

# **An Evaluation of Young People's Connections Aka Youth - Community - Connection YR-18-00952**

**Funder: Heritage Lottery**

**Delivered by: The Community Foundation for Planetary Healing  
Registered Charity in Scotland SC034826**

[www.planetary-healing.org](http://www.planetary-healing.org)

**Self Evaluation: Nov 2018 to Nov 2019**



## **What we expected to do**

The Community Foundation for Planetary Healing is a grass-roots charity known as The Planetary Healing Centre, and we are based at 288 Portobello High street, Edinburgh. We are a volunteer-led organisation, with over 52 volunteers and 2 part-time paid staff. We value equality, diversity and commitment which are strongly reflected in our team.

Our mission is to promote healthy holistic lifestyles including therapies and activities in nature that bring real, lasting, positive change to individuals and communities.

We work with people experiencing poverty, destitution, and/or poor mental or physical health.

From Nov 2018 to Nov 2019 we planned, implemented and delivered a project connecting young people with nature while developing their leadership skills. The project was called Young People's Connections aka Youth - Community - Connection.

The aim was to encourage young people to: connect with nature, community, build their confidence, relate more positively to one another, develop team building and communication skills, become more active, improve health and wellbeing. Our project also provided opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills, explore healthy self-expression and minimize loneliness and mental health issues.

Our programme was based on renowned world movement "Art of Mentoring" and "Deep Nature Connection" and was free for all young people up to 26 years old including their families and friends. Other participants gave a small donation to our charity.

One of our objectives was to support young people in learning about or improving mental health, become more resilient and leading healthier, more active lives.

Our aims were met via a wide variety of outdoors activities, such as: bush craft, forest skills, planting, outdoor activities, gathering wood, building and managing fires, leaving nature as we found her. The activities involved provided a base to help young people develop and deepen their connection with nature, reconnect with each other, members of their family, the wider community, learn about leadership and self-expression in a safe and supported environment.

Young people were involved in the planning, organising and delivery of the project. They were mentored to deliver short activities co-creating community events around the Celtic Festivals and Seasons, re-connecting their community to their ancestral heritage. They were supported by a team of mentoring adults called the Acorn Team. The activities were delivered to the community who were mostly their families and friends who joined in.



## What we actually did

Our project was based on renowned world movement "Art of Mentoring" & and "Deep Nature Connection". We used the 8 shields model.

When?	What?	Where?	Who carried out the activity?	Who was the activity for?	What we achieved
1. East Winter Solstice  21st Dec 2018	Outcome: Common Sense  Activity: Learning to light fires like our ancestors did  Celebrated Winter Solstice	Centre for Stewardship - Falkland	Consultant and Acorn team of adults mentored the young people and the young people delivered the activity to parents and members of the families present.	Young people who are 1) home educated, 2) at school 3) leaving school 4) not on employment or education.  The community	<b>Indicator:</b> Inner Happiness  <b>Participants:</b> See below
2. South East Winter Solstice  21st Dec 2018	Outcome: Aliveness and Agility Activity: Games  Celebrated Winter Solstice	Centre for Stewardship - Falkland	Acorn team of adults mentored the young people and the young people delivered the activity to parents and members of the families present.	Young people who are 1) home educated, 2) at school 3) leaving school 4) not on employment or education. The community	<b>Indicator:</b> Vitality  <b>Participants:</b> 17 young people 9 adults 8 volunteers 2 children Total: 36

