I’d like to open with one of the many positive comments I’ve received in the 18 months since working for the Whanganui Restorative Practices Trust:

“Our six year old helped my husband and I through an argument using restorative tools she’d learnt at school.”

In this brief presentation I’d like to share with you:
- the Restorative City vision
- the work the Trust has achieved and
- the issues restorative practice can address

Whanganui is the first community in New Zealand to work towards a Restorative City vision, which is:

*Creating the environment for all Whanganui people to thrive and succeed together, through respectful relationships.*

This is based on the underlying philosophy by Wachtel and Wachtel that:

*People are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes when those in authority do things WITH them, rather than TO them or FOR them (2012)*

As our patron, Judge Andrew Becroft, stated earlier this year, Whanganui is the ideal community for a “social experiment” and restorative practice is a model that can be replicated throughout the rest of New Zealand.

Restorative practice is predominantly *pro-active* through building positive relationships based on respect, inclusiveness, accountability, collaboration and wellbeing. It also involves being *re-active* so that when something goes wrong we are willing, and able, to put it right.

As a community we are all connected. We have relationships with each other. They may be good, poor or indifferent but because we all live here in Whanganui, we are connected.

It is the quality of our connectedness that is at the heart of the Restorative City vision. We believe that when people feel valued, respected, listened to and included, we are more likely to feel connected. If we feel more connected we are more likely to take responsibility for ourselves and less likely to blame others (eg Council, government). We are also more likely to positively engage with others which enhances community cohesion and community resilience.
There are many people in Whanganui whose work has always been based on the restorative philosophy but it just hasn’t been called that. Restorative practice is a unifying term bringing a shared understanding along with practical tools for implementation in a variety of settings.

The Trust is highly encouraged by the Ministry of Education’s “PB4L” programme, which incorporates restorative practice and contributes to increasing academic achievement and lowering suspensions. This is a positive initiative for today’s children growing up with the restorative philosophy and becoming our future leaders of a healthy and thriving community.

The work the Trust has achieved since it was established in 2012, has seen an increased awareness of the vision, whereby the term ‘restorative practice’ is being increasingly used in conversations and in media. You may have seen the wording on the city entrance signs (Towards a Restorative City, NZ’s first). We’re currently working on a video clip of a snapshot of what restorative practice looks like in Whanganui.

The Trust has gained civic leadership and Iwi support and has created cross sector connections. For example our Advisory Group is made up of key leaders from education, justice, social welfare, NGOs, business, health.

We’ve recently initiated a Restorative Neighbourhood pilot and the Trust has received commitment from a number of organisations to implement restorative practice.

The Trust has also been invited to become a founding member of an International Learning Community with 4 other cities (Hull, Leeds, Halifax, Wellington)

The issues restorative practice can address are results based:

- reoffending rates, victim satisfaction
- stand downs/suspensions, academic achievement
- staff engagement, work productivity, personal grievances
- crime, domestic violence, public safety, wellbeing
- consumer satisfaction, government service delivery

Other issues which are not results based include:
- breaking government silos and creating cross government connections
- improving government and non-government agency connections
In summary, the **Restorative City vision** is a positive initiative for Whanganui and creates a shared understanding of a relational way of engaging with each other.

The **work the Trust** has achieved has gained traction. We are now seeing the implementation and future preparation for restorative practice into a cross sector of the Whanganui community.

The **issues restorative practice can address**, along with evidence gathering, has ignited the community to the aspiration of the Restorative City vision. More than ever we are working together towards a better community for all who live here and for our future leaders.

I’d like to finish with another positive comment:

>“The restorative conference helped me to move on to better my life and repair the heartache I caused my wife, kids and family”

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