

Incorporated

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa

A warm welcome to everyone, and to all who have journeyed here from across New Zealand, the land of the long white cloud.

So one year on – what has been happening? This time last year we met in Flaxmere, for a great weekend of learning, sharing and camaraderie.

Let us celebrate the successes of the last year. We have a successful facebook page that is only open to members. There has been a lot of robust discussion over a range of topics throughout the year. We have another facebook page that is open to share summit information. This last year we published two newsletters and have continued our network meetings around the land. The men and women (of the committee) are committed to ensuring that we as an organisation progress, and have worked tirelessly promoting ECMENZ incorporated to their colleagues, friends and contacts.

But there is still work to be done. We have produced a new website, which you can share with others, particularly students, to lift our profile within our New Zealand ECE sector. As we know, male teachers often do not have contact with another male teacher for peer support. We represent the political and social interests of men in early childhood education and provide peer support to help retain men in the sector.

ECMENZ is a minority group, and one of the biggest barriers to develop has been the lack of the financial base to operate from. This raises a challenge - to be influential you need to have a presence and to have a presence this invariably costs. Our committee and members have been able to attend meetings in their own region including the early childhood council conference and various others. And all the costs have had to be met by the committee themselves, which severely dents our ability to be heard. This needs to be addressed so we as a Society can achieve our aims as stated in the constitution.

Slowly the NZ statistics are improving, men now account for 2.2 % of the early childhood workforce, up from 1.9 % a year ago. And there is more good news, with an increase in the number of men training in early childhood education at tertiary level.

It remains a fact that in New Zealand we have one of the lowest participation rates of male early childhood teachers in the western world. We require targeted support from the government, actively promoting men in recruitment drives for the early childhood sector and backed by scholarships, for this to begin to change.

In 2013 I received three awards and a scholarship for my work “turning trash into treasure for young children”. These awards were in the public domain, outside of education circles, helping to raise the profile of men working in early childhood in parliament and amongst business circles.

Do you advocate for male teachers in early childhood? Do you say that you are a teacher working with the children or do most people think you are a centre owner?

We need to ensure that our message is reaching the sector. I hope that many here today will leave with a similar resolve which will result in the sector not only demanding action, but taking action. It is through the voice of members such as you that the gateway to change will be opened and the pathway defined.

I also warn there is no point having a network if we don't have an active membership. It is too easy to come together each year and discuss the inequalities and then disappear into the fog for another year without making a contribution.

Action needs to begin with us, promotion to attract and recruit more male teachers and then retention through mentoring, networking and support. It is from our actions that ECMENZ will be measured and it is action that will put more men into the sector to grow the skill bases, talents and experiences of our early childhood teachers. So the question each and every one of you should be asking is what can I do to make it better?

The challenge now is to face 2014 with a new determination to make a difference.

So I welcome you all here today and look forward to working with you over the next two days – this will be an important time in which we establish our pathway for the next year. It is important that we build on the foundations we have to grow and to leave this Summit in the knowledge that we are all heading in the same direction.

Sarah Farquhar has supported us throughout the year once again and her commitment to our cause can never be undervalued. She has been a great source of support for men in early childhood in general.

And at this time I want to thank Sarah for all her hard work organising this summit. There is a lot of time and effort required behind the scenes to put together a summit like this, so we thank you for making it possible. A special thank you - to you and your team.

Yours,

Adam Buckingham

President ECMENZ Inc