

“Hope has two beautiful daughters, their names are anger and courage.” These words attributed to the 4th Century theologian St Augustine summed up my views of the University of Cornell’s 4th international conference –Building a Community of Practice.

The anger I experienced was in listening to the sessions held on the last day of the conference. The presentations by Xavier-McElrath-Bey and from the children and adults during the final panel session. The presenters spoke generously, honestly and eloquently about painful experiences in their early lives which had been at best misunderstood and at worst exacerbated by the care system. Each of these contributors spoke with courage about what they had done to survive their experience and what they were now doing to improve the system for others.

Then there was hope. This shone through the presentations by each of the key note speakers. John Lyon’s messages about the need for collaboration to achieve positive outcomes, Anthony Burrow’s on the importance of purpose in life, Howard Bath’s key message of the need to ensure that those who work most closely with children understand trauma and Junlei Li’s emphasis on simple human interactions between adults and children.

The RCCP team created and fostered a warm inclusive atmosphere throughout the conference. The team paid attention to every important detail concerning each and every participant and all of the workshop sessions. And of course this was all supported by what was a perfect venue for such an occasion.

All of this has helped foster a truly international community of practice.