

INSTITUTE OF EARTHCARE EDUCATION AOTEAROA

is a non-profit Trust dedicated to the ethics and principles of sustainability.

Earthcare's objectives are:

- to provide and promote education in environmental awareness, sustainable land use and responsible resource management.
- to promote a wholistic approach to education by teaching the principles and practices of cooperation, community participation and sustainable culture.
- to promote, conduct and publish research and educational materials on sustainable systems.

Earthcare often partners other organisations with compatible aims in delivering facilitation, education, design or consultancy services.

ROBINA McCURDY – background

(1) General

Robina is a New Zealander who considers herself a planetary citizen. As a natural 'sustainability catalyst', she has been involved in community educational initiatives and establishing practical demonstration models of sustainable systems throughout her life. Human capacity building is one of her special skills – inspiring, guiding and offering specific tools and techniques for people to access their gifts, develop their potential, build their resourcefulness, and live their dreams. She has worked alongside hundreds of organizations, with many thousands of people, to bring about significant changes in individual lives, communities and the environment.

Robina is a founder-trustee of Tui Land Trust & Community and the Institute for Earthcare Education Aotearoa. She is also the pioneer-developer of the international programme, S.E.E.D. (Schools Environmental Education & Development), now a national programme within South Africa, and 'PLANET Organic' – a vocational training in bioregional & community-scale sustainable landuse design, management & facilitation, which took place in her own bioregion of Golden Bay. Between 2008 and 2010 she worked as a community garden co-ordinator for Victory Community Health Centre, primarily funded by Nelson region's District Health Board.

Robina has a Dipoma in Education, Permaculture, and Seed Technology. For three decades she has been engaged in broadscale community development, and for the past 25 years in permaculture (sustainable landuse) design and teaching,

organic growing, the development of environmental education resources and the creation of participatory processes for decision making and collective action. She has taught and applied these powerful community-building methods with households, neighbourhoods, schools, farms, ecovillages and bioregions, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Southern Africa, Brazil, Ireland, Scotland, Britain, Canada and USA. In 2008, Robina's vast experience culminated in the publication of her community facilitation manual, 'Grounding Vision, Empowering Culture' (see 'Resources').

Some organisations which have partnered with and financed her work are: the NZ High Commission and NZ Natural Heritage Foundation (New Zealand), DANIDA (Denmark), Fundacio Gaia NGO, Rio Grande du Sul and Santa Catarina Education Departments (Brazil), Global Ecovillage Network (Australia), Village Development, Novalis Institute and Abalimi Bezekhaya (South Africa), PELUM (Zimbabwe), Context Institute, NextAID, Antioch University (USA) and the British High Commission.

(2) Ecovillage & Intentional Community

Robina is a founder-member of Tui Land Trust, a 26 year old intentional community in rural Aotearoa/New Zealand. Tui is dedicated to personal development, living lightly on the earth, working with the rhythms of nature, creating sustainable small village culture, generating ethical livelihood, using appropriate technology and serving as a centre for holistic education and healing. More on Tui can be found in Robina's chapter in 'Creating Harmony: Conflict Resolution in Community', published by Gaia Trust and Permanent Publications (Britain). Also visit: www.tuitrust.org.nz

Since the founding of Tui, she has worked globally in the community-village context, in impoverished and privileged conditions, offering many introductory and advanced level workshops/trainings. Her main methodologies are Permaculture Design and Participatory Rural/Rapid Appraisal (PRA). One of her focuses has been the facilitation of new ecovillages, and assisting schools, rural communities and suburban neighbourhoods to move towards self-reliance. This work has involved the training of community leaders as 'cultural change agents'.

Robina has also done tailored site-based facilitation/education work with existing communities and ecovillages (often in some form of crisis, or at a 're-invention' stage) in: Australia (Jalanbarg Ev, Crystal Waters Ev, Carters Rd Cty) NZ (Heartwood Trust, Earthsong Eco-neighbourhood, Riverside Cty, Valley Farm Ev), Canada (O.U.R. Ev) and USA (Sahale's 'Good-Enough' Community,

Tierra Learning Centre (NZ) and Brazil (Fundacio Gaia, leaders from the Landless Movement). In 1999, she worked alongside Robert Gilman (Context Institute, USA and co-founder of Global Ecovillage Network) in the transformation of governance structures at Findhorn Foundation, Scotland. She was also a presenter there at two different conferences: the 'Global Ecovillage' and the 'Ecovillages & Sustainable Communities'. She has taught two composite Permaculture/Ecovillage design courses at Otamatea Ecovillage in NZ and Kuthumba Ecovillage, Sth Africa, and a 1 month long 'Design for Sustainable Community' course in Golden Bay, NZ.

In 1995 and 96, at Tlholego Development Project, rural NW Province, South Africa Robina facilitated Permaculture projects, garden design & management, designing 'lelapa' (village homestead) biological systems and conducting PRA surveys with villagers to determine their needs as a future ecovillage.

Robina competence with sustainable social systems has taken her to some politically tough situations. In 1998 she led an ecovillage workshop-consultancy in Hogsback, Sth Africa, facilitating the process of land access through the then new government land redistribution system, between the local council and the Xhosa farm labouring community; and later that year with a new ecovillage ('Burdation') in County Monahan, Ireland (where the contentious border of Southern & Northern Ireland went through their land) facilitating core values agreements; sensitive cultural, environmental, economic and political issues; in depth site analysis; eventuating in an integrated land and social design to present for local authority permission and EU funding.

(3) Permaculture & Environmental Education in Schools

Robina was the pioneer and teacher-trainer of S.E.E.D. (Schools Environmental Education & Development), which she originally created as a comprehensive nature conservation programme for Otago Peninsula schools in Aotearoa-New Zealand. In South Africa she further developed it, with focus on food gardens within the South African government's 'feeding scheme', piloting it in impoverished farm schools and informal (squatter) settlement schools in 1999. S.E.E.D is a cross-curricula programme which operates within a state's national curriculum, transforming school grounds into productive, nature-enhanced, learning environments, whilst rejuvenating culture. Formally under Abalimi Bezekhaya, SEED is now a fully-fledged nationally applied, yet locally operated programme with its own organization, working in schools, creating its own educational materials and running teacher-training programmes. Visit: www.seed.org.za

