.

It was also in the 1970s, that I worked with the Auckland community activist Betty Wark to establish hostels to address the growing numbers of homeless people in the city. And I learned a great deal from Betty about creating and operating a grass-roots community organisation, and how to work alongside people who are at the edges of our majority culture.

At this time I also began to do cross-cultural work with the Taranaki elder Aunt Marjorei Rau. Together we created a series of annual gatherings at the Te Niho-o-Atiawa meeting house on Parihaka Marae, which would introduce Pakeha (European) New Zealanders to the world of Maori.

I learned much from these mentors, and their courageous projects for social change. But it wasn't until I was in my mid 20s that I came into a sense of what my own work was going to be. As unemployment started to explode in New Zealand in the late 1970s, I could see that our communities were not very well prepared to face its challenges. I was determined to do something about unemployment because I just didn't want to live in a country that had no use for a large number of its young people. So I began to work on projects for job creation and community economic development.

I joined with the Salvation Army in its local efforts in Taranaki to address unemployment. We set up what became the first public-funded work schemes in a generation. We also fought to make *skills training* an option which the government should support for jobless people.

Seven years later, I went on to help create the Taranaki Work Trust which became home to many innovations such as the *Skills of Enterprise* business courses for unemployed people,

and the establishment of community-based Enterprise Centres and New Venture Incubators. By sharing and learning from similar initiatives around the country, we felt we were part of a community economic development movement that was helping hundreds of people create jobs for themselves.

In 1990, I was one of a group of community activists that convinced the government to set up the Community Employment Development Unit. This later became the Community Employment Group, or CEG, and it was an important source of funding and support for local economic development initiatives throughout the country.

I went on to create *The Jobs Letter*, and was its managing editor for 12 years. This was a community-based media initiative published every 2-3 weeks, and was read by a huge range of people involved in employment, education, and economic development. *The Jobs Letter* was a strategy for keeping people up to date with what was happening in these fields, and for spreading the ideas and innovations on what it was possible to achieve.

In 2000, when I received the support funding as a social entrepreneur from the Tindall Foundation, I was just starting to explore my next steps in service to employment issues. I believed that we just weren't going to adequately address the issue of jobs until there was better national consensus about the goal of achieving full employment.

So I teamed up with Christchurch Mayor Garry Moore to initiate the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs. This was an innovation in local government, because until that time the Mayors had no such national forum where they could come together independently and focus on a social issue. It proved to be timely, and 96% of all New Zealand Mayors (from across the political spectrum) surprised everybody by turning up and getting involved. And these Mayors also set a cultural goal for our country — *that all young people under 25 years will be in paid work, in training or education, or in useful activities in our communities.*

At this time I also worked with a local Taranaki team on a whole new approach to staying connected with young people as they made the transition from school to work. Many of the ideas from this pilot scheme (that ran in Waitara, in North Taranaki) went on to influence the establishment of a new national Youth Transition Service.

- When I was first introduced to the term “social entrepreneur”, I remember thinking it was a pretty good and useful way of describing what I had been doing for years. How come I had never heard of it before? I would more usually describe myself as a community activist, but this was never an adequate description. As a label, it didn't capture the fact that I used a lot of business skills in my work, and had directly created enterprises, schemes and programmes to address social needs.

Despite creating the *Skills of Enterprise* business courses, which had helped hundreds of people start up in businesses of their own, it is curious that I had never really used the term “entrepreneur” to describe my own talents or services in the social field. Nor had I seriously explored the similarities between an entrepreneur in the commercial world, and an entrepreneur in the social sphere.

When I joined the social entrepreneur support scheme, I immediately threw myself into some research into where this concept of “social entrepreneurship” had come from, and what more I could learn from it. I discovered that the term had only fairly recently come into regular

usage in the philanthropic and academic worlds, and later in government policy. It was still early days in the establishment of these ideas as a recognised field of inquiry and support.

In doing this research, I saw a validation of the variety of leadership that myself, and many of my peers, had already been demonstrating for most of our working lives. We may not have claimed the term “entrepreneurship”, but we instinctively knew it was a creative key to the fundamental social changes that we were trying to achieve.

In this research, I was struck by something that Charles Leadbeater wrote in a small booklet called *“The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur”*. He was addressing the issue of the future of our welfare state, and he was arguing that, as it stands, the welfare state is ill-equipped to tackle the whole range of complex social problems facing our communities.

“At the risk of caricaturing its complex beginnings, the welfare state was designed for a post-war world of full employment, stable families and low female employment. Those underpinnings have been destroyed by international competition and social change. New social problems of single parent households, drug dependency and long-term unemployment have emerged which the traditional welfare system is not designed to deal with. We need to innovate new responses to the new social and economic realities.”

Leadbeater pointed to social entrepreneurship as providing one of the main sources of the innovations that would transform our welfare state. He argued that this quality of leadership was only marginally understood, and definitely under-valued, in the social services and public sectors.

Leadbeater’s conclusion was that we should foster and support social entrepreneurs because they are like a “research and development” wing of our future welfare strategies.

