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# David Hoskins

David came to New Zealand on a whim, planning to work only for six months, not expecting to see himself live here for over 40 years. But settle here, work, and contribute to the growth of New Zealand society, he did. His early exposure to racial prejudice in the 1960s in the USA, and his participation in the civil rights movement, allowed David to appreciate how education is the key to personal empowerment and social change. He has always seen himself as a conduit for sharing information, and encouraging people to take responsibility for their own lives.

David was born and raised just outside Philadelphia, in the United States. Following the tradition of numerous men in his family, his higher education was at a small, exclusive liberal arts college (Hampden-Sydney College) located in Prince Edward County, Virginia. David completed a double major in chemistry and philosophy in 1970. It was there he made friends with a New Zealander and this friendship would go on to take him on an unexpected journey.

*In my last year in the Philosophy Department, there was a very young person who had just started. Who had just gotten his PhD at an American university, who happened to be a New Zealander and his name was John Hinchcliff.*

In various counties in Virginia, secondary education had been only available to those who could afford private school fees. This shut out the black population and was a familiar strategy in southern states like Virginia, and North and South Carolina, which still held on to the long lingering tail of racial oppression.

But this was about to change as the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s took shape. David became aware of racial oppression and exclusion experienced by the black population going on outside the gates of this exclusive university. As one of just a few white protesters, he joined in marches to the county seat to demand the re-opening of schools, jeered by local disgruntled 'red-necks' opposing integration. *The university was like a little enclave, and you didn't really take much notice of the social conditions surrounding you, but in my last year I started being aware of what was going on. The local black community and families would march into the county seat to try to persuade the county to reopen the schools. So I would go on these marches. There would be lots of African Americans, and half a dozen white people.*

Outrage was still felt by the southern states as a hangover from the Civil War, and prejudice still ran deep in the 1950s and '60s. David's own grandparents, who had much to do with his upbringing, were bemused by his position on civil rights; this was



*David Hoskins at Glenfield Community Centre 1986, with David Lange, Prime Minister, Phillippa Thomson and baby Janet*

despite his grandfather being a doctor who worked extensively in the poorer communities, fulfilling his Hippocratic Oath. *When I was growing up and becoming aware of civil rights, I would try to speak to my grandparents about it, but I realised very quickly there was no point.* The 1960s saw a groundswell of social and political change. Racial integration of schools was but one of these; however, not before a huge local backlash, where white-American-dominated school boards closed schools outright rather than accept racial integration. *Then you started having all the Martin Luther King marches and everything, and then Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 signed off a new civil rights legislation bill, which made it illegal for schools to be segregated.*

Around the time of David's graduation, local schools that had been closed for four years were reopened and racially integrated. David decided he wanted to be part of the change in schools, and decided that he would teach at one of the schools, even though he was without a teaching qualification. In 1970, he was employed at a local high school and became involved in the school's management and administration. However, within a year David realised that the style of education at the school was not appropriate to meet the needs of the students. *At the end of the year, the head of the school came to me and said 'We want to put you in these positions of authority, not just being a teacher.' And I said, 'Look, there are too many fundamental questions that I've got in my brain.' Like what's the role of schooling? What's the role of education in terms of your local community? I said, 'If I continue to teach here, I won't be able to answer any of those questions. I have to give myself time and space to consider all of these things.'*

He was questioning the role of schooling in general, and the role of education in the local community. Fundamental questions in his mind needed to be answered and, after discussion with his friend John Hinchcliff from New Zealand whom he had met at university, David decided to travel and see the world. Hinchcliff went on to be part of a small group who established the Peace Foundation of Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1975.

