

## CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF NZTC: A Q&A WITH CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SELENA FOX

As we celebrate our 40th anniversary throughout this year, we catch up with important people who have shaped the college into what it is today.

After 24 years at NZTC, Chief Executive Selena Fox has a wealth of college knowledge. She shares below what she feels makes NZTC unique, the initiatives she is proudest of, and her favourite college value.

### What makes NZTC unique in your eyes?

Our team, our students and what we offer...

NZTC specialises in flexible access to learning. Our learning environment is unique, as is our wraparound support system where students can reach out for help at any point in their study journey with us. We are passionate about enabling learning, we are passionate about our students and we are passionate about how we serve the ECE sector to result in graduate outcomes that support lifelong change.

### Is there a particular NZTC moment or initiative that you are most proud of?

There have been so many special moments, here are just a few:

- Our first early childhood degree approved in 2007 and our first awarded approvals for our postgraduate qualifications in 2011. We broke new ground in offering a Master's specialising in early childhood here in New Zealand and beyond.
- Our initiatives of sharing New Zealand early childhood education leadership globally with projects in nations including India, China, Columbia and Malaysia. This instigated serving global students eager to learn more about caring for, and educating young children, and supporting communities in significant need. New Zealand leads the way globally and we have Te Whāriki and decades of commitment to this stunning curriculum to thank for that.
- Researching, designing and scoping NZTC Online alongside Dr Chip Donohue while supporting the greatest IT development team in the world... and piloting it to result in the best New Zealand bespoke online learning environment that is ever-evolving and that still supports our students and lecturers today.



Selena Fox

### Is there a college value that resonates the most with you?

I was lucky enough to be a part of putting words and actions to our values in early 2000 and then championing them to be visibly present through everyday life at the college. I have walked with them now each day for over 20 years and what a gift to me they have been to centre me and offer guidance in all decision making that honours our Mission.

We know bold *VISION*, wrapped in *HEART*, held strong by *COMPETENCE*, and led by *SPIRIT* has been the NZTC recipe. We know today that outstanding graduates and commitments to serve, continue to be unwavering ingredients over the years.

All our NZTC Values are dear to me as part of my everyday guidance and thinking, but if I was to choose my favourite, I quickly lean into *VISION*. It leads the way and excites me to look forward, plan ahead and think about how we can vision in new and better ways for our communities. Without it... *HEART*, *COMPETENCE* and *SPIRIT* can't reach their full potential.

## Dr Chip Donohue, NZTC Online co-founder, shares his thoughts on NZTC's 40th anniversary...

*"Congratulations to the NZTC team on their 40th anniversary. I've been honoured to be part of the development of NZTC Online and sharing best practices in online teaching and learning with the academic staff. Under the visionary leadership of Chief Executive Selena Fox, NZTC has pioneered innovative approaches to technology-mediated early childhood teacher education studies across New Zealand and beyond."*

- **Dr Chip Donohue, Founding Director, Technology in Early Childhood (TEC) Centre at Erikson Institute in Chicago, USA.**



## NZTC LECTURERS SHARE EXPERTISE AT NZ-CHINA EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

Hosted by Education New Zealand and the New Zealand Embassy in China, early childhood academics, researchers and education specialists gathered virtually last month for the NZ-China Early Childhood Symposium.

Four NZTC lecturers, Dr Sean Dolan, Shu-Yen Law, Phoebe Tong and Christine Vincent-Snow, shared their ECE expertise with a global audience of over 140,000 from China and beyond.

This year's symposium included discussions on ECE trends in New Zealand and China, with a particular focus on sustainable development in early childhood education.

In their presentation, Christine Vincent-Snow and Phoebe Tong, shared insights on sustainability and guardianship in rural childcare services in Aotearoa New Zealand. They explored how ecological sustainability through games and play-based learning also sustains children's physical, emotional and spiritual health.

Examples were shared of how rural New Zealand kindergartens teach sustainability through a rich combination of Māori values and beliefs, traditional concepts of care, strong relationships between land and people, and a play-based curriculum.

"The importance and value of play-based learning is embedded in the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki, which recognises the deep, holistic, sustainable education and development that occurs through play-based learning," says Vincent-Snow.

Te Whāriki also recognises that when children are connected to their local environment, their sense of identity and belonging is strengthened.



NZTC Lecturers Phoebe Tong and Christine Vincent-Snow

"Children are taught to be kaitiaki (guardians), protectors and preservers of the natural environment. Kaitiakitanga (guardianship) is a Māori value that establishes relationships between people and the environment, and when children learn this they learn to respect, care for and protect people, places and things.

