

The arts-based delivery of an innovative model of aged care: Systematising and disseminating the Virtual Eastern Bay Villages: Te Kokoru Manaakitanga (VEBV: TKM) model of ageing in place research project



Art and Meditation Workshop participants, Whakatāne, March 2023

End of project report for Te Tari Kaumātua, Office for Seniors, October 2023

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Executive Summary

A common definition of 'ageing in place' is articulated by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as, "the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level" (CDC, 2009). In their consumer-informed research, Grimmer K. D., Foot J. & Pastakia K. (2015) identified personal characteristics required for successful ageing in place as: independence, adaptability, and resilience, with key elements of successful ageing in place, summarised in the acronym HIPFACTS: health, information, practical assistance, finance, activity (physical and mental), company (family, friends, neighbours, pets), transport, and safety. In their comprehensive review of literature about Ageing in Place, Pani-Harreman et al., (2021) discuss HIPFACTS scores as they relate to successful Ageing in Place, with low HIPFACTS scores indicating "modest self-reliance", which correlates with unsuccessful ageing in place. The features of the Virtual Eastern Bay Villages: Te Kokoru Manaakitanga (VEBV: TKM) detailed below highlight ways in which the personal characteristics described by Grimmer et al., (2015) are strengthened by membership in the VEBV: TKM. While the VEBV: TKM offers many of Grimmer et al.'s elements of successful Ageing in Place - HIPFACTS, their focus on emotional intelligence in the provision of these elements offers an additional and much needed element to successful ageing in place.

Key Features of the VEBV: TKM's Successful Model of Ageing in Place

The key features of the successful VEBV: TKM ageing in place model detailed below are drawn from the project's findings detailed in the Findings section. The first three features, which contain 'sub-features' have been taken from Themes One and Two in the Findings section, while the fourth is drawn from Themes Three and Four in the Findings, which focuses on the participants experiences of the workshop.

1. What Brought People to the VEBV: TKM

To understand what makes the VEBV: TKM work, it is important to consider what brought individuals to the organisation. Primarily this is related to:

- impacts of major life changes, such as a loss of identity, fear of meeting new people, loneliness, and isolation brought individuals to the VEBV: TKM. In addition, individual's histories underpinning these changes are important to consider.
- the necessity to have coordinators who are skilled connectors and have strong emotional intelligence.

2. Key Features of the VEBV: TKM, What Makes it Work

Emotional labour

Of equal importance to its activities, and all the VEBV: TKM does, is the manner in which it facilitates these activities. That is, they place as much, if not more, importance on 'how' they do things as on 'what' they do. The creation and provision of an inclusive, supportive, kind, non-judgmental culture, is reliant on the direction of the VEBV: TKM board, its coordinator's skills as a connector or 'people specialist' and their strong emotional intelligence, and the way they, and the values of the organisation, encourage the same in its members. This focus in the VEBV: TKM aligns with the concept of "transcendence" a criterion for healthy ageing that broadens the goals of healthy ageing. Lander-McCarthy & Bockweg's (2013) define transcendence as an inherent process that is a gradual, nonlinear

expansion of conceptual boundaries; that is, one's personal limits or internal rules and expectations of oneself, others, and the world" (p. 86). With the outcomes of transcendence being "a sense of meaning in life, well-being, life satisfaction, and a decreased fear of death" (ibid).

The Two Whare (Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti) Governance Model

The strong emotional intelligence and labour that underpins the VEBV: TKM's culture of kindness, mutual support, and inclusivity, is supported by the VEBV: TKM's two whare (Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti) governance model with Māori and European / Pākehā co-chairs of the VEBV: TKM board, and Māori and European/ Pākehā coordinators. In addition to the co-chairs, the board consists of four trustees, and a cultural advisor. This approach to governance highlights the importance of having equitable governance systems, that reflect the context of the ageing in place organisation.

The VEBV: TKM Activities and the Information that is Provided

As with other ageing in place initiatives/organisations, the VEBV: TKM supports many of the factors required for high HIPFACTS scores, through their activities, provision of useful information, and networking with aligned organisations. Particularly important for participants was having the opportunity to make friends, and this was facilitated through the VEBV: TKM's activities:

- These activities include: coffee mornings, public meetings with guest speakers, outings to local attractions, shared meals, and educational programmes, such as the "Oranga Kai/Just Cook" programme they run in partnership with the NZ Nutrition Foundation (Please see: <https://www.virtualeasternbayvillages.org.nz/events-programmes>).
- The VEBV: TKM network with aligned organisations in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, such as Grey Power, Te Puna Ora o Mataatua, Probus, Rotary, and Alzheimers New Zealand.
- The VEBV: TKM provides useful information, such as a list of trustworthy and economical handy people, special deals on essential items, and recommendations for other organisations that members might want to join such as Probus and the University of the Third Age (U3A). Members are regularly kept informed about upcoming VEBV: TKM events, and other

information they may find useful, and this is done both through email and a hardcopy newsletter.

3. Fosters Connection, Community and Strengthens Agency and Resilience

It is not Service Provision

Related to the VEBV: TKM's recognition of the importance and support of strong emotional intelligence and labour is the way the VEBV: TKM differentiates what it does from service provision. This is clearly stated in their mission, which affirms that they seek, "to foster well-being for seniors/pakeke in our communities, families and extended families/whānau/hapū/iwi by promoting mutual support and reciprocal relationships" (<https://www.virtualeasternbayvillages.org.nz/>, para. 4, 2023).

Acknowledgement of members skills and experience

While activities are important in what the VEBV: TKM does, particularly as these activities are the entry-points for the development of connection and friendship, equally important is the acknowledgment of members skills and abilities, and the way that members are matched with each other to provide mutual support. This starts when individuals join the VEBV: TKM and can be seen in several of the questions in the VEBV: TKM's new member application form, such as: "Are there skills you enjoy and might be willing to share?", "What would you be interested in learning about?" and "What brings you joy?".

Member-led

The VEBV: TKM is member-led, which was described by one of the board members who explained that "there's a core group that get together on a monthly basis, and they'll solicit feedback from other members. The core group is representative of the member group, though members of this group do change." Currently members requests for support via the core group have resulted in the "Digital buddies" programme, and the VEBV: TKM sub-committees, including the Whānau led funerals/tangihanga, and the Accessible Transport Solutions, Waka Eastern Bay. Also, members are supported to create break-away groups focused on their

interests and needs. These groups include coffee mornings in areas surrounding Whakatāne, the Ukulele Group, the *Walkie Talkies* walking group, and a Men's Group. Lastly, members are supported to build networks with other organisations, and meet socially with each other outside of the VEBV: TKM. The VEBV: TKM is agile and able to change its approach when needed, this happened for example, when the transport and funeral initiatives, which had initially been housed in the VEBV: TKM, became VEBV: TKM 'sub-committees' with their own governance structures.

When discussing what the VEBV: TKM does well a board member mentioned the organisation's agility saying:

One of the good things about the Virtual Eastern Bay Villages is it can react quite quickly to changes in circumstances, without having a lot of red tape to go through. So, you can adapt and mould the support or the connection quite quickly if the need is there. Whereas other organisations I've worked with, you sort of have to prepare a proposal, and get it signed off, and so forth, and by the end of that you're six weeks down the track. While we as an organisation can react quickly to change – if there is a need now, it can be met right now!

Describing one of the things about the VEBV: TKM that could be improved the same board member named 'marketing,' she said:

One of the things we don't do well is marketing. I think for example we could be working with real estate agents, and every time they sell a property to someone out of town, who is over 65, that person would get an information pack. I think we have a big job to do with marketing. So, its marketing ourselves and marketing what the community of Eastern Bay Villages can offer to each other.

4. The benefits for the VEBV: TKM members of participating in the art and meditation workshop

Experience of the workshop's contemplative art practices, and sharing circles, was not only pleasurable but led to heightened self-awareness and change for participants. The realisations they gained by participating in the workshop related

to their lives and the impacts of membership in the VEBV: TKM. The latter revealed important features of the VEBV: TKM. Art works created in the workshop's first session illustrate ways that participants understand different aspects of themselves, for example what gave them a sense of power, and what provided strength and pleasure. Gaining this kind of self-awareness is important for older people, and those working with them in ageing in place organisations (Poulos et al., 2019). The longer practices in the second half of the workshop provided important information about participants' experience before coming to the VEBV: TKM, and therefore what kind of supports they might have needed, and what the VEBV: TKM had provided. Participants spoke about their loneliness, isolation, and fear of connecting with others before joining the VEBV: TKM, and how becoming a member helped them to open up and expand their personal boundaries (Lander-McCarthy & Bockweg's, 2013). This resulted from the friendships they developed, and the new meaning and pleasure they found in their lives. As Peter emphasised, "I've found a lot more colour!".

