

GREEN STORY

COMING TOGETHER: Sunnyvale Primary School; MPHS; WCC; Mayor Len Brown

On 27th April 2010 we planned our opening of the Sunnyvale Primary art post on their adopted area by the Waikumete Stream.

Sunnyvale Primary is a low decile school who live 5 minutes from our stream and community garden.

My experience with all schools and in particular the lower decile schools is that they struggle for time, there is an acknowledgement that they are over-loaded and naturally their focus is on delivering core education to their students while also supporting their families. Consequently we do everything we can to support their involvement in environmental initiatives with our focus been their local stream.

This is now undertaken in a changing environment where our objective is to build the schools capacity to undertake the work within their own structure, we are struggling with this. How can a school already under pressure undertake organization of PTS initiatives?

PTS and Sunnyvale created an art post to highlight the area where their core work is profiled. This is beside the walk/cycle way on the Millbrook Esplanade. When it came to the opening of this artwork I felt that it would be best if Sunnyvale could manage this so simply asked if they would like to celebrate an opening and asked them to organize it.

The artwork was installed in early February. The process organizing the opening was shaky however my objective was to be "hands off" as much as possible.

The schools Kaumatua and Councillor Brady were approached about attending. A date was set however some confusion followed and the date needed to be postponed to a date which we had organized for 2 classes to participant in a stream session. This made sense as it was easy. Easy is always best. I had faith that it would come together however no expectation was held.



On very short notice we were told that Mayor Len Brown would be visiting PTS and the community garden area had been designated. By chance this coincided with the Sunnyvale stream session. One of the great things about low decile schools is that they manage with very little and always appreciate anything they get. When they arrived on site I told them that Mayor Brown was coming however we could not say when. Their students greeted the people, including board members, parents and friends, and explained their art and work on their stream. Their Kaumatua, Anaru, gave a great talk about Tane Mahuta, Papatanukunuku and Ranganui. He asked everyone to come forward and place their hands on the sculpture. We felt the love. Anaru and the teachers then played guitar and the students sang their waiata. Councillor Brady then concluded with her vision for the area.



Should we wait for the Mayor? The school wanted to so we continued with our stream work. Eventually he arrived with an entourage of managers and staff. The students greeted him and escorted him to our site. They explained to him why children understand nature. With great enthusiasm they showed Mayor Len their artwork and explained how he should bless the art by laying his hands on it. He smiled and encouraged the schools work. We all felt proud. Mayor Brown enjoyed my nickname “Green Jon” so we decided he should be “BrownLen”. Mayor BrownLen is always welcome here. What happened was something all the planning in the world could not achieve. SIMPLY WE CAME TOGETHER AND WE CONNECTED.

POWER TO THE GARDENERS