

REGGIO EMILIA
AOTEAROA
NEW ZEALAND
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IN THIS ISSUE...

Conference reflections from:-

- Lesley Pohio
(REANZ Trust)
- Anne Meade (REID)
- Pam Wilson (REANZ
South)
- Liz Battersby

SPRING EVENTS...

- Kerikeri
- Auckland
- Manawatu
- Christchurch
- Queenstown

BOOK STORE...

- The goodness of
Rain by Ann Pelo

REANZ Newsletter

WINTER EDITION 2015

2015 has already seen many REANZ events. A highlight has been having Elena Giacomini, Loretta Bertani and Jane McCall with us for our seminar in Auckland and our conference in Te Anau. We hope you enjoyed the updates for these events which have been included on our REANZ Facebook page.

In this issue we have included reflections on the Conference from Lesley Pohio, Anne Meade and Pam Wilson. Elizabeth Battersby has also written a reflection on the evening where Elena Giacomini shared her wisdom and insight through stories and memories of research projects from Reggio Emilia.

For those of you who were fortunate enough to hear Margo Hobba and Chris Celada in 2013, you will be pleased to know that they are returning to New Zealand in August and will be offering seminars in Kerikeri, Auckland, Palmerston North, Christchurch and Queenstown. Be sure to enrol as soon as registrations are open to avoid disappointment as spaces are limited.

Connecting Children to the Atelier of Nature...

I was accompanying my 16 month old grandson on our early morning walk during the recent holiday weekend. He gravitated towards a long line of leaves stretching the length of the pathway and delighted in making loud crunching sounds as he swished his way through the leaves. He often paused along the way, looking closely at the foliage spilling through the fences. A yellow daisy caught his eye and he held it up to me

saying 'flower'. Later on he picked a piece of lavender and held it to his nose, absorbing the lavender fragrance. Throughout his journey Mayer was tuned into what nature had to offer in this ordinary suburban street. This small encounter reminded me once again of the words shared by Elena at the conference in Te Anau, where she urged us to fully immerse ourselves in the space of nature; to

take time to breathe and listen to the smells, the sounds, the textures and sensations the landscape has to offer. When we walk the landscape with young children they help us to become more attentive and curious and as Ann Pelo says, to "walk with my [our] senses awake" (p. 69).

By Lesley Pohio
Chairperson

A Symphony of Contrasts...

The conference was a time for us to both learn and to create. I recently saw a comment that when we look at people and things, we are missing from our own picture. However, what Elena, Loretta and the REANZ conference planners did was to make sure that we WERE very much present in the picture we were looking at as the conference processes unfolded. The conference wove together the story and illustrations of a year-long investigation focused on a bamboo wood in the garden of a pre-school

in Reggio Emilia and our 'accelerated' small group investigations of some aspect of the beautiful park on the shores of Lake Te Anau. The process of having each small group create or perform for the whole conference something that symbolized a feature of our nature experiences in the park over the conference weekend provoked us to be creative in different ways to our usual documentation. The group I was in created a "Symphony of Contrasts". It was a sound symphony, with no images. I found the recording, and the sounds in nature during the time when our colleague

captured the 'symphony', spiritually moving. The hour when the conference participants were silently 'being' in that beautiful natural environment was also a gift that we treasured.

Thank you, Reggio Children, REANZ South and REANZ for preparing that gift.

A reflection by Anne Meade of Reggio Emilia in Dialogue. (REID) Wellington

Stories from Reggio...

This wonderful evening lived up to its promise of engaging participants, as Elena Giacomini lucidly shared her wisdom and insight through stories and memories of research projects from Reggio Emilia.

For Elena, working with children is a privilege, full of discovery and, in her words, "never boring", for it means grappling with the uncertainty of knowledge. Elena continues to learn, and knew she would return home with questions, doubts, wonderings, and interpretations - the essence of Reggio pedagogy.

She stressed that Reggio educators seek constantly to understand how to "do education", learning above all from the children who are already on journeys of research that they are able to recount, if we listen to them. Elena commented that a pedagogy of

listening compels teachers to be totally dedicated to considerable documentation about children's lives, what they know, how they know what they know, and how they process their knowledge. The absolute respect for children inherent in this approach brings Reggio educators closer to children, gaining their trust as they become aware that their teachers are genuinely interested in their learning. Teachers and children become co-protagonists in children's learning. Teachers strive to make learning visible through close observation of children, research into their learning, and discussions with parents. Elena illustrated the significance of documentation in helping adults to understand children's learning in the stories she shared, explaining that the deep thinking behind a very young child's graphic representation might not be

apparent without pedagogical documentation to make the learning visible. My lasting impression of Elena is of complete devotion to children's learning; an educator who grasps Malaguzzi's poignant belief that she shared with us:

"It is our obligation to think about the future. The actions that we do not take today are actions not taken for the children who will be growing tomorrow".