In summary, key features for creating and running an ageing in place organisation

What brought people to the VEBV: TKM

All of the participants spoke of the negative impacts in their lives of significant life changes, and how this brought them to the VEBV: TKM. Bearing this in mind it is important to have coordinators who are skilled connectors, with strong emotional intelligence, and to not only consider member's immediate circumstances, and some of the common issues related to ageing, such as declining health, loneliness, and isolation, but the circumstances leading up to those more obvious issues. This requires the strong emotional intelligence that was repeatedly described in the participants interviews. They also spoke of the need to allow time for people to adjust when they first become members, and the need to be open to the many different 'personality types' of members.

As Mary said, "The group thing is alright but for some it's easier to express themselves than for others." When describing the major changes, she had experienced Mary explained:

You know, you're suddenly thrown out of the life you had. It was sort of just like cut off and I actually miss all the input we had sort of, you know, because it's just gone...and I was talking the other day to one of the men there who looked a bit lonely on the Monday, so I started talking to him and he said, 'it's quite hard, just till you get to that level that the others are in already.'

Key Features of the VEBV: TKM, What Makes it Work

There are three central features comprising the efficacy of the VEBV: TKM, and over and above these features is the need for the strong emotional intelligence of all involved (Wilson & Saklofske, 2018; Chen, Peng & Fang, 2016):

- Coordinators are not only important for bringing members to the organisation, but they also need certain attributes for the flourishing of the organisation and its members. All participants named these attributes, describing the coordinators as: outgoing, friendly, non-judgemental, helpful and patient, good organisers and professional, supportive, willing to help, and good connectors.
- Certain traits of members need to be supported and encouraged by the coordinators and values of the VEBV: TKM, particularly the core value of facilitating members ability to connect and help each other. Attributes of their fellow VEBV: TKM members that participants said they liked were their kindness, thoughtfulness, that they were non-judgemental, supportive, caring, loving, and that they had a genuine desire to help each other.
- Having the opportunity, via the organisations activities to gain and maintain friendships is central. It is also helpful to have a range of activities starting with those that offer an easy entry point, such as a coffee morning that only lasts a few hours, progressing to day-long activities, such as visits to local art galleries or gardens. It is helpful if members are supported to create 'break away' groups, and have the ability to suggest additional activities and projects, as the VEBV: TKM members have done with their digital literacy and transport groups, and that coordinators are regularly in contact with members about upcoming activities, and encourage members to join these activities. Lastly, it is not only important to offer members the help, information and support they require in a 'personalised way', but it is

equally important to assist members to offer help, information, and support to each other.

Fosters Connection, Community and Strengthens Agency and Resilience

The fact that the VEBV: TKM does not 'provide services' was regularly mentioned by participants. In contrast when asked what the VEBV: TKM's core value was, a board member simply said "reciprocity". The VEBV: TKM, which is member-led, acknowledges members skills and abilities, and matches members through these skills and abilities to enable mutual support. This is pivotal for the way that the VEBV: TKM fosters reciprocity, agency, resilience, and community.

The benefits for older people of contemplative and creative practices

Findings related to the project's meditation and art workshop suggest that:

- Contemplative and creative practice sessions and sharing circles can be enjoyable and beneficial for older people. The need for such practices is affirmed by scholars working on 'healthy ageing,' such as Berg-Weger & Morley, 2020; Jansson & Pitkälä, 2021; Klimecki et al., 2019; Lander-McCarthy & Bockweg, 2013; Malchiodi, 2012; McFadden and Basting, 2010; Nilsson, Bülow & Kazemi, 2015, and Yuen & Baime, 2006.
- The variety of reasons that participants gave for attending the art and meditation workshop provided insight into participants areas of interest, while highlighting pursuits that could be useful to cater for in ageing in place organisations. These included an interest in art and meditation, or a desire to explore these practices further; an interest in, and desire to support research on older people; curiosity about, and desire for new experiences; learning about anything 'outside of the box' and a desire for self-expression and understanding, described by one of the participants as a way "to try and find myself within myself."
- In addition to the benefits gained and pleasure participants experienced in the workshop, they also described how engaging the Meditative Process Art (MPA) method led to heightened self-awareness about aspects of their lives, including impacts of joining the VEBV: TKM. Providing opportunities to engage in a non-medicalised and enjoyable

self-development/self-awareness process, that includes art, meditation and sharing circles, in a supportive, non-judgmental, scaffolded manner can be very useful for ageing in place organisations to include in what they do (Flood & Phillips, 2007; Hanna, 2013).

The Issue

New Zealand's growing, ageing population is, and will continue to exert significant health, social, and economic pressures on New Zealand. These pressures, which are similar for other Western countries, are exacerbated by changes to family values and structures, including the growing prevalence of nuclear families. The changes have negatively impacted the amount of family support that many older adults now receive. Concurrently, questions have been raised about the effectiveness of traditional models of care, as detailed in the then Office for Senior Citizen's (now the Office for Seniors, Te Tari Kaumātua) (2014) report on their *Positive Ageing Strategy*. Additionally, as the population ages there will be an increased demand for expensive long-term formal care and a decrease in care workers (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MIBE), 2009). Intergenerational equity (in this case fairness and justice related to the burden of costs carried by a younger generation for one that is ageing), and increased fiscal pressures, mean that current models of care for older people are becoming unsustainable, and in some cases are unsuitable. In response to these issues the New Zealand government's *Positive Ageing Strategy* (Ministry of Social Development, 2011) highlights the need for new models, including the development of age friendly environments, and ageing in place. These are strengths-based models that encourage and support inclusivity, diversity, agency, and socialisation. Initiatives like the Virtual Eastern Bay Villages: Te Kokoru Manaakitanga (VEBV: TKM) that are member-led, and emphasise participation and social support networks, are key to long term positive outcomes and wellbeing for older people (Bowling, 1991; Bowling & Farquar, 1991).

The Project

The “Arts-Based Delivery of An Innovative Model of Aged Care: Systematising and Disseminating the Virtual Eastern Bay Villages Model of Ageing in Place” research project, funded by the New Zealand Office for Seniors - Te Tari Kaumātua, was conducted at the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, the University of Auckland, Auckland, and in Whakatāne, the Eastern Bay of Plenty, New Zealand, 2022-23. This qualitative, community- and arts-based research was evaluative and sought to identify key features of the VEBV: TKM, a successful ageing in place initiative in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. The research highlights and engages a gap in health research focused on older people. With much of the research in the field examining biomedical and physical needs of older people, rather than working to understand older people as active participants in their own care, as opposed to passive recipients of services. The two outputs of the research project are this report describing the VEBV: TKM model of ageing in place, and the *Ageing Well Together* virtual exhibition <https://Ageingwelltogether.co.nz>, which acts as a knowledge translation tool. Features of the model described in both outcomes have been drawn from interviews with key members of the VEBV: TKM, members who participated in the project’s contemplative art workshop, and reflections with the participants on their artworks and poetry.

Phase One

Activities for this project started in 2022 with the lead researcher Dr Patricia Morgan becoming a contractor with the University of Auckland University (UOA), and preliminary meetings with the research team. A lengthy ethics application followed, with ethics gained from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee in January 2023. The twelve documents created for the ethics application included three sets of Participant Information and Consent forms - one each for workshop participants, the VEBV: TKM Coordinator, and VEBV: TKM board members; an interview schedule for participant groups; a workshop poster; a set of focus group questions; a confidentiality agreement for the project transcriber, an email for potential participants if the workshop was oversubscribed, and a project timeline. Because of the arts-based nature of this project a detailed

overview of the art workshop was created, which included consideration of how the workshop would be documented. This information was included in the ethics application form and informed the workshop Participant Information Sheets. A letter of support from the VEBV: TKM was also required and received in October 2022.

The Project Team

- Professor Ngaire Kerse, MNZM (PI), Chair in Ageing Well General Practice and Primary Healthcare, the University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Dr Patricia Morgan, Research Associate, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, the University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Mrs Sandra McDonald (Advisor), Senior Lecturer Māori, Te Pūkenga, Manukau, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Dr Kathy Peri, (Advisor) Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, Nursing, the University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Mrs Ruth Gerzon, (research project advisor) MNZM, VEBV: TKM, Whakatāne, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand (VEBV: TKM's first coordinator).

Phase Two, The Workshop

The research project's first data collection site was its art and meditation workshop. The purpose of this workshop was to support participants to move beyond cognitive discursive understanding to a deeper subjective engagement with their experience of the VEBV: TKM. We took this approach as the VEBV: TKM's success appears in part to relate to the way it engages subjective realms, including the way VEBV: TKM encourages relationality, or as Ruth Gerson the past VEBV: TKM's coordinator, drawing from Cormac Russell (2022), puts it, the VEBV: TKM is a community of interdependence with a welcome to the stranger at the edge.

