



The Natural Phenomena Conference, 17th – 19th November, 2017

Presenter Bios & Workshop details

Keynote Speakers

Tim Gill, London, UK

Writer, researcher and advocate & consultant on childhood.

www.rethinkingchildhood.com

Tim Gill is an independent researcher, writer and consultant based in London, UK. He is interested in children's everyday lives and the changing nature of childhood, with a focus on children's play and free time. His work cuts across education, child care, recreation, planning and urban design, and speaks to decision makers, academics, commentators, practitioners and the wider public.

Tim's book No Fear: Growing up in a risk-averse society was published in 2007. He holds a degree in philosophy and psychology from Oxford University and a master's degree in philosophy from London University. In 2009 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Edge Hill University. Tim is a former director of the Children's Play Council (now Play England) and in 2002 he was seconded to Whitehall to lead the UK government's first comprehensive review into children's play. He writes for the mainstream media, trade and academic publications, appears regularly on radio and television, and is in global demand as a public speaker and workshop facilitator.

Dr. Jackie Blunt, Christchurch, New Zealand

Brainwave presenter, GP, health coach

www.brainwave.org.nz

Dr Jackie Blunt is a GP, health coach, qigong (which is like tai chi) and relaxation teacher, parent and Brainwave presenter. Jackie has been working with a wide variety of people in New Zealand and overseas in her twenty plus years as a family doctor, and has always been interested in new ways of making sense of human life, and helping people find better ways of being healthier and happier. She has been a teacher and presenter both nationally and internationally in family medicine, and holistic health. Jackie was inspired to become a Brainwave presenter and help other New Zealanders gain access to this vital information. She hopes it will give all kiwi kids a much greater chance to do well in life and be happy.

Dr. Ihirangi Heke, (Waikato / Tainui) New Zealand

Health and Physical education consultant. PG DipSci Environmental Management, M.Ed, Ph.D.

www.atuamatua.com

Dr. Ihi Heke is currently a health & physical education consultant working with Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore), University of Auckland and the New Zealand Ministries of Education and Health. Dr Heke previously held roles at the School of Physical Education at the University of Otago and Prince Sultan University, Saudi Arabia. Dr Heke is also a sport psychology consultant to New Zealand Sport, a swim coach and a motocross and mountain bike specialist.

Dr Heke recently wrote the Atua Matua Māori Environmental Framework that has been gaining recognition globally in locations such as Ireland, Canada and the US. Dr Heke is a strong supporter of mountain and river connections that can be converted into traditional physical activity and training opportunities suggesting that gains in health can be incidental outcomes that begin with connections to the environment.

Vicki Wilson, Northland, New Zealand

Top NZ show jumper, horse trainer and educator of children

www.wilsonsisters.nz

Vicki Wilson has always had a passion for riding horses and started her career in an unorthodox fashion at 3 years old, riding and training the family sheep. A few decades on, Vicki is one of New Zealand's most successful and well-respected show jump riders, being known for her competitive edge and her ability to produce happy horses.

She has a strong philosophy based on producing happy horses who love their work, and takes a holistic approach to horse welfare. Vicki (alongside her sisters Kelly and Amanda) has become widely known for her work with wild horses, having tamed and advocated for the plight of New Zealand's wild Kaimanawas, the American Mustangs and more recently the legendary Australian Brumbies.

Vicki influences thousands of NZ children each year through their Showtym horse camps throughout NZ, which encourage children to get outside, down and dirty in nature. She has an innate gift to assist and inspire all children to find their talents and follow their dreams, to take risks and dream big.



