

# Adult & Community Education Newsletter



## Hui Fono 2026: **Beyond the Hype**

This year, Hui Fono marked 15 years of bringing together Māori and Pacific educators working across the ACE sector. More than 100 people gathered to explore the theme *Beyond the Hype: Applying Artificial and Ancestral Intelligences for Transformative Learning*.

A key question sat at the centre of the day: as artificial intelligence changes how people learn and access knowledge, how do we ensure ancestral intelligence remains at the heart of learning and community life?

Throughout the day, participants discussed the importance of mātauranga Māori, Pacific knowledge

systems, cultural values and relational practice. These are the foundations that continue to shape learning through identity, connection and collective responsibility.

Guided by MCs Nohorua Hawaikirangi Parata (Rongowhakaata, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngāti Toa and Te Ātiawa) and Saylene Ulberg-Tanielu, the day balanced discussion about emerging technologies with reflection on culture and community. A live digital survey revealed the breadth of experience in the room. Pale Sauni had attended 14 of the 15 Hui Fono events, while 34 people were attending for the first time.

The mix of experienced practitioners, emerging leaders and first-time participants reflected the diversity of the ACE sector itself.

Saylene opened the day by asking: *“What’s possible when technology is guided by wisdom? How do we move forward without losing ourselves?”*

These questions carried through every session. Conversations around ownership, consent, data sovereignty, digital equity and the protection of ancestral knowledge were recurring themes throughout the day.

This year’s programme featured two keynote speakers who each brought a different perspective to the discussion.

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Whakatauki

*Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.*

*With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive.*

## Peter-Lucas Jones What We Lose When a Language Disappears



Peter-Lucas Jones

Peter-Lucas Jones (Te Aupōuri, Ngāi Takoto, Te Rarawa) CEO of Te Hiku Media, spoke about the role AI can play in supporting Indigenous language revitalisation. Named by Time Magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in AI in 2024, he shared examples of tools developed by Te Hiku Media, including Papa Reo, Kaituhi and Rongo, which support automatic transcription, pronunciation and speech synthesis in te reo Māori.

For Peter-Lucas, the technology itself is only part of the story.

*“Every two weeks a language disappears, taking with it an entire way of understanding the world,”* he said.

He encouraged participants to think about who owns data, who benefits from technology and how Indigenous knowledge can be protected in a rapidly changing digital environment.

Peter-Lucas described the extensive archive of oral histories collected through iwi radio over more than 30 years. The recordings contain stories about waterways, kai, biodiversity, whakapapa, landscapes and community life. Much of this material was originally recorded on cassette tapes and has been carefully preserved for future generations.

He explained that digitising these recordings requires more than technical expertise. It depends on trust, consent and the support of whānau and language experts. Peter-Lucas spoke about the responsibility of acting as kaitiaki for Māori data and ensuring these taonga remain protected from misuse and exploitation.

*“Data is the new land,”* he said, reflecting on the scale at which language and cultural information is being gathered around the world and quite possibly colonised by others.

At the same time, he spoke positively about the opportunities AI presents when guided by Indigenous values. Tools such as real-time language transcription and natural language processing have the potential to strengthen language transmission, preserve knowledge and reconnect communities.

*“We talk about the ocean, the mountains, the forests, the birds and the waterways. When we use these AI tools to understand our own Indigenous language data for revival, preservation and growth of our language and culture, it opens up so many amazing opportunities.”*

Peter-Lucas also reflected on the changing nature of whānau and community life. Where knowledge was once passed naturally through large interconnected households and shared living arrangements, many whānau are now more disconnected from the people and places they come from. His work focuses on using technology to help rebuild those connections while ensuring ownership remains with the communities who hold that knowledge.



