

Lincoln High School Mahoe Reserve Project

Project History

For nearly 20 years Lincoln High School has had students interested in environmental education. They began by planting trees in the school grounds, then decided to get their teeth into a project that would benefit the whole community. The students only had to look across the road for inspiration. The high school overlooked a scruffy pit site formed to extract shingle for roads and railway projects, and also used as an illegal dumping ground for refuse. The students planned, designed and consulted local community experts. They were awarded several grants, which helped them to buy plants. Over the years, Lincoln High School has had hundreds, if not thousands, of students involved in the revegetation of Mahoe Reserve.

“I like being a catalyst and I can feel the ripples are spreading out. Some of the students next year are going to Lincoln University to do resource management. A lot of them are then thinking of careers in the area. To me as a teacher that is a real spin-off.” Dr Sue Jarvis, Lincoln High School, Enviro Teacher

1991

After students attend an environmental workshop at Lincoln University, Dr Sue Jarvis encourages them to start an environmental group at Lincoln High School. They call themselves the Lincoln Environmental Organisation (LEO). Later, the group is contacted by Lincoln University students who start their own LEO group. The LEO high school students plant trees in the school grounds, paint an environmental mural, start paper recycling, worm farming, organise a wearable recycled art competition and hold “enviro” weeks in the school.

2002

Dr Jarvis’s class trial the Ministry of Education *Guidelines for Environmental Education in New Zealand Schools*.

Lincoln High School Year 9 students decide to plant native trees. They start on a small scale, planting them in the school grounds with the help of CityCare. It takes only a morning before they realise their planting is not enough. They decide to look further afield and discover the old shingle pit (called “the Pit” by locals). This is the start of the Mahoe Reserve.

To gain permission to plant in “the Pit”, the students have to talk to the Lincoln Golf Club (which leases the land), Selwyn District Council (which owns the land) and the



Lincoln Community Committee. Year 9 class representatives speak at meetings of all these groups.

Students arrange to meet Lincoln University landscape design students. The university students come up with several designs and the high school students select one that best fits with their vision. Their aim is to recreate native forest vegetation that used to exist in the area 1000 years ago. They decide to plant one-quarter of the plan each year.

2002-2003

Hundreds of students take part in the planting at Mahoe Reserve.

2004

Lincoln High School is joint winner of Green Ribbon Awards for its outstanding contributions to the environment, which is presented by the Minister for the Environment. It also receives the Selwyn Environmental Award.

2005

LEO students are invited to speak to the Canterbury branch of the Royal Society of New Zealand (apparently the first group of students to do so) about the Mahoe Reserve.

Lincoln High School becomes an Enviroschool. "Caring for the Environment" is one of the school's core values. Dr Jarvis is awarded the inaugural Sir Peter Blake Environmental Educator Award, allowing her to take a year off in 2006 to develop a model of how a high school, working in environmental education, can spread this knowledge to the whole community and to develop the idea of Lincoln Envirotown.

LEO students gain several awards such as the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network Award for a school making the greatest contribution to plant conservation (the first school to get this award) and the YHA Tuatara Award, an award financially supported by YHA New Zealand and the Department of Conservation.

2006

Dr Jarvis, inspired by progress the students have made in establishing the Mahoe Reserve, initiates with Ian Spellerberg from Lincoln University, the Lincoln Envirotown Trust (LET). Students are elected on to the LET committee.

Lincoln High School is awarded a Bronze Enviroschool Award for its work in establishing Mahoe Reserve and other sustainable practices, such as waste audits and reducing its rubbish by a third at the school.



2008

Lincoln High School wins a Silver Enviroschool Award – the first high school in the Canterbury region to do so – for its continued work at the Mahoe Reserve and for the LEO's group participation in the Liffey Stream clean-up and water testing, promoting Earth Hour throughout the school, helping out the Lincoln Envirotown Trust and doing a carbon footprint audit in the school.

The school joins the “billion tree” campaign and intends to plant more than 1400 trees in the Mahoe Reserve revegetation project.

A subcommittee of the LET is set up to manage finances and maintenance of the Mahoe Reserve.

2009

Lincoln University students set up animal and insect refuges and plan to get students from all the local schools to monitor the biodiversity in the Mahoe Reserve. The LET, in conjunction with Lincoln University, plans to erect plaques and include quizzes so students can participate in a biodiversity trail. Lincoln High School students remain involved with the LET and are elected on to the LET committee. Students continue with the ongoing planning of the Mahoe Reserve.

Future

Lincoln High School students intend to keep looking after and developing the reserve, as well as encouraging people of all ages to use, enjoy and learn from it. The LEO group will continue to increase the environmental sustainability of the school and community. Selwyn District Council plans to put in a walkway to connect the reserve to residential areas.