The Natural Phenomena

Friday 17th November, 4.00 – 5.30pm
Workshop Slot 1

Genevieve Simperingham, Ngunguru, NZ, [Aware Parent Instructor]

Workshop title: **“Earth, Water, Fire, Air - Maintaining a balanced space for the children to thrive ”**

Earth, water, fire and air; body, emotion, spirit and mind – In an educational system which has traditionally intensified its focus on the child’s developing mind, it’s important as teachers & educators to maintain awareness and balance of all elements, potentially holding the space for growth and harmony on all levels for our tamariki. As significant and even attachment figures for the children in their care, teachers hold great potential for developing resilience in children through maintaining a physical, emotional and spiritual space of harmony, care, beauty and nurturing which helps children return back to balance again and again as they experience their frustrations and challenges, as they grow and develop.

This workshop will offer very practical ways to achieve greater balance and harmony as well as giving participants an opportunity to share with each other in small groups the ways that this already happens and how it could be increased.

Personal Bios: Genevieve Simperingham is the founder of the Peaceful Parent Institute (PPI). PPI offer seminars for parents and educators, professional development for teachers and individual coaching for parents, families and early childhood centres. Their mission is to empower parents and teachers with the skills and awareness they need to create more harmony, happiness and peace in their families or centres. Genevieve shares her in-depth study of many renowned experts in the fields of early childhood development and neuroscience, as well as her experience with clients and groups over 22 years and as a parent working with this model for 19 years.

Genevieve has a Diploma in Psychosynthesis Counsellor, and is a Certified Aware Parenting instructor, having trained with Dr. Aletha Solter PhD, psychologist and author of five parenting books based on attachment science. She is also a Heart to Heart Parenting Facilitator, trained by Robin Grille to teach his parenting programs. Robin Grille, psychologist and psychotherapist is based in Sydney and is the author of ‘Parenting for a Peaceful World’ and ‘Heart to Heart Parenting’. She’s a feature writer for The Natural Parent Magazine (NZ and Oz).

John Lawry, Auckland, NZ, [Artisan, Bushcraft Teacher, Outdoor Classroom Educator]

Workshop title: **“Come let us build a ship of the future, on ancient patterns, that journey far”**

Why is it that Traditional Crafts, Gardening and Primitive Technology have an indispensably important role educationally, in composing a skills base for the future? Are they just vehicles of nostalgia or a dystopian sub-text? We need to understand their value and know how to employ them to grow and develop happy, healthy lives. I work with communities and individuals, developing curricula, running interactive workshops, advising as a consultant and have formally presented the findings of this work at conferences in NZ, Australia and the UK. Let us explore these findings together.

Personal Bios: In terms of my whakapapa, I am a fifth-generation South Pacific Celt (Cornish, Scottish and Irish). I have worked as an artisan and educator, equally: circa 20 years apiece. Five years ago, a confluence of my life-long interest and engagement in making and education occurred when, inspired by Bernard Graves, I began the process of establishing and developing the Outdoor Classroom program at Michael Park Steiner School: which included comprehensive curriculum gardens, developing and delivering craft / experiential skills based curriculum which integrate with High School Technology programs, an intensive week-long, end of year Master class Craft program for the junior high school, establishing O.C. and Bush Craft teacher training courses at Auckland University of Technology and Taruna (Anthroposophical Teacher Training), and consulting and developing programs with various interest groups and schools (including state schools) in NZ, Australia and Asia.

Dr. Peter Koci, Canada [College Instructor, Environmental Educator]

Workshop title: **“Activities for creating a positive learning environment”**

This interactive workshop will provide participants with the knowledge and implementation of positive learning environments through hands on fun activities. Research shows that if children are in a positive learning environment and feel a sense of community, they are more likely to have deeper learning experience. Building a sense of community also extends to nature, creating a sense of place is about community building. Through this learning environment participants will be shown how to build a sense of community within their groups/class. Background information will be provided to better understand the 4 key stages in this process, along with some research findings about learning environments. Research shows that the teacher and the learning environment are the two biggest predictors of learning (Fraser, 1998). Instruction will include a multitude of active participation throughout the session. Come prepared to do some fun physical activities.