## Namulau'ulu Nu'uali'i Eteroa Lafaele

### Unseen to Unstoppable



Namulau'ulu Nu'uali'i Eteroa Lafaele

The second keynote speaker, Namulau'ulu Nu'uali'i Eteroa Lafaele, brought a strong Pacific perspective to the conversation around technology, equity and leadership. A software engineer, entrepreneur and co-founder of Fibre Fale, Eteroa is one of Aotearoa's leading advocates for digital inclusion and equitable access to technology. Her achievements include Young New Zealander of the Year 2025, Forbes 30 Under 30 for Social Impact, the Hi-Tech Young Achiever Award and the Prime Minister's Award for STEM.

Her keynote, *Unseen to Unstoppable*, focused as much on people and opportunity as it did on technology.

Eteroa spoke about growing up in Cannons Creek with Samoan parents who worked hard to create opportunities for their family. She shared her journey into computer science and some of the barriers she faced entering the technology sector, including having her place and capability questioned.

Those experiences helped shape her commitment to creating opportunities for others.

After leaving the corporate technology sector, Eteroa co-founded her business with Julia Pahina with a vision of creating digital and technology opportunities grounded in Pacific values and accessibility. Since then, more than 27,000 people have participated in Fibre Fale programmes and workshops.

Her kōrero focused on digital equity and ensuring Māori and Pacific communities are not simply users of technology, but are involved in designing, developing and shaping it. She encouraged participants to think about what sits within their control and how communities can engage with AI in ways that

reflect their own values, aspirations and realities.

As Saylene reflected afterwards, Eteroa had “*created her own lane and provided the solutions.*”

The afternoon workshops expanded on the themes introduced during the keynote sessions. Eteroa facilitated an interactive workshop exploring the question *Does AI Deserve You?* Participants worked through an eight-step framework grounded in Pacific epistemology, encouraging reflection on trust, ethics, identity and participation in AI systems.

Peter-Lucas demonstrated some of the technologies developed by Te Hiku Media using community-generated language data. His workshop explored both the opportunities and responsibilities that come with preserving Indigenous language and knowledge in digital spaces while maintaining ownership and sovereignty over that information.

Hui Fono 2026 once again provided an opportunity for Māori and Pacific educators to connect, share ideas and learn from one another.

While much of the discussion focused on artificial intelligence, the message that emerged throughout the day was clear: technology is only part of the story. Culture, relationships, language and community remain at the centre of learning and knowledge sharing.



# Vox Pop

## Hui Fono

Whether attending for the first time or returning after many years, participants consistently highlighted the value of Hui Fono as a space where Māori and Pacific worldviews are centred in conversations about the future. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to explore emerging technologies through cultural lenses, engage in meaningful discussions about data sovereignty and digital equity, and connect with a growing network of practitioners committed to transformative learning. Many left feeling challenged, inspired and better equipped to navigate the opportunities and responsibilities that AI presents for their communities.



### Arian-Blade Tearikiau



*"Hui Fono was an incredible experience. I valued the opportunity to explore new ways of thinking, particularly the connection between ancestral knowledge and artificial intelligence. The discussions challenged me to think differently about the future while staying grounded in who we are. Just as important was the chance to connect with others across the sector and share ideas, experiences and aspirations. I left with new insights, new connections and plenty to reflect on."*

### Pale Sauni



*"Having attended 14 of the 15 Hui Fono events, I continue to be inspired by the way these gatherings create space for Māori and Pacific perspectives on emerging issues. This year's focus on AI reinforced the importance of viewing technology through a Pacific lens. The discussions gave us both the confidence and the practical knowledge to explore how AI can be adapted and applied in ways that reflect our values, strengthen our communities and work for our people."*

### Korelli Mulitalo, (Careerforce)



*"Hui Fono provided a fantastic opportunity to have a sector connection for Māori and Pacific people. Bringing us all together once a year is a highlight. We have met great people and there is a great vibe."*

# ACE Aotearoa Conference 2026



At ACE Conference 2026, cultural ceremony was thoughtfully woven throughout the conference as a living expression of ancestral intelligence – not as entertainment, but as sacred practice. The pedagogical tradition of karakia, mihi whakatau and waiata tautoko gave voice to the sentiments of speakers through supporting song, while a Cook Islands turou welcomed the ACE Aotearoa Awards 2026 recipients, guests and sector members with the dignity their presence deserved. These moments invited us not merely to observe, but to witness and participate in ceremonies that honour our people and the wisdom carried across generations.

