

# **Council**

**Wednesday, 26 February 2003  
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

**Item 21A: Presentation**

**SUPPLEMENT TO AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL TO BE HELD IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, 6 WAIPAREIRA AVENUE, LINCOLN, WAITAKERE CITY, ON WEDNESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2003, COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM.**

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**21A PRESENTATION - PROFESSOR ROGER BOSHIER**

**This presentation will take place at 7.30 pm.**

Professor Roger Boshier is a Professor of Adult Education at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. He will speak about the European notion of "learning cities" which are about to land in New Zealand. Attached is a paper presented at the Auckland College of Education Conference on Lifelong Learning and Learning Cities.



## HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN THE *BACK SHED* OF THE LEARNING CITY<sup>1</sup>

Roger Boshier

**Abstract:** The European notion of “learning city” is about to land in New Zealand. Municipal authorities, working with a large array of community partners and technologies, make “learning” the focus of development. As well as building roads, maintaining sewers and catching dogs, the city fosters individual, group and community learning. It sounds good but, in European conceptualizations, depends on themes that characterised the flawed *New Zealand Experiment* with economic fundamentalism. The notion of learning city should be infused with a New Zealand sensibility. Rather than rendering the past invisible – as economic fundamentalists desired – “heritage” should be one centrepiece of the learning city in New Zealand. With this in mind, the author analysed the work of the *Back Shed* heritage group that will establish a tramway system in Wanganui. This tram will help establish Wanganui as a learning city with a New Zealand soul. Working on heritage conservation projects has a very desirable impact, particularly on at-risk citizens.

Early UNESCO notions of lifelong education concerned the need to foster learning and education in a broad array of formal, nonformal and informal settings. Education was too important to be left to schools and school-like agencies. Hence, UNESCO envisaged a “learning society” wherein education and learning became the preoccupation of many agencies and settings. Later, OECD notions of “lifelong learning” moved the focus to skills and workplace training (Benseman, 2002). However, with globalisation and erosion of the nation-state, municipalities are constructing themselves as “learning cities.” Citizens can more easily identify with their own back yard and neighbours than politics of the nation-state.

During the post-1984 New Zealand experiment with economic fundamentalism there was an attempt to dismiss the past as irrelevant in a globalising world. However, in a learning city the past is a vital instrument for constructing the future. Local heritage is a vital component of lifelong learning.

With this as a backdrop, the purpose of this study was to:

- Analyse the activities of *Back Shed*, Waitakere-based heritage activists who consider heritage conservation a centerpiece of lifelong learning.
- Nest *Back Shed* activities within emerging discourses about meaning making and learning cities

The centrepiece of the learning city is not static monuments or towering edifices. Important as these are, they’re dwarfed by the focus on learning. What distinguishes a learning city from places with traditional commitments to education, are attempts to foster all forms of learning for citizens old and young and in many contexts – such as community, work, family, religious and other settings. The town or city has become a preferred site for learning for many reasons, amongst which is the failure of national plans concerning creation of knowledge-based or learning societies.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper Presented at the European Commission/Auckland College of Education/PALLACE Conference on Lifelong Learning and Learning Cities, Auckland, New Zealand, February 12-14<sup>th</sup>, 2003.  
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A fundamental canon of the *New Zealand Experiment* (Kelsey, 1995) was the desire to build a future by rendering the past invisible. In a similar fashion some discourses constructing the learning city envisage a utopian high-tech incubator that has more to do with the future than the past. This paper warns New Zealanders of what lies ahead, makes a plea for caution and suggests the most viable future will be built on the past. Rather than packing heritage away, it is the ability to celebrate and learn from the past that will distinguish exemplary from mediocre learning cities. Hence, instead of assigning heritage to a dark corner at the back of a museum, make it the centrepiece of city life.

### Defining the City

The notion of learning city is an outgrowth of OECD thinking about economic development and lifelong learning. It is a relatively new idea that arose because of the increasing difficulty of identifying with the nation state and longstanding tendency of citizens to find meaningful aspects of their lives in their own backyard. The OECD line on this was trumpeted by Larsen who proclaimed "long live the city!" Those who have "rushed to pronounce the city's demise in today's globalised communications world may have to eat their words. For cities – and their regions – can offer just the right mix of resources, institutional structures, modern technology and cosmopolitan values that allow them to serve as incubators and drivers for the knowledge-based societies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (1999, p. 73).