Personal Bios: Peter has been an instructor in the Sport Science Department at Douglas College since 2007. Prior to teaching at Douglas, he taught a Kwantlen Polytechnic University, additionally he was a sessional instructor at the University of British Columbia (School of Human Kinetics), Simon Fraser University (Faculty of Education) and Thompson Rivers University (Adventure Guide tourism program). Additional teaching experience includes teaching Environmental Education and Adventure based activities to High school students (grades 8-12). Peter also has an extensive coaching background which includes coaching the British Columbian Whitewater kayak team for 10 years along with a 2 year stint as the Canadian Junior Whitewater kayak team coach. Prior to coaching Peter spent a decade as a member of the Canadian Whitewater kayaking team representing Canada at World championships and Europa Cups.

Somerset Kindergarten, Palmerston North, NZ [ECE Teachers]

Workshop title: **“Nurturing holistic development through connections with nature.”**

Find out about how a new team has built on the legacy from the teachers who have come before them to connect to the natural environment and awhi the tamariki to explore, discover and work with Papatuanuku. We will use traditional storytelling to explain how our centre philosophy is visible within our environment. Join us in discussing how the role of the teacher has developed and changed through reflective practice within the outdoor environment. You will come away with ideas and inspiration to impact your own approach and application using the natural environment influenced by current theory.

Personal Bios: Sylvie Ker, Jo Feetham and Susan Trembath are established Early Childhood Teachers. They have been teaching together within a newly formed team at Somerset Kindergarten in Palmerston North for just over a year. Their passion for tamariki and working within the natural environment has influenced their



collective philosophy, pedagogy and practice. After attending the Natural Phenomena Conference in 2016 they have unpacked their experience and application of their learning in a recent workshop to teachers in the wider Manawatu region.

Tim Gill, London, UK [Writer, researcher and advocate & consultant on childhood.]

Workshop title: **“Balancing risks and benefits in outdoor play and learning: a deeper dive”**

This workshop will assist attendees put into practice a more balanced and thoughtful approach to managing risk in children’s play and learning. It will look in more detail at the ‘state of the art’ in the UK, namely risk benefit assessment (RBA), and explore the relevance of this approach to a New Zealand context.

Personal Bios: Tim Gill is an independent researcher, writer and consultant based in London, UK. He is interested in children’s everyday lives and the changing nature of childhood, with a focus on children’s play and free time. His work cuts across education, child care, recreation, planning and urban design, and speaks to decision makers, academics, commentators, practitioners and the wider public.

Tim’s book “No Fear: Growing up in a risk-averse society: was published in 2007. He holds a degree in philosophy and psychology from Oxford University and a master’s degree in philosophy from London University. In 2009 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Edge Hill University. Tim is a former director of the Children’s Play Council (now Play England) and in 2002 he was seconded to Whitehall to lead the UK government’s first comprehensive review into children’s play. He writes for the mainstream media, trade and academic publications, appears regularly on radio and television, and is in global demand as a public speaker and workshop facilitator.

Veronica Macpherson, Ngunguru, NZ [Psychologist, Mindfulness coach]

Workshop title: **“Mindfulness in Nature”**

Mindfulness is a practice that cultivates present moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, and our five senses... there is no better place than nature to learn how to become ‘the observer self’. We often get so hooked up in thoughts and emotions that we are not present in the moment; this is where most human suffering comes from. This workshop will include mindfulness exercises, using different aspects of nature, to enhance awareness of our internal and external environments. The connection with Mauri Ora will also be explored, along with links between mindfulness and neuroscience, and practical strategies to use with children.

Personal Bios: Originally from Dunedin, I currently live in Ngunguru, working as a psychologist for the Ministry of Education. Upon completing a Bachelor of Commerce at Otago University after leaving school, I decided this was not my path so spent a few years living the backpacker lifestyle where I met a variety of people and became fascinated with human behaviour. Whilst working in a bar in Manchester, I started to hear my soul’s calling so decided to return to NZ to study psychology at Waikato University. During this time I was drawn to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)....and so my journey began. ACT provided me with the framework to learn how to live life in alignment with the most authentic version of myself; the more I practiced this way of being, the more passionate I became about helping others to journey towards their soul and create the life they most desired.



