

Learning to play jazz: adaptive community leadership for turbulent times

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NZCOSS conference workshop

November 2010

Dunedin

E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga hau e wha, e rau rangatira ma, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa. Nau mai, haere mai ki tenei hui, ki tenei rohe. It is wonderful that you have come south to Dunedin for this conference. I join you today as someone whose family has been engaged with this community for nearly 150 years. It is a place I love and feel deeply connected to, even though I have only lived here for a small part of my life. I hope you leave today feeling that you have had even a small taste of this stunning landscape and some welcoming, stimulating southern hospitality. So welcome, welcome, thrice welcome.

Today I want to explore the theme of leadership and suggest that as leaders in these complex times of economic change, environmental risk and significant political policy shifts, we have a lot of strengths to draw on from our own whakapapa in the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector. My fear is that over recent decades we may have lost touch with some of our historical strengths, values and identity, amidst the daily challenges of managing and delivering services, being accountable to multiple stakeholders, trying to be legitimised as worthy contracted agents of the state, and trying to be more “business like” and “professional”. In this session I want to explore a few concepts about leadership and a key issue of inequality that I believe desperately needs our leadership.

I want to start by asking you to imagine for a moment the role of a symphony orchestra conductor and then contrast that with your image of a group of improvisational jazz players. What do you see as the key differences? Are you old enough to remember “what’s the difference by gus” in the newspaper? Which of the two feels more like your experience of life in your social service organisation?

I want to suggest that as managers and leaders we are under a lot of pressure to be like symphony orchestra conductors, and yet it may be that at least some, if not most of the time, we need to be more like jazz band players to be really effective in working in a complex, dynamic and diverse environment.

Some of what I think a jazz band player needs is the same as good symphony orchestra players: musical talent and skills, careful listening to each other, watching and complementing each other. Yet jazz to me expects more than being able to read and play the rhythms and notes from the music someone else has composed as a prepared script. It requires reading the rhythms and the silent spaces between the notes, improvising and composing in the moment, working with the ebbs and flows of energy present between the players and between the players and the audience. It has underlying patterns and principles to guide, but not prescribe, the performance. Each performance is different and each listener hears a different performance. Those more involved than I in the music world may argue that there are more similarities than differences between these genres, but for now I want to use the metaphor to make a point about leadership.

To me the jazz metaphor signals the adaptive leadership which is continuously working as a group to read the situation, listen for the nuances, the silences of what is not said, judging what is going to work at this moment, how to complement each other's input, what rhythm and pace is appropriate for team motivation and energy. There are some underlying patterns, principles, skills and talents but no set script to provide a roadmap for the performance. Whether the leadership is perceived as successful or not will be based on other's perceptions and assumptions about what "good leadership" or "good performance" means to them, in the same way that a musical performance invokes a good or bad review, based on the perceptions of the reviewer.

And yet, so often in our daily work we are lead to believe that good leadership or management centres on an individual person who will be the orchestra conductor, who will have control over people, plans and performance. We are expected to be able to evaluate outcomes based on logic models that map expected outputs, outcomes and impacts from certain inputs and processes, as though we can pre-write a symphony for a complex set of players. Planning and measuring our performance are definitely important, and at their best can keep us focused on our vision and strategic direction. However, we still need the wisdom to make judgements in the moment about when we need to adapt our direction and adjust our composition. We must manage the risk of being shaped solely by what we are measuring and what the sheet music said we should be playing, rather than by our listening and noticing what we are learning in the present, and adapting accordingly.

So what does it take to be an effective leader in our sector? There is plenty of prescriptive literature with practical advice on management, leadership and governance of nonprofit organisations, but very little research around what makes leadership in the community and voluntary sector context distinctive or effective (Dym & Hutson, 2005; Hailey, 2006; Hailey & James, 2004; Hubbard, 2005), let alone in an Aotearoa or tangata whenua context. The research that exists is mainly focused on the US nonprofit experience and on Board leadership in particular. John Hailey, from UK, is one exception and makes a useful contribution to our understanding of leadership competencies and styles to work in this complex, dynamic environment.

Drawing on a review of major themes in leadership theories (Northouse, 2004), he defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group or individuals to achieve a common goal." (Hailey, 2006, p. 2). Hailey's research and other capacity development literature highlight the importance of individual NGO leaders' diagnostic skills, "insightful agility" (Fowler, 2000, p. xii) or "analytical and adaptive capacities" (Ebrahim, 2003, p. 1). Hailey argues that NGO leaders require a rare balance of inward looking (management) and outward looking (influence) skills, with exceptional resilience, emotional intelligence and an ability to balance multiple stakeholder demands without compromising identity and values.

Such 'development leaders' could be characterised as being value-driven, knowledge based, and responsive. In practice this meant that they had:

- a clear **vision** and a firm **personal value-set** used to inspire others
- a **willingness to learn and experiment** with new technologies, innovative organisational forms, drawing on research, applied or professional knowledge
- a **curiosity and ability to scan the external environment** in order to track changes, analyse trends, and identify ways to respond to changing circumstances.

- **strong communication and interpersonal skills**, enabling them to motivate staff and engage with a cross-section of society in a proactive and positive manner.
- the **ability to balance competing demands** on their time and manage the pressures from a range of different stakeholders.
(Hailey, 2006, p.13)

That is, we need a really strong inner core of values and vision that we hold firm, while everything else is about adapting, learning, relating, balancing and discernment. The values and vision connect us to our passion and our heart. We also need ways of thinking that help us with the analytical capabilities to guide our adaptive leadership – otherwise we might just as well be blowing with the wind.

Mintzberg and Gosling provide a way of thinking about core competencies for managers (not just in the community and voluntary sector) not just in terms of all the functions like finance, human resources and strategy, but rather the five mindsets they believe managers need. They used this for the design of their management education programme.

- **Managing self:** the reflective mindset – to understand ourselves, our lives, our work, our world including focus on personal styles, learning organisations, appreciative systems, ethics, spirituality.
- **Managing relationships:** the collaborative mindset – listening, relating, building trust, motivation, commitment to action with individuals, teams, alliances
- **Managing organisations:** the analytical mindset – to understand the nature of the analytical process, thinking, noticing, doing, synthesising, innovating, designing, working with complexity and ambiguity
- **Managing context:** the worldly mindset – understanding our own and other's worlds, focus on external context, community, government, markets, stakeholder relationships, networking skills
- **Managing change:** the action mindset - top down/bottom up, macro/micro, organic/planned, community/organisational/personal learning
(Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002)

Interestingly when a Canadian organisation adapted this framework for a voluntary organisation leadership programme, they added a sixth: ethical mindset (Patton, 2006). The centrality of values and ethics in guiding behaviour, decisions, organisational culture and as a resource for motivating and mobilising resources is well recognised as an essential nonprofit sector characteristic (Rothschild & Milofsky, 2006).

Another perspective on leadership is to think in terms of styles. Hailey (2006) identified four major types of NGO leadership style: paternalistic, activist, managerialist and catalytic leaders:

- ▶ the paternalistic leader who can inspire great loyalty through strong, close and even familial relationships with their staff and volunteers in a hierarchical, top down style of working
- ▶ the activist leaders who energise and inspire followers with a charismatic, highly articulate style to support political advocacy and lobbying work, but may not attend to the basic managerial or organisational work

- ▶ the managerialist leaders who are respected for their ability to establish reliable systems, structures and relationships to manage people, finances, projects, raise funds , etc
- ▶ the catalytic leaders who are the strategic catalysts, promoting and implementing change, taking a strategic, big picture worldview to choose priorities, delegate roles and build external stakeholder relationships

He identified how the NGO leader needs to embrace both management roles (focused more on the internal day to day practical achievement of tasks) and leadership roles (focused more on the relational, strategic and change dimensions). Each style can be successful in different contexts, though Hailey argues that the catalytic leadership type is more likely to generate longer-term, sustainable, strategic growth than the others.

