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|  | Speak Up - KōrerotiaCraft for therapy and wellbeing17 March 2021 |
| Male | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s access media station Plains FM and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana, E ngā reo, E ngā hau e whāTēnā koutou katoaNau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.Ko “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” tēnei, ko Sally Carlton ahau. Today we’re talking about craft for therapy and wellbeing which is a really nice topic but also one that’s actually really, really important and a really powerful way of people finding themselves and finding connection with others. And I think those are probably the two critical angles we’ll be looking at today: How does craft enable connection with self and connection with others and through craft then, how do we find ourselves within this bigger picture of the social world? We’ve got three guests today who are involved in craft or researching craft one way or another. I’ll leave it over to you to introduce yourselves, tell us a bit about yourselves and why you are involved today. Rosemarymary, perhaps we’ll start with you.  |
| Rosemarymary | Hi everyone, my name is Rosemarymary Omar and I lost my son Taraq in the terrorist attack on the 15 March and I found with the post-traumatic stress disorder I developed that I was unable to function properly and my counsellor and my victim support worker suggested that knitting might be a really good therapy with re-connecting the left and right side of the brain again. And so I, for a year, did basically… couldn’t read a pattern but did basic little garter stich, little knitting squares and joined it up finally into a big healing blanket and I chose colours that were colours that I’d either knitted previously for Taraq in beanies or a supposed jersey that I never knitted. I found it to be really therapeutic so I just wanted to pass that on to others. It helped me a lot.  |
| Sally | That’s great and I think that ties in really well with Jane’s research which is around craft as therapy.  |
| Jane | Kia ora, Jane Maidment tōku ingoa. I work at the University of Canterbury but prior to that I worked here at Ara and a group of us got together after the earthquakes because we saw that big resurgence of interest in craft and art and so we went out to talk to people about what they gained from being involved in craft post-earthquake and it was just amazing results in terms of the therapeutic gains but also a whole range of things and definitely fitting in with what you said, Rosemarymary, about sort of regaining some cognitive capacity as well.  |
| Rosemary | Yes.  |
| Amber | Kia ora, I’m Amber. I’m the coordinator of Craft Without Borders and for me personally, craft has been an escape through my experiences and troubles with mental health. It’s definitely been a sort of meditative and creative outlet for me in that form and also I find craft is just a really good connection tool as well as therapeutic. I think it’s really good for people to be able to come together and create together, I think that’s really therapeutic as well and I think it helps people… so I mean, Craft Without Borders is for people who come together from all different backgrounds and all different cultures and there’s no language to craft. So you can have 20 people in a room not speaking the same language and they can all do the same thing working with their hands and so I think craft is just an incredible connector.  |
| Sally | I like that idea of craft in itself almost being a language.  |
| Amber | Yes, definitely.  |
| Jane | And so much of what people craft, what they do in their craft is symbolic of a whole range of different things.  |
| Rosemary | That’s very true.  |
| Jane | I’ve got some pictures here, things people embroidered after the earthquakes. Cones with flowers on them - that might not mean anything to people from outside Christchurch but immediately that you’re in… you can connect with that. Another woman had done an embroidery of a building and named it with her friend’s name who had passed away when the building collapsed. So there’s lots of symbolic things that come out when doing the crafting.  |
| Rosemary | I found also, it’s a really good way for everybody just to get together and forget about the worries of the world and we just enjoy the day, those two hours just go so fast and we all just have a big laugh, you know. It’s really good to see that, just to have a bit of lightness in what can be quite a dark period of time.  |
| Jane | Do you know there’s a name for that?  |
| Rosemary | No.  |
| Jane | There’s a psychologist, I don’t know what nationality the psychologist was but in the 1990s, a guy called Csikszentmihalyi talked about the flow and the flow is when you just get so engrossed in what you do that time passes because you’re so connected with what you do. I mean, colloquially we call it being in the zone.  |
| Rosemary | Yes certainly, it’s very powerful and the ladies that are in the wee group that I do, say that they find it so helpful just to actually forget everything. One lady said when she felt really upset or really angry, she’d just pick up her knitting and it would just take away those feelings, it would just help balance her. Just not even being consciously mindful, it’s just re-connecting with the basic joining of your left and right hand with your brain, isn’t it really.  |