Throughout the two days there was a strong sense of belonging and a shared commitment to strengthening Adult and Community Education across Aotearoa. With 174 registrations, the conference also explored the theme *Beyond the Hype: Applying Artificial and Ancestral Intelligence for Transformative Learning*. The programme challenged participants to move beyond the excitement surrounding emerging technologies and focus instead on practical application, critical thinking and meaningful transformation. Through the keynote speakers and ako workshop sessions, the conference created space for educators to distinguish between shiny new tools and genuine opportunities to improve learning outcomes for communities.

Central to the theme was the relationship between artificial intelligence and ancestral intelligence. Rather than viewing these as competing concepts, speakers and participants explored how both forms of intelligence can inform decision-making, support learning and strengthen communities when applied with purpose and intention. Throughout the conference there was a strong emphasis on maintaining human connection, cultural knowledge and ethical practice while embracing innovation.



## Keynote Speakers

**Madeline Newman**  
Executive Director,  
AI Forum  
New Zealand



The first keynote speaker was Madeline Newman, Executive Director of the AI Forum New Zealand.

Madeline joined the AI Forum four years ago and brings extensive experience in strategy, transformational change and helping organisations understand the opportunities presented by emerging technologies. Originally from New Zealand, she spent more than 20 years in the United Kingdom working across mental health, financial services and regulatory sectors, helping organisations navigate technological change and innovation.



Her previous roles included helping shape and deliver the UK Financial Conduct Authority's internationally recognised RegTech innovation programme, as well as serving as Head of Innovation and Product for a science-based digital mental health platform. Alongside her role with the AI Forum, she contributes to several AI advisory boards, mentors emerging leaders through the University of Auckland's Kupe Leadership Programme and regularly participates in national discussions about the future of AI in New Zealand.

Madeline's keynote, *AI in a Human World*, looked at where AI is heading and some of the opportunities and challenges that come with it. Drawing on her work with the AI Forum New Zealand, she gave delegates a useful snapshot of what is happening both here and overseas and what organisations like ours may need to think about in the years ahead.

One of the first things Madeline said was that we are living in "the age of monsters". That got people's attention! She compared today's AI revolution with the arrival of the internet in the early 2000s. Back then we knew something significant was happening, but nobody really understood where it would lead. In many ways, she suggested, AI feels much the same. We know what it is, we can see it developing at extraordinary speed, but we still don't know exactly where it will take us.

Madeline talked about the fact that New Zealand is currently in a position of high use but low trust when it comes to AI. People are already using AI tools every day, often without even realising it, but questions remain around governance, transparency and accountability. She challenged delegates to think about how we prepare for a future where AI becomes increasingly embedded in education, services and everyday life.

A significant part of her presentation focused on the things we need to be considering now, including social licence, governance, education, enabling regulation and sustainable AI. One of the points she made was that New Zealand currently has no dedicated AI legislation. While this creates flexibility and opportunities for innovation, it also raises questions about accountability and public confidence. She used the example of electricity, which is highly dangerous when unregulated. When regulations and standards were introduced, it became a tool that we could all use safely – and

today we use it every day without even thinking about it.

Madeline also encouraged delegates to think about what is coming next. AI development is moving at an incredible pace and technologies that once seemed years away are now much closer. She touched on the growing interest in quantum computing and what this could mean for AI. While still emerging, quantum computing has the potential to dramatically increase the processing power available to AI systems, allowing them to solve problems that are currently beyond our reach. Although the technology is not yet mainstream, it is an area many experts are watching closely.

Another area she discussed was Agentic AI, which has emerged rapidly over the past 12 months. Unlike the AI tools many of us are already familiar with, Agentic AI can do more than simply respond to prompts. These systems are designed to undertake tasks, make decisions, use different tools and work through multiple steps to achieve a goal. Rather than being directed at every stage, they can operate with a greater degree of independence.