Learning cities are committed to learning as a core aspect of development. They seek to sustain economic activity by combining lifelong learning, innovation and information technologies. About 20 communities in Britain have declared themselves learning cities. They include Sheffield, Norwich, Darlington, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Hull, Derby, Greenwich and Southampton. Gothenburg, Espoo, Limerick and Drammen also claim to be learning cities and are part of a European Commission consortium that includes the Swedish Telepedagogic Knowledge Centre and U.K. Learning Cities Network. The European Network of Learning Cities aims to educate adult education decision-makers, leaders and policy developers in municipal (and, to a certain extent, national) governments about what constitutes a learning society in a municipal context.

New Zealand has laboured under at least two waves of colonization. The first involved European settlers that mostly arrived prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1874 was the peak year). The second was after 1984 when the Rogernomes uncritically embraced fundamentalist theory hatched in the Chicago School of Economics. Once again, New Zealanders thought the answers to their problem lay in foreign cities. Individualists among them wanted to set aside their own experience and implement a pure form of theory developed at the Chicago School of Economics. European notions of the learning city sound eerily familiar.

At present, learning cities is an outgrowth of OECD thinking about lifelong learning. It's a European idea. Because of deep-rooted New Zealand commitments to the do-it-yourself ethos, continuing veneration of No. 8 fencing wire improvisation, kiwi loyalty to "place" and presence of numerous "farm-gate" learners (Boshier, 2002a; 2002b) the learning city is an idea that ought to take root in New Zealand. However, just like when gorse was deliberately imported, New Zealanders should be leery of ideas from other places.

There are numerous places in New Zealand that have the ingredients to become a learning city. These include a sympathetic and creative City Council capable of thinking beyond roads, sewers, rabbits and water. It also helps to have citizens committed to activism, learning and heritage. Having institutions committed to heritage (e.g. museums) or creative arts (e.g. galleries) or industries (e.g. film-making) also helps.

Although it might help to have adult education providers, the about-to-become-a-learning city need not be inhibited by their absence. Indeed, the presence of well-established educational institutions can inhibit momentum needed to build a learning city because it's hard for them to get beyond the sometimes-grim strictures of classroom practice. In a learning city, it's vital to ensure there's good horizontal integration between partners and ensure power is exercised in an equilibrious fashion.

### Getting There

There should not be any one version of a learning city. How each place gets there will depend on leadership and local factors. Here are steps needed to expedite creation of a learning city:

- *Educate Leaders:* Educate city councillors and opinion leaders about what distinguishes fluid and broad notions of lifelong learning from older, narrower and, in some ways, dysfunctional notions of education and training. Focus particularly on why education should no longer be monopolized by educators and how learning ought to become the preoccupation of every agency and setting (not just those in the business of education).
- *Inventory of Resources:* Create an inventory of community resources for learning. Focus on who knows what and who needs to learn. Identify learners, teachers (in the broad sense of the word) and settings for learning. Pay particular attention to skilled and interesting older people along with community resources and settings not normally deemed to be in the fabric of education. Highlight people, resources and settings that distinguish your community from others (e.g. Waitakere = film, wine, surf) (Wanganui = river, heritage, tramways).
- *Partnerships and Links:* Identify informal and formal partnerships. Ask about the extent to which these – along with new ones to be developed - can be harnessed for learning. Pay particular attention to iwi and organizations and individuals with deep roots in the community. Include newcomers. Strive for diversity. This might require forging relationships with people who don't come across as natural allies – such as businesses, churches, sporting groups and professional societies. Partners would include public agencies, civic institutions, local educational and cultural agencies, research societies, key individuals. They should have a shared commitment to learning. “Front-loaded” school systems are often competitive and resistant to community involvement. The city, by definition, offers an arena for coordination and ought to encourage collaboration.
- *Technology:* In New Zealand, the learning city might be less dependent on high technology than in Europe. Nevertheless, networking is important and digital technologies useful. Hence, identify local resources – such as computer or Internet-savvy young or old people – and bottlenecks – such as nonwelcoming Internet policies in libraries – that inhibit connectivity and learning. In Europe, the

Grundtvig New “Towards a European Learning Society” (New-TELS) project has put a lot of emphasis on building a “sophisticated online service to facilitate communications, put citizens and organizations in touch ... and to develop ... insight into initiatives and actions on local, national and European levels” ([http://www.learningcities/view\\_body.cfm?](http://www.learningcities/view_body.cfm?)). This might be useful but, in New Zealand, could consume resources better spent on more community-based, festive, face-to-face events.