While Hailey and Mintzberg's frameworks provide useful insights, there is a danger of making assumptions that it is possible to identify some fixed reality or universal template of core competencies for 'good leadership' (Mole, 2004) or particular styles that are most effective. We all have culturally endorsed implicit leadership theories about what kind of leadership is "good". This influences what is accepted and sanctioned as positive leadership in different historical periods and cultural contexts (House, 2002). The once popular archetype of the charismatic, heroic leader is now shown by research to not necessarily be as effective as the humbler, more facilitative, team oriented leader (Collins, 2005). Maori and Pacific leadership is acknowledged as more collective than western Pakeha orientations, and yet much leadership research in cross-cultural leadership is still focused on studying the individual leader, rather than the collective practice of leadership (see for example Pfeifer & Love, 2004; Sanga & Chu, 2009).

Much of the current leadership development literature emphasises self awareness and reflective practice as central to the judgement calls involved (Storey, 2004; Symonette, 2007) in constantly adapting style to context. "In organisations immersed in continuous change, what matters most is not what a leader knows, but what he or she is capable of learning." (Antonacopoulou & Bento, 2004, p. 82). However this learning mindset is not just an individual competency, but needs to translate into an ability to work collectively with others to make sense of the complex reality they are working in (Torbert & Associates, 2004). The deepest capacities of organisations are about how they sustain themselves through reflecting, learning, adapting, engaging and maintaining integrity (Morgan, 2005). Leadership is therefore primarily relational. It can only exist in and through relationships. These relationships are part of wider systems and social structures. Our leadership challenge is to support the quest for ongoing collective learning that informs appropriate practice – and to understand leadership as collective work, collective achievement, not just something that belongs to an individual person (Ospina & Sorenson, 2006)

The last two decades have seen a strong sector focus on increased professionalism, risk management, quality assurance, planning and policy development as part of a complex social process of legitimising community organisations as effective deliverers of service, approved contractors with government and worthy recipients of public and philanthropic trust donations. While this organisational development work has very likely strengthened the sector's management capacity, we may have also unwittingly undermined our

leadership capacity for the challenging times we are now in. The management mindsets that have underpinned a lot of capacity building work have emphasised a leadership model designed to control risk, build quality, plan strategic direction in a centralised approach drawing strongly on business concepts. I want to remind us of some of our sector's historical leadership strengths that may be lost sight of, if we are unduly colonised by others' ideas of what "good management and leadership" looks like.

Jim Collins, a respected researcher of key factors in building great businesses, has acknowledged that tomorrow's great business leaders may well come from the social sectors, not the other way around (Collins, 2005), because community leadership involves mobilising people around a vision when they have the freedom to engage or not, without any monetary incentives or legal obligation to do so. Leadership in our sector has a depth of experience of using shared values and vision as the more common motivational lever than money to entice or power to control. This is increasingly recognised even in the business world as a key dimension of leadership, and of decentralised leadership in particular. For example, in the book "The Starfish and the Spider: The unstoppable power of leaderless organisations" (Brafman & Beckstrom, 2006), the starfish is used as a metaphor for decentralised leadership. The starfish has no head. Its major organs are replicated throughout each and every arm. Cut it in half and it won't die, but rather, two starfish will form. Thus, under attack it becomes more decentralised and stronger. In contrast, spiders have a central head, a structured body and legs that represent a clear division of roles and functions. Communication is through the head, and if that head is squashed it will likely die. While promoting the strengths of starfish style leadership, the authors also acknowledge the places of spiders, and hybrid organisations with a mix of both. I would argue that our sector has quite a deep history of being starfish, especially in building social movements, engaging volunteers, supporting community development, achieving miracles with scarce resources, being innovative and adaptable. But if we are told for too long that spiders are the best or only way to lead, we might lose some of our greatest wisdom as a sector.