~ Loris Malaguzzi

A reflection by Liz Battersby

"It is our obligation to think about the future. The actions that we do not take today are actions not taken for the children who will be growing tomorrow".
~ Loris Malaguzzi



Relationships between materials and place...

It is sometimes difficult for adults to see something as familiar as nature with different eyes. Children do this so well as we all saw throughout Elena's and Loretta's presentations culminating in the Planetary Messages on the closing day. Listening to the group presentations after two sessions at Ivon Wilson Park, I felt the adults had 'got it'. Just as children's ideas about nature are complex, so are the adults' ideas. This was evident in all the presentations and also obvious that the conference

participants had begun to look at nature with all their senses through observation, with empathy and through immersion, with cultural knowledge and closeness. They were able and willing to imagine themselves in the object's place and show the relationships between materials and that place. Listening to these presentations was quite an emotional and spiritual experience for me and as one of the organisers, made all the work so worthwhile.

So, thank you to Elena, Loretta, Claire and all conference participants for your energy and enthusiasm, your willingness to actively involve yourselves and your appreciation of nature in our place.

A reflection by Pam Wilson of REANZ South (Southland)



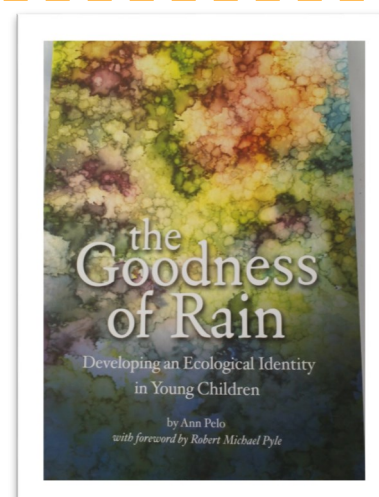
We are—and must be convinced of this—inside an ecosystem: our earthly journey is a journey we make along with the environment, nature, the universe. Our organism, our mortality, our culture, our knowledge, our feelings are connected with the environment, with the universe, with the world. And here we can find the spider web of our life.
- Loris Malaguzzi

Book Store

We now have available to purchase, Anne Pelo's latest book *The Goodness of Rain—Developing an Ecological Identity in Young Children*. \$63 + postage

To order please go to our website www.reanz.org. Once your purchase has been processed by Paypal, the books will be couriered to you.

Please note that Eftpos is now available at our REANZ events.



Being a Teacher *IN* research with Children: Listening, documenting and discussing...

We are thrilled to announce that international speakers, Margo Hobba and Chris Celada will be touring New Zealand in August and September. They bring with them a wealth of wisdom and in-depth understanding of the principles of Reggio Emilia.

During these workshops we will explore theories and practices associated with being a **teacher *IN* research with children**: listening, documenting and discussing from a perspective of trying to make sense of the challenges, thoughts, interests and desires that are engaging children; and making choices about possibilities for proceeding that engage both children and teachers in furthering their processes of learning.

Chris Celada and Margo Hobba have had long careers in both early childhood and tertiary education. They have been studying the educational project in Reggio Emilia for many years and collaborate to present their interpretations and elaborations of the project to many groups around Australia and New Zealand. They are concerned that professional learning for teachers tends to *separate[s] the head from the body*, asking teachers:

*to think without hands,
to do without head,
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy*
(Loris Malaguzzi)

As with children, adults' knowing grows from shared, lived experiences. These workshops are a reflection of Chris and Margo's ongoing research into strategies for enabling adults to participate in a learning community whose intention is the co-construction of knowledge.

Save the dates!

Kerikeri—Thursday 27th August

Auckland—Saturday 29th August

Manawatu— Monday 31st August

Christchurch—Tuesday 1st September

Queenstown—Wednesday 2nd September

WATCH THIS SPACE!

Check your inboxes for our flyer that will have details of venue, cost and time or visit our website at www.reanz.org