

Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

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Guest Editor
Leon Fulcher

BEGINNINGS



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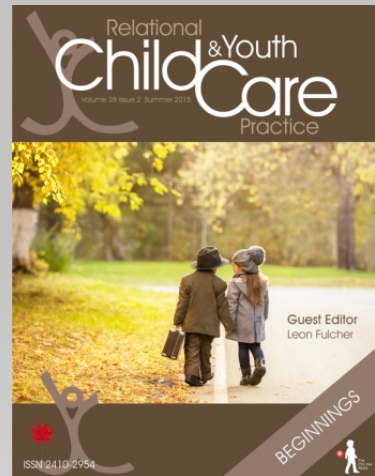


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Contents

Volume 28 Number 2 — 2015



- Editorial: Beginning by Pausing to Remember** 4
Leon Fulcher

- My Life Was Like A Small Heap Of Sand: Providing Shelter in Austria for Refugee Youths** 8
Karin Demuth

- Buen Camino! Happy Trails on the Journey!** 13
Ernie Hilton, Kari Colledge, Melissa Crooks and Darren Nogler

- Valuing Mentorship: Towards Cultural Humility** 22
Lauren Oswald and John Korsmo

- A New Beginning for Child and Youth Care Workers in South Africa** 29
Merle Allsopp

- Beginnings as a Child and Youth Care Researcher in Australia** 42
Glenys Bristow

- Nurturing Creativity in Child and Youth Care Practice: It's not what we think but how we think!** 48
Mary Ventrella

- Beginning Work in Kindergartens with the Children and Mothers of Norwegian Travelling People** 56
Anne-Mari Larsen



Relational & Youth
Child Care
Practice

Beginning to Work with Bangladeshi Sex Workers and Their Children: A Personal Reflection	65
<i>Md. Tuhinul Islam</i>	
The Beginnings of Documentation Practices in Child and Youth Care	77
<i>Michelle Chalupa</i>	
Beginning to Realign, Redefine and Realise New Opportunities for Care Leavers	81
<i>Cameron Forester</i>	
Street Voices	84
<i>Joel Zola</i>	
Reading Comics To Read the World	87
<i>Wolfgang Vachon</i>	
The Button Jar and Other Childhood Stories	90
<i>Donna Jamieson</i>	
A Retiring Beginning	96
<i>Garth Goodwin</i>	
Twilight Reflections: Some Reflections about Beginning as a Trainer	99
<i>Thom Garfat</i>	
Journal Information	101



Aaah, summer — that long anticipated stretch of lazy, lingering days, free of responsibility and rife with possibility. It's a time to hunt for insects, master handstands, practice swimming strokes, conquer trees, explore nooks and crannies, and make new friends.

— Darell Hammond

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(formerly *The Journal of Child & Youth Care*, established 1982) is committed to promoting and supporting the profession of Child and Youth Care through disseminating the knowledge and experience of individuals involved in the day-to-day lives of young people.

This commitment is founded upon the belief that all human issues, including personal growth and development, are essentially “relational”.



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Beginning by Pausing to Remember

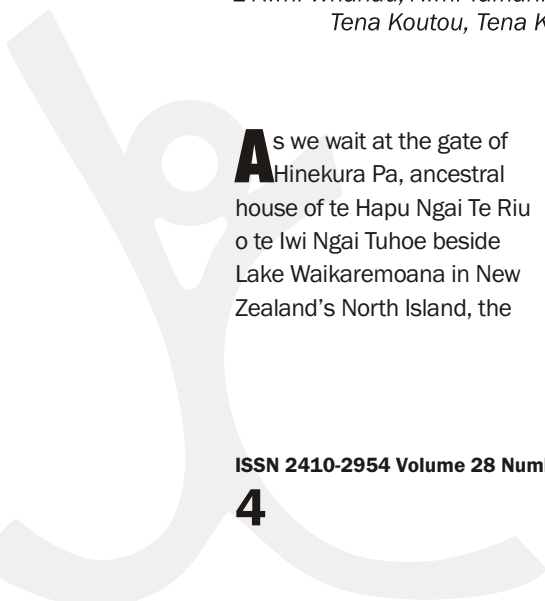
Leon Fulcher

Karanga Mai! Karanga Mai! Karanga Mai!