We live in a climate where government (and to some extent other funders as well), are looking at the economies and efficiencies of contracting with fewer, larger organisations to deliver services. And yet, Brafman and Beckstrom would argue we can no longer assume bigger is better or even more powerful. There can be economic and other advantages in being small too. These authors emphasise the value of networks and the gift economy that establishes channels for each member to contribute their knowledge to society – but from the edge, not the centre. In letting go central power, they challenge us to accept chaos, and embrace it as an incubator for innovation. Starfish movements or organisations need catalytic leadership to inspire people to action. However, beware not to turn such people into a CEO or the entire network will be in jeopardy. Measuring, monitoring, managing are still involved, but within a flattened structure where values are the core of the organisation and the glue that holds it together. They suggest that decentralised systems are strongest when they are underfunded and reliant on volunteerism. Isn't that something that we know how to work with? Or are these factors seen as weaknesses we want to "overcome" on a journey to being more "professional"? Are we not used to having to be adaptable, working with complexity, outside the simple zone?

I would argue that we have key leadership strengths in our potential ability to work creatively in situations that are not overly well resourced, to ignite people's passion around heartfelt values and visions for a better world, to mobilise community strengths and assets, to shift social attitudes and impact change. We have exceptionally high levels of volunteerism in this country, and a strong presence of expressive organisations (e.g. culture, recreation, civic, advocacy and membership), not just service delivery ones (Sanders, O'Brien, Tennant, Sokolowski, & Salamon, 2008). These are great resources I believe to draw on.

Three strategies, I would suggest, could help focus those strengths, and are well within our capability. I will explore each of these in more detail:

- ▶ Looking beyond our organisation's boundaries
- ▶ Using research to inform strategy
- ▶ Creating learning spaces for collective sense-making

Importing business thinking into our sector can be a helpful tool for making wise use of resources and supporting our entrepreneurial endeavours. However we need to critically examine when particular ideas or tools serve our end goals well and when they don't – whatever sector we work in. For example, I am concerned when I see a community organisation's strategic direction being driven by goals like growth and increased market share. This assumes that growth represents success. In some cases it does. It may help the financial bottom line, or show we are reaching more clients. But generating a surplus, growing client numbers, being the largest provider in town, are not the real indicators of success for community organisations. Our reason for existing is to impact progress towards a vision of stronger, more inclusive, resilient, creative, healthy communities. We need to look beyond our organisations' boundaries to that higher goal to remind us of why we exist. Indicators of vision success might include less clients, more small, informal community initiatives supported, but not controlled by established organisations, effective alliances to change social attitudes or political policies. How often do we do our strategic planning collaboratively to see how we could generate more impact by working more closely together? How often do we act as though we "own" the community and fight over who will work in which patch? What sort of shift is needed in funding relationships to really support such collaborative interagency and community connections?

I believe one area that is ripe for more collaborative work, is around collectively seeking to understand the underlying conditions that need to be in place to support our vision. The answers to such questions are complex and need a mix of good research and intelligent minds that understand the complexities of working in local communities like you people do. I have been involved for the past six years in the Tangata Whenua, Community and Voluntary Sector Research Centre which has a commitment to encouraging access, dissemination, use and development of good community research resources and practices. If you haven't already done so, I would encourage you to explore www.communityresearch.org.nz to find good community research and researchers, to upload your resources and to participate in this community seeking to build more understanding of our sector. I searched the website for this presentation and found a paper my colleague Garth Nowland-Foreman has prepared for Todd Foundation Strategic