The Natural Phenomena

Saturday 18th November, 10.30am – 12.00pm
Workshop Slot 2

Anna Gentry, Ngunguru, NZ, [ECE facilitator, Environmental educator, NaturePlay NZ]

Workshop title: “**Communing with Nature: the child / animal relationship**”

Ancient peoples across our planet understand the necessary requirement to be in right relationship with everything that exists. Maintaining right relationship was central to the sustenance and wellness of the tribe. In the 21st Century we too must remember to honour our connection to everything that exists, to sustain & maintain optimum conditions for growth and total wellbeing.

Our animal kingdom and animal connections nurture this place of relationship. The same place that nurtures the heart and soul of the child. During the workshop we will observe children working in right relationship with horses and explore the territory with communing with the animal kingdom. We will consider the powerful role of the animal in a child's life, and the importance of establishing these connections in the early years of life. Horses from ancient times have been a symbol of true freedom, their magical counterparts – the Unicorn and the Pegasus regularly captivating every child's imagination.

Personal Bios: Anna is co-founder of NaturePlay NZ. An organisation dedicated to assist all the children and the earth to grow in a heart centred relationship in these interesting times. A teacher, mother, healer, her role is to assist the total wellbeing of the children, mother earth and all her inhabitants.

Dee Pignéguy, Auckland, NZ, [Writer, researcher and passionate organic gardener]

Workshop title: “**The Nutrition, Nature, Brain Development Connection**”

At a time when optimal brain development depends on both good nutrition and nature experiences, many of today's children are divorced from both nature and nutrition. Dee's workshop will help educators strengthen their connections to nature while exploring the links between nature, nutrition and brain development. She will introduce you to creative, meaningful ideas that can be used in any learning environment.

Personal Bios: Dee Pignéguy, a former school-teacher, is a dedicated science champion helping to cultivate wonder in our world and pass on nature nous to a new wave of mini scientists. Read her well researched science based books and you will find her views on gardening, nutrition, nature and well-being are inspired.

Dee's books are incredibly informative, demonstrating the importance of conservation and sustainability.

Dee is a keen observer of life and she believes Exploring Nature's Pattern Magic will help people engage with nature and realize just how important the natural environment is to sustaining our own life here on Planet Earth

Nature's Techno Tricks is a ground breaking new Kiwi book for readers of all ages. Stunning photographs introduce Biomimetics, a scientific revolution that emulates Nature's best technology. Internationally, scientists are studying natural systems and their technology to solve many environmental problems.

Dr. Jackie Blunt, Christchurch, NZ [Brainwave presenter, GP, health coach]

Workshop title: “**The Early Years Last Forever - Whakamana te tamaiti**”

This fresh, engaging and interactive seminar will give you up-to-date research from multiple disciplines including neuroscience, attachment, genetics, psychology and infant mental health. It aims to help build knowledge and understanding of the importance of early brain development and the lifelong impact this can have on children. Participants will be given information that is likely to – affirm much of what you are already doing; encourage you to do some things differently; and, perhaps challenge some of the ways we think about young children, in order to help every child get the best start in life.

Personal Bios: Dr Jackie Blunt is a GP, health coach, qigong (which is like tai chi) and relaxation teacher, parent and Brainwave presenter. Jackie has been working with a wide variety of people in New Zealand and overseas in her twenty plus years as a family doctor, and has always been interested in new ways of making sense of human life, and helping people find better ways of being healthier and happier. She has been a teacher and presenter both nationally and internationally in family medicine, and holistic health. Jackie was inspired to become a Brainwave presenter and help other New Zealanders gain access to this vital information. She hopes it will give all kiwi kids a much greater chance to do well in life and be happy.

