TE IPUKAREA

New appointments to the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education International Council

Te Ipukarea is so proud to have been present at an event during the week leading up to Matariki which included the celebration of two young inspirational Māori men who are indeed emerging Māori leaders in a global world. Dr Toiroa Williams (Te Whakatōhea, Ngāi Tai, Te Whānau-a-Apanui) and Mr Jaye Wainui, affectionately known as Josh, (Ngāi Tahu, Tūhoe, Whakatōhea, Ngāi Tai, Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Kai Tahu, Ngāti Whātua) both alumni of Auckland Univeristy of Technology, AUT, have been recognised by the domestic and international Indigenous community as being worthy candidates to serve on the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) International Council. Outgoing and long serving member on the WIPCE International Council for 20-years, Dr Bentham Ohia said, 'he was standing down from the Council to make way for a younger generation and the appointment of Toiroa and Jaye does just that because they can connect with both the kaumātua and rangatahi which is what is needed and importantly because they are tikanga-led.'

WIPCE is the largest and most diverse global Indigenous education forum in the world. It brings together Indigenous communities, educators, and leaders every three years to share knowledge, celebrate cultural identity, and strengthen Indigenous-led education systems. Most importantly it is grounded in 'community' and has its origins in 'community'.

Aotearoa has shared a longstanding and significant relationship with WIPCE. The second WIPCE gathering was hosted in Aotearoa in 1990 at Tūrangawaewae Marae under the manaakitanga and leadership of Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu, with Tā Dr Tīmoti Kāretu serving as Conference Chair. That gathering represented a defining moment in Indigenous education internationally and firmly established Aotearoa's place within the global Indigenous education movement.

The WIPCE movement was established in 1987 in Vancouver, Canada, and its driving force was Dr Verna Kirkness (Cree) who celebrated her 90th birthday last year. She attracted the support of the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust; another movement grounded in community, and so the Te Kōhanga Reo movement travelled in droves to support the call from this wonderful Indigenous Cree scholar and leader from the Fisher River Cree Nation. Dr Verna is a lifelong proponent of Indigenous language culture and education; something she has in common with her dear friends, Tā Dr Tīmoti Karetū, the late Te Arikinui Dame Te Ātairangikaahu (1931-2006) and the late Dame Iritana Tawhiwhirangi (1929-2025).

WIPCE returned to Aotearoa in 2005 when the conference was hosted by Te Wānanga o Aotearoa in Kirikiriroa, Hamilton, under the leadership of Chief Executive Dr Rongo Wetere and Conference Chair Dr Bentham Ohia. Together, they delivered another landmark conference that strengthened relationships and educational collaboration amongst Indigenous peoples from around the world.

The WIPCE conference rotates globally with the next one being hosted in Waikōloa, Hawai'i in 2028. The conference features keynotes, panel discussions, youth-focused streams, and academic/community presentations across various key themes.



Indigenous education leader Dr Verna Kirkness pictured with her lifelong friend Tā Dr Tīmoti Karetū at WIPCE 2025 in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa New Zealand, celebrating both the conference and Dr Kirkness' remarkable 90th birthday.

A prominent feature of WIPCE is the Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Education. It is an important document developed through a collective Indigenous voice to address decades of disparities for Indigenous people's around the world. This critical document helped to shape and inform other foundational documents like the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP). The Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Education was drafted at the 1993 WIPCE in Wollongong, Australia by a Task Force drawn from several Indigenous communities across the world. It was then ratified at the 1999 WIPCE in Hilo, Hawai'i. There is an appetite from some of the WIPCE membership to review and update the Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Education. It is hoped that Toiroa and Jaye will reach out to the original Task Force members to be included in this forum to work with rangatahi in a) understanding the whakapapa behind the Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Education and b) because it is a matter of tikanga to consult with the elders.

Dr Rongo Wetere said,

> I am thrilled that these two young men Jaye and Toiroa will represent and support Aroha Te Kanawa as Aotearoa – WIPCE will be safe with their involvement; the WIPCE values will remain steadfast and not compromised. Aroha Te Kanawa, was appointed Event Director in 2005;

this would be the first WIPCE conference with a published academic review. Aroha has served as Secretary of the WIPCE International Council since 2011 and has been central to maintaining the relationships, continuity, and organisational foundations of the WIPCE movement internationally. Together, their leadership, institutional knowledge, and longstanding commitment to Indigenous education have been instrumental in supporting the return of WIPCE to Aotearoa last year in 2025.