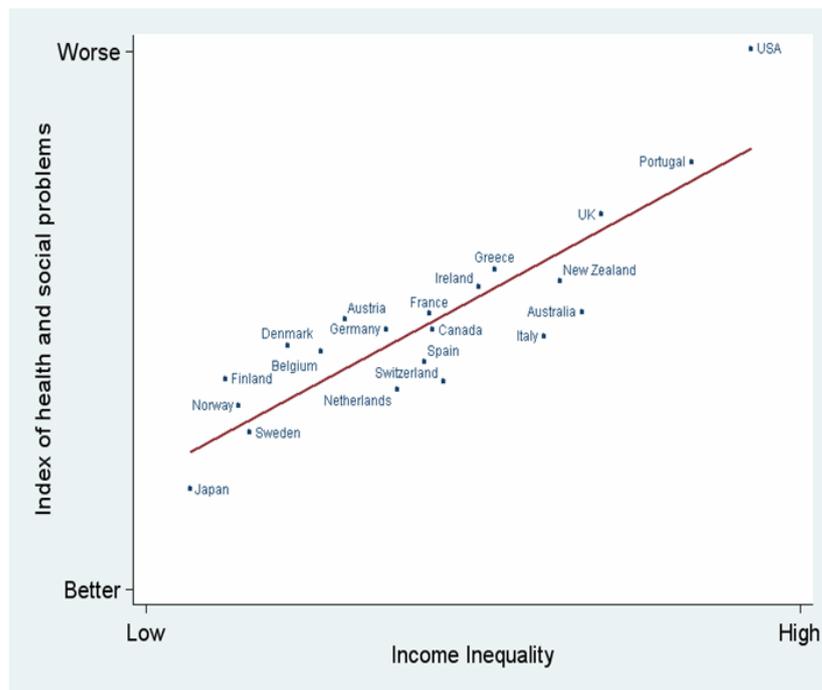
Planning “ One Million Children and the Measure of a Nation: Key Messages from Social Policy Briefings” – a fantastic background resource for any social service agency working with children. Other examples that would be highly relevant to many of you include a dissertation by Kate Bukowski, about Forgotten Women: A study of women and homelessness in Auckland, and a paper on Alternative models of accountability for third sector organisations in New Zealand by local academics Jenny Aimers and Peter Walker. These are just a few examples of hundreds of resources there to be explored with a simple keyword search. We want to see even more resources, researchers and visitors there to keep building this network for sharing research, so I encourage you to go explore!

Beyond Aotearoa we have international research to inform our understanding of underlying conditions that impact the work we are doing. One of the best reads I have had this year is Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett’s book “The Spirit Level” in which they present some very compelling research evidence to build the case for why equality is better for everyone. They provide solid research data from multiple sources about the 50 richest countries in the world that shows how almost everything - life expectancy, literacy, infant mortality, homicides, imprisonment, teenage births, obesity, mental illness, drug and alcohol addiction, social mobility, violence and trust - is affected not so much by how wealthy these societies are, but how equal they are. Their study shows that societies with a bigger gap between rich and poor are bad for everyone, including the well off. It may be of some surprise for you to see how high New Zealand sits on the inequality index on the graph below, one of the highest in the group of rich countries studied:

Health and Social Problems are Worse in More Unequal Countries

Index of:

- Life expectancy
- Math & Literacy
- Infant mortality
- Homicides
- Imprisonment
- Teenage births
- Trust
- Obesity
- Mental illness – incl. drug & alcohol addiction
- Social mobility



Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

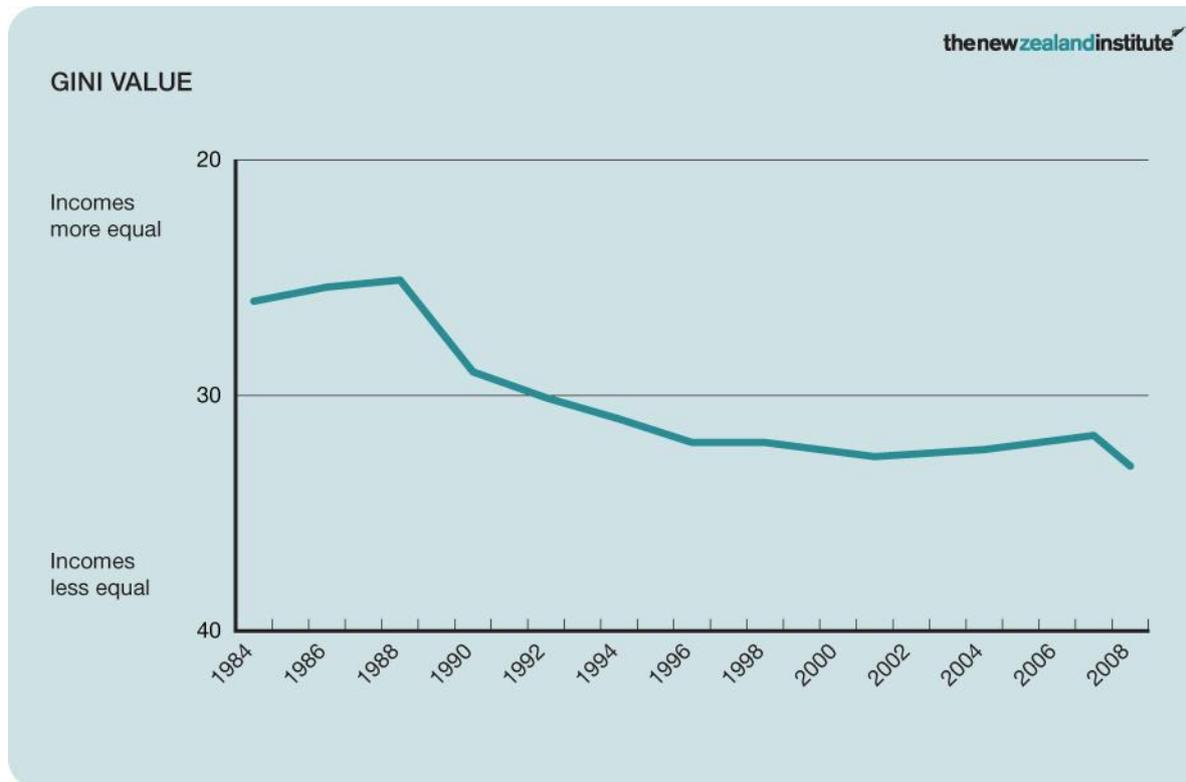
www.equalitytrust.org.uk

Equality Trust

So what are some of the factors underlying these trends? Wilkinson and Pickett suggest that growing up and living in a more unequal society affects people's assumptions about human nature. For example, more unequal societies have higher imprisonment rates. These are not so much determined by higher crime rates as by attitudes towards rehabilitation and reform. The greater social distance between people in more unequal societies breeds lack of trust and fear of crime, which supports the public and policymakers adopting more punitive attitudes and imprisonment policies. The same societies that are expanding imprisonment of more people are also contracting their spending of their wealth on welfare and education. Inequality affects trust, community life and violence right from early life, predisposing people to be more affiliative, empathetic or aggressive. Inequality increases status competition and consumerism. We are so influenced as a country by Australia, UK and USA in our culture and government policies that we forget that we have better role models on these issues from Scandinavia, Japan and Europe.

While we may never have been the egalitarian society I was brought up to believe underpinned kiwi culture, there has certainly been a significant growth of income inequality since the 1980s as the graph below shows. The latest tax cuts are likely to take

us further down this pathway. We have the dubious distinction of leading the OECD countries in growth in income inequality since the 1980s.¹



Of even greater concern, I believe is the shift in social attitudes that shows that inequality is becoming more socially acceptable, as evidenced from these results from Massey University International Social Survey Programme and a UMR Research Survey reported in NZ Listener May 1 2010.