- *Social Justice*: Identify and involve groups prominent because of their previous lack of participation in community life. Secure the cooperation and leadership skills of optimal role models (like Dave Harre of *Back Shed*) who are socially-motivated and have a facility for working with at-risk citizens for whom learning is potentially life transforming. When building advisory committees, conducting consultations or doing research, be sure those normally excluded or forgotten are actively recruited.
- *Learning as a Social Process*: There are a lot of New Zealanders with unhappy memories of school. They think learning is an “individual” and not enjoyable endeavour. In becoming a learning city, ensure there’s a festive and convivial atmosphere at learning events. Pitch them to families, whanau and groups. Remove the threat of individual learning by making it a group process.
- *Conduct Research*: Merely declaring oneself a learning city will not suffice. Earlier proclamations about lifelong education, lifelong learning and creation of a learning societies largely founded because they depended on “armchair musings” (Coffield, 2000). Any serious attempt to become a learning city will, to a large extent, depend on its ability to understand itself. Hence, it should stimulate research -- some traditional and theory laden. But, as well, participatory, narrative and ethnographic forms of enquiry which utilizes community members as researchers and draws upon a broad range of local (not just university, college or professional) resources.

### **Europe Isn’t New Zealand**

In Europe, “rotten boroughs” are amongst the most ardent advocates of the learning city and it costs nothing to make a proclamation. The idea is also attractive to east and central European cities struggling with their post-soviet “transition.” In his OECD analysis of learning cities, Larsen (1999) singled out the German city of Jena, the Andalusia region of Spain, the Kent/ Thames area of East London as exemplars. Almost anything – even another burst of neo-liberalism – is thought to be better than the past. Hence, most conceptions of the learning city envisage a utopian future wherein happy citizens use high technology, learn from each other and joyously create a knowledge-based economy. They become “incubators” for economic development and show off their “best practices.”

This talk is eerily familiar to (still somewhat exhausted) New Zealanders thrown off balance by the post-1984 attack on the foundations of New Zealand society. There will almost certainly be an attempt to deploy the European version of learning cities in New Zealand. Citizens should be ready for snazzy Powerpoint displays about its potential. Provincial mayors and others fed up with what is perceived to be the Auckland tendency to vacuum up resources for itself will welcome this initiative. And so they should. Except, because of the bruising encounters with neo-liberalism and other features of New Zealand life, learning cities in Aotearoa will be different. For one thing, New Zealanders must consider the Treaty of Waitangi. Moreover, Feilding is not Hull. And commitment to the public good in New Zealand requires involvement of socially excluded or otherwise disadvantaged learners.

Now, here is the main point of this paper. Rather than trying to create learning city incubators by deploying high-technology, the best option for New Zealand towns and cities is to build for the future by understanding the past. As Habermas (1994) wrote *The Past is the Future*. Instead of denying the past, find, celebrate and build social cohesion with heritage in the foreground.

Heritage conservation is a good place to expose questions about what it means to be a New Zealander (or an Auckland, Wellingtonian or Hokitika-ite) in a globalising world. Restoring the past evokes ruminations about identity, culture, gender, race and class – all big “-isms” of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hence, although heritage speaks of the past it is a vital instrument for creating a future more viable than socially corrosive fundamentalism. Although there’s much more to it, heritage conservation ought to be at the centre of the New Zealand learning city and, with this in mind, later in this paper, the focus will be on *Back Shed* heritage conservation.

### **Learning As A Fundamental Human Need**

New Zealand mayors are under a lot of pressure but have considerable knowledge about roads, sewers, building codes and the other material aspects of city governance. Now they’re being told “learning” is part of their mandate. Already, there’s evidence several of them think this denotes “school” – and we’ll be doing well in that department. But, like most things in life, there’s more to it.

One of the most crushing aspects of the post-1984 *New Zealand Experiment* was creation of a cult of finance (Jesson, 1999) wherein citizens were asked to embrace an entrepreneurial globalised future. The prime purpose in life was making money. Although learning was part of the anticipated transformation, it was characterized by a narrow focus jobs through skills formation, units and standards or mean-spirited renditions of OECD thinking about lifelong learning (Boshier, 2000, 2001).