| Amber | Specifically it’s sessions like that, like what you do with the Empowerment Project and what we do with Craft Without Borders, it’s a specific time that you’re setting aside just for yourself as well. Like somewhere where you can go, you can create, you can make something and you don’t have to think of everything that’s going on outside, as you were saying.  |
| Rosemary | I’ve got three teenage girls that come along as well as some of the widows so it’s sort of intergenerational really and we’ve had a lady come along to the library who said look, can I please join your group and so she’s come along as well. So it’s sort of been more inclusive of everybody, it’s not sort of been in the little square box.  |
| Jane | A lot of people stereotype craft as being a nana thing, don’t they?  |
| Rosemary | Yes they do and I feel like you have to be really careful when you say you’re doing knitting because people look at you as if you must be in your dodderage or something.  |
| Sally | I think this is a really interesting point that we’ve touched on here: who does craft? So we’ve pointed to the idea that it’s for older people typically but I also imagine it’s seen very much as a feminine domain. Would that be correct?  |
| Amber | Definitely and I think a lot of the groups emerge out of women actually generating the initiative in a community-based way organically and those groups actually give back powerfully to the individuals and the communities as well in a whole range of different ways and it’s not recognised and I think it’s not recognised because it’s perceived as a women’s domain.  |
| Rosemary | Yes there is that stereotyping, isn’t there? There is a gentleman that wants to join our group and I think that’s a really positive step to just try not to be too much into this oh it’s only women that do it. But I do wonder if women tend to do it because they are much more willing to try something new and not be afraid of the failure, just actually get out there and do it and want to empower themselves a little bit more.  |
| Amber | We often get…well not often but yeah, we do get the odd male come to our craft group as well which is really cool, most of the time with their partner which is usually a female but yeah, they really get into it, they really get into it.  |
| Sally | Before we get too much further in our kōrero, what is craft? And I guess what is craft *not*? So could craft, for example, be the guys at the Menzshed with their woodworking?  |
| Amber | Mind if I skip back because I’m really glad you’ve mentioned the Menzshed - the association between men going to the Menzsheds and addressing mental health issues. It’s exactly the same for craft. That craft actually really helps women and men sort of get some respite or relief in terms of mental health. But women’s crafting has never attracted anything like the attention in the media or for research funding or for funding in operations like the Menzshed movement did in Australia. I can’t comment on New Zealand.  |
| Sally | Says something about the visibility or lack thereof, doesn’t it?  |
| Amber | Yes and taken for granted, assumptions. Mind you, I don’t think we’d want to commercialise or commodify what we have in terms of organic crafting initiatives from women. That might be a generalisation.  |
| Sally | So just on that second part of the question then. Is woodworking, the type of stuff that happens at the Menzshed, is that also a kind of a craft?  |
| All | Yes. Definitely.  |
| Jane | It’s finding a skill, it’s creating with your hands, it’s creating with your hands.  |
| Sally | Interesting, isn’t it, and yet we think about it being more or less a women’s domain but actually a lot of that stuff is very much traditionally seen as men’s work.  |
| Rosemary | Exactly and there were some very famous men like William Morris, a designer and craftsman in the crafting movement. Kaffe Fassett, knitting.  |
| Amber | Is he the guy who recycles his woollen stuff as well and he just makes heaps and heaps like really nice jerseys? |
| Jane | Really very colourful patterns and materials. I don’t know about the recycling but very prolific designer in knitting.  |
| Sally | Ok cool. We might have our first song then and we’ll go with Amber’s choice. You might have to tell us the name of the band and the name of the song seen as it is in Latvian.  |
| Amber | Zāle is the band and they’re a nice wee Latvian band. |
|  | **MUSIC** Zāle, ‘Smilšu Laiva’ |
| Sally  | This is Speak Up – Kōrerotia, we’re speaking with Amber Johnson of Craft Without Borders, Jane Maidment from the University of Canterbury and Rosemary Omar who is part of the Empowerment Project which is looking at craft as a way of healing after the 15th March. In this segment I’d like to think about what are some of the wellbeing benefits of craft, or the benefits that come with craft as a form of therapy. And I guess, just to kind of kick the conversation off, one of the things that strikes me when I think about this is it’s almost become a movement in recent years and I would think maybe in the last couple of decades probably. That it’s become more and more of a movement that people are deliberately stepping back from the hustle and bustle of very busy modern lives and craft provides an avenue to engage in something that’s of a slower pace and allows them to reconnect more with self.  |