David's intention for a worldwide adventure narrowed down to working six months in New Zealand, which then merged into taking up graduate studies in Philosophy at Auckland University in 1972. All the time, he was still mulling over the role of education to empower youth and the role of community education to grow vibrant, connected, inclusive, healthy communities. *I originally got in touch with the embassy and applied for a work permit, and at that time they said to me, 'No, you don't want a work permit. You want a permanent resident's visa.' I was young and I said, 'Well why do I want a permanent resident's visa?' 'Well you might get to New Zealand and you might like to stay. You might like it and so forth'*



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*And it cost me \$50 more, and so I applied still intending to maybe work around New Zealand for a year and then continue to travel, and still thinking about these ideas.*

In 1970s New Zealand, David took his thinking about personal empowerment, and his research into participatory education and community education, a step further. Amongst his achievements was establishing a new model of schooling in the shape of Metropolitan College in 1977. Then, he worked in community development in West Auckland and on the North Shore in Glenfield as a community advisor. Following these roles, in 1989, David was part of the Community Development Team in the first North Shore City Council, under the mayoralty of Ann Hartley.

While at the University of Auckland, the dean of the University, Reverend John Rymer, became a friend and a great sounding board for David, as they discussed theology, philosophy and his ideas. David met Mary Evans and the pair were married at the small historic chapel at Judges Bay in 1979.

In 1974, the National Government, under Prime Minister Rob Muldoon, initiated a national series of discussions called the Education Development Conference for which they sought submissions and presentations on 'Education Innovation and Reform'. David had been working on a new model of education which he termed 'a school with no walls'. The key principles were that the system would respond directly to the needs of the local community, learning could take place anywhere in the community, especially in under-utilised facilities, and the students would lead decision-making and be able to choose their own learning paths in terms of the subjects they wished to pursue.

The call for submissions provided the opportunity for David to share his ideas through a detailed proposal to the Ministry of Education. His concept was received favourably and David was invited to enter into discussions over a 12-month period within a committee of liberal educationalists including Des Mann from

Green Bay High School and Charmaine Pountney from Auckland Girls Grammar School. This committee had the responsibility of determining whether David's ideas were viable.

In 1977, Auckland Metropolitan College, was opened in Mt Eden. Based on David's educational principles, this was the first state school of its kind in New Zealand. *'The opening was backgrounded by alternative schools throughout Britain and the United States in particular, which were based on ideals about active learning, recognition of individual differences between students, cooperative class planning by teachers and students, and an attempt to make learning at school more directly related to 'real life outside school'.*

David initially taught science at the college, having done a year of teacher training at Epsom in 1976. However, he was not qualified enough at the time to be the principal of the school, being both *too young* and not having sufficient teaching experience. Mary also taught at the school. After two years, David came to the realisation that he needed to leave the school, feeling that the appointed head had ideas that were diametrically opposed to how David saw the school being managed. The essential difference was that the head was in favour of allowing development to take its own course, which was not David's intention and design. *It didn't matter. I mean I'd set it up. I thought, Fantastic. Now it's going. Now the people who are involved in it are moving it into a different direction, and I don't want to hamper that. And so I decided to withdraw.*

After 24 years, the school was closed in 2001 by the Ministry of Education following a number of poor annual Education Review Office reviews. *'Metro's future depended to some extent upon whether certain tensions between the realities of state regulation of schools and visions of cutting-edge innovation (and challenges to that regulation), within a quasi-market policy context, could be resolved.'*

After David left the college, the family decided to travel overseas for a while. This was in 1981, and when they returned in

1982, David was approached by Ivan Snook from the University of Canterbury, who was establishing a new education department at Massey University in Palmerston North. He wanted David to come and teach his ideas. David was keen also to put his ideas onto paper; now was the right time.

