

## Case Study: Belville Community Garden

### Future Conversations at a community group

Pam Canda's experience as facilitator at [Belville Community Garden Trust](#) during spring and summer 2019, gives insight into the guided Future Conversations sessions and what this workshop can bring to people and organisations.

The group at Belville ranged in age from people in their early 20's through to people in their 60's. It was mainly women but the group, which was comprised of 6-10 people each session, usually had 2-3 men as well. The group met 8 times over 3 months.

A Wednesday afternoon in March was the first session, where Pam met with Geri Sinclair, Volunteer Coordinator at Belville, and volunteer Trisha Orr who took part in the facilitating, before the other participations arrived. The take off for the session was the dining area of Belville's large catering kitchen where the project's chef creates tasty and nutritious meals using food from [Fareshare](#).

At the end of one session, under the smiley face request for feedback one person commented: *"It is good to hear people care. I am used to people rolling their eyes everytime I open my mouth. The conversation needs to be had, no matter how hard it is."* And another: *"Getting to know and feel comfortable with all of the individuals in the group and the topic."* Under the unhappy face: *"Concerned about what is happening in the world right now,"* and *"Would be nice to spend time outdoors in fresh air..."*

The group did spend time outdoors in almost every subsequent session, taking advantage of the space at Belville to

- have a slow silent walk at least twice,
- visit the raised beds and butterfly gardens,
- just stop and look at the amazing view to the hills across the Clyde,
- reflect on how a tree's structure can be used to investigate our own well-being, and
- see some fox cubs playing in the sunshine!



In the wide-ranging gardens the group discussed and set up a planter for this group to experiment with their big idea arising from the Future Conversations sessions: growing vegetables especially for making soup and providing a soup kit to people to make their own soup at home from fresh locally grown ingredients. The group hope to further develop this idea to provide veg boxes in the next year and to hold gardening training sessions with intergenerational groups.

The group loved the idea of the Joanna Macy Work That Reconnects (WTR) spiral, and spent some time reminiscing about dandelion memories in response to the blown dandelion image connected with WTR and embraced the steps in the process. In the honouring our pain section of the spiral, people said they felt able to express their fears for the future whilst at the same time being supported and buoyed up by the others in their group of three.

There was an amazing synergistic feedback session after Joanna Macy's "over the hedge" exercise where participants envision the future and report back. The reporting back yielded overlapping visions, with people starting their feedback with "My story builds on yours by ...."

The participants created a collage of ideas about what community means, and what Belville could look like in the near future.



Actions discussed during the sessions ranged across various spheres, for example:

- a community growing and cooking project which welcomes everyone, no matter their capabilities, and finds a role suit to each.
- a project to help young people understand why destroying things, especially in parks and wild spaces, is harmful.
- the group committing to helping one member with a personal difficulty.

The group have expressed a desire to keep going and are looking at continuing to meet Wednesday afternoons to keep their soup veg plot going and to explore new concepts and to take on new actions. Geri and Trisha hope to run some permaculture sessions and to bring other practices to the group as well.

One thing added to each session was poem reading from [Looby McNamara](#), a permaculture teacher who writes about cultural emergence. Here is an excerpt from her poem Gratitude as an Attitude:

*...We arrive in the presence of now,  
The gift of the present.  
When we choose to view with an appreciative gaze  
Our mind chatter stills  
We are here and now and we are timeless.  
We are uniquely ourselves  
And undeniably connected.*