| Amber | Yeah I think that you’re seeing more and more the age bracket is widening. So as we were saying before, it’s kind of seen as like an elder lady kind of thing but I mean in our craft group we get people as young as 13 and we get a lot of people around my age in their 30s as well. I think it’s becoming more of a broad thing I think. Also with the sustainable living and things like that, it’s becoming quite an interesting topic. There’s a lot of upcycling and learning to create your own, make your own. So I think craft is kind of merging with the sustainable lifestyle as well which is quite cool.  |
| Rosemary | And I think also with the lockdown, it taught us that we couldn’t go out, we couldn’t go out to have a coffee or whatever so let’s sit at home and do something constructive but which is also quite mindful as well. Looking at my own household, that was a really good opportunity for myself, for my younger daughter to pick up the needles or in her case, do some embroidery and just having that quiet time and you don’t have any technology on really, maybe a little bit of music in the background, and you talk and you talk about things that you might not necessarily talk about because you’re not looking at each other. So you just sort of open up and it just flows. And I think I found that, too, in the Empowerment Project, that things will come out. There’s that flow because we’re not sort of confronted by looking at each other so we feel quite comfortable and it’s just making really good foundations for people to express themselves and get on with each other and to survive.  |
| Jane | I think something that’s added to the growth in crafting is the online presence. Online in terms of sites like Ravelry but also online access to tutorials.  |
| Amber | Like tutorials on You Tube, you can teach yourself anything.  |
| Jane | Yeah so the internet has been a kind of a platform for people to engage with craft that may not have otherwise have done so if it was in person. And for people who are stuck at home for one reason or another or don’t feel they can go out, they can engage online.  |
| Rosemary | That’s really good, isn’t it, that we can use that technology. You know, use it to our advantage really.  |
| Amber | And as you were saying there’s been a lot of creativity coming out of Covid. Me and my husband were in Latvia for all of last year and we came back over Christmas and you know, you have to do your two weeks’ quarantine. Even in quarantine the things that people were coming up with! You get your dinner in a paper bag; well, people were making these outfits out of them and with lockdown, it’s just a way of expressing… it’s a way of busying the mind or calming the mind. Yeah, I think it’s been really good recently.  |
| Jane | I’ve got some photos here of things that people made after the earthquakes and one person, she talked about… she did these two pictures here in embroidery. She described them as the light and the dark and one picture shows two ambulances and helicopters - this was the dark side of post-earthquake - and the next picture shows the cardboard tubes arriving for the Cathedral, it’s got the cardboard tubes and a cross and she described those as key moments for her in terms of the earthquakes. That the sound of the helicopters, we all remember that and she wanted to kind of work on the light and the dark because it was important to represent those two sides. So heaps of creativity come out of really dark moments.  |
| Rosemary | That’s very true actually.  |
| Amber | And as you were saying Rosemary, it felt like it was really good for you in your therapy and I have my own experience with anxiety and things like that, it really helped me and I’ve also got a lot of close friends with severe anxiety problems that are incredible crafters and it’s their way of… as we were saying before, it is a way of mindfulness.  |
| Rosemary | And it is something you can do just for a short time and you don’t… It’s different to meditation where you sort of have to go through the process of meditating and you have to make a time which is quiet to do that, whereas you can have a lot of noise around you and pick up the… whatever the craft is and just go for it.  |
| Jane | And it’s portable, isn’t it?  |
| Rosemary | It is portable.  |
| Jane | You can do it in a café, you can do it on the plane.  |
| Amber | Yeah, yeah and going back to yours as well, you can use that as a creative way of expressing trauma or moving through something emotionally.  |
| Jane | It can be so personal, isn’t it, so personal that you know exactly what that means and just getting it out there really, isn’t it?  |
| Sally | How about a sense of pride or accomplishment that comes with crafting and what we’re talking about here in terms of fulfilment?  |