People like to learn but don’t necessarily like going to school. The author was an unhappy inmate of Hastings Boys’ High School and now convinced schooling profoundly interrupted his education. New Zealand has nurtured an unusually high number of self-directed learners who, without benefit of higher education, were (or are) leaders in their fields. None of the following had much formal education – Ed Hillary, Kiri te Kanawa, Richard Pearse, Bill Hamilton, John Britten, Peter Jackson, Bruce McLaren, Peter Blake or Tom Schnackenberg (Boshier, 2002a).

Adult learners are remarkably resilient and, even those damaged by formal education, can (and will) resume learning in spectacular fashion if they find the right circumstances. Adults tend to be “problem oriented” (Knowles, 1980) and care little for disciplinary boundaries. As well, they like to be actively involved in the process of learning, appreciate equibrous power relationships (where it’s hard to distinguish teacher from taught) and respond positively to appropriate uses of art, music, heritage and theatre.

These days less is heard about economic miracles thought to flow from deregulation, market forces and globalisation. As a result of initiatives such as those that impelled the *Knowledge*

*Wave* conferences, there is now greater acknowledgement of the importance of social cohesion and building a future by understanding the past. For example, the Prime Minister made herself Minister of Heritage and frequently speaks about heritage and learning.

These kinds of ideas spawned the *Back Shed* Heritage Group and provides a conceptual framework for the *1912 Boon Tram for Wanganui Society Inc.* In New Zealand, Wanganui comes close to being a learning city and *Back Shed* is about to give (i.e. donate) a tram to run in the city and be used for learning and education.

### ***Back Shed* Heritage Group**

*Back Shed* is a loose association of conservators and educators working under the leadership of former film-maker Dave Harré in West Auckland. Before committing himself to fulltime heritage conservation work, Harre was an NZBC television producer, Auckland Teachers' College television producer, Audio-Visual Facilitator at the University of Auckland and CEO of *Video Link*. He was the Producer/Director of many documentaries with a focus on New Zealand history and culture. One of his best known films was *Second Blade of Grass*, a documentary about Rewi Alley's Baillie Schools in China - made in association with Geoff Chapple and narrated by P.M. David Lange.

Here are some *Back Shed* projects. Although all different they had elements in common. About half involved periodic detention detainees, young people serving "community service" sentences, or other at-risk citizens. All involved learning about and restoring some aspect of New Zealand heritage. In most cases, neither Harre or the workers received remuneration so it was necessary to create a working and learning environment that didn't depend on coercive discipline.

Table 1. Nature of, Citizens Involved and Outcomes Associated With *Back Shed* Conservation Projects

<b>Project</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Conservation Workers</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Jewish Prayer House	Move and restore	Periodic detention detainees	Restored
Henderson Water Wheel	Construct in Creek Creek	Periodic detention detainees and whanau	Rebuilt
Parker Cottage	Restore	Local citizens	Restored
Ellison Chambers	Political Campaign	Artists, writers	Saved
Lutheran Church Tower Moved/Restored	Move and restore	Whanau	
Marshall Steam Engine	Restore to working condition	Local citizens and whanau	Restored
Albion Vale house	Restore to 1859 Condition	Whanau	Restored
Laingholm Bridge	Restore to 1920 Condition	Workers from Astley's Tanneries	Restored
Little Sisters of the	Political campaign	Activists	Demolished

Poor	to save chapel		
Rewi Alley's House	Restore to 1927 condition	At-risk young people	Restored
Swanson Railway rebuilt Station	Move and rebuild	Community members	Moved and
1912 Boon Tram	Restore and Run	Community service detainees	In progress

### Heritage in the Learning City

These projects involved a mix of learning and work and adherence to the United Nations *International Charter on Monuments and Sites*. Harre was also a non-authoritarian role model for adults and youth sent to projects by Probations, Corrections and other authorities. No project was easy and, in some cases, theory informing the work clashed with the modus operandi of prison authorities. For example, while installing the Henderson water wheel, it became necessary to get in the river and remove a sandbag dam. Most detainees strongly identified with the project and were happy to help. But the prison guard would not let inmates get into waist deep water. As a result, pneumonia-prone Harre had to do the entire job while the inmates and keeper watched from the river bank.

The most theoretically provocative and difficult project was the Moeawatea process that resulted in restoration of Rewi Alley's house in a remote part of Taranaki. Alley was a distinguished New Zealand poet and educator who devoted most of his life to China. This was the subject of an earlier report (Harre & Boshier, 1999) and, as such, will only get brief treatment here. In this project the task was to restore Rewi Alley's house and provide a positive learning experience for at-risk young people.