*I felt I needed to put all my ideas down about schooling and education, and so I wrote this manuscript. Also about that time, in the late '70s, New Zealand had a visit from a guy called Ivan Illich and Ivan wrote De-schooling Society and Medical Nemesis and all of these types of books, and I went to his lectures, and I started communicating with him. When I wrote this manuscript, I sent it to him. He took this manuscript, read it, and said this has to be published; but he said it's too specific to New Zealand. Too specific because I gave a history of schooling in New Zealand. He said, 'What I'll do is... I've just delivered a lecture in Germany; I'll give you the English rights to it. Put that as your introduction and maybe that will help your book get published.' So I cobbled the two together and then now we're talking about '81, and I sent it around the various publishers who all said, 'Do you have a job in a university where you can set it as a text?' I said, 'Well I don't.' So in the end, a good book, but with no mileage in it.*

It was a year later that David decided he was not so interested in teaching at a university and that his ideas needed to be applied more practically, so he left Massey. In 1985, David applied for a position at the newly opened Glenfield Community Centre, forging his first connection with community development. He described himself as a community educator with nothing to teach but in fact the main premise of his work was to work with local groups and organisations to articulate and realise what they needed—this was community-led development. *I always felt that I'm just a conduit. If I can be a conduit through which people can achieve something, then I've done my job and I feel satisfied.*

It was in Glenfield that David met up with Reverends Peter Beck and Susan Adams, who were members of the team ministry of Glenfield Cooperating Parish. Beck had only recently come to New



Zealand from the United Kingdom, where he had worked in team ministry, and Susan Adams was also employed as a social worker with Anglican Methodist Social Services (AMSS). Both Adams and Beck were active in supporting projects for disadvantaged youth in the community.

David joined forces and applied his decentralised education model of Metropolitan College, using the existing organisations and facilities to establish hubs of learning. *Community education is basically community development. Going into an area, working with groups, working in such a way that you're very shortly going to absent yourself, because the focus is not on you. The focus is on the group and what the group or the group of individuals, what they want to achieve in their own lives—in terms of family life; in terms of whether they're unemployed and want to actually get work.*

In 1988, Waitemata City Council in West Auckland was setting up a community development department under Tim Shadbolt's mayoralty and David was taken on as one of four community advisors. *I was one white foreigner with three Māori.* David's direct insights and experience with Māori increased rapidly and substantially. He worked, too, with Pasifika groups, establishing project employment and self-employment opportunities, and came to recognise that different nationalities made up the Pasifika population; David began to liaise with them as individual communities.

In 1989, the newly amalgamated North Shore City Council was also setting up a community development unit and David was willingly enticed back to work on the Shore to join the team lead by Ewen Derrick, whom David greatly admired. *Ewen was a mentor for me throughout these years, as he was with many others. Ewen got in touch with me and said that Takapuna was developing this community development programme and he wanted me to come over and work for him. Without hesitation, the opportunity for me to work with Ewen was one not to be missed.*

Along with Glennys Adams. *Glennys did a lot with community houses in the wider area, great work!* David also got to know Linda Blincko. *I would have these long discussions with her about community development. She has such a great perception and view of what was going. She said, 'This is my community and this is where I want to be.' And she has been there ever since, and I certainly respect her for that.*

David had a particular focus on employment on the North Shore. He was involved with supporting the establishing of the Employment Resource Centre in Takapuna with Jenny Kirk. *Yeah she was greatly involved in that, and then there was also a guy called Patuone Hoskins. My surname.*

Others who were influential people in David's work in community education and community-led development were Bruce Jesson, Margaret Crozzier, Dr John Raeburn, and his friend Dr John Hinchcliff. David made connections, too, through North Shore Community and Social Services (NSCSS); he found Executive Officer Catherine McClintock a good resource person.

David and Mary now live in Matakana. When they first arrived he says that he automatically *slipped into working in the community*, but soon pulled back knowing that their lives could once again get consumed by the demands of community participation. Rather, they decided to concentrate on their new interest of viticulture, establishing their own winery called *Heron's Flight*.

David remains true to his ideals. *It's about taking responsibility for your own education, but in order to do that, you have to be given the damn responsibility. I don't care whether you're 13 or whether you're 18. And I don't care what state of life you're in, you need to be involved. In anything that you want to see change, you have to be involved. That's participatory democracy. That if it's going to affect you, you need to have a say.*

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