Preparations

After receiving ethics approval, the lead researcher contacted the VEBV: TKM coordinator to start recruitment and find a suitable time to run the art and meditation workshop. Initially this was designed as a 3-week workshop series, but

the VEBV: TKM coordinator was concerned that VEBV: TKM members would not be able to commit to 3 sessions, and it was decided to run a one-day workshop. The workshop was advertised in the VEBV: TKM's newsletter and the VEBV: TKM's coordinators informed members about the workshop at different VEBV: TKM events.

The workshop was originally planned for late February but had to be moved to early March because of impacts of a major storm and Cyclone Gabrielle in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. The workshop ran on 2 March 2023, from 10am – 4pm at the Knox Presbyterian Church, Domain Road, Whakatāne. Prior to the workshop Dr Morgan coordinated participant recruitment with the VEBV: TKM coordinators, which included providing participants with the information and consent forms and answered any questions regarding these forms and the workshop. Lastly, before the workshop Dr Morgan purchased the workshop art supplies.

The Workshop Poster

THE VEBV AND ME:
A research project using meditative art to express your feelings about and experiences of the Virtual Eastern Bay Villages (VEBV)

You are invited to take part in this research study, which aims to evaluate the VEBV using art and gentle meditation to express your experience of the VEBV

Where and When:
The workshops will be held at the Knox Presbyterian Church, on Thursday the 2nd of March, from 10:00am to 4pm, transport can be arranged. If you would like more information or to sign up please contact: Patricia Morgan, patricia.morgan@auckland.ac.nz or Jo and Kyle: easternbayvillages@gmail.com

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 23/01/2023 for three years. Reference Number: UAHPEC25106.

Nine participants attended the workshop¹, which was divided into two sessions. The first involved several preliminary exercises, and started at 10.30am after karakia, and a whakawhanaungatanga session. The first session included an introduction to process art and meditation, the two practices used throughout the workshop. Morning tea was provided and was followed by a series of short exercises in which participants meditated and then used pastels and paints to describe their body, mind, emotions, and spirit, a power symbol and a symbol that represented what gave them strength and pleasure. Participants used the *Image Library*, a booklet created for the workshop, that offered suggestions for art techniques, including the use of colour to express feelings, mark and symbol making. To ground these practices participants also wrote poems about themselves and their experiences of the VEBV: TKM. The second session of the workshop started after lunch and consisted of longer practices in which participants visually described themselves before and after joining the VEBV: TKM. This section also included afternoon tea and concluded with participants speaking in a sharing circle about their experience of the workshop. As a part of their discussions, participants showed and spoke about their last two art works. This discussion was recorded.

Phase Three, Methods

Interviews

Directly after the workshop, in-depth 60-90 minute semi structured interviews were conducted with the two co-chairs of the VEBV: TKM board and the first VEBV: TKM coordinator. Then interviews with the 8 workshop participants (please note one workshop participant withdrew from the study), the VEBV: TKM coordinator, and two of the VEBV: TKM trustees were conducted via Zoom by Dr Morgan, who transcribed the interviews, before analysing them. The eight workshop participants ranged in age from 62-86, with seven women and one man. They all

¹ Originally 11 participants had been recruited, but two of the participants were unable to attend on the day because of ill health, and one withdrew from the research.

lived independently in their own homes or rental accommodation. Only one participant was married, and one lived on a shared property with her family. One of the participants was born and brought up in the area, two had immigrated to New Zealand and after living in different parts of New Zealand had settled in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, and five had moved to Eastern Bay from other parts of New Zealand. All had experienced major life changes such as illness, accident, and loss of a life partner. It was the isolation and loneliness resulting from these changes that brought them to the VEBV: TKM. A feature of interviews with the VEBV: TKM board members was the need to concentrate on what they believed to be the central work of the VEBV: TKM, which they described as, "the knitting." This core work supports members to identify their strengths and share these with their fellow VEBV: TKM members. The participants are eight of the approximately 100 VEBV: TKM members. They pay a nominal yearly membership fee, which is important as many members are on low incomes. However, this means that funding is not secure for the VEBV: TKM, and primarily comes from community funding.

Data Collection and Analysis

Arts-based data and an audio recording of workshop participants' discussion at the end of the workshop was gathered at the workshop, and interviews conducted, recorded, and transcribed as described above. Grounded Theory Analysis (GTA) was used in this project, including inductive thematic coding and analysis of transcripts that was conducted by hand. This included the iterative, sorting and "memoing" stages (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Holton, 2005) of GTA. Analysis began with open coding where close reading resulted in extensive labelling of data, that led, through axial coding, or the identification of relations between codes, to the aggregation of core codes. The lead researcher's coding and analysis of the data focused on participants' emic interpretation, or the way they ascribed meaning to their lives. Lastly, theory building consisted of bringing core concepts into relationship with relevant interdisciplinary literature. This aspect of Glaser's (1978) method titled "theoretical sensitivity" provided the means to begin theorising participants' stories. Art works were not directly analysed but participants were encouraged to speak about their meaning in the in-depth semi-

structured interviews. A similar form of interview was used with the VEBV: TKM board members and coordinators but the content focused on their roles.

The four central themes identified using these methods are:

- What brings people to the Virtual Eastern Bay Villages: Te Kokoru Manaakitanga (VEBV: TKM);
- What makes the VEBV: TKM work;
- The Workshop;
- Change and Transformation. Each theme contains a series of sub-themes, and both themes and sub-themes are discussed below.

Preliminary findings were presented at the New Zealand Association of Gerontology Conference, *Rethinking Ageing*, 6th – 8th September, 2023.

Findings

In this community and arts-based research we aimed to identify key features of the successful VEBV: TKM's ageing in place organisation. After in-depth interviews and data analysis, the key features of the VEBV: TKM, as described by its member, are detailed below.

Introduction

What sets the Virtual Eastern Bay Villages apart from many other community-based organisations working with older people is its emphasis on, and support of, members agency, skills, and experience, as opposed to service provision (please see: <https://www.virtualeasternbayvillages.org.nz/>). As one of the board members emphasised, "Well, I mean, that's one of the things we've made sure of, and I keep reiterating it, we are not a service". In contrast, other organisations working with older people frequently emphasis the 'what' of their work, that is the provision of services related to personal care, household chores, meals, money management and health. While the VEBV: TKM acknowledges and addresses these important areas of support, it focuses on 'how' it does this. Or in other words it focuses on its culture and the manner in which it works with all involved in the organisation. The VEBV: TKM encourages and supports what is often invisible, and unconsciously expected in organisations that work with older people - primarily

emotional labour and emotional intelligence. It does this in a variety of ways, including having co-ordinators who are skilled connectors or 'people specialists', and the encouragement of certain traits in its members by the coordinators and through the organisation's values, particularly its core value of recognising its members skills and abilities and encouraging them to connect and help each other. All of the participants spoke about valuing the supportive culture of the VEBV: TKM and the diversity of its members. This is supported by the VEBV: TKM's two whare (Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti) model with Māori and Pākehā (European) co-chairs and coordinators. Common elements of best practice in organisations that work with older people, such as respecting and valuing older people, and creating age friendly environments, are worthy pursuits but until emotional labour and intelligence are valued and understood to be of equal importance to those pursuits, aspirations for best practice can remain unfulfilled in practice.

Central themes

As we used a grounded inductive approach in our research, findings were developed from what the participants told us, as opposed to the application of a theory or hypothesis to lead data collection and analysis. This meant that participants ideas and feelings about the VEBV: TKM, which directed our identification of key features of the VEBV: TKM model, are articulated through information found in participants' interviews including reflections on their art works. In this section the findings are divided into 4 central themes drawn from the participants interviews and the emphasis they put on factors important to them. These themes are: 1. What brought people to the VEBV: TKM; 2. What makes the VEBV: TKM work; 3. The benefits for the VEBV: TKM members of participating in the workshop's contemplative and creative practices; 4. Realisations and change resulting from participation in the workshop: Highlighting features of the VEBV: TKM's successful model of ageing in place.

Theme one

What brought people to the VEBV: TKM

- It is important to understand the impacts of major life changes on members of ageing in place organisations, such as a loss of identity, fear of meeting new people, loneliness, and isolation, as they are what brought individuals to the VEBV: TKM and indicate their needs.
- Related, and important to consider when creating, or working in ageing in place organisations, are individuals' histories underpinning these life changes and immediate circumstances.
- The coordinators of ageing in place organisations need to be great connectors, or 'people specialists,' as they are pivotal in attracting members and maintaining a healthy, welcoming, supportive organisation.