*Tehei Mauri, Tupu Mauri
Ki te wheao, ki ti ao marama
Tehei Mauri Ora!*

*Kia ora tatau e hui hui nei
E Nga Rangatira – E Kui Ma; E Koro Ma
Hei Nga Hapu*

*E Awhi Whanau; Awhi Tamariki; Awhi Rangatahi; Awhi Mokopuna
Tena Koutou, Tena Koutou, Tena Koutou Katoa*



As we wait at the gate of Hinekura Pa, ancestral house of te Hapu Ngai Te Riu o te Iwi Ngai Tuhoe beside Lake Waikaremoana in New Zealand's North Island, the

voice of a senior Maori woman calls out from the PA, making her voice heard, and through her the voices of the ancestors of this Marae.

Another woman's voice responds from amongst the visitors, someone with *mana* or social standing, offering returned greetings with reassurances that there are no reasons to fear conflict.

Karanga Mai!
Who are you and for what reasons do you come?
Karanga Mai!

Thus begins a ritual of encounter between people – whether family, friends, officials, strangers or invited guests – that happens daily



the length and breadth of New Zealand. Such rituals are exchanged around funerals or *tangi*, birthdays, weddings, unveilings and so forth – bringing people together again through rituals of beginning. The initial exchanges between visitors and locals are always conveyed through the voices of women.

Those who enter the space at the front of an ancestral house – the Marae Atea – enter a ‘zone’ that is governed symbolically by the god of war. In historic times, were visitors not to adhere to accepted rituals of encounter, then attack was a serious consequence. When visitors and home people are positioned on either side of the Marae Atea, the men begin their own *whaikorero* word-weaving exchanges and these are endorsed and

embellished by the women through *waiata* or song. Creation of a life within the universe is acknowledged, both in the celestial realm as well as in the terrestrial realm. And with *tehei mauri ora* – we share the breath of life!

As the beginning rituals of encounter ensue, we acknowledge all who gather together to engage in this time of exchange of thoughts, memories, reflections and goals. We acknowledge the chiefs, (even the ‘wannabe’ chiefs), and elders amongst us, including the Kuia female elders as well as the Koroua male elders. We formally acknowledge the sub-tribe of peoples who care for – not just care about – children, young people and families, and grandchildren – thereby acknowledging a lineage. We

acknowledge you our readers and greet you as our child and youth care colleagues. We respect how you have joined us to ‘check out’ every bit of Volume 28, Issue 2 of the *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* journal – this Special Issue on Beginnings!

We begin with an account by Karin Demuth from SOS Children’s Villages International about new beginnings for young asylum-seekers leaving war torn parts of the Middle East seeking help to re-settle and start new lives in Austria. Beginnings are deeply personal, and also very prominent across child and youth care services, whether through staff taking up new posts, roster changes or transferring from one work site to another. Ernie Hilton and colleagues at HomeBridge Youth Services in Nova Scotia offer a creative muse about how child and youth care workers are all the time faced with and experience beginnings. Sometimes the impact of new beginnings only becomes apparent to us some while later!

So *Buen Camino*, beginnings are about journeys. Korsmo and Oswald share reflections on how mentoring relationships can become very influential at different stages in the career of a child and youth care worker. Cul-



tural humility goes a long way towards helping to smooth over some of the challenging and alone times associated with new beginnings, especially if it means moving to a new place and starting afresh. Often, it requires simply 'hanging in' until some improvements in the 'weather forecast and climate change' can be seen while transitioning through new beginnings. Merle Allsopp documents how South African child and youth care workers 'hung in' there through forty years of challenge and struggle against apartheid and then social reconstruction. Today they are celebrating formal recognition and registration of child and youth care workers in that country and the training of 6000 new child and youth care recruits! Beginnings are both personal and political!

Glenys Bristow shares a personal account of some of her beginnings as a child and youth care researcher. In so doing, she captures the essence of those moments of numb terror waiting in a corridor or anteroom for 'the call' to meet with the committee or the examiners when 'What am I doing here?' surges ste-



reophonically through the senses. Then, it's a matter of getting on with the challenges around interviews, transcripts and data analysis. Important beginnings, these, frequently locked away in our darkest memories.

Mary Ventrella invites readers to consider how it's not so important *what* we think in child and youth care practice, as it is *how* we think in our daily practices with children, young people and family members. How can we think of opportunities and meaningful moments that matter when preoccupied with the incantations of a policy rule book? Creativity is an essential part of the personal toolkit carried by every child and youth care worker.

