



CONNECT
THE DOTS



CONNECT THE DOTS CHARITABLE TRUST

**CASE STUDY REPORT BY GEVA DOWNEY
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FOUNDATION
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With support from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, through the Te Tahua Whakahaumarū Creative Arts Recovery and Employment (CARE) Fund, Connect the Dots has been able to successfully enhance access to, and participation in, our art-making and art discussion programmes for older adults and people living with Dementia.

The consistent and reliable support offered through this Fund has enabled Connect the Dots to partner with charitable organisations supporting the lives of older people and people living with Dementia. The Selwyn Foundation is one of the organisations we have chosen to support through the facilitation of free creative arts programmes for their guests, and professional development for their staff.

Lavender Cottage is a secure day centre for people with dementia, located within the Selwyn Village grounds in Point Chevalier, providing warm and personal care for up to 16 clients a day.

Client's participation and independence is promoted through social, mental or physical activities. Lavender Cottage is a multicultural day care centre. Clients who attend the service come from a range of ethnic, religious and social backgrounds. Day care is designed to give caregivers and families regular or intermittent daily respite, while their loved ones enjoy a quality environment and genuine caring by qualified staff.

Lorraine is a member of the Selwyn Centre, Lavender Cottage group. This case study highlights a few of the positive impacts observed during a series of 5 workshops in Point Chevalier.



Often quiet and withdrawn on arrival to the art table, Lorraine's hearing difficulties make it difficult to connect with others and to participate in group conversation. With a focus on making her mood lifted and changed significantly during the sharing times on session. Connect the Dot programmes are designed to allow space and time for all participants to respond with their thoughts and feelings about the art works brought in as well as time to express themselves creatively with art making.

When discussing the art works at the beginning of session, the educator made a point of standing closest to Lorraine and repeating prompt questions about the artworks to ensure she was connected to the discussion and had opportunity clarify any points of confusion and to contribute her ideas.





The questions posed to the group were open and designed to allow for personal connection to larger themes and experiences. For example, when discussing a John Pule work, Kavaka, the group was asked “Does this place look like somewhere you would like to be?”. Lorraine replied:

“The family would often take trips to our cousin's cottage. We were always encouraged to participate in the arts, it was very much valued by our mother especially.”



Lorraine showcased visible pride when sharing the stories of her mother's role as president of the New Zealand Women's Writers and Artists Association as well as her own work experience as a children's librarian.

She was an eager participant during sessions and her confidence to begin making and to contribute ideas grew each week. She was most often energised at the end of sessions rather than fatigued.





There was also opportunity to respond visually with games that supported simple open questions and prompts like, “choose a colour from the selection of colour swatches that you feel particularly connected to today and if you would like to share why, we would love to hear”. The prompts that followed were simple but allowed for personal associations to colour symbolism and more nuanced expression. Questions like; a colour you associate with spring, with autumn, then it moved onto a colour that reminds you of various pieces of music played to the group.

This gave Lorraine relief from having to rely on her hearing to understand what was happening in real time because she could see the choices the individuals in her group were making across the table and around her. She was able to express herself visually alongside her peers at the same time, rather than using a lot of energy to try to follow the stream of conversation, a situation that hearing challenges can sometimes create.

Lorraine enjoyed being able to test new materials and ways of working that she hadn't had exposure to before. Often the first to take a risk with these new art materials, she was a group leader when showcasing to others it was safe to explore new ways of working.

She also enjoyed the question "does anyone have a question about another person's work created today?". It allowed her space and time to connect to her peers and to be listened to, understood and affirmed for her contribution.





As sessions continued, a lovely friendship between Lorraine and Diane, a teacher and children's book writer, began to develop. Knowing that the two had shared interests we seated them next to one another to foster connection. While discussing the meaning behind Diane's patterned Circle work, Lorraine praised her patterning and repeatedly told her exactly what she found interesting and remarkable about her creation. "the contrasting colours are interesting and you have such a vibrant palette."

As the two women worked Lorraine shared a little about her family's interest in the arts. Dianne, in return, talked with her about some of her books she had written. At the end of session, Dianne gifted her circle painting to Lorraine. When I announced to the group that the gifting had taken place, the group cheered and clapped acknowledging the kind gesture and Lorraine began to cry happy tears of appreciation.

Lorraine enjoyed the opportunity to give positive feedback to the group, to affirm her peers, to receive support and appreciation and to offer warm genuine connective smiles.

Sessions affirmed Lorraine's family cultural values, her own skills and gifts as an art maker as well as an encouraging group member that loved to connect with and celebrate others.

When asked at the end of the five sessions what she thought of the sessions she said,

“Oh, I just loved it. I'm happy with my work and happy to be coming here today to work with such lovely people and interesting materials. It was very therapeutic, getting to share what we had made. Everyone did such wonderful work.”





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