When speaking about why they became VEBV: TKM members, every participant told stories of a major life change, which in some cases was traumatic. The stress, anxiety and depression that can result from these changes is emphasised by scholars such as Bassil, Ghandour & Grossberg, 2011 and Verill & Beck, 2000, with the latter focusing on "late-life anxiety". The changes participants described resulted from, illness, accident, the loss of a relationship/life partner, issues with housing and fear of homelessness, or having to shift after living in one place for a long time. The breakdown of traditional family structures is also important here. It is something that Mary lamented when she spoke of the loneliness she suffered after her children and grandchildren moved to live in different parts of New Zealand. The issues Mary raised about loneliness and the break-down of family structures is well understood in the field of ageing studies (Berg-Weger & Morley, 2020; Fried, 2020; Wenger 1996). Because family-structures may never be what they were, there will be a greater need for ageing in place organisations like the VEBV: TKM.

Participants feelings about ageing were also relevant and ranged from what Renata called her 'glass half full' attitude, led by her belief that, as she described it, "you are only as old as you feel," to Peter's assertion that he "hates it, it's hard,

there's no doubt about it, it's hard. You know, people are living longer, medicine is making people live longer. But if you're not well, it's not nice, it's bloody hard." While Mary's approach was pragmatic, speaking about having to adjust to her "reduced capacities" because of ageing, she explained, "your body isn't up to that much anymore you just have to adjust." The results of ageing and participants feelings about it, the loss of family and the changes all of the participants had been through, led to a sense of disorientation, loss of identity, isolation, and loneliness. What was also revealed when participants spoke about these changes was the history behind them. The change may have come at the end of many difficult years, where for example they had nursed a partner for a long time before they passed away and were then struggling with their own health problems, which meant they had to leave a home they had lived in for decades.

"YOUR BODY ISN'T UP TO THAT MUCH ANYMORE YOU JUST HAVE TO ADJUST."

The Coordinators

Many of the participants spoke about coming to the VEBV: TKM through its coordinator, and this related to that individual being a good 'connector.' With such connectors being *people specialists* who are: natural networkers, relationship builders, positive, optimistic, caring, and compassionate local people, who are not 'professionals' (Block & McKnight, 2012). Importantly connectors sit within a range of interconnecting networks, both personal and professional. This was described by participants who spoke of having met the coordinator for many years before joining the VEBV: TKM, or their long-term friendship with the coordinator, others learnt about the VEBV: TKM through presentations that the first coordinator did in the local library and church and country halls throughout the Eastern Bay of Plenty, and others through friends, or individuals they met when seeking support.

Theme two

Key Features of the VEBV: TKM, What Makes the VEBV: TKM work

1. Coordinators need strong emotional intelligence and to be great connectors for the organisation and members to flourish.
2. Certain traits of VEBV: TKM members are supported and encouraged by the coordinators and values of the VEBV: TKM, particularly its core value of acknowledging members skills and abilities and supporting them to connect and help each other.
3. The Two Whare (Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti) Governance Model.
4. Additionally, participants spoke of a number of reasons they liked the VEBV: TKM and why they remain members. This section is divided across three subthemes: a) Relationality, particularly having the opportunity to make friends, which appeared to be the most important aspect of membership for participants; b), the VEBV: TKM activities (which provided scaled entry points into making friends) and the opportunity to participate at their own pace, to be able to develop other activities, and connect with each other outside of the VEBV: TKM activities; c) The help, information and support they received, and the assistance to offer help, information, and support to their fellow VEBV: TKM members.

The VEBV: TKM Coordinators

Coordinators are not only important for bringing members to the VEBV: TKM, but they also need certain attributes for the flourishing of the organisation and its members. The participants all named various attributes of the VEBV: TKM coordinators, describing the coordinators as: outgoing, friendly, non-judgemental, helpful and patient, good organisers and professional, supportive, willing to help, and good connectors. When

"OH GOSH, THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE. THEY'RE VERY UNDERSTANDING, THEY'LL HAVE A BIT OF TIME OUT WITH YOU IF THERE'S ANY ISSUE, ANY PROBLEM, OR THEY'LL TAKE YOU INTO A QUIET SPOT, AND THEY DON'T PRESSURE YOU, THEY REALLY SUPPORT YOU."

speaking about the coordinators Fiona said, "Oh gosh they're beautiful people. They're very understanding, they'll have a bit of time out with you if there's any issue, any problem, or they'll take you into a quiet spot, and they don't pressure you, they really support you." Sharon spoke about how the coordinators approach is 'personalised' giving the example of needing a bit of extra help with her smart phone and how one of the coordinators showed her how to use it. At the same time, she also told her about a special deal on an internet connection with a phone company. Describing the VEBV: TKM coordinators Sharon outlined, what for her, makes a good coordinator:

I think basically, they like people, they enjoy people, being in their company and talking. Yeah, their friendliness and being able to help, or put you in contact with people that can help. Like I noticed how there were two group members in the same area who wanted to go walking, so the coordinator connected them up. The coordinators try and get people to help each other, and it's just the joining in and connecting people and not giving up because a lot of people I know have said that they were contacted two or three times before they really started to get involved. It was the persistence of the person trying to help them or assist them, but not being overly pushy as well. Not telling them what to do by any means. Because I think that would be the worst thing to do to tell anybody older what to do. They're just very special people.

Strong emotional intelligence is underpinned by self-awareness and potential coordinators may need to be supported to develop the necessary self-awareness. Explaining the need for heightened self-awareness a board member said that coordinators need to be "flexible, it's important not to have a 'fixed view'." They also suggested that training through self-development courses could be useful for coordinators to understand the VEBV: TKM's approach, which is based on, "standing side by side with someone and supporting them, and this is one of the critical things that is needed." The board member also spoke about coordinators needing to know how to "give it away," that is, despite possible good intentions to help that can lead to a service provision approach, coordinators need to give away the position of power, and hand it over to the ageing in place members. For

example, members need to be supported to organise and run their own activities. Further, as the board member explained, “the number one thing is to be in communication, don’t assume anything, then the next part is to acknowledge what people have done, this is the key to success, you have to be 100% on to it, you can’t miss out even one person.”

Another board member emphasised the need for coordinators to be from the community they are working in, as she said, “they have to have actually be from that community, and have an established network. So, I think you can't go past those established conduits that exist in communities.” These established connections were important, and particularly in country towns, when the coordinators need help or information. Emphasising this the board member said, “that's probably a really vital thing knowing who to go to or who to tap on the shoulder, or who to ask for help. That's quite important once you get out of a city, having those connections.” For this board member emotional intelligence is central, and the coordinator needs to be “out there” or out and about in the community, be good at prioritising members’ needs, have good organisational capabilities, and they don’t get drawn into conflicts, but focus on the “big picture.” Plus, there are other qualities that the board member felt were important with the first being, “a really good listener, and you have to be able to sort out what's real and what's not. And who to prioritise your time with. Because it's very easy to go off on a tangent.” When describing other qualities, the board member suggested that in the case of coordinators working in ageing in place organisations they need to have specific knowledge about older people and that this is an area they are working on with the VEBV: TKM coordinators:

Yes, understanding of process, knowing the community, being a really good listener, and having a bit of get up and go. I think those are very important things, you've got to be able to relate to people of all ages. But if you're working with vulnerable seniors, you actually have to have some knowledge and understanding. And that's probably the next thing for us as a board, is to start looking at what kind of mentoring or not...I don't want to use the word 'training', but maybe exposure? Can we give our coordinators that broader brush view of our members, and what they can contribute.

Traits of the members

Through the course of the interviews, it became obvious that certain traits of the VEBV: TKM members were supported and encouraged by the coordinators and values of the VEBV: TKM, particularly its core value of facilitating members ability to connect and help each other. Describing these attributes members spoke of themselves and their fellow members as kind, thoughtful, non-judgemental, supportive, caring, loving, and that they had a genuine desire to help each other. Some even spoke of the VEBV: TKM as a “second family.” Additionally, participants liked the diversity of VEBV: TKM members, and explained that because of this diversity they each engaged with the VEBV: TKM for different reasons and in different ways. While participants liked this flexibility and diversity, they were pragmatic about needing to compromise at times, and how they may not always get on with everyone. As Mary explained: “If you are together in a group there are always people who are different you know, they'll have a different viewpoint that's how it is in life. Then you might find people who are more suited, who match with you, that's the good thing if you're in a group.”

While learning to accommodate these differences was important for participants, the sense of caring between VEBV: TKM members was emphasised by participants. Gillian, for example spoke of how when she arrives at a VEBV: TKM event that “everyone gives you a hug when you go in, and everyone's just welcoming, there's no snobbiness, it's just different types of people.” Participants spoke of needing time for trusting relationships to build and how this then led to the reciprocity that many described. Gillian spoke of this in terms of what she understands as a core value of the VEBV: TKM, which she explained is about “helping one person to help the next person, it's really just you - do something for one person, and that person can do something to help the next person.” While they didn't use the term, many of the participants spoke about their own, or others strong emotional intelligence. This is described by Peter in his story about mowing his neighbour's lawn:

I went to mow her lawn because her husband was crook, and she'd been having trouble, but I think they're fairly proud, like most people are. Most people like to mow their lawn the way they like to mow it, and no matter who you are,

you're never going to do the job the same as them, and I'm aware of all that. So I asked nicely if it was okay if I did their lawns for them. I said 'I don't want to step on your toes', and that I don't like people mowing my lawns, you know (laughing), and I said 'I was more than happy to do them', and he popped out and said 'yeah if you like.' You know it was just nice, and I enjoyed doing it.

The Two Whare (Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti) Governance Model

Equitable governance systems that reflect the context of the ageing in place organisation are important for healthy ageing in place organisations.

The VEBV: TKM has a two whare (house) (Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti) model with Māori and European / Pākehā co-chairs and coordinators. The creation of VEBV: TKM's two whare governance model began when Ruth Gerson met with the woman who would become the current Māori co-chairperson on the board. In the interview with her she said:

I had a meeting with Ruth, basically, she had come to share with me about the Eastern Bay Villages, and the reasons why she felt it was an important project for elders within this region. Her coming to see me was the important first step to see if the local iwi were going to support the Eastern Bay Villages. So, once we had that discussion, I had a meeting with the elders who supported what Ruth had brought to the table. I was very much in support of it because of the needs of the elderly that I had seen in the community. From where I sat in the community, I saw a lot of our elderly who were staying at home, and who didn't want to go into rest homes. The more I learnt about it, and the way it was likened to a village, and how people were looking after each other, I thought that it was no different to us on the marae. As we do with manaakitanga (expressing kindness and respect for others), whanaungatanga (relationship, connection, and a sense of family) and how we are caring for our elders in the marae setting.

Providing an overview of the VEBV: TKM's governance structure one of the board members said:

We have a two-house model; so, we have equal representation of Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti partners. And we try really hard to look at any of the issues that come up in the context of – ‘what does a partnership really look like?’ And I think we are the only organisation in our region that actually is structured that way. So, all of our meeting protocols, champion both sides of the treaty. Though we don't always open every meeting with a karakia (song/prayer), we might open a meeting with a poem, a Rudyard Kipling poem or something like that. It's always that we can learn from each other, and there is a structure and process in place.

The VEBV: TKM's two whare model relies on the good will of the board members and their openness to ongoing learning about what true partnership means. Currently board members are in discussion about doing Te Tiriti o Waitangi – the Treaty of Waitangi training, which has been important for the Māori co-chair of the VEBV: TKM, as she said:

If I'm stepping into the co-chair role with its responsibilities, I want to make sure that the whole of the board understands the two whare model. Because I have a different perception of it than they do. So, I'm making sure that we are all on the same page. Personally, I think that we need to do the training (Te Tiriti training), because without that understanding then yeah it can all tip over.

The VEBV: TKM is a registered charity, and in their meetings the board works on a consent agenda. This is so that, as a board member explained:

we don't waste a lot of time going over minutes, and financials and things like that, because all that gets sent out. Our meetings are mostly focused on new ideas, addressing any particular issues, or how are we progressing our strategic plan. So, we very much use that meeting time, that coming together time, not to rehash things that have happened in the past, but to look forward. Our meeting protocol is all around respect, and it's almost like, are you familiar with the Edward de Bono hats? Okay, so, so nobody ever talks over the top of anybody else, we're always extremely respectful. And if your view is different,

then the opportunity is for you to listen to another point of view, and consider other options. It's a very, very respectful board, extremely respectful.

What members like about the VEBV: TKM, and why they remain members

Relationality and the development of friendships

Of all the things that participants liked about being VEBV: TKM members, the most important appeared to be the opportunity to make new friends and have regular opportunities to connect with them. As mentioned earlier, all of the participants had experienced a major and sometimes traumatic event in their lives that led to loneliness and isolation and being afraid to reach out to new people. For some this was exacerbated by continuing ill health, lack of transport or funds, and self-consciousness. Participants also mentioned a lack of trust or fear of others, or fear of not being able to manage relationships because of ill health, shyness, or awkwardness around people, this was particularly so for people who had been isolated for a long time. The VEBV: TKM's different activities provide a range of entry points starting with the least challenging, which are the weekly morning teas, games afternoons, and presentations on a range of subjects such as healthy eating. Then there are longer activities such as visits to art galleries or gardens outside of Whakatāne, where members travel together in the VEBV: TKM van. As individuals become more comfortable with each other and the VEBV: TKM they may be matched with each other depending on their skills and what help is required. Sometimes this is facilitated and sometimes it happens organically. A board member detailed aspects of the way that relationality develops in the VEBV: TKM saying:

It's all about building the relationship and explaining what you need and if you can't do that in such a way that allows someone to say 'oh I can help you with that', then you're doing it all wrong. It's something that we could probably do a bit more work on, in terms of the conversations and how to ask, how to put it out there that 'actually this is what I need'. It might not just be as simple as how - I can't change my light bulbs or tap washers anymore. It might be more complex than that, and how do you put that into words, and who do you trust enough to ask. Trust is huge, but I believe

by showcasing the members and what they're capable of, and by telling their story there is an opportunity for people to think, 'oh they're not that different from me, and I could actually sit alongside them and get to know them a bit better.' Just being able to tell your story in such a way that you are approachable, you're not just that person on the other side of the table, you've had experiences in life.

The idea of showcasing VEBV: TKM members is something that is being considered by the VEBV: TKM board with suggestions that it could happen in sharing circles, or as feature stories in the newsletter. The rationale being that it will help strengthen relationships and trust between members. However, the board member explained that VEBV: TKM members may need support to tell their stories, as she explained:

You need to enable and equip people to tell their story, otherwise they may not be understood. If they can't be understood then their needs can't be met. So, by not telling their story you're doing them, as a member, a disservice. Because how can people help you if they don't understand. If you're trying to create and build relationships there has to be a level of – 'who am I', 'where am I from', 'what are my values', all of those things are really important, and just providing a platform for that, whether it's in a sharing circle, in the newsletter, in an interview. It's a way of alleviating that isolation, vulnerability aloneness.

A story that Gillian, one of the workshop participants, told about helping a fellow member/friend, Maria, who she knew had health problems, illustrates how friendships develop and are maintained. Gillian was driving home and saw her friend in a local shopping area so stopped and asked if she needed help. Her friend, Maria was trying to enrol at a local doctor's office but because of a disability she lives with she wasn't able to fill out the forms. Gillian helped her and supported her to get the tests she needed. Some weeks later at the Monday morning tea Gillian spoke of needing help to clean her windows, and a few days later Maria arrived at her home with her bucket and squeegee and cleaned all of Gillian's windows. When the job was done Maria and Gillian shared a cup of tea. Additionally, once such friendships develop, members will connect outside of the

VEBV: TKM activities, regularly meeting for lunch, or checking in with each other via phone or text.

The VEBV: TKM activities

Include a weekly Monday morning tea and Thursday games afternoon; a monthly shared meal, day trips and presentations on a range of topics, including Alzheimer's education, and legal advice from Baywide Law. Members are also supported to create their own groups and these include: Edgecumbe and Taneatua coffee mornings, the ukulele and line dancing groups, the walking group the Walkie Talkies, and a newly formed men's group. Participants spoke of how much they enjoyed these activities, how they were informative, and how they provided the opportunity to make friends. However, there was the suggestion when comparing another organisation in the Eastern Bay with the VEBV: TKM that the scope of the latter's activities is inhibited by limited funds. Nonetheless participants were very enthusiastic about the choice of activities provided by the VEBV: TKM. This was emphasised by Renata when speaking about an outing to Kawerau, "last year we went to a big stadium in Kawerau, where we had games and it was an all-day event, and Wow, was that fun!" More information can be found here: <https://www.virtualeasternbayvillages.org.nz/events-programmes>

Gaining help, information, and support, and offering help, information, and support

Participants spoke about the benefits of being able to access help, support, and information and in turn offer help and support, and share information that resulted from being VEBV: TKM members. Members informally share aspects of their lives with each other and this ranged from recommending a movie they'd just seen, or a good doctor, to gardening and internet tips. Importantly this sharing acted as a social lubricant and was pivotal in the development of friendships and community. Sharon spoke of the pleasure of spending time with a fellow member/friend when her friend was teaching her how to knit woollen bed socks. This happened after Sharon had supported her friend when her husband was ill. Mary described how a friend from the VEBV: TKM taught her and others about Māori culture and protocol, which she was keen to learn because of their visits to local marae. VEBV: TKM

members gain this information and support informally as friendships develop, or more formally when they are matched with each other by the VEBV: TKM coordinators.

Also, information is shared by the VEBV: TKM coordinators with members, this includes such things as a list of trustworthy handy people who will do odd jobs and aren't too expensive. Additionally, members can make suggestions for activities or specific help, such as the need for digital literacy, transport and funerals, which have led to the creation of the "Digital Buddies," the "Accessible Transport Solutions, Waka Eastern Bay," and the whanau led funerals/tangihanga projects, run by the VEBV: TKM's sub-committees. It is important to note that this support and information is offered in what Sharon called a "personalised way." Here she explains this through her description of how it was for her when she first joined the VEBV: TKM:

I think it's the confidence, and I think too if you haven't done anything like that, you're not sure how people will react to you, or how you would feel, whether you'd feel comfortable or not. I think basically, yeah, confidence has a lot to do with it and feeling that you've got the ability to actually pass anything on or actually you know, get to, to be involved or to talk to people. I know when I first started my confidence was quite low. I didn't say a hell of a lot but as time went on, I listened to the conversation and made odd comments where things cropped up that I might have known or whatever, and so you know it takes time to build that confidence up you know, and I enjoy their company. Yeah, it's really good, you hear what they've been up to and things like that, and they ask what you've been up to and what's happening it's yeah, it was really nice.

This "personalised" approach relates to members feeling welcome and being regularly informed about the VEBV: TKM's different activities (this happens via email and a hard copy newsletter as some members, don't have smart phones or computers). Also, that members are encouraged to join activities or provide support but don't feel pressured, that their talents, skills and abilities are acknowledged, which provides agency and builds self-esteem (Brandtstadter,

Wentura & Greve, 1993), and that they can engage at their own pace. Additionally, if issues between members arise that these are dealt with swiftly, and in private, by the coordinators in a respectful and non-judgmental way.

Theme Three

The benefits for the VEBV: TKM members of participating in the workshop's contemplative and creative practices

This section contains three sub-themes: 1. The reasons participants attended the workshop, 2. Previous experience of art and meditation, 3. The workshop practices elicited heightened self-awareness.

- While art-making and meditation were not entirely new for some of the workshop participants none had experienced the Meditative Process Art (MPA) method (Please see: Appendix 2) before. Despite it being entirely new for them the participants spoke of enjoying and gaining benefit from the MPA method's practices.
- Bearing in mind that the MPA method was new for all the participants, it appears that the scaffolded design of the workshop, where participants moved from preliminary to more complex practices, helped them readily engage with the workshop practices.
- Participants had different reasons for attending the workshop, such as curiosity about art and meditation. The benefits they gained from these practices like heightened self-awareness, suggest possible new VEBV: TKM activities, such as art-making and meditation. These could also be useful in all ageing in place organisations. Please see: Klimecki et al.'s (2019) review of meditation for healthy ageing, and McFadden and Basting's (2010) report on healthy ageing and creative engagement.
- The workshop practices elicited heightened self-awareness, which led to participants realisations about themselves, including how they had changed as a result of becoming a VEBV: TKM member. The changes, revealed through their making and reflection on their art works, occurred both in the workshop and through VEBV: TKM membership. Change through art making

is something that Malchiodi (2012) emphasises in her exploration of creativity and ageing, while Lander-McCarthy and Bockweg, 2013 speak about the use of contemplative and creative practice to introduce the concept of “transcendence” as a more holistic criterion for measuring successful and healthy ageing.

- The sharing at the beginning and end of the workshops supported increased understanding and heightened empathy between participants, suggesting the benefits of including contemplative art, sharing circles, and similar practices, in the VEBV: TKM, and other ageing in place organisations. While speaking of a different setting Berg-Weger and Morley (2020) confirm the benefits of sharing circles for older people.

Although none of the participants had experienced the Meditative Process Art (MPA) method before the workshop, some had practiced meditation and/or done art at school, or participated in craft activities. Nonetheless, the particular combination of Process Art and gentle mediation was very new for the participants. As Mary said, “it was an absolute new experience for me doing that workshop.” Concurring Fiona said: “I really thought, you know that you’d sit there, and fold your legs and you’d meditate through the mind and the soul, I didn’t realise the mahi (work) that went with it. But I thought, ‘no I’ll give it go – I’ll give it a try.’ And I was actually so glad that I did because it blew me away!” Some of the participants like Peter were initially apprehensive, as he recounted, “Well, when I walked in there, it was funny, because you had everything down there, all the pens or paints, it looked pretty impressive to tell you the truth. And I was looking and thinking oh,’ what am I going to do?’ But I do remember thinking ‘this is going to be fun,’ and I was quite happy, it was good.”

The reasons participants attended the workshop

There were a variety of reasons that participants attended the art and meditation workshop, ranging from curiosity, to a long-held desire to return to the art making they had done in their youth. Barbara came to the workshop to learn how to express her ideas 'visually,' or as she described it, "to try and find myself within myself." As Peter explained he felt uncertain and awkward about art-making but he was keen to try something new, as he said, "what I've found, with Eastern Bay Villages stuff you do need to give them a chance. So what if you don't know about it, give it a chance it will open up your mind? And you might see something you haven't seen before? It does make a difference." Like Peter, Sharon thought she would give the workshop 'a go,' because she was curious about what would happen, despite saying to herself 'What are they trying to do?' Describing why she came to the workshop Gillian said, "Oh, because I love anything to do with thinking and the mind. Anything to do with thinking outside of the square." Clarissa simply said when asked why she attended, "because I love art." She then elaborated further and said that after the workshop she had spoken with the coordinators about having art classes, and the suggestion was reinforced after a visit to a local art gallery.



A workshop participant working with the *Visual Library*

Previous experiences of art and meditation



Interestingly when asked if she had meditated before Gillian, who is a deeply spiritual woman said, “yes to the meditation – always, anywhere, anytime!” Like Gillian, Renata said she was attracted to the workshop because of the art, as she confirmed, “I’m into arts and crafts and everything like that, I just love that sort of thing, and when painting was mentioned, I was like, yes I’m in!” Mary attended the workshop because she wanted to support research with older people, as she explained, “I felt it is worthwhile because there are quite a few people who live on their own, and it's good for them to mix with others you know?”

A workshop participant in the morning session of the workshop

And it's a chance to see what problems the others have and how to solve them.” All of the participants spoke about enjoying the day-long workshop despite some of them saying they felt tired at the end of it. Speaking of the workshop Peter said “I enjoyed the day and I still remember it.” He also said he wanted to do the workshop again, and described how he is planning to take up painting as a result of the workshop, “I’ve still got it in my mind, and I'm going to...I haven't done it yet, but I think of it every second day. And I'm going to get some of that big white paper and some paints, and I'm gonna go like this and like that”, laughing he mimed moving a paintbrush backward and forward.

Other participants said they enjoyed the art making, and since the workshop the VEBV: TKM coordinators have discussed running art workshops for members.

Several of the participants spoke of finding the meditation very relaxing and helpful, with Peter reflecting that he'd used the meditation to relieve pain on a family trip, and had described one of the meditation techniques to his wife and daughter, as he outlined, "I was saying what to do and I was giving them the – smmmmmm (he breathes in) cool air going in, warm going out? Feeling on the inside,...I used it up at the Coromandel when I was there, when I was in pain." There is an increasing awareness of the benefits of meditation and other contemplative practices for older people as outlined by Nilsson, Bülow & Kazemi, 2015, and Yuen & Baime, 2006.

The workshop practices elicited heightened self-awareness, about participants lives and impacts of joining the VEBV: TKM

In addition to the benefits gained and pleasure participants experienced in the workshop, they also described how working with the MPA method led to heightened self-awareness, and realisations about aspects of their lives, and impacts of joining the VEBV: TKM. Here Peter describes his insight:

Well, I'm thinking that in the art workshop, there was a lot more involved than art. Like where we went to, and that was a good thing. You can actually go from that to something more, maybe another little inch forward to something else, as well, something that's a little bit cooler. You know, it's a bit of a movement thing really.

The structure of the workshop, with introductory art and meditation practices in the morning leading to longer practices in the afternoon, was designed to scaffold participants experience and to elicit subjective/affective/somatic awareness, or "felt knowing" (Morgan & Abrahamson, 2018) related to the change and transformation that participants experienced through joining the VEBV: TKM. Fiona's two art works depicting how she felt before and after joining the VEBV: TKM, visually express change, with expressive mark making, cross hatching, circling, and fragmented lines a feature of her 'before' artwork. There is also a large block of colour with a set of scales inside of it and a mass of circling white lines partly obscuring the scales. The scales are an important symbol for Fiona, as her astrological sign is Libra, and she uses the scales to represent herself and her

subjective sense of being in or out of balance. Here Fiona explains what her artwork represents:

Oh, I'm unbalanced, yes, before I come to EBV, way before I come on board there I very unbalanced. I was always tipping up. I was very shy, very unbalanced and I was a very quiet, and stand offish. I didn't know how to get involved with others, it has taken me quite a few months before I found that balance.

In her "After the VEBV: TKM" artwork, Fiona illustrates the changes she experienced since joining the VEBV: TKM by having more white space, coloured dots, and a stylised sun, which provides a much lighter tone to the work. Describing this work she said:

That's me after the EBV, when I got really involved with the ladies, I just feel as though I was fitting in with them. I'm always happy when I come in, they always know when I'm not happy or they tell me, 'oh you look a bit...,' I'm happy, I love having fun, I love laughing, laughing with the others. I enjoy listening to our ladies, what they do on their weekends, or what they do with themselves. And I'm able to share with our ladies now. To actually talk in front of them, I'm not shy or don't have to feel uncomfortable, it just feels so good today with the EBV.

Finally, when she saw her two art works together, Fiona articulated the change she saw, "I'm OK, I'm actually OK because I'm very balanced, totally balanced, I'm not tipped up." Like many of the participants Fiona was describing both the realisation that resulted from making the artworks, and the changes she has experienced through becoming a member of the VEBV: TKM.



Fiona’s Before and After the VEBV: TKM artworks. “Before the VEBV: TKM” is on the left and “After the VEBV: TKM” on the right.

The afternoon session of the workshop, where the ‘before and after’ art works were made, concluded with a sharing circle, as these opportunities to share experiences of the contemplative art, is a central feature of the MPA method. The sharing not only grounded the participants’ subjective experience but it resulted in heightened empathy and understanding between the participants, which Sharon describes here:



“I think a lot of them were very open about what they were thinking and a couple were a bit shy, including myself. But I think it made you realise that people feel the same way as you feel. That you're not the only one that feels like that. It makes you realise that you're not unique in the way you feeling that other people have those feeling too. I think it makes you realise that, that yeah, that everybody needs somebody or something around so you don't feel lonely.”

My Spirit” by Sharon

Sharon's articulation of links between sharing and loneliness, and the benefits of sharing are confirmed by Berg-Weger and Morley (2020 in their "Loneliness in old age: An unaddressed health problem" article. In it they speak about the 'loneliness epidemic' older people suffer and recommend the *Circle of Friends* programme developed at the Central Union for the Welfare of the Aged at Helsinki University, in the early 2000s. The *Circle of Friends* is built on a model of group rehabilitation, with the aim being to alleviate and prevent loneliness in older adults, see, Jansson & Pitkälä, 2021.

Theme four

Realisations and change resulting from participation in the workshop

Highlighting features of the VEBV: TKM's successful model of ageing in place

There are two sub-themes in this section, 1. The participants use of art practices such as symbol and mark making to express subjective experience, and 2. How experience of the contemplative art practices led to heightened self-awareness and change, so revealing important features of the VEBV: TKM, as illustrated by the participants art works and poems. This second section is introduced by participants' realisations and is then divided across three sub-themes: a) Idiosyncratic use of symbols; b) Sophisticated use of symbols; c) Art-making revealed repressed feelings and provided a means to reflect on these feelings.

Leading on from the last section on the heightened self-awareness that resulted for workshop participation, this section focuses on the insights and change workshop participants experienced. Their descriptions related both to, insights and changes they experienced in the workshop, and those that resulted from joining the VEBV: TKM. The art works completed in the second half of the workshop that depicted how participants felt before and after joining the VEBV: TKM clearly illustrate the changes participants experienced. Additionally, the preliminary art works created in the first half of the workshop, starting with a self-portrait, then a series of symbols depicting participants felt understanding of their body, mind,

spirit and feelings, power, and pleasure and strength, also revealed important subjective aspects of participants understandings of themselves.



Clarissa, "My Emotions" on the left and "My Mind" on the right.

1. The participants use of art practices to express subjective experience

Eliciting subjective experience and enhancing self-awareness may not immediately seem relevant for ageing in place organisations but there is a growing awareness of the need for the provision of these kinds of experiences for healthy ageing, and for what Lander-McCarthy & Bockweg (2013) call "transcendence". While there are multiple aspects of transcendence Lander-McCarthy & Bockweg (2013) propose that self-transcendence is an "inherent process that is a gradual, nonlinear expansion of conceptual boundaries; that is, one's personal limits or internal rules and expectations of oneself, others, and the world" (2013, p. 86).

With the outcomes of transcendence being “a sense of meaning in life, well-being, life satisfaction, and a decreased fear of death” (ibid).



Clarissa, “My Emotions” on the right, Clarissa, “My Spirit” on the left

As the participants progressed through the workshop their comfort and ability with the workshop practices increased. This was for both the art and meditation practices, with the meditation allowing participants to enter a relaxed and contemplative state, and the art helping to materialise, or stabilise the internal mix of somatic, affective, historical, psychological, and spiritual experience encountered in the contemplative consciousness that they entered through meditation. Fiona’s description of the symbol she created to represent her spirit offers insight into the ability of process art and meditation to access the deep, sometimes unconscious feelings participants had about themselves. Fiona’s symbol is a flower with separated petals and explaining what it meant to her she said, “there are those white shapes, then I’m scattered with the petals, that’s when my mind, my brain is a bit scattered, so that’s where I go for the white,

that's my protection" Fiona who describes herself as a "visionary," drew white shapes on 4 of the petals of her flower to represent her ancestors who provide safety and protection. Each of the participants readily developed a deeply personal meaning system using colour, symbol and mark making. Colour for Peter had always been important, so in the workshop he quickly created a personal symbol system based on colour. Here he describes the meaning behind the stripes of colour on his artwork about how he felt after joining the VEBV: TKM:



Peter, "After the VEBV: TKM"

Yeah the red one is going out to a friend's place and planting some trees and stuff like that. And the blue one is more like going to Opotiki and seeing the sea and looking at the new wharf area, the Marina that they're making. The green one is just a nice little chat somewhere where we've walked along and meet a few people and we've just chatted for a little while. And then we've had a bit of a break and then there's the long orange one where we met again.

2. How experience of the contemplative art practices led to heightened self-awareness and change

Art works created in workshops first session illustrate ways that participants understand different aspects of themselves, for example what gave them a sense of power, and what provided strength and pleasure. Gaining this kind of self-awareness is important for older people, and those working with them in ageing in place organisations (Flood & Phillips, 2007). The longer practices in the second

half of the workshop provided important information about participants experience before coming to the VEBV: TKM, and therefore what kind of supports they needed and what the EBV: TKM could provide. For example, becoming a member of the VEBV: TKM has helped Barbara with her anxiety. When sharing her work with the other artists at the end of the workshop Barbara explained that, "Before joining the Eastern Bay Villages I felt uncertain, shy, nervous. But after attending several meetings I felt less worried and much calmer."

Peter visually described himself as being in a bubble before joining the VEBV: TKM. He said he felt OK in this bubble, but through creating his "After joining the VEBV: TKM" work he realised that there was much more he could have in his life, as he said, ""Since I've joined Eastern Bay Villages, I've found a lot more colour. A lot more, opening, a lot more opportunities. So, it's been really good and I've met some very lovely people, it's been awesome."

When speaking about her artwork that describes how she felt before joining the VEBV: TKM Fiona said: "This is me here before I came to the EBV, very unbalanced, I wasn't myself, I was very unsure, there was no trust, there was no trust at all. I didn't know how to get along with people. I was closed up for a long time, unable to open-up, to share what was going on." Fiona then spoke about the changes she experienced after joining the VEBV: TKM saying, "and today with the EBV, I just love it. I love being around people, I love sharing with others, I have opened up quite a lot, I'm not shy anymore. I'm able to say what I want to say and this is what the EBV is all about. We've got voices, we've got choices, we're allowed to voice whatever we want, and just be ourselves."

a) Idiosyncratic use of symbols

Like Peter and Fiona other participants used colour, mark-making, and symbols to express subjective experience, aspects of their lives, and experiences of the VEBV: TKM. Some also used symbolised elements of the natural world to express feelings and ideas. For example, Mary's self-portrait consisted of a symbol of herself as a tree, with her roots reaching down into the earth and her branches reaching out to others. While in her work symbolising her emotional life, Mary used blue lines at the bottom right of the work, depicting her deeply felt emotions as though lying

hidden in the ocean, but above the ocean she drew the sun to describe her optimism about life, for as she said, "never give up because the sun always rises again." Like Mary, Clarissa used natural symbolism drawing from native plants to express aspects of her cultural beliefs. She also used mark-making, drawing a series of blue lines and dots to create visual rhythm in her art work about her mind. Explaining this Clarissa said, "it's like taking little steps forward and back, forward and back and forward. Yes, sort of trying things out, or moving in different directions, or making up your mind whether you should or should not."

b) Sophisticated use of symbols

Despite the workshop only being six hours long, participants developed sophisticated symbols systems, with Sharon for example representing herself in a deceptively simple self-portrait that had a double meaning.



Sharon, "I Am"

This work above has a yellow background with two black circles on top of two white circles. It depicts how Sharon is looking through her own glasses at herself. Here she explains what this artwork means: "It's like seeing myself through my own glasses. Yeah, so it's just seeing myself and, it is the clouds in the sky, it might sound strange, but yeah, the clouds because you know how clouds can have those circular shapes around them. But its more about seeing myself through my own glasses." Sharon's description of her spirit also offers insight into one of the known benefits of using art for self-development/awareness, which relates to art

being able to describe things that are hard to put into words (McNiff, 2008). Sharon speaks about the colour she uses in her artwork about her spirit, and then uses, "su su su" to express something about her spirit that is difficult to explain but ably described in the moving orange lines of her art work. As she said, "I did enjoy doing that one, it was just sort of the curves, and I just liked that orangey colour. I thought it seemed to give a bit of spirit to it. It just sort of described a different concept, it's just this sort of su su su, and I quite liked the flips."

c) Art making revealed repressed feelings and provided a means to reflect on these feelings

During the process of making their art works as participants chose colours, marks, and symbols to represent their feelings, and as they articulated the personal meaning in their art works during the interviews, it became clear that participants were working through repressed feelings. When Gillian spoke about the symbol that represented her 'Spirit' she spoke about the importance of her religious beliefs, which then led to her speaking about the challenges as a child of living with parents who had opposing views about religion. When explaining what her "Before the VEBV: TKM" artwork was about Sharon not only spoke about the way she visually described the fragmentation in her life but how really "seeing" this in her artwork led to her realisation of how difficult her life had been. As she said,



"I can see...I think it comes down to the sheer turmoil, of how things in my life were bitsy and how they were in slight chaos, at the time I didn't really realise to the extent of that. And it took me time to realise that I was coming out of that. I was coming out it and feeling better. I think it's sort of getting a bit better... I'm trying to open up, I'd say I'm opening up about my feelings and whatever, and before that I wasn't, I didn't. I was well, and truly not doing so. It's hard looking back and sort of think crikey!"

Sharon, "I Am"

In addition to creatively readdressing difficulties in a personal history, or reflecting on changes in participants lives, the contemplative art practices also revealed new understandings of ageing. Barbara described this in her last artwork of the workshop about her life since joining the VEBV: TKM. Describing her artwork which was of a bird taking flight Barbara said, "She's flying free, she's about to take off. I'm taking off. I think I've come to a stage where I'm free, I can do anything I like, there's nothing, no inhibitions, nothing can stop me."

In Conclusion

There is a growing awareness of the need for the provision of practices that heighten self-awareness for healthy ageing. Participants ready access to a personal symbol language, and comfort with art and meditation that developed quickly across the course of the project's workshop highlights the suitability of using contemplative art with older people for heightened self-awareness, and its viability for use in ageing in place organisations. The benefits of art and meditation for healthy ageing, including the ability of the arts to describe what is difficult to put into words (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2012), are increasingly understood in ageing research, including in the field of community and arts-based research with older people. Creatively working with subjective experience, difficult histories, and repressed feelings, allows older people to gain insight into their lives, and make changes to support their healthy ageing.

The transformative power of art-making and contemplative art making is well known in art therapy, and is increasingly being recognised in art-based research, and in the field of healthy ageing (Clifford et al., 2021; Lawton & La Porte, 2013; Miller, Potts, 2022; Stephenson, 2021; Watson et al., 2023). As our aims in this community and arts-based research project were to identify the elements of the VEBV: TKM's success, we were pleased to find that for members of the VEBV: TKM, using art and meditation was not only a pleasurable and useful experience, but that their reflections, described above, have offered invaluable insight into what makes the VEBV: TKM a successful ageing in place organisation.

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Appendix One

The Virtual Eastern Bay Villages: Te Kokoru Manaakitanga (VEBV: TKM)

<https://www.virtualeasternbayvillages.org.nz/>

The VEBV: TKM was founded in 2016 by Ruth Gerzon, the first VEBV: TKM coordinator, after an experience caring for her elderly, socially isolated, uncle. As Ruth lives in the Eastern Bay of Plenty this is where the initiative is sited. Ruth started by inviting members of local government and community organisations, and her colleagues and friends to a public meeting. She used a number of platforms to publicise the VEBV: TKM, including her regular column in the “Grey Matters” section of the Eastern Bay Life (<https://www.easternbayvillages.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/EBV-July-7.pdf>). After the initial meeting, and many others, a steering committee was formed, a paid administrator appointed in 2017, and a two whare (house) board consisting of Māori and Pākehā co-chairs and coordinators was formed. This board structure means that the VEBV: TKM is a two whare tangata Tiriti, Tangata whenua co-governed organisation.

The word ‘virtual’ in the title of the VEBV: TKM is used because, while the VEBV: TKM members are physically based in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, there isn’t an actual ‘village’, rather activities happen in various locations in the Eastern Bay. The VEBV: TKM’s central aim is to reduce isolation and vulnerability among older people in the Eastern Bay, and to enable them to have a good quality of life as they age in their own homes. From the beginning the VEBV: TKM board and members have differentiated the VEBV: TKM from service provision. In contrast members strengths and agency are emphasised, they are not passive recipients of care but are encouraged to be active in decision making and to contribute their skills and time to the VEBV: TKM, and their fellow village members. This community-led development approach, supports members to build strong connections and deep relationships based on shared passions and interests (<https://officeforseniors.govt.nz/our-work/age-friendly-communities/2-age->

[friendly-case-studies/eastern-bay-case-study/#:~:text=Eastern%20Bay%20Villages%2F%20Kokoru,and%20passive%20recipients%20of%20care\).](#)

Ruth, who worked as the first VEBV: TKM coordinator for five years, handed over her coordination role in 2022. Currently there are over 100 members of the VEBV: TKM, who attend weekly catchups, games mornings in Whakatāne, trips out of Whakatāne, and a variety of presentations on subjects ranging from healthy eating to dealing with flooding in the Eastern Bay. Members have created offshoot groups in other parts of the Eastern Bay, and their requests for support with new technology, transport and home funerals has led to the creation of a variety of programmes and aligned organisations focused on these topics. However, at the heart of the VEBV: TKM is what its board members call “the knitting” – that is the recognition of members strengths and skills, and support for members to share these with each other. A grounding statement for the VEBV: TKM comes from Cormac Russell, who developed asset-based community development, which calls for us all “to create communities of interdependence with a welcome to the stranger at the edge” (Russell, 2022).

Appendix Two

The Meditative Process Art (MPA) Method

Meditative Process Art (MPA) is an arts-based method for exploring psychosocial aspects of individual and group experience. It is led by imagery, meditative consciousness, and somatic, psychological and affective experience. The MPA method employs central tenants and practices from process art, contemplative science, and creative arts therapy (CAT). MPA engages the chance occurrence and deep focus in art making from process art. This art movement from the 1960s takes an anti-form approach and has its roots in Performance Art and the Dada Movement. Contemplative science offers contemplative practice and research findings. Particularly findings related to learning such as the heightened meta-awareness and executive function gained from contemplative practice. The MPA method also employs practices and theory from CAT, which is grounded in Jungian psychology with its focus on accessing subjective or pre-conceptual experience. Humanist psychologists and gestalt therapists expanded Jung's work by including somatic, affective, and psychological experience so paving the way for the creative, holistic therapeutic approach of CAT.

The MAP method utilises the pedagogical scaffolding practice in which students move from introductory to more complex concepts and tasks. It combines meditation and art to support practitioners' access to underlying feelings that they assimilate using multimodal creative practices such as drawing, poetry and movement. The efficacy of the MPA method results from its iterative cycles of: reflection, creation, realisation, and application, facilitated by rounds of meditation, creative practice, and story-telling. The meditation offers in-depth access to practitioners' pre-conceptual, somatic, affective, and psychological experience, while the creative practice gives form to this experience. Reflection and discussion then provide discursive space from which to view and cognize the newly fashioned personal symbology. This is a meaning-making process in the constructivist sense, in which practitioners' self-awareness grows and their realisations are solidified then embedded in new meaning systems.

Dr Morgan's development of the MPA method evolved across a number of stages. Starting with her integration of art and contemplative practice in creative self-development classes she designed and facilitated in drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres. Then in her community education work and finally in courses and lectures in and outside of the academe. Through her research in contemplative inquiry Dr Morgan identified links between the creative and contemplative state of consciousness, which led to pedagogical experiments with the Embodied Design Research Lab at UC Berkeley. This research revealed the educational and healing potential of combining process art and contemplative practice and led the way for Dr Morgan's creation of the MAP method. The method has been trialled and refined in collaboration with Dr Carter and colleagues in the *Positively Women* research project at the Kirby Institute, UNSW, Sydney: <https://positivelywomenproject.com.au>