- There are so many mixed messages that social entrepreneurs have to face as they work in the community sector. We all like to see social problems tackled, and we are intellectually curious about any new ideas that might make a difference. But, at the same time, our communities are conservative, and particularly wary when it comes to supporting any changes that are disruptive to the status quo.

So social entrepreneurs usually end up doing their work in the margins, where they are often seen as difficult or troublemakers as much as they are recognised as innovators or visionaries.

Yet there is also another reason why there has been a resistance to embracing the notion of “entrepreneurship” in the community sector — many of our community leaders have developed a love-hate relationship with “business” itself.

Over the last generation, the “business” world-view has thoroughly colonised government departments, social service agencies and the not-for-profit sector. There have been a great many benefits that have come from this — like important ways of managing efficiencies and management processes, and ways of measuring the things we have been trying to achieve. But the business world-view has also brought its own limits into our thinking. “Business” has



*Ngahau Davis, Kim Workman and
vivian Hutchinson in conversation
at the NZSEF Retreat,
September 2007*

proven to be an inadequate metaphor to describe the complexities of everything that we value in our communities.

I have many colleagues who say we should stop adopting the business rhetoric that our funders and government departments have been forcing us to use for some time. These colleagues bristle at the use of the terms social “capital” or the idea of “social return on investment”. And they are irritated by the idea of turning fellow citizens into “clients”, and replacing their care with “services”. They seem particularly suspicious at re-labeling our most creative community organisers as social “entrepreneurs”.

Given my own background, I have some sympathies with these views. The world-wide economic collapse of 2008 was a good time to reflect on how much our communities suffer when business and corporate interests get it so completely wrong. The consequences of this collapse are still with us. ... and I would argue that the greatest need we have for social entrepreneurship today is for the leadership who will create a fundamental shift in the moral centre of everyday business practice, and in the governance that surrounds it.

But in the midst of all this, I don't think it's useful to create a simplistic and false opposition between *business* and *community* ways of seeing the world. After all, the concept of “entrepreneurship” doesn't belong to the business world ... any more than the concepts of “community” and “care” belong to the social sector alone. These are qualities that belong to all of us.

I do think there can be a useful tension between *business* and *community* perspectives on the world, but if we get too caught up in this oppositional thinking ... then we start to deny the very real gifts and insights that we have for each other's work. As Viv Maidaborn has asked in her own profile in this series: *What are the possibilities that can emerge when we reject these polarities?*

- The HOW COMMUNITIES HEAL series of profiles are about people who are definitely reaching beyond these polarities, and are running with the possibilities.

The New Zealand Social Entrepreneur Fellowship was established in 2007 as a peer learning community of leaders working in completely different areas of social change - from affordable housing, to disability issues, prison reform, running mentoring schemes in schools,

alternative education and training schemes for young unemployed, addressing problem gambling and family violence issues, building neighbourhoods that are better for the environment ... and more.

The Social Entrepreneur Fellowship was initiated and supported by the Tindall Foundation, but this time working through a mixture of grant-makers and community leaders called the Social Innovation Investment Group. It was to be a three-year project, and I was invited to become both a member of this new fellowship, as well as its convener.

The project drew upon the experience of several international philanthropic foundations which had also started fellowships as a way to connect with social entrepreneurs, and to learn more about the process of social innovation, and the skills of social enterprise.

The individual social entrepreneurs on this new fellowship were not directly offered income support or funding for their projects. They were supported to establish themselves as a learning community, and to meet together at retreats held every six months at the Vaughan Park Anglican Retreat Centre (overlooking Long Bay Beach on Auckland's North Shore).

These learning retreats have involved a mixture of presentations on the skills of social enterprise, and innovation workshops where each participant had their projects critiqued and discussed by the full group. The philanthropists and community leaders backing this project were also able to meet with the social entrepreneurs, and help connect them with the networks and resources they were a part of.

When the original Social Entrepreneur Fellowship completed their three-year series of gatherings, many of the fellowship members realised that they didn't want to stop their connection to this learning community. They had gained so much from the sharing of resources, from the dialogue amongst their peers and, in several cases, had grown new commitments and collaborations on their projects.

So the Vaughan Park retreats have continued, and the original fellowship has also opened up their gathering to a new group of younger leaders and change-makers.

HOW COMMUNITIES HEAL captures some of the stories that have emerged from this fellowship so far. They are stories of leadership and enterprise which only seldom, or perhaps only

Workshop at the NZSEF retreat at Vaughan Park September 2010

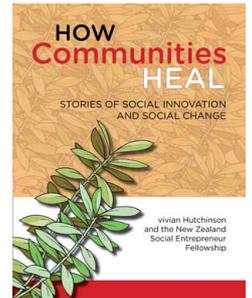


partially, have appeared in New Zealand's mainstream media. They are the still-unfolding stories of innovative projects and programmes, and also of the questions and conversations that are shaping these new possibilities.

Perhaps, in 20 years time, we may look back and see that these meetings, conversations and projects have led to some very real progress on our most difficult social and environmental challenges.

