

## Editorial

### Alan Macquarrie

I am grateful to the editors of the *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care* for inviting me to edit this special themed edition on historical research and historical subjects. It has been an enriching experience to see the research which is being carried out and the lessons which are being learned from it.

This issue represents ends and beginnings: some doors close, while others open onto new vistas pointing to future directions. We are very privileged to begin this issue with Professor Roy Parker's last article, completed when he knew that he was very seriously ill with terminal cancer, but still determined to complete the last word on his life's work on historical research: scholarly and fair-minded as ever, but underpinned by passionate convictions about the rights of children. We are very grateful to Professor Sonia Jackson for having provided us with an obituary for Roy Parker, and to his family for the accompanying photograph. The issue ends with a short article by Angus Skinner, whose report *Another Kind of Home* (1992) has underlain most policy and practice development in Scotland in the last quarter-century. In his article, Angus speaks of 'passing the baton from one generation to another'.

In between we have an eclectic collection of full-length articles and shorter pieces. James Anglin and Larry Brendtro offer a review of the history of child and youth care from a North American perspective, discussing the implications of its evolution for the future of the discipline. We look forward to a fuller discussion in a forthcoming book. Then we have two detailed articles on the development of child welfare systems in the nineteenth century in different parts of the world: Annie Skinner on England and Wales, and Ted Dunlop on urban Canada. Ted Dunlop's article has had to be cut in two because of its length, and the second part and bibliography will appear in a later issue of the journal. The whole thing is so packed full of quality research that the editor was reluctant to suggest leaving anything out.

Samina Karim presents the findings of a research study undertaken with survivors of historic abuse, and discusses the problems young people had in disclosing abuse contemporaneously, so that issues which should have been addressed at the time became 'historic'. Then we have a shorter piece by Peter

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Clarke and Sue Brock-Holinshead on the historic development of a programme developed by the Society of Friends (Quakers) for young men who have harmed sexually.

Taken together, these articles offer a rich range of subjects and views, all with 'history' as their main theme.

Why do we do history? There are many good answers: we learn from the mistakes of the past and try not to repeat them, and we redress, as best we can, the harm done in the past. We develop an understanding of why things were done in a certain way in the past, and develop respect and sympathy for those who tried their best. For me, having spent forty years researching and writing on historical subjects, a very important reason for doing history well is to counter bad history. This may sound like a negative argument, but recent events in Scotland, in the United Kingdom and in the wider world have shown how it is possible to sway public opinion with bogus historical arguments. A collection of articles like these, with their breadth of vision, should enable us to use history in ways that are helpful and constructive.

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