



Young Adults Retreat 2017 Report for the Wangapeka Community

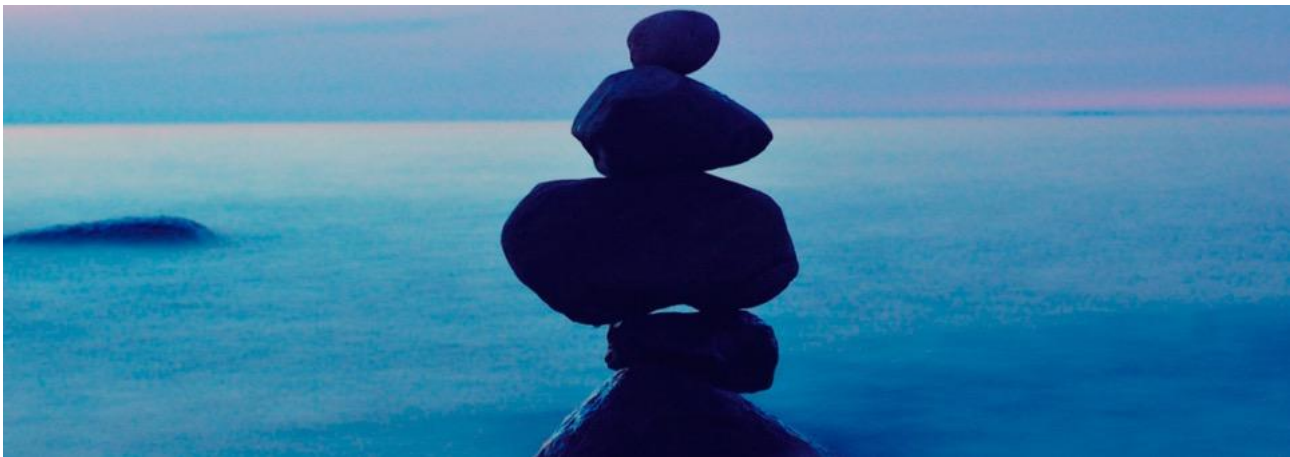
Tēnā koutou e te whānau o Wangapeka Retreat Centre,

The Young Adults Retreat (YAR) has wrapped up for 2017, making this the fifth successive year the retreat has run. This retreat provides a low cost opportunity for younger people (aged 18-35) to stay at the Wangapeka Centre and experience the beauty it has to offer. Part of the course is a work exchange component, providing the opportunity for participants to give back to the Centre and integrate their practice with a considerable practical activity. These dana projects keep the cost of the retreat low for participants. By removing the barrier of cost, we enable a more diverse pool of people to attend and contribute to the life of the Centre.



Our theme for YAR 2017 was *Building The Foundations Of Mindfulness: A Contemporary Exploration of the Satipatthana*. As facilitators, we began shaping the retreat around the questions: *What are our foundations? How can we build a strong structure for ourselves in the midst of a complex, challenging world? How might the Satipatthana assist us in this work?* From here, we engaged with the four foundations (kaya, vedana, citta, dharma), taking aspects from Tarchin Hearn's translation of the text to work with and craft sessions around.

During the week-long retreat the group explored each foundation through a range of activities and contemplations including creative movement, music, clay, writing, sound and silence. We deepened into three days of noble silence in the middle of the week.



From the website blurb: *“The Satipatthana is the root instruction for mindfulness practice. This pithy ancient text strips mindfulness back to four foundations that underpin the experience of being alive. It was written a long time ago by a human who looked deeply into the nature of things. Some things have changed since then, others have not.”*



The four facilitators. From left to right: Rachel Zahner, Elli Yates, Jaime Howell, Dan Burgess-Milne

YAR was previously facilitated by Jaime Howell, Kath Mitchell and Mark Schrader. In 2017, Mark and Kath chose to step back and make space for three emergent facilitators to step up. For Elli and Dan in particular, as children and teenagers who grew up attending GOM, this felt like being “passed a torch” from one generation to the next. Rachel, Dan and Elli are deeply grateful for the mentorship and support provided by Kath, Mark and Jaime over the last five years. We acknowledge the skill and wisdom that Mark and Kath have brought to YAR and thank them for the years of service which have made this innovative annual

retreat possible. As young facilitators we are finding our way into holding space for unfolding as we assist our peers and sangha on the path of awakening. Our process as emerging leader in this space has been imbued with great trust and patience from our elders - may we continue to learn and grow under their spiritual guidance.

DANA TO THE LAND

This year we were blessed with 17 participants, meaning we were able to have four successive dana projects happening at the Centre during the week. These were skillfully co-ordinated by the caretakers, Faith and Guy, and provided an excellent opportunity for participants to come to know the Centre more profoundly and more compassionately.

1. The Hut Site

A new hut is about to be built at the Centre, and participants were hard at work preparing



a flat space for construction to begin.

2. The Garden

The garden has had a major re-haul, with fresh seeds being planted and hours of weeding and mulching completed by a keen gardening crew.



3. Painting the Men's Toilets



The men's toilets and the laundry have had a fresh coat of paint and are now a beautiful sky blue!

4. Beautification

Various jobs happened all over the Centre to beautify indoor and outdoor spaces. These include new signs in the main hall, new tent site signs and a freshly cleaned pagoda.



FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

A selection of comments made by participants on feedback forms following the retreat:

“For me the retreat was deep, special, kind, patient, enlivening, whole-making, loving, fun, nourishing and beautiful.”

“It was a beautiful balance of the traditional and new, which seems to express the impermanence within the practice itself.”

“The retreat was wonderful.”

“Exceptionally well crafted, loving, balanced, deep.”

“Such stillness, such kindness.”

“I appreciated deepening into silence . . . the movement, dancing, the teachings and insights, the ritual sharing, the magnificent place and community of inspiration.”

“Gave space for people with different experiences.”

“I loved it. I might have felt lost without the grounding practice of hard manual labour, the team spirit, the ‘seeing something through’ and witnessing with pride the finished work, in the spirit of dana.”

“So much compassion, intelligence, kindness and wisdom.”

“I’ll be back!”

“Absolute gratitude. Thank you for your openness.”

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who has supported YAR over the years. It is such a delight to see new faces at the Centre discovering the Dharma in such a safe a co-creative environment. Facilitating this retreat is a fulfilling and engaging experience, knowing that the ripple effects in the world will be wider than we can imagine.

A big thank you to the Board, who continues to support the course by allowing us to adjust the fee structure in exchange for dana to the land; helping us provide an affordable retreat for younger participants. And thank you to Ange Holtslag our cook, who provided us with creative, delicious and nourishing food for our week of exploration.

Sarva Mangalam, many blessings.
Dan, Rachel, Jaime and Elli.