Matiu Te Huki, Wellington, NZ [Musician, Teacher and Story teller]

Workshop title: “**Matiu's Maori Story telling workshop**”

Matiu's story telling workshop is an exciting journey into the mystical mysterious and ancient world of the Maori Ancestors, elemental gods and spirits. Narrated with his own unique present-day story telling style, Matiu also invites adventurous audience actors to vividly and sometimes hilariously bring the characters to life. The stories hidden messages are also uncovered in this fun and entertaining, community strengthening, learning experience. This workshop will bring out the story teller in us all.

Personal Bios: Apart from touring as a Maori musician and ambassador, Matiu Te Huki has established a reputation as a potent workshop presenter. Matiu has been sharing his knowledge of his culture and the arts successfully in Aotearoa and Australia. Matiu is also a kapa haka teacher in 20 centres a week, Maori cultural advisor to the New Zealand Kindergarten Association, Te Reo Maori teacher, MC, and a father of 3.

Rose Short & Geoff Fugle, Whangarei, NZ [ECE Teachers, Open Spaces Preschool]

Workshop title: “**Place-based Education: Tangata Whenuatanga**”

As we welcome in the revised Te Whāriki, it is a time to pause and reflect on our practice and curriculum. By taking a Place-based Education approach, we can return to the foundations of Te Whāriki and enable Kaiako to authentically bring the four principles to life. Join us as we explore Play Based Education and how it influences practice.

Personal Bios: Rose Short and Geoff Fugle are teachers at Open Spaces Preschool. Through our regular adventures in the Wild Woods we have explored meaningful ways to connect our tamariki with nature.



Mark Jones & Omine Ivatt, Auckland, NZ [Outdoor educators, Lecturer and Crafters]

Workshop title: **“Food from the Flames”**

Nothing brings people together like food, and campfire cooking is a special kind of nourishment that also feeds the soul. Producing quality baking by fire is a magic trick children never tire of being a part of- an easy in to a kid’s heart. Come and learn how to harness the primal element of fire to produce tasty treats to rival what comes from the kitchen and to explore the ways that this activity can be programmed for kids.

Personal Bios: Mark Jones is a lecturer in the field of outdoor education at AUT University. He has been an outdoor practitioner for more than 30 years, and instructed and lectured as an outdoor educator for 25 of those. One of his areas of interest is the value of crafting as an educational tool. His experiences support crafting as a powerful medium to enhance a wide range of student learning events in the outdoors.

Omine Ivatt is the Steve Irwin of New Zealand outdoor education. He offers outdoor learning for schools and community groups through the Craft Lab and the Educators Tool-Kit. Omine is passionate about crafting as an educational medium and excited about sharing his knowledge and skills.

Saturday 18th November, 2.30pm – 4.00pm Workshop Slot 3

Glenn Edney, Ngunguru, NZ, [ECE facilitator, Environmental educator, NaturePlay NZ]

Workshop title: **“We live on an Ocean Planet.”**

Ninety nine percent of the molecules in every cell of our bodies are water molecules: we are water beings within an Ocean world. And yet we treat water and the Ocean as separate from ourselves. This great separation sickness robs us of our conscious connection to the animating force of the living breathing world. Re-animating this conscious connection is the best antidote we can give children who are growing up with a two-dimensional “screen shot” of the natural world. Using a phenomenological approach we will explore techniques and practices we can use to help our children discover their watery roots.

Personal Bios: Glenn Edney is an Ocean ecologist, underwater naturalist, professional diver, sailor, teacher and author. He has been exploring the Ocean and interacting with Ocean life for more than 30 years.

Glenn has an MSc in Holistic Science from Schumacher College and Plymouth University in the UK. He studied Gaia theory under the tutelage of James Lovelock collaborator, Dr. Stephan Harding, as well as Complexity and Chaos theory as they apply to ecological systems. His ongoing research is primarily focused on understanding the Ocean as a living system, bringing together traditional indigenous Ocean knowledge and modern scientific ecological understanding. Grounded within an animistic worldview, he brings a phenomenological, qualitative approach to his work.

