

ANZEA post conference piece for ANZEA newsletter Nov 2012

From Yolanda Wadsworth, Keynote Speaker

My overall experience was of a conference attended by 'first generation evaluators' who are still moved to do evaluation because they think it is valuable and important for the betterment of the world rather than because it has, as yet, become normalised as 'a job'. This seemed to me to lend itself to still-lively discussions of valued methodology and the 'how' of what we do as well as reporting 'what' was found out. I hope NZ can work out how to keep *both* the energetic ethical life in evaluation as well as make it become a normal part of 'the way we do things round here'!

What I also valued about the conference was returning to NZ to find that what I would now characterise as 'whole cycle' evaluations (that pay attention to multiple forms of carefully observation, embodied feeling, reflection, dialogue for developing, thinking, planning and trying out in real-world practice then observing again) seemed to have become common, I think perhaps because of the powerful influence of Maori culture. This strong Maori involvement appeared to me to 'hold' the evaluations in a web of human relationships so that all of our human evaluative, personal and collective 'gifts differing' are valued, retained and able to play their part.

My most enduring personal memories are of the people with whom I was able to spend time; Thereza Penne Firma's infectious love of life and learning; the warmth and generosity of everyone, and particularly Pam Oliver in looking after Thereza and I so thoughtfully; and also finding that my own trialling of a workshop format for conveying the ideas about 'living systems evaluation' was so well received. Perhaps also the crash landing on an icy frost-covered concrete driveway that cut short my post conference holiday has not yet been forgotten either! Although the latter has not dimmed my enjoyable memories of the conference in the least!