| Jane | Could I read a little quote? This is actually a male who said this in our research and it links in with what you were saying Rosemary about getting your cognition back. This person said after the earthquakes: “My brain was shot” - and I won’t say the next sentence - “the knitting has actually improved what I call working memory. So all I’m doing at the moment, I’m doing a basket stitch of four and even keeping four together hurts my brain. So you’ve got to keep a sequence of patterns, so I’m slowly clawing my brain back again. So that’s been one benefit. Also achieving something because I lost all my work after the earthquake so I need to see something for the effort I’m doing and knitting is very good to actually see something”.  |
| Rosemary | That’s very true. I’ve noticed that you know, some of the ladies have been worried because they may have dropped stitches or added extra stitches on and I know ideally if you’re following a knitting pattern, you need to be correct but I’ve said to them that no, that’s fine because life isn’t perfect. We just actually have to embrace the imperfections and even if you’ve ended up from 40 stitches to 50, that’s fine. It’s not about being perfect, it’s about acknowledging the whole spectrum that it is fine to make mistakes and this is just all part of learning really.  |
| Jane | The other thing I think crafting brings is it’s the whole gifting of what you’ve made and we’ve seen lots of that happening. There is a sense of reciprocity and a kind of… it’s not about accomplishment, it’s about being able to share. And we saw that after the terrorist attacks, we saw it after the earthquakes; I’m thinking about the Japanese students who were trapped in the CTV building, they were gifted quilts, handmade quilts. A group of people got together to make these quilts. The Lyttelton Hearts Project where all the Lyttelton hearts were made and given out to people. It’s about the gifting is sort of passing it on; it’s an important symbolic kind of gesture, I think.  |
| Rosemary | We received a quilt after March 15th and it’s important that connection to know that somebody actually cared enough to do that. We also received a teddy bear that somebody had made and it might sound small and insignificant but it actually meant so much.  |
| Amber | Those things are made with love, aren’t they?  |
| Rosemary | They are and it is all part of that and it works both ways, doesn’t it? The person who is doing the craft and the person who receives it as well.  |
| Amber | And I think there are so many different crafts out there that when it comes to the personal accomplishment, you can sit down and do something for two hours and you can have something wonderful to show. It doesn’t have to be this really long project, you can get instant gratification from sitting down and doing craft.  |
| Jane | That’s right. Or making cards or something like that.  |
| Amber | Yes.  |
| Sally | I imagine as well, precisely because there are so many kinds of craft, there’s always ways you can keep on challenging yourself as well though, if you’re after that… you might feel like yeah, I’m doing pretty well with my knitting, now I want to try crochet or now I want to try something else. There’s always that sense that you could keep evolving.  |
| Amber | Yeah I think that’s definitely… I think that people who are crafters, they’re crafters. They have their hands doing everything because it is, it’s almost addictive in a way.  |
| Rosemary | It is addictive. I was sort of thinking I kind of might border on hoarding with wool. |
| Jane | I was going to say stash. There are two things about your stash like… buying materials for another project or another ten projects.  |
| Amber | Yes I currently have four projects on at the go and they’re all different crafts – embroidery, crochet, yeah… I’m pretty bad. And I think once you’ve learnt one craft and you see somebody else doing something else, you’re like I could do that, I’d be really interested in trying that. It does grow into all these different hobbies.  |
| Jane | I became interested in crafting after watching my sister. She has a daughter with severe autism who was at home with her, she’s now residential care. But my sister was unable to go out during the day but she had this space around her that she could do her needlework and she got into that space and she got into her flow and she could do it and that really helped her mental health. But outside of that, things were quite chaotic. It’s immeasurable, the benefits of doing crafting.  |
| Sally | I think as well, you touched on it Rosemary, this idea of cognitive benefits and we hear about it all the time especially as you age doing things like crosswords and keeping your brain active supposedly helps with things like delaying the onset of dementia and those sorts of things. I imagine craft is much the same - you’re busy with your hands, you’re busy thinking through your stitching.  |
| Rosemary | Yes, so for me personally, with the death of my son and because I’d been present on the street, it was such a traumatic experience that even the most simplest tasks were most difficult. And I’d always been quite a prolific knitter before that and was able to knit very complicated patterns but I had completely lost that ability to even read the most simplest of patterns. So it took me a good year but it enabled me to get back to cooking, to being able to read a recipe, to being able to play the piano again - and they might sound very basic but you know, when you’re living in that nightmare, you need everything you can get. And you know, I think the fact that I can now knit slightly more complicated knitting patterns has helped as well. But it is very hard when you don’t have that concentration ability. But just even ten minutes is so beneficial.  |