When?	What?	Where?	Who carried out the activity?	Who was the activity for?	What we achieved
3. South Spring Equinox 23rd Mar	Outcome: Inquisitive focus Activity: Did a butterfly survey  Celebrated Spring Equinox	Centre for Stewardship - Falkland	Acorn team of adults mentored the young people and the young people delivered the activity to parents and members of the families present.	Young people who are 1) home educated, 2) at school 3) leaving school 4) not on employment or education. The Community	<b>Indicator:</b> Commitment to others  <b>Participants:</b> See Below
4. South West Spring Equinox 23rd Mar	Outcome: Care and tending nature Activity: conservation work: clearing paths, planting trees, pruning trees. Removed rubbish from nature  Celebrated Spring Equinox	Centre for Stewardship - Falkland	Acorn team of adults mentored the young people and the young people delivered the activity to parents and members of the families present.	Young people who are 1) home educated, 2) at school 3) leaving school 4) not on employment or education.  The Community	<b>Indicator:</b> Empathy and love of nature  <b>Participants:</b> 7 young people 7 volunteers 5 adults 2 children Total: 21
5. West Beltane 04th May	Outcome: Service to the Community Activity: Made bread and cordial to share  Celebrated Beltane Jumped the fire	Centre for Stewardship - Falkland	Acorn team of adults mentored the young people and the young people delivered the activity to parents and members of the families present.	Young people who are 1) home educated, 2) at school 3) leaving school 4) not on employment or education.  The Community	<b>Indicator:</b> Truly helpful  <b>Participants:</b>  <b>Participants:</b> 4 young people 4 adults 7 volunteers 7 children Total: 22

When?	What?	Where?	Who carried out the activity?	Who was the activity for?	What we achieved
6. North West Summer Solstice 21st June	Outcome: Aware and reverence Activity: learnt bird language  Celebrated Summer Solstice	Centre for Stewardship - Falkland	Consultant and Acorn team of adults mentored the young people and the young people delivered the activity to parents and members of the families present.	Young people who are 1) home educated, 2) at school 3) leaving school 4) not on employment or education.  The Community	<b>Indicator:</b> Fully Alive  <b>Participants:</b> 5 young people 7 adults 5 volunteers 1 children Total: 18
7. North Autumn Equinox 21st Sep	Outcome: Self sufficiency Activity: learned about Shelter building in nature  Celebrate Autumn Equinox with songs and games	Centre for Stewardship - Falkland	Consultant and Acorn team of adults mentored the young people and the young people delivered the activity to parents and members of the families present.	Young people who are 1) home educated, 2) at school 3) leaving school 4) not on employment or education.  The Community	<b>Indicator:</b> Empathic connection with others  <b>Participants:</b> 5 young people 4 adults 5 volunteers 0 children Total: 14
8. North East Shamhain 02nd Nov	Outcome: Quiet Mind Activity: Solo time in nature, quiet spot  Celebrated Samhain Ancestors feast	Centre for Stewardship - Falkland	Consultant and Acorn team of adults mentored the young people and the young people delivered the activity to parents and members of the families present.	Young people who are 1) home educated, 2) at school 3) leaving school 4) not on employment or education.  The Community	<b>Indicator:</b> Concentration and listening skills  <b>Participants:</b> 9 young people 12 adults 6 volunteers 12 children Total: 39
9. All dates above during the week.	Outcome: Train and prepare the team of acorn volunteers and the young people's representative	Centre for Stewardship - Falkland	Consultant as the main Facilitator highly experienced plus representatives of the young people	Acorn team of volunteers, representatives of the young people	Build confidence and have clarity on the activities we will deliver in the programme.

## **What difference we actually made:**

### OUTCOME 1.

1) Young people will get out of their urban surroundings and out into the natural environment, where they gained experience in practical bush crafts, team building, peer bonding and leadership. They had opportunities to explore their communication and self-expression and engage positively in reference to themselves and capabilities.

### ACHIEVEMENT

We achieved the above by encouraging the young people themselves to pass on the skills they were learning and the knowledge to the other young people who were present.

We measured it by monitoring the progress of the young people as they began to devise and deliver more of the activities themselves.