Some commentators might call what happened at Alley's house "restorative justice." Troubled young people lived, ate, worked and, in several cases, slept together for six months in a remote location. They learned and practiced the art and science of heritage conservation and came to understand arcane details of the ICOMOS charter. They gazed in wonder and cheered when, at the end of their labours, Phil Goff, Minister of Labour, arrived in a helicopter. Working alongside a Maori elder, he opened Alley's house and declared the project a success.

Most at-risk youngsters working on Alley's house had been unable to find employment and came to this project because, although of an adult age, they didn't act like it. They lacked the maturity or "independent" self concept Knowles (1980) claimed as the distinguishing characteristics of the adult learner. Yet, what happened was an almost pure form of critical adult education. It was very much a made-in-New-Zealand process and depended on equilibrating power relations and *whanaui*.

### From Country to Town

Although difficult for those at Moeawatea to live, cook and work together, Alley's house had advantages. Although remote, it didn't move. Having completed the projects listed in Table 1, at the turn of the century, with the notion of learning cities hovering offshore, *Back Shed* wondered if the Moeawatea process could be applied to "moving heritage" in a city.

The material task was to take a derelict 1912 tram that had once run in Wanganui, restore it and, in the process of giving it back to the city, persuade them to find funds to lay new tracks, build a barn and run the tram for the purpose of learning. This is a mid-term report because the restoration process is now well advanced – coincidentally in a West Auckland "back shed" built specifically for this project. This paper – which advances the notion of placing heritage at the centre of the learning city – is part of the process.

### Learning Settings

The European Network on Learning cities want to educate mayors and policy-makers about what distinguishes lifelong learning from older ideas about education and training. Regrettably, when most citizens and some mayors hear there's a need for learning, their first impulse is to think of the local school, college or university. These institutions are important but no more so than a broad array of community and other settings that ought to foster learning and education. The worst thing that could happen to "education" is to have it fall into the hands of educators!

Fig 1. shows components of a "learning society." The vertical axis concerns the age of learners and is the *lifelong* dimension of lifelong education. The horizontal axis concerns places or settings wherein learning occurs and is the *lifewide* dimension of lifelong education. The four quadrants constitute a utopian ideal. At present, resources are allocated in an unequal fashion – with most going to education of children and youth in formal settings.

Even now, 30 years after Faure (1972), older learners and those working in nonformal settings get less than their share. In a learning society, education would be democratized and there would be a more equitable distribution of resources among the four quadrants in Fig. 1. For the original architects of lifelong education, there would be a more or less equal preoccupation with fostering the learning and education of young and older people in formal (school and school like) and nonformal (out-of-school) settings. In this context, nonformal/formal refers to settings. It does not refer to the "formality" of the learning, teaching or educational process.

### Heritage in the Learning Society

There are today few New Zealanders who can recall what life was like before motor cars arrived. It was hard slogging for women in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Wanganui and not easy for men. Many class, race and gender issues that still bedevil New Zealand life here at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century played out in struggles over tramways.

Although it might appear trams were an innovation to get horses off roads, expedite the travel of people who didn't have cars and foster development of suburbs, they were also a space wherein contemporary problems were enacted. After a civic struggle of immense proportions Wanganui was the first New Zealand provincial centre to get trams. The first

one trundled out to Aramaho railway junction in 1908. About 10,000 people lived in Wanganui at the time and, according to tram enthusiasts, the entire future of the city depended upon getting cheap, efficient transportation for ordinary people.

Here at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a teacher could make much of the fact Wanganui had to choose between electric and steam trams. However, there wasn't much argument about the route which acknowledged Maori legend. Decades before Europeans arrived a Maori had lost his way and died. Those who found his body discovered he'd beaten a circular path through the bush in his struggle to get out (Stewart, 1973). The tram route would follow this path.

As well as race and class, there was also a gender dimension to early tramways in Wanganui. On opening day, a Miss Norma McBeth (niece of a Councillor) swung on the huge switch that fed electricity into the overhead wire. The first tram was "dispatched" by the Mayoress Mrs. C.E. MacKay. However, it wasn't long before women were warned of dire consequences if they kept wearing unprotected pins that projected from hats. There were also reports of lost luggage (retrievable from the depot for two pennies) but no mention of dire consequences for smelly men returning from work.