| Sally | We might have our second song then and we’ll go with ‘Somewhere Over the Rainbow’ by Israel.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY ISRAEL KAMAKAWIWO’OLE – SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW** |
| Sally | This is Speak Up – Kōrerotia. We’re talking about craft for therapy and wellbeing. We’ve been talking about the many, many benefits that craft can enable. One that we haven’t touched on and that I wonder about is how that connection to a kind of a simpler time and also that idea of connecting to culture. So we’ve talked about craft as knitting and things like that but there are also crafts that are very culturally significant. That might be weaving harakeke for example and those sort of connectivities that can come through craft as well.  |
| Jane | I think often what is crafted and what is used for craft are often reflective of the context in which it’s done and so in New Zealand we do have such a strong Māori crafting narrative and practices with harakeke. We saw, too, after the earthquakes, reflections of the place. The place was important in crafting, being symbolic of things around Christchurch and the surrounding district.  |
| Amber | Because there is no language to craft, craft can be done anywhere you know, and it is, craft is done all over the world and at Craft Without Borders we encourage people to come and teach their craft from their own culture and things like that and it’s amazing, actually, how they crossover culturally. Like harakeke weaving we do but also in places in Africa, they also do grass weaving to make baskets and things like that. Like it crosses over so much. You see tie dye as something… if you ever lived in the ‘70s or something but also Japanese shibori is the form of tie dye that they do with indigo ink. And it really does crossover cultures. But it’s also a really beautiful way of expressing and it’s also a really beautiful way of showing you a culture, like that’s what we try and encourage at Craft Without Borders because the whole point of Craft Without Borders is for people to connect. It’s to break down to stigmas, it’s for people to actually get to know people from different cultures because in Aotearoa, we do tend to fall into our wee groups and we don’t really see outside of that and so it’s for people… both the wider, say community and migrants and former refugees to come together and actually get to know each other by creating. We also have food - I would say food is definitely a craft; cooking is definitely a craft - we have food days where we get people to bring like a cultural dish and the excitement and joy people have in sharing their culture with people in this way is really, really lovely. It’s a way of showing people that don’t know anything about your culture, just how beautiful it can be and how expressive.  |
| Rosemary | For me, I found it very interesting the stories from some of the other women who talk about their mothers being Palestinian who use knitting for the same reason, for the stress of their daily lives. Because I obviously was very insular and sort of stereotyped knitting into maybe just white women do, of European descent. So it’s been really enlightening just to know that it’s actually much more broader than that. The fact is our group is so multicultural as well which is really great.  |
| Amber | Before Craft Without Borders, the whole reason that it started was I was doing another project with former refugees and I went around to interview this lady and she was Ethiopian, oh, a wonderful woman and her whole house was just covered in crochet and knit projects and I was kind of sitting there and she was like yeah, in Ethiopia, from a young age she was crocheting and stuff and I was like oh that was my first craft, that’s my baby craft was crocheting. So it really blew my mind as well because I didn’t realise that.  |
| Rosemary | Yes I didn’t realise either, I just falsely assumed that it was just European women that would do that task. But then that could be also because it’s been so generational in my own family as well, it seems like every generation there’s always a knitter or two or three or four or more.  |
| Jane | The indigenous crafting goes back many, many, many generations. The carving, the weaving.  |
| Rosemary | That’s right, that’s true.  |
| Sally | I think that’s another really valuable point that you’ve raised here is this idea of crafting as an intergenerational tool that you can use to tell stories and pass on traditions. But also, as we’ve been talking, pass on tips for wellbeing.  |
| Rosemary | My grandmother taught me to knit and she was married with two children during the Second World War when her husband went overseas and my mother tells stories of her being up knitting at 3am and 4am and I never really thought a lot about it until losing my son Taraq and then I just kind of clicked that that would have been her anxiety and that knitting was her release as well. Plus, it was her time. You can see that through the generations it has been used as a creative thing and also it would have been served as a purpose for clothing during those days but it would have also been so mindful for her as well.  |