While the possibilities are exciting, Madeline suggested that Agentic AI also raises important questions. How much decision-making are we comfortable handing over to technology? How do we ensure transparency when AI systems start taking actions on our behalf? What skills will learners and educators need when working alongside increasingly capable digital agents? These are questions that sectors across society will need to consider in the coming years, if not months.

Madeline left delegates with plenty to think about. While there was genuine excitement about the possibilities AI offers, there was also recognition that we need to have conversations about trust, governance, regulation and equity. Her presentation reminded us that technology alone is never the answer. The real challenge is making sure these tools are used in ways that strengthen communities, support learners and reflect the values we want to see in Aotearoa.

## Dr Mahsa McCauley

Communication  
& Information  
Commissioner,  
UNESCO NZ



The second day of the conference was opened with a keynote from one of Aotearoa's leading voices on artificial intelligence, education and technology policy – Dr Mahsa McCauley of the New Zealand National Commission of UNESCO. She is also Chair of the AI Forum New Zealand and Associate Professor of AI at Auckland University of Technology.

Dr McCauley brought both deep technical expertise and a practical understanding of what rapid technological change means for educators and learners. Before discussing her



many professional roles, Dr McCauley introduced herself first as a mother. Looking ahead to the future her daughter will inherit, she reflected that resilience may prove more important than specific skills, and wisdom more valuable than knowledge alone.

Drawing on her own background in natural language processing, Dr McCauley described how quickly technology is evolving. Research she completed only a few years ago has already been overtaken by new developments. While the internet transformed access to information, she argued that artificial intelligence is creating an entirely new level of disruption by enabling information to be analysed, generated and acted upon at unprecedented speed.

To illustrate the pace of change, she compared the adoption of different technologies. Commercial air travel took decades to reach 50 million users, Facebook took two years, while ChatGPT achieved the same milestone in just five weeks. The message was clear: the changes ahead are unlikely to be gradual and predictable.

Central to Dr McCauley's presentation was the idea of developing what she called a "sponge mindset". In an AI-driven world, people need to remain curious, absorb new ideas and be willing to learn, unlearn and relearn throughout their lives. Just as importantly, they need the resilience to adapt and recover when circumstances change.

She also outlined the different stages of artificial intelligence. The world currently operates in the era of Artificial Narrow Intelligence, where systems are designed to perform specific tasks. Future developments may lead to Artificial General Intelligence, where machines can perform a wide range of intellectual tasks at human levels, and eventually Artificial Super Intelligence, where machine capability exceeds that of the most capable humans. For many attendees, it was a reminder that society is still only at the beginning of this technological transformation.

Throughout the session, Dr McCauley returned to the implications for education. Today's children are growing up as digital natives in a world where AI tools are becoming commonplace. Referencing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all, she highlighted the potential for AI to

provide personalised support for learners and practical assistance for educators.

Students are already embracing these technologies for research, brainstorming, content creation and problem-solving. Used well, AI has the potential to provide every learner with access to a digital tutor and every educator with a digital assistant.

However, Dr McCauley was equally clear about the challenges. The real issue is not whether students are using AI, but whether educators are receiving the training and support they need to use it effectively. She described a significant global training gap, with many teachers still lacking confidence and practical experience with AI tools.

One of the most thought-provoking aspects of the presentation was the distinction between a learning curve and a judgement curve. Simply having access to AI does not automatically improve outcomes. Research shows that people who use AI without understanding its strengths, limitations and appropriate applications can actually produce poorer results. The future, she suggested, will belong to those who combine technical capability with sound judgement, critical thinking and ethical decision-making.

Dr McCauley also challenged attendees to think beyond individual achievement. Increasingly, success will come from people working together, combining human creativity, empathy and expertise with technological capability. As she noted, intelligence may be abundant, but coordinated human intelligence infused with compassion remains scarce.

Looking ahead to 2030 and beyond, Dr McCauley urged educators, organisations and policymakers to act now. Training teachers, developing clear policies and ensuring learners have a voice in shaping the future will all be critical.