Later, the system was extended to Castlecliff beach and it became possible for those unable to afford a horse to get to the beach for family picnics. However, it was not all smooth sailing and, on 12 June, 1911, the barquentine *Pelotas* was wrecked when unloading Australian hardwood sleepers for the Castlecliff tramway. Nevertheless, the Tramway Board gave money to the Castlecliff surf club to help create holiday attractions and amusement equipment for children at the point where the tram reached the beach.

Now the task is to show how the *Back Shed* tram project could be understood in the context of a learning city. By laying the two axes in Fig. 1 at right angles, four quadrants or zones emerge. This model is deliberately political. Each zone is the same size as the rest. This reminds mayors and everyone else there's much more to learning and education than what goes on in school. The education of young people in formal settings is important. But no more so than what ought to happen in other quadrants.

#### *Young People/Formal Settings (South-East corner of Fig. 1)*

Carol Pope teaches infants at Oratia school. Knowing of the *Back Shed* tram she brought her class of five-year olds to the site. Each had a sketch pad, pens and pencils. They drew what they saw and, in the best traditions of Ashton-Warner (1958, 1963, 1979; Hood, 1988) built small stories around their observations. Later, they converted drawings into screened prints. Each child made a card for the *Back Shed* group. Hence, Ben wrote "Thank you for letting us sketch your bildings (sic) and I liked the chicken house and the dubbel garge and the stem engen." Mark, aged 5 years wrote "Thank you for showing Room 1 your old things. I liked the garden shed. Whith the log and the pumpkin on the log. I like the tram too. And the red shed. I so like the cottage near the graveyard." As well, Pope photographed the day's events and, with the children, made large scrapbooks containing reflections about childhood, architecture, urban transportation and life in colonial New Zealand.



For young people, the venerable Girl Guides and Boy Scouts and many other organisations provide education in a nonformal setting. Many of these organizations already have a focus on heritage but, in a place like Wanganui, the presence of a tram will provide more lavish opportunities for community service and learning in nonformal settings.

#### *Older People/Formal Settings*

Not many people get the opportunity to learn about heritage in formal settings. Indeed, tertiary and higher education institutions in New Zealand have few, if any, courses or credentials concerning heritage conservation. The Moeawatea process (Harre & Boshier, 1999) attracted some attention amongst advocates of service learning overseas and the recent flurry of publications about heritage conservation in New Zealand (e.g. Trapeznik, 2000; Hall & McArthur, 1993; ICOMOS, 1993; Dalley & Phillips, 2000; Shaw & Hallett, 1991) suggests there is a renewed interest in heritage.

When the 1912 Boon tram once again trundles through Wanganui streets, classroom teachers, college instructors and others working in formal settings will have unique opportunities to create challenging, participatory, critically nuanced and convivial learning events. The tram, along with the paddle steamer *Waimarie*, coupled with the city council desire to transform themselves into a learning city on the river, should provide an impetus for these kinds of developments – all involving learning and education in formal settings:

- Courses and heritage awareness programs mounted by Wanganui museum in association with the volunteers *Tramways Wanganui* group.
- Creation of a heritage conservation program at the local university college. Opportunities for linked courses and continuing education provided by local schools.
- Development of partnerships that make Wanganui a leading centre for developing online and other technologically-mediated courses and materials concerning heritage conservation and historical consciousness.

#### *Older People/Nonformal Settings (North-West corner of Fig. 1)*

Although the Wanganui tram ought to make it easier for Manawatu and other teachers to build the tram into vibrant forms of social studies, its greatest contribution resides in its potential to engage adults in nonformal settings. Most of the educative power of heritage resides in this corner of the learning society. It is here skillful adult educators, community activists, business people, mayors and interested citizens can excel by, for example, creating festivals of learning, bringing heritage into the workplace, shopping centres, arenas, churches, farms, farms and factories.

Australian advocates of the learning city demonstrated part of what's possible by having "science in the pub." Two years ago the University of East London *Festival of Lifelong Learning* was a creative, boisterous and postmodern effort to bring learning into the streets. In places like Feilding, the historical society is well organized with its educative "steam festivals" and "pioneer days." At the Avondale race course and in Otago the Sunday markets have grown into a crowded and vibrant arena for celebrating and learning about Polynesian culture in Auckland. Although Napier art-deco weekends are motivated by tourism needs,

valuable learning and education arises from understanding the 1931 earthquake. People like to learn – and almost everyone is interested in their own heritage.