| Sally | That’s another good point that you raised, I think, as well, is that it enables connection. So your grandma taught you and that might be a task that you guys did together, just the two of you.  |
| Rosemary | That’s right. I don’t know why she was so patient and now looking back I think gosh, you know, I think I was about eight or nine so reasonably young but she was very firm. So very loving as well. So I think it was a really good opportunity when I would go and stay with her and she obviously thought oh how to keep Rosemary interested, let’s sit down and knit. And so we’d knit together and I’d knit all these hideous little squares which would be minus 50 stitches here or there and what have you. Lots of holes. But it was a good way to share the love as well.  |
| Jane | After the earthquakes there was a lot of broken china and things like that and so we got stories of people who had broken china from grandparents that were then made into mosaics for the garden in different places but to be passed on to children. So it’s like while you can’t pass the tea set down anymore, it can be reformed into something and to pass on and there was jewellery, a lot of jewellery made from recycled glass and wood and things like that.  |
| Rosemary | I think that’s really wonderful to be able to use that and to pass it forward and it doesn’t have to be traditional form.  |
| Amber | Yes that’s the great thing about craft is that it’s also just creating out of things that are otherwise seen as broken and recreating it which is kind of a metaphor for what craft is. When you’re feeling in a way broken, it’s a really good way of like reviving you.  |
| Rosemary | That’s very true. It is part of that healing, isn’t it, putting those pieces back together from your own person level to, in this case, with the ceramics… mosaics, rather. Just to put it all together, totally relate to that.  |
| Sally | We’ve got some Christmas tree stars that were made from upcycled wood from some of the houses in the red zone. I think that was Rekindle’s project way back when. It’s really nice to think that you’ve got something that’s been saved from a building tip, basically, but also it’s got that special meaning because it was part of the red zone and it’s connected to Ōtautahi and that sort of feeling of connection to place that you were touching on.  |
| Jane | And I mean, I think people also, during that time and also post-March 15 did things to symbolically signal hope in some way. Like these big hearts that were made and put on fences. A whole range of things were created to sort of say OK, this terrible thing has happened but we’re still here.  |
| Rosemary | I think it was healing for those people as well, so it had a multi-fold passed it on as well as healing for themselves because there’s no denying that the earthquake or the terrorist attack… even if you weren’t directly affected, you were affected by it and so what better way than to do something constructive like that.  |
| Jane | It’s a positive thing.  |
| Rosemary | It is a positive thing.  |
| Jane | In the face of terrible things.  |
| Rosemary | Yes, yes.  |
| Amber | And I think as you were saying, even if you’re not… you weren’t directly affected, you were still affected and I think when you’re in a position of seeing struggles and trauma and pain around you, the sense of being able to actually do something - even if it is just creating a heart and putting it up somewhere - it gives you a sense of giving back as well and of contributing and helping in anyway. And I think that’s really beautiful with what came out of both of those traumatic experiences where people were wanting to help, not knowing what to do. So creating these things, it could at least in some way show hey, I’m trying to help.  |
| Jane | Yeah I think that’s part of a kind of communal coping, like community altogether and we saw it with the… Do you remember the container in Sumner that was covered in squares? That was done from squares from right across New Zealand and overseas, people wanted to say we are thinking of you, we are going to contribute to this project, you’re in our hearts and minds. It’s symbolic of a communal kind of coping.  |
| Rosemary | That’s very true. So I know when my son Taraq was killed, one of my cousins had a school in Wellington on one of the Fridays, the whole school did a whole lot of pictures just to say oh, send their love to the families and I think it’s really great that it showed that a whole school, primary school, can come together and make something creative in the face of adversity and just healing for them as well. Every time you’d watch the news, it’s something traumatic and dreadful, isn’t it, so it’s such a nice light thing to do.  |
| Amber | It’s a great way of expressing as well, like creating is a great way of expressing whatever you’re wanting to express. Whether it be trauma, love, anything.  |
| Rosemary | That’s true.  |
| Sally | We’ll have our final song break then. We’ve got ‘Peace Train’ by Yusuf Islam, Cat Stevens.  |
