

True Wealth Project

Evaluation Report



Reconnecting People, Place, and Possibility

PROJECT COORDINATOR

Hiromi Charles

What is True Wealth?

The True Wealth Project demonstrates how a rural community can be revitalized through global exchange, arts, and human connection.

Rooted in the idea that true wealth is a sense of belonging, purpose, and meaningful relationships, the project creates transformative experiences for individuals and communities.

Through artist residencies, regenerative tourism, and community-based programs, it fosters confidence, trust, and new possibilities for living and working.

It offers a replicable model for reconnecting people to place and to each other in a time of increasing social isolation.



Project Overview

Reframing Wealth

The True Wealth Project is a place-based initiative in Nishiawakura Village, Japan, integrating art, craft, food, and cultural exchange to create meaningful connections between local communities and international participants.



Global Encounters

Implemented through an artist residency in partnership with Shelburne Craft School and regenerative tourism programs with international partners, the project brings together artists, educators, chefs, families, and children through shared experiences of making, cooking, and living together.



Transformation through Connection

These activities create a platform where global perspectives and local traditions meet, generating both personal transformation and community revitalization.



Living the Vision

Artist Residency

October - November 2025

An international artist residency was carried out in partnership with Shelburne Craft School.

Fourteen artist-educators lived in the village for two weeks, staying with host families and working alongside local artisans in pottery, woodworking, and natural dye.

The program included community workshops, after-school activities, and a public exhibition, creating opportunities for shared learning, cultural exchange, and daily interaction.



Regenerative Tourism Program

February-March 2026

A second program focused on regenerative tourism through food, nature, and community engagement.

In collaboration with Beth and Aron from Portland, Oregon, activities included shared meals with local producers, guided nature walks, and a seed-planting activity with families.

These experiences created spaces for meaningful interaction, connecting participants to people, place, and environment through lived experience.



Evaluation Approach

The project is evaluated through a combination of qualitative and quantitative indicators, reflecting both measurable participation and deeper transformation.

Qualitative evaluation focuses on shifts in mindset, trust-building, and the quality of human connection.

Quantitative evaluation captures participation across workshops, events, and community activities.



Qualitative Impact

The project's primary impact lies in expanding participants' sense of possibility.

Young people, in particular, experience moments where preconceived life paths begin to shift through interaction with international guests. For example, a 15-year-old aspiring chef reconsidered his future direction after a conversation with an experienced professional, demonstrating how exposure to diverse perspectives can open new pathways.

Trust-building is another key outcome. Relationships formed during the residency have led to continued exchange beyond the program. In one case, a 13-year-old participant was invited to attend a summer program in the United States by a host family she had connected with, reflecting a significant shift in trust, openness, and global engagement.

The project also creates spaces of presence and connection, where participants feel fully engaged and open. These moments—often visible through curiosity, attentiveness, and emotional response—are key indicators of success. At the community level, increasing involvement from local families, educators, and residents demonstrates growing ownership and alignment with the project's vision.

One of the most significant outcomes is the emergence of the “Rooms That Teach” initiative, developed through collaboration between a local master carpenter and a visiting woodworker who have entered an apprenticeship. This reflects how temporary exchange can evolve into long-term knowledge transfer and place-based innovation.

**“Even without speaking the same language,
we understood each other through food.”**

Aron, Chef, US (February 2026)

Quantitative Indicators

Artist Residency – October 2025

- Welcome event: ____25*__ participants
- After-school program workshops: ____20*__ participants
- Final exhibition and workshops: ____40*__ participants
- Farewell event: _33_____ participants

Artist Residency – November 2025

- Welcome event: ____15*__ participants
- Meeting with Board of Education: ____17__ participants
- After-school program workshops: ____20*__ participants
- Final exhibition and workshops: __30*_____ participants
- Thanksgiving community event: ____20*__ participants

*Approximate numbers

Regenerative Tourism Program – February 2026

- Nature walk and seed-planting activity: __20*_____ participants
- Moon-viewing ceremony: __7_____ participants



Nature walk & Dream Seeds Planting

Key Outcomes

Across all programs, the project has engaged approximately 250 participants through workshops, events, and community activities.

Outcomes include:

- Increased confidence and global awareness among children
- Renewed pride and visibility of local craft and culture
- Formation of long-term, trust-based international relationships
- Emergence of new initiatives rooted in collaboration



“Rooms that Teach” Project

The Preservation of Cultural Heritage

The “Rooms That Teach” project emerged directly from the artist residency.