With the tram in place there will be opportunities to:

- Deploy “working heritage” at the centre of various festivals, learning weeks, pioneer days, Wanganui river celebrations and urban transport fairs and celebrations.
- Identify and learn from the experience of former tramways workers
- Provide a focus for tramways brass bands that have become disconnected from their origins.

Citizens of Wanganui are known to be civic-minded. David James, former Secretary of the National Council for Adult Education lives there and runs innovative and non-confrontational workshops about Treaty issues. The Wanganui museum is one of the best in New Zealand. The Sergeant art gallery has an international reputation. The Wanganui river is a source of civic pride and arena for education. There are numerous former activists approaching (or now in) retirement willing to rally around the task of integrating the tram into Wanganui’s desire to become a learning city known for its heritage. For example, there were two university professors, one retired Community College Principal (John Harre) and well-known folk singers (e.g. Rudy and Pat Sunde) on the 1912 Boon Tram for Wanganui Committee. It was the same in Wanganui where advocates of lifelong learning stood ready to welcome the tram.

Once tracks are laid, the 1912 Boon tram will link *Waimarie* with the city and other iconic Wanganui structures like the main street, Durie Hill and Castlecliff beach. As well as attracting tourists and reinforcing Wanganui’s appeal as a destination, the tram should be an important nonformal setting for learning, as follows:

- *Tramways Wanganui*, a society of volunteers, will work in partnership with local iwi to create a database, accumulate audiovisual and other kinds of archival materials on the social history of Wanganui.
- Working with the museum, galleries or in other settings, community members will run the tram, press for line extensions and, most importantly, orchestrate large and small community events that enable citizens of all ages and walks of life to critically analyse the politics of urban transportation from a socio-cultural and historical perspective.

### **Heritage Conservation as Meaning-Making**

The nature of the project profoundly shapes the content and processes of learning and, at *Back Shed*, experience suggests there are recurring themes. Skills – such as using sandpaper, replacing rotten wiring, waterproofing leaky roof structures – are important but less than psycho-social changes that occur within individuals and groups.

Learning about heritage is broadly concerned with maintaining or challenging the status quo. Secondly, it is either built on the notion there is an objective world (“out there”) or is more a matter of subjectivity and meaning-making (Paulston, 1966). When Carol Pope brought her

class to look at, draw and think about what they saw at the *Back Shed* site she was more interested in their critical reflections than ability to “accurately” draw the sheds or tram.

The “objective facts” of heritage conservation are fascinating and nobody is set to decry the functional utility of learning about roofing, wiring or plan-reading. Moreover, many mayors committed to building learning cities are enthused by “reskilling” their population. However, in the context of the tram, skills are of less interest than making meaning.

Most adult educators are familiar with “perspective transformation” which has today involved into “transformative learning” (Mezirow, 1990; 1991). In a similar vein, almost all school teachers are familiar with “constructivism” where the teacher is supposed to create or facilitate learning events wherein children derive their own meaning. Rather than being told what’s right and wrong, children are supposed to “discover” and reflect on things for themselves. As well, most educators know Freire (1972) saw literacy education as a vehicle for creating new forms of social justice. However, while acknowledging foreign sources like these, New Zealanders should not forget our own marvelously creative Ashton Warner (1958, 1963, 1979) who extracted emotion-laden “key words” from life experience of (mostly) Maori children and turned them into a potent vehicle for learning to read, write and understand the world. Ashton-Warner’s approach almost entirely depended on respecting the past and foregrounding the local.

### **Heritage and Populations “At-Risk”**

Thus far, U.K. and Australian work on learning cities has not been overly concerned with social justice or at-risk citizens. This theme is present to a greater degree in the “Cities of Learning” project of the European Commission. The New Zealand Historic Places Trust does not have the capacity to deal with malcreants. However, at-risk citizens are a vital part of community-based projects at *Back Shed*.

Almost without exception, those associated with *Back Shed* work without pay. Hence there are no resources for formal evaluations, pretesting or post-testing, before-and-after measures or treatment and control groups. However, as shown in Table 1, more than a dozen projects have been completed – several involving profound logistical difficulties (e.g. getting building materials to Moeawatea) confrontations with powerful organizations (e.g. the stand-off with the Catholic church over the Herne Bay chapel of the Little Sisters of the Poor or the offshore owners of Ellison Chambers in Queen St) and a relentless search for funds. There have also been minor triumphs – involving, for example, mayors who understood the politics and potential of the learning city (e.g. Bob Harvey of Waitakere and Chas. Poynter of Wanganui).

