

“It was huge!” was my response to that archetypical Monday morning question “howz ya weekend?”. That weekend being the 9th and 10th of February 2008, saw a piece of educational history unfold in the hands of a group of male educators gathered at Porirua’s Whitirea Polytechnic.

Having accepted a kind offer to attend this “*The 2nd Men in Early Childhood Summit: The Launching – Te Whakamanu*”, and having only been in the profession myself for 1 year, i had some apprehensions as to what I was going to encounter and in turn what I could offer those encounters. However any apprehension was quickly alleviated as I realized I was among a group of people who shared with me what is a rare experience - working as a male in the early childhood education sector.

The focus of the weekend was to form and launch ECMenz, a group dedicated to the task of encouraging fellow males into a rewarding and challenging profession that has been historically overlooked by men for reasons the group also seeks to remedy.

The guest speakers blew my mind

with contributions from international men in childcare advocate Kenny Spence, internationally experienced childcare professional Bob Drummond, New Zealand’s third ever male kindergarten teacher Simon Easton, researcher Sarah Farquar and media consultant Anthony Keesing.

The amazing insight these speakers provided on the Saturday set us in great stead for Sunday’s task of uniting as an incorporated society (ECMenz), and solidifying strategies to increase the amount of males participating in early childhood education. Avenues to further explore ranged from ground level advocacy to involving the already supportive Ministry of Education – represented at the summit by Karl Le Quesne.

Our elected ‘El Presidente’ Russell Ballentyne said, when I checked as to whether to run this article past a

member of the newly elected committee before publishing – “No Jonny, you’re your own voice”. In hearing that I realized the importance of there being access to male voices, for those within the sector, and other men looking for something to connect with as a point of entry to the profession.

In saying that, our ingenious editor has just put out the call for any and all men in ECE to contribute their story/journey/profile to *The Space* and we will publish these stories as a regular feature.

Feels good makin’ a bit of history. Peace in your town, Jonny X. **For further information see www.ecmenz.org.nz**



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