### OUTCOME 2.

2) Young people were involved in exploring and appreciating what valuable lessons can be learned from the past in order to inform our future. By reconnecting with our national and cultural heritage through learning crafts, cultural practices, folklore and humanity's relationship with and use of landscapes and natural resources through time we can gain valuable insights into alternative ways of living. At the Centre for Stewardship Trust in Falkland where we will deliver the project, in particular, young people are exposed to a wealth of history and heritage all around; from Hillforts to hunting parks, geological formations to farming and landscaping through the ages as well as natural history and heritage crafts galore and the Falkland castle.

We will support young people to engage with Scotland's SDGs for health and wellbeing, quality education, gender equality, peace, justice and strong institutions through mentoring, inspiring and equipping young people with skills necessary to develop

good mental health practices which promote a sense of peace and wellbeing within themselves and allow them to play an active part in shaping their own futures, as well as that of their communities and environment.

## ACHIEVEMENT

The ancestral knowledge of harvesting and preserving food and natural medicines and crafts were presented, appreciated, practiced and passed on. They were learning more sustainable ways of living and this will support them in the future.

## OUTCOME 3.

3) Young people will develop leadership opportunities and their potential to whatever degree appropriate or comfortable for the individuals themselves. Developing the young leaders and empowered citizens of the future through leadership training and gaining understanding of how to run group activities and community events as well as gaining confidence in sharing ideas and contributing to group and community discussions.

The young people will experience mentoring by adults trained in the Art of Mentoring model and will allow them to experience being Young 'Acorns' (part of a leadership team of 8, each with specific roles) and learning how to facilitate activities as part of a group and to plan and deliver team and community activities/events.

## ACHIEVEMENT

We achieved that by giving lots of opportunities for each young person's voices to be heard by the other members of the community present. By supporting and encouraging them to lead an activity or take part if they were not confident to lead it. We gave them opportunity to host the community, provide food, activities and entertainment.

## OUTCOME 4.

4) Young people will develop their mentoring abilities and opportunities. The natural tendency for older children to mentor younger children will be actively encouraged as part of the programme.



The young people will have an input into the design and planning of sessions and to organise and facilitate activities as appropriate e.g. developing an overnight camp. All in consultation and overseen by trained adult facilitators

## ACHIEVEMENT

We achieved the above by organising Heritage Festival where the young people helped host and design the day activities where they mentored and designed games for other young people present and also adults.

We monitored the level of engagement and confidence of the participants throughout the project by watching how much they were engaged and also by having conversation with them to find out how comfortable they were. Young people who before would have panic attacks just with the thought of talking to a group of people, at the end of the project found themselves relaxed, at home and comfortable in talking to a big group of people.

We managed to get regular written feedback and verbal feedback as to how young people were feeling and progressing.

### **Some Quotes from participants:**

*“Engaging with a multigenerational group is excellent- compared to so many other activities which are age-specific. Nice mix of outdoors and practical and non-practical. Both my youngsters liked the skills-based days. And they enjoyed leading games and skills development eg paracord key-rings. It was empowering to pass on what they had learned. Also, they really liked the food aspect eg making elderflower fritters was a highlight!! They really like the combination of unstructured time with friends and structured fun that's optional is so good”*

*“My first experience with nature connection was a session when we climbed up to the high wooded campsite. We stopped along the way and did some nature connection ( you talked about bird song meaning and then we experienced it) then we*



*played games on the cricket pitch and finally we 'arrived' at the village. My working memory is generally very poor but the day is seared into my memory as one of the special days in my life. I experienced it as a wandering tribe, working together (collecting wood) playing together and then returning to the fold. It felt like all the elements of creating a village where present. My boys love the Chancefield site because they can bike and be creative in the space and they really enjoyed the hands-on sessions as did I"*

*"The darkness was a fitting conclusion to our magical day together. Like we have been filled with light and could navigate without our eyes. I left feeling nourished, depended and open. Lucy had such an incredible time and transformed herself throughout the course of the day. It means so much to me for her to experience her whole self within a whole world. Thank you for enabling this to happen. There was a point in the day that I took myself away. A short walk into the trees. I basked in the presence of all that came before me. I felt proud communicating about today with those that are yet to arrive. It was in this moment that I felt myself saying 'I have arrived' 'This is what I have been searching for'. It was a wonderful and emotional moment. I care to thank you for creating, holding and inviting me and my daughter into such a sacred space."*