"Through play-based learning, children are taught reciprocity, they respect and tend to the needs of the land and its creatures, and the land tends to their needs with lush gardens, bird songs, fresh ripe fruit and vegetables, and peaceful green spaces in their daily environment."

## JAPANESE ULTRAMARATHON RUNNER SHARES HER PASSIONS OF TRAIL RUNNING AND TEACHING

Studying towards her dream career, working in an early childhood centre and finding time to train for races, are all things Graduate Diploma in Teaching (ECE) student, Konoka Azumi, takes in her stride.

Originally from Japan, Azumi has competed in races around the world and says New Zealand offers some “marvellous opportunities” to stoke her trail running passion.

In her most recent race traversing the Swiss Alps in a demanding 140km trail, crossing mountains and glaciers, Azumi placed in the top 4 female competitors.



*Konoka Azumi traverses the Swiss Alps*

“I would say I have a good balance between my studies and trail running. I get up before dawn every day and go out for a run, and after the teaching practice in my home centre, I train again in the evening.”

She says NZTC’s flexible workplace learning has enabled her to pursue both her passions of early childhood education and trail running.

“It’s attractive that NZTC has such a flexible mode of learning along with practical learning experience. Because of this, I believe I will not only be able to become a professional early childhood teacher but also improve my expertise and skills to pursue further opportunities in the field of early childhood education.”

Before even moving to New Zealand, Azumi says she first heard about Te Whāriki, New Zealand’s early childhood curriculum, during her Japanese university studies in education.

“I got the awesome chance to learn about New Zealand’s early childhood curriculum, which has been universally acknowledged. Since then, I have always been curious and interested in Te Whāriki.”

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Strongly aware of the many benefits movement and exercise has in young tamariki, she is keen to incorporate this into her teaching practice.

“I am convinced that playing sports has great benefits for young children, not only physically but also mentally.

“Things like grabbing, bouncing and running help enhance their physical skills. It helps prevent injuries and results in building a healthy body. More importantly, sports also play a pivotal role in mental development.”



*Konoka Azumi*

## A NEW ADVENTURE IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

With borders fully reopened, we catch up with YuQiong Cui from Beijing, China, who recently made the move to begin her ECE studies with NZTC in New Zealand.

**Program currently studying:**  
**Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education)**

**You recently moved to New Zealand and now live in Christchurch, what are your impressions so far?**

When I first arrived here I was shocked when people would stop and say hello and make small talk on the street. Everyone is so warm and friendly and Christchurch has beautiful houses, abundant parks and green areas. It's a comfortable city to live and work in.

**Why did you choose to study with NZTC in New Zealand?**

I was very interested in NZTC's Blended Learning mode. My previous study, (Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages) gave me an awareness of how crucial practical experience is in an education program. I believe NZTC's program is the best way to help students become qualified teachers. I also hope to learn about the Western concept of education, which respects children's personal growth and individual development, and encourages children to develop the habit of self-learning. In the future, this will allow me to have better employment opportunities in China.

**Have you visited any places around the country?**

I was eager to ski and New Zealand lives up to its reputation as a world-famous skiing destination. Recently, I've been skiing at Mt. Hutt which has beautiful scenery and some of the best snow I've ever dreamed of.

**How have you found studying via NZTC Online so far?**

I find it convenient that I can open NZTC Online and study a little bit after work, and rest when I'm tired, arranging my time flexibly. This also helps with my time management skills. NZTC Online has a lot of excellent resources available, which is very convenient. I also really like the calendar feature, which is easy to see at a glance.

**What are you enjoying about your studies so far?**

The classes answer a lot of my questions but also leave me with questions, and it's clear to me that this is the process of learning, which I really enjoy. I'm able to verify this knowledge



*YuQiong Cui*

with the children in my weekly practice. For example, after I learned how a child's conscience develops step by step, I immediately recognised signs of a child's conscience development in my practice.

**Do you feel well supported in your study journey?**

The NZTC lecturers and IT Support team are always available to answer questions and I often get calls from the college asking about my life. I would like to say thank you to NZTC's International Team, especially Audrey Wang, who I met at an international education exhibition. She made it very clear about what NZTC's programs involved and what kind of career I could pursue by studying at NZTC. That gave me a solid understanding and helped me to decide.

**How are you enjoying working at your home centre, Kindercare Learning Centre in Avonhead?**

I really enjoy working in my home centre as my Associate Teacher (AT) and AT group members are very supportive. They are very good at what they do, and I learn a lot by watching them interact with the children – every action is educational and has strong leadership qualities. When I first started, I was very nervous and scared to communicate with the children in English. But the children's innocence touched me and made me happy to talk to them, and I think they have changed my timid and shy self. Although I still have a lot of areas to improve and challenges to overcome, I believe I can do better and better with the support of NZTC and my home centre.