It's all a question of whether creativity is sought after and used purposefully with children, young people and families.

Anne-Mari

Larsen's account of beginning work in kindergartens with the children and mothers of Norway's Travelling People is particularly noteworthy. Travelling

People are a recognised national minority group in Norway. These are a people whose ancestral roots as Romani travellers living in Norway date back more than 500 years – older than Newfoundland! And they are still a highly marginalised minority people in contemporary Norway. We are grateful to Anne-Mari for sharing her story with us. Similarly, we draw attention to Tuhinul Islam's account of beginning to work differently with the children of Bangladeshi sex-workers through involving



mothers in the residential care of their children. Beginnings are not only personal and political. Moral and ethical dilemmas are never very far away.

Michelle Chalupa offers a short reflection about a piece of work she was assigned to carry out a few years back which involved going to the basement of an old residential child and youth care institution, locating old and rusting file cabinets, and archiving 30 years of old case files. In the course of this assignment as an experienced child and youth care worker, she gained a whole new appreciation of the importance of recording, documentation and periodic reviews of quality care standards in our field. As a care leaver, Cameron Forrester reports on a new service in England that supports care leavers with new networking opportunities and with renewed commitment to the importance of transitioning out of care – where endings and new beginnings meet. Joel Zola's *Street Voices* initiative in Toronto highlights ways in which care leavers are beginning to use social media and make connections and networking to find their own voices for change.

Bringing this Special Issue on Beginnings to a close, Donna Jamieson

reflects on her grandmother's button jar and other childhood stories, about how childhood play and play in the neighbourhood has changed over the years through health and safety concerns and the arrival of digital entertainments. Book reviewer Wolfgang Vachon reminds us about reading comics to read the world while Garth Goodwin steps boldly forward into retirement and a new beginning in his child and youth care career! Thom Garfat wraps things up by reflecting on 7 principles to remember as a beginning Trainer.

I wish to acknowledge the effort that authors have put into helping to compile this Special Issue on Beginnings. This includes acknowledging the efforts put in by those who wanted to contribute but for a variety of reasons it hasn't happened. These contributions made by authors to this Special Issue celebrate the professional credibility of *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* as a new e-journal, steadfastly maintaining the quality standards which have underpinned the journal of *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* for nearly thirty years.

Enjoy this Special Issue on Beginnings! I've enjoyed watching it emerge through

its own journey of beginnings that has included both challenges and opportunities. Take care of those who care for others and may the Peace be upon you.

Kia Kaha – Stand Tall!



Leon Fulcher, MSW, PhD

has worked for more than forty years as a social worker in residential child and youth care work, and as foster carer in different parts of the world. As a practitioner, supervisor, manager, researcher, scholar and author, Leon has given special consideration to working across cultures and geographies, how this impacts on team working, supervision and caring for caregivers, as well as promoting learning with adult carers. His practice aims involve making moments meaningful in the lives of children and young people whilst nurturing and promoting developmental outcomes that matter for them and their families, wherever they live.





Some Reflections about Beginning as a Trainer

Thom Garfat

I have been developing and delivering training in our field for a long time now but I still remember with great clarity the first few times I ever did a ‘training’ or made a presentation – darn, I thought I was on top of it, good, knowledgeable, ready, in fine form. All these years later, long after ‘beginning’ as a trainer, I have some (can I say ‘many’) doubts about how good I was on those first occasions.

So, all these years later, I am thinking I would like to try to share a few thoughts on things I have learned (or am learning). So, here we go:

- **Know your material**
much deeper than what you are training. I must confess that in my first training, I thought I knew

it all – I was on top of my game. I sailed through my material and then, having learned somewhere that it was important to allow people to ask questions, I paused and asked “So, any questions?” And of course the first person to ask a question was, it seemed, more knowledgeable than I was at that moment. His question was much deeper than the depth of my knowledge on the subject. (Why was he there anyway, the idiot!). Maybe it is not that he – yes, it was a he – was actually more knowledgeable than me, perhaps he was just better informed in a certain area – or is that me, still after all these

years, rationalizing. From that one experience I learned not to be so smug about what I thought I knew. You see, I knew ‘my material’ really well, but I did not know the subject as deeply as I should have. Superficial expertise?