| Rosemary | Yes I chose ‘Peace Train’ because the last Tuesday before Taraq was killed on the Friday, we heard it on the car radio and it sort of sparked a bit of a discussion about how Cat Stevens because Yusuf Islam and it seemed quite significant when it was played at the national memorial and it just seems really personal and it also feels like it would be an ideal world, just to have a bit of peace.  |
|  | **MUSIC - Yusuf Islam, ‘Peace Train’** |
| Sally  | This is Speak Up – Kōrerotia and today we’re talking about craft, therapy, and wellbeing and one angle that we haven’t spoken about too much although we have already touched on it is craft as ecology or craft as sustainability.  |
| Rosemary | That’s wonderful if you can find crafts that you can recycle rather than throwing them in the rubbish. But for me it’s even about just even the prospect of having a first grandchild, I sort of done a lot of little knitting and I found all these buttons that my mother had cut off. So it’s even about recycling those buttons that she used but it’s also got a personal connection as well. So you just think about who wore those before hand and just passing it on. So I think it’s a wonderful thing to do, go to an op-shop or whatever and find little bits of wool that you can use or whatever craft you need.  |
| Amber | Yeah as we were saying before like upcycling, it’s a form of upcycling and upcycling is definitely kind of becoming more and more popular as people realise what a consumer-driven world we are in, how much rubbish we put out there and actually, how much we can create from it. So I think it’s really good in that aspect. And as you were saying before, just little things like the stars that were created out of houses, the wood that would have been just thrown away from the red zone and yeah, and also using nature in a way. Like Rekindle you mentioned before are perfect in that way, using like tī kōuka leaves, like cabbage tree leaves, which people see as pests because you can’t mow your lawn over them and stuff whereas you can actually create rope with them. You can create like really strong rope, really strong baskets. And it’s a way of seeing what we’ve got and being able to do something with it instead of creating more and more. We’ve already got so much already.  |
| Jane | Like using the flowers from gorse to… |
| Amber | Yes, natural dyes, elderberry flowers or elderberry berries, things like that as natural dyes.  |
| Jane | It’s about getting back to really basics and just expanding the mind and just going for whatever you can really isn’t it.  |
| Amber | Yes, getting creative with ideas.  |
| Jane | Just don’t be limited by what people say or thing, get out of that box and go out there and pick the elderberries and try and see what colours you can get.  |
| Sally | I think this idea of the consumer-driven material world is really important because if you’re going out and you’re finding your own dyes, you’re not using chemicals, for example. Not only are you using the natural world but you are deliberately not using chemicals and deliberately not buying that new T-shirt or whatever it is, contributing to this broader idea of sustainability as well.  |
| Amber | I know a friend that goes around op-shops and looks for ugly woollen jerseys and then unravels them and uses the wool to make something else. You can upcycle in so many different ways.  |
| Jane | That’s one of the things that I really noticed in crafting and talking to people about their crafting, is that crafters tend to be a really generous lot and they like to share stuff, their things. So when people are in desperate straits financially, if they come into a craft group, most often they’ll get lots of people giving them stuff to do things with. It’s actually… people like to share their resources and you can do a lot with a little in crafting and a lot with just things that you find around your house. I mean, some people can spend a lot on your craft but you don’t need to do that to actually make really cool stuff.  |
| Amber | Yes, and actually with the terrorist attacks, Rebecca Parnham, she created Giving Seeds of Love and she took all the donated flowers and the cards that were put outside the mosque and outside areas of collections. She got them all in and all the paper and she mulched them up and put seeds into them and created them into hearts and put wildflower seeds in them. Things like that and Simone…. I can’t remember her last name. But Simone, she went and got all the plastic paper that goes around the flowers from those tributes and she made these beautiful flowers and she made this big UNITY sign for Uniting Canterbury Women and yeah, it’s amazing how creative people can be with what’s available to them.  |
| Rosemary | Looking at the tributes, some people had collected stones and shells and painted them. Beautiful, beautiful work. So without too much expense. Yeah.  |
| Sally | And without too much resource either. The idea of upcycling the card and the plastic from the tributes, I think, is particularly poignant. The same with the stars from the red zone housing. You’re taking something that had so much significance and using it as a way of looking forward and providing hope.   |
| All | Yes.  |
| Amber | Especially with the things like Giving Seeds of Love. The whole point of them being wildflowers was to show like that wildflowers are so diverse and beautiful and strong and it’s kind of like a representation of our community and the world and yeah, there’s so many ways of being able to put symbolism into it all as well.  |
