

The presidents speech

Delivered at 62nd NZAOT AGM, Waitangi, Thursday 3 November 2011.

Going forward to 2012

As members, council, staff and I move the association forward into 2012, I hope and expect we all maintain the message clearly conveyed during yesterday's opening cultural encounter.

That message being "the awareness and tolerance of different perspectives and ways of doing". "Not wrong, just different". As in the difference between the actions of a forward facing Māori waka kaihoe (paddler), and a backwards facing colonial English oarsman - not wrong, just different.

There have been changes made today, and there will continue to be changes as we work through the constitutional review and respond to the changing realities of our environment.

Yesterday I attended Hemaima, Diane and Rose's presentation "Drawing Threads of Culture into the Clinical Interaction", and a phrase struck a chord with me. This phrase being about how our interactions have two qualities - 'transactional' and 'transformative'.

Firstly, transactional. This is about the here and now interactions. In the context of NZAOT it is things like the phone calls taken at the office, SIG discussion's, responses to submissions created by members, the conversations we have informally amongst ourselves as we move from one workshop to the next.

Each of these actions being transactions, which at the same time, are also transforming.

The second interaction, 'transformative', to me, captures the strengthening power of belonging to NZAOT. The transformative power we have in shaping policies and entitlements for our clients, and our own work opportunities, are tangible products of this transformative concept.

Today as a group of association members and even non-members - we are reaping the benefits of all the transactions that have gone before us - that have transformed us to this place today.

Our voice is growing at policy and management levels; we are being asked to be part of decision-making groups that affect areas of health, education, justice and social development. In my eyes another sign of our professional confidence is that even if we are not asked we are fronting up and giving an opinion backed up by evidence. We have a voice in Aotearoa New Zealand and it is getting stronger.

In conclusion, as we move forward together I give gratitude to all those transactions that have occurred over the last 62 years that have transformed us to this point - a clinical workshop at Waitangi - a comfort in acknowledging different perspectives and the strength and ability to have a voice.

The transactional job for 2012 is for us all to recruit more membership. The transactional job for 2012 is to be financially mindful. The transactions of today are to connect with each other and soak in the strength achieved by belonging to the New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists.

Ka kite koutou

Rita