

Reflections from Waitangi

A New Set of Eyes

Ruth Spain

Community Occupational Therapist at Waikato DHB

I have been a member of NZAOT since a promo at tech convinced me I needed to foster links with other occupational therapists in the profession. Of course it was only a few dollars for a student to belong back then. [Still not very many dollars now ☺ Ed.] I didn't attend any of the conferences as I was a single mum scraping to get by. But since graduating I've attended many of the conference and workshop programmes around the country. My greatest joys have been catching up with classmates and making new friends during these times although I've also learned a lot from the sessions. I have usually left the programmes feeling "a-buzz" with ideas and inspirations.

This year though I arrived with a different attitude and a new set of eyes as I'd just been elected to council. I felt a greater sense of ownership towards the event and a responsibility to hear what was being said by those around me. As a consequence the ideas and inspirations I've come away with this time are quite different. They are less focused on my own practice and more concentrated on the profession as a whole; on the challenges of remaining true to our occupational background, and the importance of our national roots in biculturalism and partnership.

The powhiri at Te Tii Marae made a thoughtful start full of respect for the place, the people, and the tribal history. It was made more alive for me by the explanations of a brave kuia about significant features inside and outside of the whareniui. It seemed from her tale of a whare rebuilt by women during wartime, and the composition of the tour guide team at the treaty grounds, that brave women are an important part of this hapu.

The highlight for me at the treaty grounds was visiting the whareniui of the tribes of New Zealand. The incredible variations to the carvings representing the different tribes, the meanings behind the tukutuku panels, the realisation of the time taken to bring them all together, and the uniqueness of the whareniui itself, made the place all the more breath-taking for me as a person and as a New Zealand therapist.

The NZAOT Issues forum showed there are many who feel strongly about the cost of belonging to a small health profession and the continued discussion online since the workshops has confirmed that impression. Our council established the fact our organization cannot easily continue at current income levels but it was a big surprise to note the amount of support for a much larger increase than originally proposed. I wholeheartedly believe this decision will enable our organization to fulfil its mission of excellence in representation, support, standards and knowledge for the occupational therapy profession in this time of uncertainty and challenge.

One workshop I attended stands out in my memory as pivotal for me. It was held at Te Tii Marae whareniui and centred on the exploration of therapeutic relationships in the context of Whanau Ora. During the session the participants discussed the differences between dependence, independence, and interdependence, and how therapeutic relationships helped create or dispel each of these. I came away from the workshop with a refreshed understanding of my own responsibility as a facilitator rather than a creator of health and also of the supreme importance of reflection.

I have to say that the workshops were well planned and executed by the committee – the venue, the focus on cultural matters, food, exhibitors, dinner - I can only look forward to next year in my home region of Waikato to see how well we compare.



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A Renewed Passion

Terrie Hunt

Being born outside New Zealand (living only in the South Island), I have not had the opportunity to visit Waitangi previously. The experience of being at the place where the Treaty of Waitangi was written and signed, added greatly to my understanding of the significance of this document to life in New Zealand. From day one, listening to Hemaina Reihana-Tait describe her role in developing strong therapeutic relationships in Te Tai Tokerau PHO provided further understanding of the culture of this area and of the cultural skills and traits required by health practitioners.

Other workshops I attended included "Standing Together as One: reflecting on our disaster response" with Christchurch resident and past NZAOT president Tracey Partridge. This focused on the best use of occupational therapists following any disaster. The OTBNZ workshop provoked robust discussion and provided a number of ideas for the board to consider, with participants developing essential competencies for graduate occupational therapists in the future; and the A3 Interactive Problem solving model presented by therapists from Counties Manukau DHB provided another way of looking at issues and demonstrated that often the stated problem is not the real problem. Of further value to my practice, was the CCFR workshop which focussed on simplifying and de-stressing the writing of CCFR objectives, and a workshop on "therapeutic use of self in leadership".

The trade gallery was well attended throughout the workshops. Exhibitors were very generous with their time and resources, demonstrating their ongoing and enthusiastic support for our

profession. NZAOT would not be able to hold these excellent professional development activities without the considerable financial commitment from exhibitors.

I attended the NZAOT AGM on day two where there was vigorous discussion regarding membership and the proposed fees increase. To become a stronger influence in the health and well-being of all New Zealanders, occupational therapists need to work together in partnership through their professional body. Membership of NZAOT is subsidised by many employers, especially DHB's, yet over 50% of occupational therapists do not take this opportunity to strengthen the position of their profession by joining their professional body. If we cannot commit to promoting our profession why should we expect others to fully understand what we can potentially "do"?

The workshops dinner on the evening of day two began with a relaxing ferry ride to Russell. It was a wonderful night of entertainment and great food. The highlight was each table's collaborative efforts in creating and presenting their "Nga kete o te matauranga – Baskets of Knowledge". The creative, co-operative, competitive and fun aspects of being an occupational therapist were fully demonstrated with much hilarity and enthusiasm. However it would be interesting to hear the hotel staff describe what occupational therapists do!

As always I came away with renewed passion for this amazing profession and with increased respect for the outstanding people who are the profession in New Zealand.



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A Philosophical Understanding

Janet Edmond

Workforce Development Coordinator, Central Region, Te Pou

The setting was steeped in history, the views were inspirational and the programme was full of great learning opportunities - a perfect combination for a growth experience. The powhiri and the tour of the Waitangi Treaty grounds highlighted the meaning of true partnership for me. That being, that it is the reaching of a destination or outcome we are aiming for, and not whether we paddle our waka forwards or row our boat backwards to get there!

I enjoyed the philosophical question posed by Dr Manuka Henare from the University of Auckland within his workshop about being 'in' or 'of' a place, my profession or my organisation. I explored how my worldview and values align with those of the profession to help recognise if I was 'in' or 'of' the profession. The process involved exploring and writing down our worldview and what values are important to us in our life. We then talked about the philosophy and values of occupational therapy. The stronger the alignment indicates being more 'of' the profession rather than 'in' the profession.

I reconnected with old friends and made new ones. I added to my kete of knowledge and shared my knowledge to add to others kete. I finished the workshops stimulated and knowing I am 'of' the profession! Thanks to the organising team for a great few days.