Dr Lisa Sonter, Queensland, Australia [Environmental Educator, Sustainable Schools Advisor]

Workshop Title: **“Arranging in nature: Raising children’s awareness of their environment through art”**

This practical session invites participants to reflect on children’s intentions when engaging with natural, open-ended materials. It draws upon works by American researcher Heather Malin (2013) who investigates children’s intentions of their art work; Ann Pelo’s interest in the place of ecological identity in children’s lives; and ephemeral artists Andy Goldsworthy and Shona Wilson.

Showcasing children’s explorations of natural materials as a meaning making tool to support thinking, this workshop promotes understandings of the significant opportunities art affords children to connect with, and raise their awareness of, the natural environment, and its care.

Personal Bios Dr. Lisa Sonter is a very experienced early childhood teacher, currently lecturing at the University of New England. With a strong interest in children’s play, particularly in natural environments, Lisa co-operates ‘Consultants at Play’, a play-based curriculum consultancy, and is co-author of *Progressing Play: Practicalities, Intentions and Possibilities in Emerging Co-constructed Curriculum*. She is a recipient of an ASG Community Merit Award for leadership and innovation in early childhood teaching methods. Vice-President of the Queensland Early Childhood Sustainability Network, Lisa is committed to building and progressing respectful, collaborative partnerships across the early childhood sector.

Shirley Peterson, Whangarei, NZ [Environmental Educator, LEOTC Kiwi North]

Workshop title: **“Natural Natives”**

During this ‘hands-on workshop’ we will explore the following themes:

- how to make a weta hotel or a lizard-safe area, and explain the role of cats and rats and mice in reducing insect and lizard numbers in the garden.
- safe native plants to grow in a small area or pots, that won’t poison kids and will feed birds and lizards throughout the year
- the layers of the forest (ground, shrub, small tree, canopy, emergent)
- podocarp/cone trees (totara) v’s broadleaf/flowering trees (puriri) and how to identify these two groups in the forest to sort the trees out.
- eco-sourcing of genes in planting projects

Personal Bios: As the LEOTC, Learning Experiences Outside The Classroom Educator at Kiwi North I am lucky to have some amazing resources at my disposal. Working with the native flora and fauna in our Kiwi House and the taonga in our Museum we are able to provide a range of superb learning experiences for our community. I have reached out into our museum and ecology community and found some excellent partner sites that offer wonderful educational experiences for students of all ages. Together we are developing an educational network for Tai Tokerau that offers opportunities and support for learning in many different topic areas. Watching my own children explore our natural world and gaining the skills and knowledge to lead a sustainable lifestyle has been very important to me as a parent. It is a wonderful journey, reconnecting ourselves.



Sarah Sheeran, Auckland, NZ [Environmental Educator, Sustainable Schools Advisor]

Workshop title: **“Connecting to nature”**

Come and spend an hour and a half filling your kete with tools to help children and adults connect to nature. Fun, engaging and easy activities to help create a sense of awe, wonder and respect for the environment we are all a part of.

The activities can be done over and over again. Try them in different seasons, in different weather conditions and in different environments. Each time your children will see, hear, smell, feel, experience and notice different things.

Personal Bios: Sarah Sheeran has worked in the field of Environmental Education and Education for Sustainability for over 16 years. Much of this time has been spent taking children into the natural environment to explore the wonder of nature.

Sarah is currently working for Auckland Council as a Sustainable Schools Advisor with a major focus on the development and delivery of experiential education programmes in Auckland’s Regional Parks.

Tim Gill, London, UK [Writer, researcher and advocate & consultant on childhood.]

Workshop title: **“Balancing risks and benefits in outdoor play and learning: a deeper dive”**

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Tim’s book “No Fear: Growing up in a risk-averse society: was published in 2007. He holds a degree in philosophy and psychology from Oxford University and a master’s degree in philosophy from London University. In 2009 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Edge Hill University. Tim is a former director of the Children’s Play Council (now Play England) and in 2002 he was seconded to Whitehall to lead the UK government’s first comprehensive review into children’s play. He writes for the mainstream media, trade and academic publications, appears regularly on radio and television, and is in global demand as a public speaker and workshop facilitator.