However, just like Mezirow (1990), Harre and Gillett (1994), Potter and Wetherell (1987) Freire (1972) and other foreigners committed to foregrounding human subjectivity and challenging existing power relations, *Back Shed* doesn’t have a fully worked-out theory of learning and heritage. However, as a result of years working in this field they have a theoretically provocative model which contains strong echoes of anarchist-utopianism of the kind advanced by Illich (1970). It also echoes Habermas’s (1984; 1987) emphasis on mutual respect and absence of coercion. However, what most distinguishes it is the distinctive New Zealand preoccupation with whanau. It also has a kind of Outward Bound emphasis on mental agility, physical activity, testing limits and working in teams but without disciplining

elements sometimes associated with outdoor education or adventure training. What *Back Shed* proposes is a distinctive New Zealand type of lifelong learning.

Learning from heritage conservation depends on the project and needs of the learner. However, here are some observations – mostly derived from Moeawatea and the 1912 Boon tram project. Citizens of all ages can derive comfort and a formidable education through involvement in community-based heritage conservation. However, for at-risk citizens, heritage conservation offers numerous additional benefits. Objective skills are useful but the most provocative benefits concern subjectivity and meaning-making. In particular, those at *Back Shed* have confidence about the following:

- In the non-coercive and convivial atmosphere of a heritage conservation project, at-risk citizens learn to identify with the project and appreciate the passion of initiators. Eventually they feel a sense of “ownership” and often bring whanau members (to, say, Moeawatea) to show off their handiwork. They develop a long-term sense of “belonging” to the object.
- At first, at-risk citizens are deeply suspicious of or reject all forms of authority. On a heritage conservation project they learn to value principles of cooperation and even seek advice from leaders. It is the absence of arbitrary authority and attempts to smooth out power relations that makes this possible.
- Despite difficulties, uncertainties and compromises nested in heritage conservation, many at-risk citizens come to regard the project as an island of sanity in the midst of what is often a chaotic or painful life. They identify with traditions and meanings nested in the object and, as a result, challenge their own assumptions about what constitutes a good life and how to achieve it. This is fundamentally different than say, making mail bags in a prison or sweeping floors in a Salvation Army old folks home.
- At-risk adults become part of a loose “family.” Even though the Corrections Department forbids it, *Back Shed* provides meals. The team sits, eats and chats together. The uniqueness and value of each person is respected and there is lavish positive reinforcement for jobs well done. Participants are encouraged to consider themselves a member of the whanau and, even when there are more Pakeha than Maori present, this is the language of discourse. Reciprocal rights and obligations are used to construct domestic arrangements, conservation procedures and outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, New Zealand is at the crossroads (Kelsey, 2002). The post-1984 application of fundamentalist economic theory destabilized the country by wanting to render the past invisible. Now there is a need to rehabilitate the past and develop new approaches to heritage and its conservation.

At the same time as New Zealand pauses at a crossroads, Europeans are working to understand what it means to be a learning city. More than 20 U.K. cities and towns, along with others in continental Europe and a few in Australia, have declared they are learning cities.

Declarations are not the same as action and, in this paper, we've argued New Zealanders should think about whether New Zealand needs more hectoring about "incubators," and "best practices." However, learning cities have considerable merit. Hence, the task is to take the idea and infuse it with a New Zealand sensibility. Bearing in mind the Rogernomes desire to rid New Zealand of its past, heritage should be one centrepiece of the learning city.

Despite (or perhaps because of) globalisation, heritage matters. There is also plenty of New Zealand evidence (from places like Waitakere, Napier or Wanganui) to suggest it also draws tourists and fills local coffers. In this paper, we've analysed the work of the *Back Shed* conservation group in West Auckland. They've elaborated a model that:

- Makes learning the centrepiece of heritage conservation.
- Deploys New Zealand notions of whanau in creating an optimal socio-educational climate for heritage conservation and learning.
- Infuses heritage learning with a commitment to social justice by deliberately seeking to involve at-risk citizens in conservation projects.
- Provides a local manifestation of perspective transformation -- a pillar of adult education theorizing in other countries.
- Has implications for learning and education in a broad array of informal, nonformal and formal settings.
- In the current project, will produce a 1912 tram for Wanganui. Together with the paddle boat *Waimarie*, a superb main street, good museum and archives, fine art gallery and other commitments to heritage, the tram will position Wanganui to develop a distinctive New Zealand manifestation of the learning city.

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