He also acknowledged that, alongside Bentham and Aroha, Professor Tania Ka'ai has been a longstanding and influential figure within the WIPCE whānau, with her involvement stretching back to the period surrounding the development of the original Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Education in the 1990s. Her leadership and advocacy for Indigenous language revitalisation, education, and cultural sovereignty have helped shape not only WIPCE, but Indigenous education movements globally.

There have been 14 WIPCEs.

1987 – Inaugural WIPCE, Vancouver, Canada
1990-Turangawaewae, Aotearoa/New Zealand
1993- Wollongong, Australia
1996: Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA
1999: Hilo, Hawai‘i, USA
2002: Calgary, Canada
2005: Kirikiriroa (Hamilton), Aotearoa (New Zealand)
2008: Melbourne, Australia
2011: Cusco, Peru
2014: Honolulu, Hawai‘i, USA
2017: Toronto, Canada
2022: Tarntanya (Adelaide), Australia
2025: Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), Aotearoa (New Zealand)
2028: Scheduled to be held in Waikōloa, Hawai‘i

But who are these two new members of the WIPCE International Council?

The journey to WIPCE 2025 began in 2022 when Auckland University of Technology (AUT) led Aotearoa's bid to host the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education at WIPCE in Adelaide, Australia. As members of the original AUT bid team, Dr Toiroa Williams and Jaye Wainui joined colleagues in presenting a vision that reflected the strength of Indigenous communities, the importance of tikanga, whakawhanaungatanga, and the belief that rangatahi are the future leaders, educators, researchers and knowledge holders of tomorrow. The presentation also highlighted AUT's longstanding commitment to Indigenous education and its partnership with Māori communities. Following the presentation, the WIPCE International Council unanimously selected AUT and Aotearoa New Zealand to host WIPCE 2025, marking the return of the conference to Aotearoa twenty years after it was last hosted in Kirikiriroa in 2005.

The appointments of Jaye Wainui and Dr Toiroa Williams as Aotearoa representatives on the WIPCE International Council continue this proud whakapapa of Māori leadership and service within the global Indigenous education movement, building upon the foundations laid by those who have carried the kaupapa before them and ensuring that Indigenous voices continue to shape the future of education internationally.



Dr Toiroa Williams, Senior Lecturer at Te Ipukarea – Institute for Indigenous Knowledge, Auckland University of Technology.

Dr Toiroa Williams is a Senior Lecturer in Te Ipukarea – Institute for Indigenous Knowledge at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). Throughout his academic career, he has been recognised with a number of prestigious scholarships and awards, including the AUT Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship, the AUT INTERNZ Scholarship at the Sundance Institute in Los Angeles, and recognition as a finalist in the Best Creative Commercial Campaign category at the 2023 New Zealand Radio Awards. Toiroa has represented AUT as an ambassador both nationally and internationally, participating in and presenting at major Indigenous forums, including the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE), and the World Indigenous Content Conference in association with the World Indigenous Broadcasters Network. In 2017, he received the AUT Ambassador Award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the University at the Kea World Class New Zealand Awards in New York City.

Toiroa's passion is documentary filmmaking, photography and audio production. He specialises in storytelling and documentary installation, with a particular focus on te reo Māori, pūrākau, and mātauranga Māori. With tribal connections to Te Whakatōhea, Ngāi Tai, and Te Whānau-a-Apanui, he is guided by a proverb from his iwi: *"Tohenihorautia taku ora, tohenihorautia taku mate", strive for success and remain resilient through life's challenges*.

A proud senior member of his tribal Māori performing arts group, Ōpōtiki Mai Tawhiti, Toiroa draws inspiration from regularly returning home to his Mum and Dad's farm on Paerata Ridge in his hometown of Ōpōtiki. He remains actively involved in his communities through iwi initiatives, governance and trust roles, and a wide range of community service. These enduring connections to his whenua, whānau, and iwi continue to shape his work and commitment to Indigenous education, research, and storytelling.

Jaye Wainui is a prominent Māori leader and the Tumu Whakarae (Chief Executive) of the Kirikiriroa Family Services Trust and Tamariki Tū, Tamariki Ora in Hamilton. With tribal links to Ngāi Tūhoe, Te Whakatōhea, Te Whānau a Apanui, Ngāi Tai, Kai Tahu and Ngāti Whātua. He is recognised for his advocacy for Indigenous-led community development, mental health, and social equity. With over a decade of experience across Health New Zealand, Auckland Council, and the Department of Corrections, Jaye is a trusted governance voice championing Indigenous-led community solutions and whānau wellbeing.