Waikarere Gregory, Northland, NZ [Earth connected Home-school mother]

Workshop title: **“Sounds of this whenua”**

During this workshop we will listen to and explore some Maori stories, interspersed with the reo/voices of various taonga puoro/maori musical instruments. From these we will identify ideas about the world we live in and ways of relating to it and placing ourselves in it. The importance of telling these stories, keeping them alive, will become clear to the participants.

Personal Bios:

Ko Tinana te waka
Ko Tumoana te tangata
Ko Taumatamahoe te maunga
Ko Tangonge te wai
Ko Te Rarawa te iwi me te marae
Ko Ngati-Te-Ao te hapu
Ko Waikarere Gregoryy toku ingoa

I was born and raised in Pukepoto, on my ancestral lands, close to our marae in the Far North, where the storytelling of my father brought my world to life and helped ‘educate’ me. I am now a te reo speaking, home-schooling mama of two tamariki, living back on my Nannies whenua and am passionate about sharing these stories with anyone who will listen!

Sunday 19th November 10.30am – 12.00pm
Workshop Slot 4

Dan Hales, New Plymouth, NZ, [Craftsman, Educator]

Workshop title: **“Nurturing your soul, tools of wisdom”**

Using play, observation, and natural internal skill setting, we look to wake up the natural functions of our human animal. The senses are our tools for states of connection and wellbeing. They are the gate keepers, to a world of deep mystery and inspired everyday adventures that life holds. Come join Dan and discover how to use nature to feed and nurture our own inner life, whilst rekindling the knowing of our belonging and deep sense of wellbeing in relationship with our beautiful Mother Earth. Life is good, life is fun, life is beautiful... Lets connect.

Personal Bios: Having spent a life time in and around the bush, I am grateful for being taught by my Grandparents to craft and utilise the beautiful natural resources our environment offers.

A large part of Dan’s adult life has been spent gathering skills and understanding for health and wellbeing of people. He has had the privilege of observing the wonderful states of mental health and healing that nature provides, when we are given the tools to connect in healthful ways.

He is in the process of writing two books on health and wellbeing in relationship to natural brain patterning practices.

He looks forward to getting into our hands and heads via crafting and internal brain patterning play. All brought together through the eyes and mind of the Clown, the eternal character that allows us to look at ourselves with openness, lightness and humour.



David Spraggs, Gisborne, NZ, [ECE Teacher, Consultant]

Workshop title: “Less is best”

During this workshop we will explore what happens to the programme, if the programme is only about people and the things that they find around themselves. We will discuss what happens when the space is overloaded with “stuff” and children have moved into things that all they desire is “entertainment”.

Personal Bio: Having worked in early childhood for over 35 years David brings an ECE focus to the provocations he provides for people. He is married and lives in Gisborne with his wife and 4 children. His passions include nature education and the hope that one-day the Ministry of Education will open up opportunity for Forest kindergartens similar to the ones that he has played in in Europe.

Eve Tonkin, Auckland, NZ, [Teacher, Writer, Principal]

Workshop title: “Get outside to write!”

In my experience, everyone’s ability to write well improves when they are supported to feel and respond to the mauri (life energy) of beings in the natural world (rocks, the ocean, a tree, etc).

During this practical workshop you will experience a range of ways to write creatively outdoors in nature. Guided meditation supports you to be more present to what your body is experiencing, and to feel the mauri around you. Various writing activities are followed by a sharing circle in which we will explore ways to develop a safe and robust writing group culture (a necessary part of learning what good writing looks like.) For teachers, children, teenagers, and adults. Feeling the mauri (life energy) alive in the natural world can be a key support to literacy development for children and young adults.