- **Only you know what you are supposed to be doing.** In a way, this might seem to contradict the above, but really, when you are doing a training – especially if it is one you developed yourself – it is worth remembering that only you know what you are supposed to be doing at any given point. So, if you get off track and miss a point, you can always recover because no one but you knows that you have wandered or missed something (especially if you keep your cool). I always used to think that ‘they’ would know when I made a mistake but, eventually, I realized that it is only I who knows. But in those first trainings if I lost my way and forgot a piece of the material, I panicked, and it showed. Now, in retrospect, I realize that all the participants knew was that I was anxious. They did not know that I had missed something that I thought

twilight reflections



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99



was important when I developed the training. ■

Sharks in the water.

There are always going to be people who want to tell you how you are wrong, or prove they are smarter, or show how what you are saying only proves their point, even if it does not. I don't know when I learned to call these folks 'sharks in the water' but at some point I realized there are people who go to trainings simply to prove they are superior, or at least 'right'. And there are often people in trainings who are just 'waiting to strike' – they are not, I think, really paying attention to what you are training, only waiting for their opportunity, like sharks sniffing for prey. And that's okay! Just be ready – and don't be as stupid as I was, in the early days, when someone asked 'Why should I listen to a long haired hippie who knows

less that I do?' Unfortunately my response was something like 'At least my hair is not all congested in my head keeping my brain from working' – I am sure, now, that there are better responses ☺. So, be prepared to deal with the sharks – because once they sense blood, they are vicious. And remember, a shark's hunger is to feed itself, not to be helpful to others. In 1964, Eric Berne claimed that amongst the 'games people play', this one is called *NIGYSOB* – *Now I've Got You SOB!* The 'sharks' are often lurking about, not to eat you but to cripple you!

- **Be ready to translate.** I really cannot emphasize this enough. There is a lot of valuable information out there which is very relevant to working with children, youths and families – but the problem is many trainers do not know how (or do not spend the time) translating what they are training into the practical world of the practitioners in their training. So, as an example, imagine you are out there doing training on 'how to communicate effectively with children'

and all your material is based on working with verbally functional adolescents. But what about those working with non-verbal young people, or those working with adults, or those working with people from a differently communicating culture? How does your material, your ideas, translate across cultures, contexts and situations? Be prepared to address this difference. Before you put your final stamp of approval on your preparations, ask yourself, 'who might be in the audience?'

- **Don't talk about things you don't know.** This is an issue for a lot of beginning trainers. I know it was for me. I felt like I had to be 'the expert' in all things. So, when someone asked me a question about something I knew little about, I still felt I had to 'be the expert'. I did not realize I could say something like "I have not thought about that much, what do you think?" So, instead, I ended up talking superficially about important things, and maybe even giving bad advice – yes, I used to 'give advice' back then (another dangerous tactic). You are there to

present your material and you are doing so because you think it is good and you know it well. So, stick to what you came to do and if a participant offers to take you into territory which is not the focus of your training, find a way to politely decline. And, don't worry, with time, as your knowledge grows, this will be less of an issue.

■ **Engage throughout.**

Some trainers, especially those new to the activity, think that all they have to do is present their (obviously brilliant) material and all will be fine, but people learn best when they are engaged with the instructor *and* the material. I remember once going to a workshop and for the whole time the 'trainer' looked at his flip chart, talked to his flip chart and when he did turn away from the flip chart he only looked over

the audience, not at them. He did not even engage them in eye contact, let alone in dialogue. We sat there, bored, and I am sure he thought he did a fine job. By the way, that's when I learned to sit at the back of the room or near an easy exit place. Oops! Am I describing myself in those early days when I was actually frightened of the participants. "If I engage them directly, will they eat me alive?"

- **Critically review your presentation.** Once the joy of having completed your training is over and you start to settle back down, take the time to reflect on the training. What worked? What didn't? What could have been presented differently? What would make it stronger? How can you be even better prepared next time? Reflecting on

how you did what you did creates the opportunity for you to do even better. If you simply congratulate yourself and then the next time simply do the same thing, you will soon become bored with yourself, and others will follow your lead.

Beginning as a trainer is a challenging new adventure. It can be filled with great anxiety and also great excitement. You want to enjoy the experience. And the more you enjoy your own training, the better you will become at doing training. But it is not a life or death experience and it is not going to make or break your career. (Well, it might if you keep doing bad training and act like a superior expert!)

Walk the Talk! ☺

tg



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102

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