Jaye Wainui, Tumu Whakarae (Chief Executive) of the Kirikiriroa Family Services Trust and Tamariki Tū, Tamariki Ora

Jaye has recently made headlines for leading the charge against the cost-of-living crisis in the Waikato. Under his leadership, the trust collaborated with Foodstuffs to open the region's first "social supermarket" in Frankton, Hamilton. This innovative, dignified alternative to traditional food banks

allows struggling families to choose their own groceries using a points system rather than receiving pre-packed parcels. He has also been a prominent advocate for social sector workers and vulnerable children, vocally calling for community services to receive essential-service status and pushing back against bureaucratic contract uncertainties that impact kaimahi (workers).

There is no doubt that both of these young men will represent Aotearoa extremely well on the WIPCE International Council. They have the support of kaumātua and iwi across the nation and so we can be assured that we are in good hands.

Toiroa said,

> As a young boy growing up in Ōpōtiki, surrounded by the support of my whānau, hapū and community, I could never have imagined a journey that would lead to this moment. I am deeply grateful to the many teachers, mentors, kaumātua, friends and family members who believed in me long before I believed in myself. WIPCE has always been grounded in community, so it feels fitting that this appointment comes with the support and encouragement of the very communities that have shaped me. From Ōpōtiki to representing Aotearoa on the international stage, I have been carried by my, hāhi, whānau, my iwi, my teachers, mentors and friends. My hope is that Jaye Wainui and I will honour that support by creating opportunities for our rangatahi and ensuring Indigenous voices continue to shape the future of education globally.

Jaye says,

> As a young boy growing up in Kaiti, Gisborne, the only thing separating our backyard from the local Mongrel Mob pad was a corrugated iron fence. My brothers, sisters and I would climb up onto that fence and sit there with the kids next door. At that age there was no difference between us, we were just children.
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> As we grew older, our lives took very different paths.
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> Years later, while serving as Chief Māori Health Officer for Ara Poutama Aotearoa, I walked into a prison and came face to face with one of those same boys I had sat beside on that fence. I remember asking myself a question that has stayed with me ever since. What was the difference?
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> My parents weren't wealthy, but they gave us something far greater. Guided by our whakapapa, our faith, our hapū and our tīpuna, particularly my great-great-grandfather Paora Kingi Delamere, who served as Poutikanga of the Ringatū Church for 46 years, they taught us to love one another, to serve others and to care for our neighbors regardless of where they came from.
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> Around that same time, I had the privilege of joining my cousin and dear friend Dr Toiroa Williams inside Mt Eden Prison while he was researching our tipuna Mokomoko. Walking through 'The Rock' and seeing where so many of our people ended up strengthened something in me. I realised that if we truly wanted different outcomes for our people, we couldn't wait until they entered prisons, hospitals or crisis services.
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> We have to start where every journey begins, with our tamariki and their whānau.

That belief has shaped every step of my career, and it is the belief I bring to the WIPCE International Council. Indigenous education is about more than classrooms, it is about identity, belonging, language, culture and ensuring our children grow up knowing who they are and what they are capable of becoming. If we get that right, I believe we won't simply improve outcomes, we will help create a future where far fewer of our children ever reach the places our indigenous peoples have become too familiar with.



From left to right: Jaye Wainui, Dr Rongo Wetere, Aroha Te Kanawa, Dr Bentham Ohia, Professor Tania Ka'ai, and Dr Toiroa Williams at the Matariki evening reception in Kirikiriroa, Hamilton, marking the official handover and welcome of Jaye and Toiroa as Aotearoa representatives to the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE) International Council.

Princess Te Puea Herangi (1883-1952) was a visionary leader of the Kīngitanga who dedicated her life to the wellbeing and empowerment of her people. Her sayings and guiding principles remain foundational to Māori culture, unity and community service and so it seems appropriate to conclude with one of these sayings which depict the pathway of these two Māori leaders, Toiroa and Jaye as they step into the WIPCE International Council space to represent us in the years to come.

Mehemea ka moemoeā ahau, ko ahau anake. Mehemea ka moemoeā tātou, ka taea e tātou
If I were to dream alone, I dream alone. If we dream together, we can achieve.

This saying encapsulates Te Puea's philosophy of collective action, dreaming, and communal achievement; it is her gift to us that if we dream together we can achieve so much for the communities

that we serve. We wish Toiroa and Jaye all the very best as they prepare for their first WIPCE International Council meeting in Waikāloa, Hawai'i, September 2026.