*“What a beautifully deep-rooted and well-connected occasion you enabled us to create yesterday A true feast Loved it all... thank you “*

## **Challenges and Changes**

We managed to evaluate the project in line with National Lottery requirements working with the external programme evaluation team and HLF officers, and producing a final project evaluation report. This was not so easy to do because our project was outdoors . It involved a lot of gathering data in forms , asking and helping the young people to fill in very long forms. Then we had to enter the data online ourselves. Although it was very laborious, we manage to gather all the data and do all the reports required. We consider it a great achievement and it helped us with our own self evaluation report.

Another challenge was the weather. Sometimes when the weather is not so good, it is difficult to know what will happen on the day, how many people will come at the end. To overcome this problem we used the Tipi area in the Falkland State and requested to have that area as our main spot.



We tried to attract young people from Edinburgh as well by support with transport as we recognise the distance can be a problem. However, most of the participants were from Fife and a very small number were from Edinburgh. Two Young people with their family came from Glasgow twice and two young people with their families came from Edinburgh. The others were from Fife.

As Young people live in the moment, often it was difficult to prepare them before hand, get them motivated and interested in something that was going to happen in the future, even if that future was next day. It proved to be very difficult task to plan activities before hand and follow a specific schedule. On that matter we leaned from the young people as much as they learned from us. In future program we will be more flexible and go with the flow as that is when the young people's leadership can be better explored and nurtured. They live in the here and now, they live in the present and that is something our modern society and adult world lacks. Mentoring them into finding a balance of planning for the future and yet being present in the moment was a great challenge to overcome and the fun aspect of the programme with games helped to overcome that challenge. When things were not going well, a game was always introduced to keep the balance and the young people engaged.

### **Learning for the future:**

The intergenerational aspect of the programme was a very positive thing. Young people and elders interacting, sharing experiences stories and songs around the fire in a very relaxed environment made the programme really special.

A highlight was to see the young people sharing their knowledge and skills with the young children specially in regards to teaching them how to use sharp tools in a safe manner. Also seeing the young people care for the young ones in the same way there were cared for by the Acorn team of mentors. The plan was to mentor them and give them the opportunity to mentor others in the same way.

We had two occasions where we supported the Centre for Stewardship with activities like building shelters for showers for a big Art of Mentoring programme they were going to host in their land in July 2019 programmed to hosted 275 people for a week. This was also a very positive aspect of the programme for the young people. It gave them a sense of purpose and seeing the ending result of having those showers build and being used by the community, it gave them confidence, definitely a lot of joy and sense of purpose. We would definitely like to create more partnerships like that in the future.

We also build a partnership with a local outdoors school for home educated children. 5 of their young people attended most of our programmes. As they were young people experienced with outdoors, everyone had a lot to learn from them in terms of feeling comfortable and at easy with nature at all times in all weathers. Everyone was very impressed with the outdoors shelter they had as their outdoors school, their classroom. They gave participants of our programme a tour of their outdoors school and we learned a lot and felt very inspired. We feel building partnerships is the way forward for our organisation and we were very inspired.

