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| **What happens when a community grows its own solutions** |
| **Setting/problem**The Common Unity Project Aotearoa Project started in 2012 when its founder Julia Milne noticed children and families at her local school without enough good food to eat. A conversation with the Principal at Epuni Primary School, led to a disused soccer field being turned into a school/community garden. **Intervention**Working with the strengths of the Epuni community – time, fertile soil and each other we learnt that establishing a local food network to feed the children/participating families of Epuni was neither difficult nor expensive. We also learnt that it takes more than a garden to feed a community. Gardening together was the gateway to many other community-identified activities. Our Syrian Mums wanted to learn to sew. Out of this idea grew a community enterprise Sew Good, re-purposing fabric to make non-plastic alternatives for lunches and shopping. One of our Dads wanted to learn to keep bees, and Beeple, our Honey Collective was born. Beeple is now a thriving enterprise with over 80 backyard beehives. We have learnt systems change starts with people, sitting down without the answers, to talk. Our Urban Kai Network began with 12 people and a pot of soup. The Network now has 11 farms (including four at Rimutaka Prison and one in Tracy’s backyard). Tracy is a tenant of Housing New Zealand, she brought local Housing New Zealand staff to the table. Produce is made into ready to eat meals by local school students for families seeking help at Women's Refuge. Our newly opened off-grid container kitchen, will be used to prepare and preserve produce (2,500kg of fruit and vegetables in the last 6 months). Some of the produce is sold in the Common Grocer, a food cooperative started by local Mums with over 200 members.**Outcomes**It is early days for Common Unity. We have created employment for local people earning a living wage. We have developed a local food system capable of feeding our community. We are repurposing materials that would otherwise have gone to landfill. We have begun to disrupt some of the systems that do not serve our community well. We have a generation of Epuni School children who have always grown food, helped to cook it and been part of feeding the whole school three days a week. **Implications**Every community has the ability to disrupt the industry of poverty and grow its own solutions. **Preferred presentation format**Innovation in policy and practice (oral) |