| Jane | Completely and being able to send some of those things - not necessarily the seeds but some of those things - being able to send them overseas helped connect other family members to what was happening.  |
| Amber | And the workshops that Rebecca was doing, the majority of those hearts were made by children. Children that wanted to give back, that were also going through an experience that they didn’t understand and giving them something that they could do together and a way of them being able to give back together. So they felt like it brought them together and for them to connect and also gave them a way of expressing and giving their love.  |
| Sally | It’s great that you’ve brought up Giving Seeds of Love because the show that aired earlier in March and was about community initiatives after the 15th March and we had Rebecca on as one of the guests.  |
| Amber | Cool. She does amazing things, that woman.  |
| Sally | Just to finish off, Jane, you’ve done a lot of research in this area - the idea of craft as therapy and wellbeing and I notice in one of your articles you talk about ‘post-traumatic growth’ and craft as enabling that. And I thought that might be a really nice way for us to wind up our conversation today and this idea of growing through craft.  |
| Jane | So that notion of post-traumatic growth is kind of a counter discourse to the idea that everything is terrible post-disaster and that idea that people actually have within themselves resilience and recognising that and it’s about that huge distress co-existing with resilience at the same time. And that’s kind of what we saw after the earthquakes and after the terrorist attack, was whilst there was terrible distress, there was also demonstration of amazing capacity for community resilience and giving and an outpouring of love. And so post-traumatic growth really recognises that that is possible and that within this activity of crafting was kind of like a vehicle for doing that, for expressing that resilience.  |
| Rosemary | Both those cases have been such a dark time for the city and New Zealand as a whole but more specifically, Christchurch and I think just to actually have an outlet, just to express yourself and it doesn’t have to be perfect, it can just be whatever. I think it just shows such a lot of support for those who received it but also a lot of good for those who did it really.  |
| Amber | And I think the beauty about craft is that it can be your own personal therapeutic outlet. It can be done alone, it could be done with many and as you were saying, like you sit around and when you’re crafting, you’ve got something in your hands to kind of fiddle with in a way while you can express things that you wouldn’t normally feel comfortable expressing if you were confronted face to face with someone, looking in each other’s eyes. So it gives you an opportunity as a collective group to connect closer and it gives you an opportunity personally to connect closer to yourself.  |
| Jane | Absolutely and one of the things about post-traumatic growth is having opportunity for rumination and that’s what people could do with their crafting while they came together post-earthquake, they were doing their things, their knitting or crocheting or card… whatever. But they were talking about their problems with insurance or whether or not they had got their repairs done or not or whether or not they could move… all of those things were talked about over the crafting and that kind of opportunity to share and ruminate sort of contributes to the meaning making.  |
| Rosemary | Yes, it does, that’s very true.  |
| Amber | And actually just to touch on the Menzshed again, that’s actually really beautiful as well because men and mental health, there’s definitely a lot of barriers there and I think for places like the Menzshed where they can go and create but have the opportunity to also talk and express is an incredible healing opportunity and that’s just another way of showing that craft is a healer and as a healing modality, it’s actually broadening its scope into different age groups, different genders, different…yeah.  |
| Sally | It would be nice to think as well that the research that you’re doing Jane and various other things, these types of conversations that we’re having, the various groups that are springing up might eventually make more of a change in terms of it being more visible.  |
| All | Yes.  |
| Rosemary | And I think it’s setting a greater example, isn’t it, for future generations, to know that you can actually do this and you’re not limited by, like you say, resources or ideas or anything, you can just get out there and go for it really.  |
| Sally | Well that seems like a nice place to finish up, just get out there and go for it. If you’re interested, we’ve obviously got Craft Without Borders if you want to come and just learn some new crafts. The Empowerment Project is an open group as well, if people want to come along and join the knitters. The invitation is there if you are keen, come along and join them. Kia ora koutou, thank you so much. It was really heartening discussion today.  |
| All | Thank you.  |