Personal Bio: Eve is the principal of Timatanga Community School, a small democratic school in rural Auckland, where she teaches a weekly half-day Creative Writing workshop, almost always outside. She is also a published author who has written many children’s stories and readers for Learning Media and Pearson. Eve grew up in the bush in the Hokianga with no electricity or hot water and this experience taught her to be a writer. Eve was one of the organisers of the Connections Conference in Auckland last year.

Dr. Ihirangi Heke, Waikato / Tainui, NZ [Health and Physical education consultant. PG DipSci Environmental Management, M.Ed, Ph.D.]

Workshop title: “Ancient Maori Environmental Information”

During this workshop we will discuss traditional Māori environmental knowledge including some examples of whakapapa rationale for certain types of environment. An explanation will be provided for a new environmental programme called the Atua Matua Environmental Framework. Some examples of formats being used within this approach will be shown, including Google Earth, 360 degree multimedia and virtual tours. The incidental aspects of youth obesity being addressed through the pursuit of environmental platform will also be discussed.

Personal Bio: Dr. Ihi Heke is currently a health & physical education consultant working with Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore), University of Auckland and the New Zealand Ministries of Education and Health. Dr Heke previously held roles at the School of Physical Education at the University of Otago and Prince Sultan University, Saudi Arabia. Dr Heke is also a sport psychology consultant to New Zealand Sport, a swim coach and a motocross and mountain bike specialist. Dr Heke recently wrote the Atua Matua Māori Environmental Framework that has been gaining recognition globally in locations such as Ireland, Canada and the US. Dr Heke is a strong supporter of mountain and river connections that can be converted into traditional physical activity and training opportunities suggesting that gains in health

Tanya Batt, Waiheke, NZ [Story teller, Educator, writer.]

Workshop title: “Environmental education through the expressive arts.”

Elemental is an expressive arts, story based programme that uses the four elements believed by many cultures through out history to form all life on this planet. Elemental explores the four elements through the wisdom of traditional stories, music, movement and art. Come journey with Tanya.

Personal Bio: Tanya Batt is a self-confessed story-o-phile and frock-o-holic. Hailing from Waiheke Island, Aotearoa, New Zealand she is a South Pacific pirate princess, a black butterfly, a word warbler and story stitcher who channelled her childhood propensity for talking and her love of dressing up into a real ‘imaginary job’. Stories have put food on her table and a roof over her head near a quarter of a century enabling her to share her work in over 20 countries. She is the creative director of the ‘Once Upon An Island Charitable Trust’ that uses storytelling extensively on Waiheke Island for community building & environmental and cultural education.

Wiremu Sarich, Kaitaia, NZ, [Educator traditional Maori games]

Workshop title: “Ako atu ako mai the reciprocal nature of learning/teaching from a Maori perspective.”

The workshop will begin with introductions and a brief history of Ako. Wiremu will demonstrate and lead out a series of traditional Maori games designed to highlight the holistic perspective of traditional practices and how Maori relate to the natural world. The workshop will include a resource building exercise using natural resources e.g. flax, manuka, karamu leaves. The workshop is completely interactive and guaranteed to draw out the creative potential and collective experiences of all participants. Ako has a virtually limitless potential as an educational tool for teachers and students alike.

Personal Bios: Wiremu Sarich is a Youth Educator working at Te Oranga for Te Runanga o Te Rarawa in Kaitaia. Wiremu has been utilizing Nga Taonga Takaro (traditional Maori games/past times) to promote healthy activity in schools throughout Muriwhenua from North Hokianga to Te Kao. For the past year Wiremu has been developing a new initiative which draws on the same principals and pedagogies inherent in Nga Taonga Takaro he calls “Ako” (to learn, to teach or instruct). Ako is a group activity derived from the Maori concept of reciprocal learning (ako atu. ako mai). Ako activities/games are specifically designed toward the enhancement of the three core principals: 1 communication, 2 co-operation and 3 co-ordination.