- Are income differences in NZ too large?
 - 1992: **72%** said yes; 2009 **62%** said yes
- Should people on higher incomes pay a larger share of their income in taxes than those on lower incomes?
 - 1992: **71%** said yes; 2009: **53%** said yes
- Should the government reduce income differences between people?
 - 1992: **52%** said yes: 2009, **40%** said yes
- Much less support for the idea that what people earn should in part relate to what is needed to support a family

¹ "Household Incomes in NZ: trends in indicators of inequality & hardship 1982 – 2009" Ministry of Social Development (August, 2010, p 132). <http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/monitoring/household-incomes/index.html>

- 1992: **52%** ; 2009 **34%**
- Or whether they have children to support
 - 1992: **43%**; 2009 **24%**
- Inequality continues because it benefits the rich and powerful
 - 1992: **60%** agreed; 2010: **44%** agreed
- Large income differences necessary for NZ's economic prosperity
 - 1992: **60%** disagreed; 2010, **32%** disagreed
- Good business profits are the best way to improve everyone's standard of living
 - 1992: **46%** agreed; 2010: **43%** agreed

Wilkinson and Pickett's data directly challenges the belief that inequality continues because it benefits the rich and powerful. It benefits no-one if our collective health and social wellbeing goes down as inequality increases.

This attitude survey lead me to look at data from our own sector in terms of wage and salary movements over these last two decades, because I had a hunch that inequality is growing in our own backyard too. From the indicative data I could find from those who have conducted sector remuneration surveys over the last two decades, it is clear that lower wage workers have continued to sit at or just above the minimum wage. Higher level jobs have moved more – absolutely and proportionately – than the lower ones as the table below shows². If I had been able to access data from the 1990s I expect the gap would have been even narrower then.

	CEO medium sized NGO	Admin assistant, enrolled nurse, community worker	Proportional difference
2000	\$77, 588	\$29,266	2.6
2010	\$133,400	\$39,207	3.4
Absolute increase	\$55,812	\$9,941	

Obviously our wage and salary setting is influenced by the wider market trends and we still lag well behind the public and private sectors in terms of overall salary levels. There is certainly a case to be made for realistic remuneration in our sector, but it is of concern to see that when gains are made, they are increasing not decreasing the inequalities in our organisations and the wider society. I found a recent Canadian remuneration survey by the HR Council for Nonprofits that confirmed a similar trend there, with a 2% average shift and a

² Data derived from Watson Wyatt Remuneration Report for the Voluntary Welfare Sector April 2000 and subsequent data provided by David Shannon from Strategic Pay 2010 Not for Profit Remuneration report and personal communication with David. The number and scope of participant organisations participating in the survey have grown over this period, but the grade levels from a job sizing perspective are comparable

4.2 – 5.9% shift for executives over the past few years. Their commentary justifying this trend was even more interesting:

“There once was a time where if you were working for a charity, you almost felt guilty for accepting the salary, because you were taking money away from the charity. I think this has shifted to a more realistic approach that says ‘We need the very best people and we have to pay for the very best people.’” Without making this shift an organization can have a lot of passion but not necessarily the skills to do what needs to be done.

http://www.hrcouncil.ca/labour/trends_compensation.cfm

While I agree we need to pay for the very best people, what are we saying about the value of all the people who work for our organisations if we allow those sort of inequalities to continue to increase? I suggest we have an opportunity to make our own stand on these issues as organisations and show leadership around alignment of our vision, mission and core values of fairness and justice. Who will provide the lead to make a shift in this trend if we don't? I will never forget the silence and then rigorous debate when in my first workplace in the 1970s I raised the possibility that we should all get the same base salary and it should then be adjusted as much on family need as the role and responsibilities particular workers carried. Yes I was a naïve and idealistic young worker. But I was working in a very progressive, faith based community organisation that I thought might have the courage to lead the way. In reality the gap between the top and bottom earners was probably far less than it would be today based on these figures.

