Between the Branches

A community project based at the BCFC with a strong emphasis on participants developing a greater understanding of the importance of play in child development; and in providing authentic opportunities for adults to contribute to their community through creating tangible, interactive stimulus to encourage open-ended play for children.

4 Way Partnership:

Burnie Child and Family Centre
Burnie Community House
Burnie LINC (Library)
Burnie TAFE (Polytechnic)

With funding from the Local Solutions Fund (Federal)
Understandings

In the Australian policy context, social inclusion is conceptualised as four key domains of opportunity - the opportunity to:

- participate in society through employment and access to services;
- connect with family, friends and the local community;
- deal with personal crises (e.g., ill health); and
- be heard

(Australian Government, 2010).

Barriers to social inclusion in our community (Burnie, TAS) include:
- Low levels of education
- Long term unemployment
- Lack of transport
- Anxiety and mental health challenges
- Lack of awareness of options and resources
- Lack of confidence
- Family breakdown- no significant adult or role model
Child and Family Centre Priorities

Our CFC purpose is “to contribute to the improvement of the health and well-being, education and care of Tasmania’s children (pre-birth-5 years) by supporting families and increasing their ability to access quality services (in the local community)”. CFC Strategic Plan

Dr Tim Moore Senior Research Fellow (& outspoken champion of CFC’s)
A trained teacher and psychologist, Dr Tim Moore conducts research and project work at Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) aimed at improving early childhood services and regularly consults with state and federal governments and non-government organisations on best practice.

“Many of the health and wellbeing problems we see in adults - obesity and its associations such as diabetes and heart disease, mental health problems, criminality, family violence, poor literacy, unemployment and welfare dependency - have their origins in pathways that begin much earlier in life, often in early childhood (4). - Tim Moore 2006

“Many of the problems currently faced by society, services and families are complex or wicked problems: under these conditions, traditional evidence-based programs are not capable of making sustained changes in outcomes for children and families on their own.” - Tim Moore 2014
At a glance...

*Between the Branches* is the title given to the book documenting the Project journey.

The *Play & Art group* has extended beyond the funded program. It began in February 2013 and continues today. This is the term participants are most familiar with and use to refer to the group.

*Interactive Arts Project* is the title of the funded project which ran from July 2013-June 2014.

**Admin**
Project Officer, Arts Mentoring, TAFE teacher, BCFC facilitator, BCH Administrator

**BCH LINC TAFE**

**Adjunct care provided**

**Extras:**
excursions; guest speaker (Playworker)

**Materials:** (new and recycled/reclaimed: tools, wood, loose parts, concrete, plants; all weather playsuits for children)

**Interactive Arts Project 2013/2014**

**Ongoing workshops and side projects:**
totems, weaving project, hanging garden, mosaics, stepping stones

**In Kind support:**
BCFC Space, computers, personnel, centre car, centre materials.
The group

- 14 participated regularly in workshops while a separate group (with some participants crossing over) worked on the media and documentation component based at the Burnie Community House. Additionally up to 8 others joined in at different times – people could drop in and out but those signed up with TAFE needed to commit to regular attendance.

- The group included those who identify as Aboriginal; single parents; couples; grandparents; parents with children under CP orders and non-parents. Of the 14 there were 3 men, 11 women with a total of 9 children who also took part in activities.

The brief was to design interactive play equipment to be installed in our playground, using natural materials which encourages children to play in a safe, exploratory, open-ended way.
Lots of elements

- The project was not narrowly focussed on the totem garden aspect (although this provided the crux of the project).
- Participants were encouraged to experiment with different types of play activities, and different ways of incorporating natural materials.
- The product would be an important part of the project but equally the process of coming together and talking, interacting, sharing ideas and reinforcing the objectives was invaluable. It was where friendships were formed, new information was shared and peer-recognition and praise for achievements so far were lauded.
Hands on – experimenting with materials
Excursions
Getting children involved
Making free standing interactive totem poles to go amongst the man ferns.
Putting them in the ground
• **Partnerships:** Pooled resources, support & broad networks encouraged ongoing commitment to working collaboratively.

- **Funding:** this allowed us to make full use of our community resources.

- **TAFE:** the qualifications on offer were the main motivation for several participants.

- **Routine:** scheduling workshops at regular times each week seemed to promote commitment to attending. Also, I texted participants each week as a reminder.

- **Participant voices:** all members of the group were involved decision making throughout.

- **Varied, flexible,** participant-driven workshops. People could choose from various jobs to carry on with each week.

- **Excursions!** Participants repeatedly commented on the enjoyment of these outings.

- **Dedicated, accessible facilitator.** Being onsite meant that I was able to respond to group members anytime, not just workshop time.

- **Deadline:** working to a budget and needing to meet a deadline kept everyone focussed on task.

- **Community Space:** Participants often come to the centre socially outside of workshop hours.

- **Time:** 12 months gave us enough time to form meaningful relationships as well as achieve our objectives.

- **Commitment** to continue. The group still meets every Thursday to work on new projects.
What now?

- Funding for this program ceased June 2014. The group continues to meet every Thursday.
- New art project for 2015 with the help of Pam Thorne (papier mache artist) donating her time for free – a nature scene representing the EYLF “Being, Belonging & Becoming” with a tree, eggs in a nest, and birds soaring.
- New public awareness campaign #findawaytobekind
- There is no extra budget for this – the centre will offer something in the way of materials, space, time and personnel again. Any excursions or other extras will have to be negotiated with participants and centre management.

Moore, Tim 2006, ‘Early Childhood and long term development: the importance of the early years’, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth.