

Kinda Education

Elders 2023 Evaluation Report to Funders

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Kinda Education

Kinda Education CIC promotes equality and kindness by creating accessible opportunities for communities to deepen their connection to nature and each other. We work to balance the needs of people and wildlife through enabling careful environmental stewardship, utilising cross-generational partnerships to assist people of all ages and backgrounds to experience a greater sense of belonging, solidarity and hope. Kinda inspire kindness without boundaries and is guided by Compassionate Communities' approaches to build compassion as a major value in people's lives.



Now in it's 7th year in Kaliwoods, this year Kinda Education has blossomed, in particular Alternative Provision for children, now 3 days in the week, many of whom express long term effects of COVID, but also with different trauma stories. KE now employs 40 facilitators, and operates 5-6 days a week in Kaliwoods.

Kinda's 8 spoke wheel describes it's vision as follows:

Elders 2023

The Elders circle, the 7th spoke in the wheel, was established in 2021.

Elders, who have gathered their wisdom over decades of living and learning on the earth, have often become distanced from other communities, are often isolated and feel their loss of utility. The Elders Circle weaves the wisdom of Elders, digging out their utility, reminding us of our childhood, connecting with the ethos of deep nature connection: learning traditional green skills and activities which support the conservation of our natural heritage and traditions.

Elders Wellbeing in the woods, now in its 3rd year, is an enormously successful manifestation of Forest School for children, for Elders. In other words, Elder led, and with the principles of Forest School at the heart.

This year we have adopted an intergenerational approaches to support communities at risk of socio-economic exclusion and explored our local natural heritage.

2023 Plan Manifest for the year



January to March: Friends of Kaliwood met to plan and plant the land, and coppice the woodland. Elders worked with Kinda tribe planting the first hedge on the land. Elders worked with Paul to learn the art of laying the hedge of hazel on the northern boundary

Spring we began our exploration of our senses. Starting with an explosion of colour with the woodland Holi (Indian festival) we awakened our sense of joy and laughter, we were back in the woods after the winter break. Seeing lichen, and into each others eyes, hearing birdsong, tasting with

blindfolds the scent of violets and primroses, touch within mystery boxes (aloe vera), culminating in a gong bath.

After the break we took trees as our theme: hawthorn, hazel, ash, oak, maple, hornbeam. Learning to do a hedge survey was a highlight. The hive knowledge of each tree was manifested in a Tablet, created from Elders words and images

Autumn term we explored the fruits of the trees, and how they could be utilised, resurrecting the ancient art of making jam, drink (if not poisonous), and soap making (using horse chestnuts). Throughout we made dyes, dying fabric to weave into our giant Loom. We explored fruits mythology, their stories, as well as their utility. Blackberry, Sloe, Rosehip, Haws, Quince, Apples, Chestnut, Spindle, Medlers, Holly, Yew



Elders profile

Between 12 and 24 people came per week, average 18, plus a variable number of dogs between 2 and one day 6! Sometimes Elders brought their family members with them, or a friend, and altogether we estimate over 100 passed through Elders throughout the year.

Ages ranged from 60 to 100!

The people come from 3 main sources: The Pear Tree, and word of mouth, Halesworth Volunteers.

Some have been coming for the entire 3 years. Some on and off as life events - like deaths, injury and illness - distracted for a while.

From the Pear Tree we received people with dementia and their carers.

Story: Pippa first came with Bertie, her husband with dementia. He was valued as a member of the community, and the Elders gave them both a focus and outlet. (one of the reasons they stayed here and not moved back to London was Elders in the Woods). He helped to build the bender, carrying poles using tools, he was the pearly king.

As he deteriorated, our support for her as his carer grew. He started wandering more becoming more anxious. Sometimes he came to elders on his own and we watched out for him, gave her a short break. Now he has moved into a home, her experience is changing she has time for herself, grieving, yet still gaining support from the community through her grief and loss, able to share her experiences and the conflicts inherent in caring for someone with dementia. Coming out from a shadow somehow, knowing it's not over but sharing experiences with Roy, also grieving the loss of his wife.

This is a supportive community through life and loss.



Facilitators

This funding financially supported 4 staff and 3 volunteers. The modest self employed subsistence income is vital for our facilitators. One volunteer, Nicky, trained up in Level 3 Forest School while volunteering with us, and is now leading the group.

Another volunteer, Leslie, who always arrives early and lights the fire, is inspired to train Level 2 Forest School in 2025.

We found a joy and ease of working with a team. We brushed our dust, shared our temperatures

of the day. Our roles fitted easily together.

Partnerships and collaborations

The Pear Tree supports and directs Elders to the woods.

Halesworth Volunteer Centre also directs people to the woods.

We had various guests who came this year and worked with us:

Tomas from Germany, Rupert who talked about wine making, Martin from Wrongs Covert who told us stories, Simon from Holton Pits talking of birds.

The Gong Girl gave us a gong bath.

Jenny taught us how to make paper.

Meg came and sang and danced with us.

How has Elders improved the lives of the beneficiaries?

Community building - joining linking with each other

Every one had their moment to be heard in the circle, which began and ended each day. We noticed increasing sharing and attentive listening. Building trust. Many Elders are connecting with each other outside of the project.

Utility and usefulness

The Vintage Elders became increasingly involved in supporting the sessions, so giving unexpected utility to some Elders.

They all did their homework - which means the woods and learning extends beyond the single day, as they gathered information to bring with them to each session.

For planning the field, the skills of two retired designers were willingly used.



Physical wellbeing

Every session incorporates physical tapping. Nicky leads us often inviting us to tap each other. Touch and laughter. The movement and tapping sessions helped everyone to keep mobile and some Elders say they practice outside of the session, which has helped with their aches and pains.

Some of the more able Elders got involved in planting out of the saplings in the new field. Planting for the future.

General wellbeing

Throwing paint for the festival of holi to singing stimulates much laughter.

Being outside, some say for the longest period of their week, is rejuvenating, relaxing and calming, as well as healthy.

The Elders say they leave all their troubles behind and relax

They enjoy the Quiz - Remembering, or making up a fictitious answer. It's really OK to feel safe share and get it wrong.

Grief supporting

Roy returned without Irene, and Pippa without Berti both grieving. Both braved the return and found solace among friends.

Support for carers

Attending to the partner with dementia we give the carer a much needed break.

Intergenerational

Ivy (less than 1 year old) entered the circle in September and was an enormous hit when she came to Elders with Meg. Elders watched out for her, held her little hand, picked her up from a fall.

Elders worked with Kinda tribe and facilitators and volunteers planted the first hedge on the land.

Heritage skills and nature integration

Coppicing and woodland management

Every year about an acre of the wood is coppiced. In February 2023 Friends of Kaliwoods, including Elders and other tribes, joined in the coppice work including learning the skill of hedge laying hazel.



Planning the land

With two Elders who had been designers we devised a plan for the land. At various times in the year we walked out onto the land, seeing what plants grew out of the soil.

Woodland work skills:

Very popular working with the draw knife and whittling. Chris worked at home producing spoons, and scarecrow heads. He made gifts of Green Men for all facilitators, and an apple whittling out of apple wood, and inspiring using a clove for its base. Both Chris and Roy made a giant loom out of living hazel.

Charcoal from Spindle

As summer turned to autumn we dyed with kaliwoods oak knopper galls adding a rusty nail or two to darken the shade of brown we obtained to our fleece, yarn and cotton fabric. As we travelled through our fruitful knowledge each session, we experimented with gaining colours from different foraged nature, one week a gloriously sugary pink from sloes, the next a bright orange from a handful of quince leaves. The chemistry of colour explored with Kally. Some elders were inspired to try dyeing experiments of their own. Diana excelled at using the devil in the field plant, Ragwort to dye with. We made ink out of blackberry and oak knopper galls, which we used to write our own charter at Halesworths celebration of 800 years of its charter.



Creative Skill sharing and Music:

Drawing as a way of observation was used. Speed drawing, and shared drawings (pass your drawing on to another to form a series of composite drawings)
Music! Singing and playing Ukulele was essential. Nicky and Kally made up songs for each tree and Caroline made up the song for Kaliwood
<https://kindaforestschoo.com/2023/12/01/in-kaliwood/>

Nature connection

Naturally we marked the turning of the wheel, Samhain,

Solstice, Equinox, with poetry, stories, and action.

Foraging – we learned about what we could harvest for teas, like hawthorn tea.

Fungi foraging with Neil Mahler in which we found the Mutinus caninus Dog Stinkhorn, causing much amusement.

Which of the themes did this application meet and how?

1. Community building and integration- they are a diverse group of people who care for one another. They would otherwise not find a common denominator or mix, but here they do. They now support each other outside of the wood.
2. Resilience - in the face of grief or illness, they come to the woods, feeling safe and held, in all weathers
3. Heritage Traditions: engaged in the conservation of the woodland typically the re-introduction of coppicing, hedge-laying, heritage crafts such as weaving, dyeing, wood carving and paint paper making.
4. Nature Preservation: Engaged in practical conservation both the existing wood and planning for the future land.

Challenges

Storms - which prevent us from using the wood - we need to find alternative inside venue. We used to be able to use the Pear Tree, but this is no longer possible (it was a big ask when we 25 people did arrive)

People with Dementia - we facilitators needed training. We received some on-line training to understand that it wasn't just the mind which was curtailed but the motor capacity. Walking in the woods was challenging, and using tools was prohibitive. Singing, however, was a dream and always enjoyed.

Media coverage:

Greenprint Forum / Community News Halesworth / Halesworth Hoot /.

On all our publicity we acknowledged our funding sources.

Our web site describes each session which is linked from Facebook each week

<https://kindaforestschoool.com/elders-wellbeing-in-the-woods-2023/>

A link to the testaments of Elders is here:

<https://kindaforestschoool.com/testaments-from-elders/>

MOVIE - 5 minute movie of Elders 2023