#### Other:

#### Volunteers: In kind contributions: £ 5,700

Date	Description of task	Task category	Number volunteers	Number of Days	Total contribution
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21/12/18	Volunteers, who are professional outdoors facilitators, contributed by being Acorn mentors being good adult role models for the young people. They mentored the young people and supported them while they were delivering activities.	Skilled: Hosted 36 people	8	1	1,200
23/03/19	Volunteers, who are professional outdoors facilitators, contributed by being Acorn mentors being good adult role models for the young people. They mentored the young people and supported them while they were delivering activities.	Skilled: Hosted 21 people	7	1	1,050
04/05/19	Volunteers, who are professional outdoors facilitators, contributed by being Acorn mentors being good adult role models for the young people. They mentored the young people and supported them while they were delivering activities.	Skilled: Hosted 22 people	7	1	1,050
22/06/19	Volunteers, who are professional outdoors facilitators, contributed by being Acorn mentors being good adult role models for the young people. They mentored the young people and supported them while they were delivering activities.	Skilled: Hosted 18 people	5	1	750
21/09/19	Volunteers, who are professional outdoors facilitators, contributed by being Acorn mentors being good adult role models for the young people. They mentored the young people and supported them while they were delivering activities.	Skilled: Hosted 14 people	5	1	750
02/11/19	Volunteers, who are professional outdoors facilitators, contributed by being Acorn mentors being good adult role models for the young people. They mentored the young people and supported them while they were delivering activities.	Skilled: Hosted 39 people	6	1	900

# 8 SHIELDS 'ACORN LEADERSHIP' ROLES AND TASKS

BY REBECCA CARD AND PETER COW 2018

Direction	Attribute	Tasks	Embodiment
East	Happiness	Welcoming, announcements, gathering people, inclusion, bringing awareness of hazards, holding energy for beginnings, catch the story of the journey	Sunrise
South East	Vitality	Activation, removing blocks - physical, mental and emotional; initiating physical/active games, orientation, transport logistics, embodiment practices, animal forms, curiosity, awareness of one's own shadows and passions and those of others	8/9 year old child
South	Commitment to mentoring	Unconditional listening, time keeping, attention to detail, accountability, keeping records and recording talks, catching stories, tracking agreements	Relaxed and inquisitive focus
South West	Empathy	Timelessness, wandering, space care, land care, people care, food liaising, tending of: fire, firewood, drinking water and toilets	Nurturing, generative parent
West	Being truly helpful	Master of Ceremony, story teller, harvesting the stories of the day, bringing song, honouring gifts, facilitation, peacemaking, fostering community	MC
North West	Being fully alive	Awareness of ancestors, grief tending, looking after elders and presenters, reflection, inner tracking, journalling, honouring experience and wisdom	Counsellor, healer
North	Love and forgiveness	Leadership, Village Builder, stands back to see big picture, overseeing, task mentor, decision making, planning/seeing ahead, staff meeting facilitation, forming acorn, fostering unity, task prioritisation and delegation	Elder
North East	Quiet mind	Awareness of the unseen and connection to the sacred, gratitude, holding ceremony, listening for what hasn't been said, awareness of bird language, energetic space clearing, awareness of the mystery, sit spot, meditation, creativity, dreams, magic, beauty, unharmful trickery, sacred and profane	The mystery

**Finances :**      **Heritage Lottery Funded: £10.000**      **Community Foundation for Planetary Healing funded: £ 2.371**

Cost Heading	Agreed Costs (£)	Revised costs (£)	Proposed Costs (£)	Proposed use of Contingency	Reason for Change
Professional Fees	3,000	0	3,000	0	
Professional Fees	3,000	3,562	3,562	652	More hours of admin was needed than expected in order to complete the work.
Professional Fees	2,500	3,200	3,200	700	Less expenses with volunteers and more expenses with coordination and admin work.
Professional Fees	430	438	438	0	
Expenses for volunteers	800	171	171	0	We attracted more local volunteers and only a few had to travel from far, therefore, the cost of volunteers was less. The local volunteers did not want to claim their expenses and were happy for it to be used to support the project in something else needed.
Other	830	1183	1183	0	Insurance was 883 and use of the land was 300



Publicity and promotion	200	417	417	0	Costs of printing, designing leaflet, update website, host website, stamps and envelops to send leaflets to schools and other agencies working with young people, promotion in social medial, etc were a bit more than we expected.
Evaluation	400	0	400	0	
Contingency	900	0	900	0	