A collaboration between a local master carpenter and a visiting woodworker has developed into an apprenticeship, supporting the transmission of cultural heritage while creating a space for learning, exchange, and co-creation.



Crowdfunding video

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ah0vQBubCmQh8N7CvSn_lt8cPuUh6Mts/view?usp=drive_link

Beyond Connection: Relationships That Continue

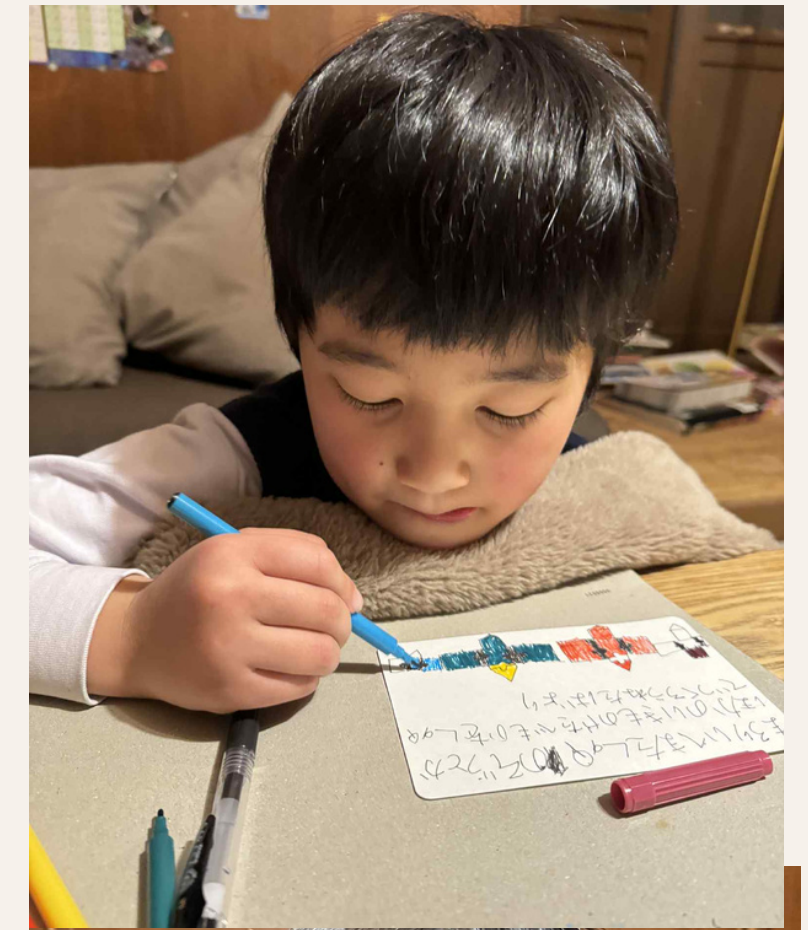


“Thank you for playing so much with our children...
I feel like I might cry.” — Chinatsu (Host family)

“I felt like part of the family. Everyone was so warm and
welcoming.” — Mallory (Artist, November Residency)

“Who’s coming next?” — Taba (Child, after the residency)

“We’re already talking about meeting again in Vermont.”
— Chinatsu & Mallory



For Mallory!

“Engaging with craft feels like a large tree growing new branches and leaves each time — expanding connections within the community.”

Nanako Suzuki, natural dye artist, Someya Suzuki owner



“If you had to describe Nishiawakura in one sentence to the world, what would you say?”

“A magical place to reconnect to life and Japan. “

Beth Crow, gardener/Boutique Japan Tour Agent





Seeds planted
種が蒔かれた

Future rising.
未来が動き出す

True wealth moment
真の豊かさの瞬間



nokishitatoshokanbandb

Original audio



atlas01042022 It was such a peaceful but powerful time 😊
I'm glad that we could be part of it!
Loved it and I can't wait for them to sprout 🌱🌸🌺🌻🌼



3w 4 likes Reply See translation



shellyitoh Is perfect the right word to describe the amazingly organic event we shared today!? The synchronicity of the universe seemed to bind us all together for a brief moment. I'm looking forward to more moments like this in Nishiawakura. @amosacrefarm many thanks to Beth for sharing her thoughts and insights about nature ❤️



3w 2 likes Reply See translation

[View insights](#)

[Boost reel](#)



Liked by **theworldismyoysteryum** and 20 others

March 1

Thank you for
your support!
I look forward to
welcoming you
to Nishiawakura.
with gratitude,

Hiromi

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DVVkMeLE68C/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==