Notes and Links

- This article by vivian Hutchinson is part of the [HOW COMMUNITIES HEAL project](#) — stories of social innovation and social change featuring members of the New Zealand Social Entrepreneur Fellowship. It is available online at tinyurl.com/hchentrepreneurship
- *entrepreneur* ... the word comes from the French, meaning “one who undertakes”.
- *no idea that it couldn't be done* ... this Tim Finn lyric is from “*Couldn't Be Done*” from his album “*Imaginary Kingdom*” (2006). The video of this song can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLPYSgiDIE
- *unreasonable* ... a word which is being increasingly used with pride by social entrepreneurs: “*The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.*” — George Bernard Shaw
- “*No*” as a question ... a viewpoint often advocated by the UK social entrepreneur Michael Young.
- *deal and ideal* ... thanks for these ideas go to Pamela Hartigan and John Elkington, see “*The Power of Unreasonable People: How Social Entrepreneurs Create Markets that Change to World*” (pub 2008 Harvard Business Press) available at the NZSEF bookstore on Amazon at astore.amazon.com/nzsef-20/detail/1422104060
- *indicators of well-being in New Zealand* ... see the regular Salvation Army reports on social indicators for New Zealand available from tinyurl.com/yb4zxc5
- *The Tindall Foundation* ... established in 1995 by Sir Stephen and Margaret Tindall. Stephen Tindall is a leading New Zealand business entrepreneur, venture capitalist, and the founder of The Warehouse retail chain. See www.tindall.org.nz
- “*Hand in Hand with Inspirational New Zealanders*” — The Tindall Foundation Annual Report (November 2001) at tinyurl.com/scribd135. This report profiled some of the work of New Zealand social entrepreneurs informally receiving support from the foundation, including Elizabeth Deuchrass (Partners New Zealand), Lesley Max (The Pacific Foundation), vivian Hutchinson (The Jobs Research Trust), Kay Baxter (Koanga Organic Gardens Trust), Norman Smith (energy efficiency adviser), and John Stansfield (Not-for-Profit Management).
- *The Jobs Letter* ... resources from this community media project (1994-2006) are archived at www.jobsletter.org.nz
- *The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs* ... resources from this project (1999-2005) are archived at www.jobsletter.org.nz/mtfjobs.htm. This taskforce is ongoing, and its current activities can be found at <http://www.mayorstaskforceforjobs.co.nz>
- *threw myself into some research* ... a lot of this was summarised in a special issue of *The Jobs Letter* (No.147, 27 June 2001) available at www.jobsletter.org.nz/pdf/jbl147.pdf



- *The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur* by Charles Leadbeater (Demos 1997) ISBN 1-898309-53-1 available at tinyurl.com/scribd874. Leadbeater argued that the innovations of social entrepreneurs would ultimately be transferred to the mainstream public sector, in much the same way as small biotechnology and software firms often transfer their innovations to larger pharmaceutical and computer companies.
- *other writers and thought leaders in social entrepreneurship ...* see also *Practical People, Noble Causes — how to support community-based social entrepreneurs* by Stephen Thake and Simon Zadek (New Economics Foundation 1997) ISBN 1-8994011-1 available at tinyurl.com/scribd822; “*The Meaning of Social Entrepreneurship*” paper by J. Gregory Dees (revised 2001) at www.caseatduke.org/documents/dees_sedef.pdf ; “*Social Innovators with a Business Case: Facing 21st Century Challenges one Market at a Time*” by Pamela Hartigan and Klaus Schwab, *Innovations Journal*. MIT Press, Fall 2007
- *international foundations fostering social entrepreneurship* see the Schwab Foundation www.schwabfound.org, Ashoka www.ashoka.org, the Skoll Foundation www.skollfoundation.org, the Skoll World Forum www.skollworldforum.com, Echoing Green www.echoinggreen.org and the Unreasonable Institute www.unreasonableinstitute.org
- vivian Hutchinson attended the gathering of the *Schwab Foundation Social Entrepreneur Fellowship* in Davos, Switzerland in January 2006.
- Radio New Zealand Ideas programme (with Chris Laidlaw) on the 2010 NZ Social Entrepreneur Fellowship Retreat can be heard at tinyurl.com/RNZIdeas100912
- More articles in this series, and further information on the HOW COMMUNITIES HEAL project can be found at www.nzsef.org.nz/howcommunitiesheal
- If you want to be notified of future releases of articles in this series, you can sign-up for our mailing list at tinyurl.com/HCHsign-up
- Comments and conversations on this project are encouraged on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/howcommunitiesheal
- This project is on Twitter at [@HowCommHeal](https://twitter.com/HowCommHeal) using the tags [#HowCH](https://twitter.com/hashtag/HowCH) and [#socent](https://twitter.com/hashtag/socent)
- The online publication of the HOW COMMUNITIES HEAL project has been made possible by the Bishop’s Action Foundation.
- Funding for this project has also come from several individual donors, the Jobs Research Trust, the Social Innovation Investment Group, and the Tindall Foundation.
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