The Spirit Level research paints a powerful analysis of underlying factors that make an enormous difference to the context we are all working with and living with. There will be no simple quick fix, but I do believe that we have the potential to build a social movement that can make a shift in social attitudes, policies and practices impacting inequality. Reducing inequality in Aotearoa would make an enormous impact on progressing the core vision of every social service organisation at this conference. Wilkinson and Pickett suggest various routes to greater equality. Government policies have a role to play in supporting redistributive taxes and benefits, minimum wage and industrial policies. But it will take more than government action to achieve real change. More equal incomes before taxes and benefits would make a difference, and that can start in any sector. Employee share-ownership, profit sharing and participation in business decision making all bridge the human divide between “them and us”. As one worker commented after implementing such a shift in their company : “people look you in the eye” (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009, p. 259), which is such a symbol of relating not on a basis of status and income hierarchy, but on the basis of our shared humanity. Technology may also open up potential for more free access to goods and services in the public arena. Obviously political will has to be established for a shared vision of a better society. The crisis of financial markets could have helped achieved that if alternatives routes to recovery had been considered. Member controlled organisations such as unions, mutuals, credit unions, friendly societies, building societies have all played a role historically in advancing attitudes and processes to achieve greater shared ownership, profit sharing and participation. Nonprofit organisations focused on social purpose and sustainability represent a different set of values and vision that can help influence public attitudes and practices that support equality. Our experience in social movements, building volunteer support, campaigning, networking and advocacy give us a great resource to draw on.

I doubt there is recipe or mega- strategy for this sea change that could achieve a happier, fairer society for everyone. Planned campaigns and strategies can certainly help, and I applaud the work that organisations like NZCCSS and Auckland Community Foundation³ that are playing a leadership role on this issue. It will also need a starfish-like social movement spread through many, many cells like an unstoppable, healthy virus to shift attitudes, policies and practices. I would suggest that those cells are often built on people coming with their own wisdom, questions, humility and the commitment to work with each other in search of a space for collective sense-making. Coming together within and between organisations, communities and sectors to build communities of practice, spaces for conversations, networks to support a culture of learning, wise adaptation and agility, creates a powerful basis for engagement with these complex, pressing issues like inequality.

Let's take a pause to create such a space now and discuss with the people near to you:

- How do you respond to the Spirit Level data and messages?
- How might it inform your work?
- What could your organisations do collectively that you could not do on your own?
- What might be one small action possible from this discussion for each of you?

So what is my message for social services sector leadership? Firstly, don't assume you are the symphony orchestra conductor leading a well planned performance of a previously composed piece. Be prepared to improvise jazz as you listen, notice, respond and innovate, reading the rhythms, the ebbs and flow, the patterns of what is going on around you. Secondly, believe in the power of starfish, not just spiders, thinking like a movement to achieve your vision, not just like a manager focused on your organisation's mission. It's not an "either/or" choice but a "both/and" mix and you need to discern the balance between the two. Thirdly, relationships are pivotal to leadership, and so too are the mindsets we bring to it – reflective, collaborative, analytical, worldly, action-oriented, ethical. We can be leading without pleading, catalysts, not victims, being the resilience we want to build in our communities. We can draw on the strengths of those who have gone before us in building this nation, and this sector, with its own values and traditions of volunteerism, advocacy and action for a just, fair and inclusive society. It takes perseverance for the journey and I would like to conclude with a poem from Margaret Wheatley's latest book of that same name which came to her from the elders of the Hopi Nation:

TO MY FELLOW SWIMMERS

Here is a river flowing very fast

It is so great and swift that there are those

who will be afraid, who will try

to hold on to the shore.

They are being torn apart and

will suffer greatly.

³ For a video clip of Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett talking to an Auckland Community Foundation seminar go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msUXRJJChx8>.

Know that the river has its destination.
The elders say we must let go of the shore.
Push off into the middle of the river,
and keep our heads above water.

And I say see who is there with you
and celebrate.
At this time in history,
we are to take nothing personally,
least of all ourselves,
for the moment we do,
our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt.

The time of the lone wolf is over.
Gather yourselves.
Banish the word struggle from your attitude
and vocabulary.

All that we do now must be done
in a sacred manner and in celebration.
For we are the ones we have been waiting for.

(Wheatley, 2010)

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