She also touched on some of the social risks associated with emerging technologies, including growing concerns around loneliness and social isolation. While AI will continue to shape the future, she reminded attendees that the future is not something that simply happens to us. It is something we actively create.

Her closing message left a lasting impression. In a world where machines are increasingly capable of producing polished and perfect outputs, our humanity may become even more valuable.

*"When machines perfect everything, humanity becomes rare."*

It was a fitting conclusion to a keynote that challenged attendees to think not only about what AI can do, but also about what makes us uniquely human.



## Vox Pop

### ACE Aotearoa Conference 2026

#### Lynda Megson, Bojana Rimbovska (Risingholme Learning)

*"We both really enjoyed conference. The speakers were great and Paula Gair's workshop on the safe, ethical and responsible use of AI was particularly good. The overall energy was excellent. We are starting to see some of the 'why' when it comes to AI and how that can be put to good use." – Lynda Megson.*

*"I particularly enjoyed Carla Teng-Westergaard's workshop, AI for storytellers: A practical Media Toolkit. I feel I have new tools to use and that AI is more manageable." – Bojana Rimbovska.*



#### Emma Mclean, Kellie Weatherston, Sarah Millwater (Central Otago REAP)

*"ACE Conference provides a great opportunity for the sector to come together, to collaborate and to share ideas. It keeps our passions alive and reminds us why we do what we do. It is a real time to celebrate positivity and make new connections." – Emma McLean.*



#### Nita Hutchinson (ELP)

*"This is my first time at the ACE Conference, and it has been great to connect with kaimahi across the sector and to better understand the challenges and opportunities ahead of us in relation to AI."*



## Political Panel

Day one of ACE Conference 2026 featured a political panel discussion, facilitated by Bronwyn Yates, ACE Sector Steering Group Chair. With Parliament preparing for Budget Day and political schedules particularly busy, representatives joined remotely via Zoom. This busy schedule also impacted the ability of other parties to attend, with all invited to participate. Francisco Hernandez from the Green Party (spokesperson on Tertiary Education) and Shanan Halbert from the Labour Party (spokesperson for Tertiary Education and Whānau Ora) participated in the discussion, responding to a series of questions focused on the future of Adult and Community Education in Aotearoa.

The questions explored the value of lifelong learning, the role of ACE in supporting more than 80,000 learners annually, the potential impact of education policy changes on demand for second-chance learning, the need for sustainable funding, and how government can better recognise and respond to the needs of ACE learners.

Both panellists spoke positively about the role Adult and Community Education plays in strengthening communities and supporting learner success. Francisco Hernandez reflected on his own experiences as an ACE learner, sharing how community education opportunities, including comedy classes at Wellington High School and Te Reo Māori classes helped him build connections, develop skills and become engaged in his community as a new New Zealander.

Looking ahead, Hernandez said the Green Party sees ACE as a vital part of community infrastructure and supports stronger investment in the sector. He described a vision of community education centres acting as local hubs where people can learn, connect and participate more fully in community life.

Shanan Halbert highlighted the strong alignment between Labour and the Greens on many ACE issues. He noted that around 100,000 young people are currently not in employment, education or training, describing this as both a social and economic challenge. He argued that education remains one of the most effective ways to create opportunities and improve outcomes for individuals and communities.

Halbert also acknowledged concerns around funding, referencing a review initiated by Labour which found that ACE funding had not kept pace with demand or rising costs. He said the sustainability of the sector would need to be addressed to ensure organisations can continue supporting learners effectively.

Both panellists emphasised the importance of equitable access to learning opportunities, particularly for rural communities and groups that have traditionally faced barriers to education. They also highlighted the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi being meaningfully embedded across the sector and recognised the role ACE plays in supporting social inclusion, cultural connection and lifelong learning.

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was that Adult and Community Education remains one of New Zealand's most valuable yet least recognised parts of the education system. Both speakers acknowledged the sector's role in supporting some of the country's most vulnerable learners and agreed that greater recognition and investment are needed if ACE is to continue meeting the growing needs of communities across Aotearoa.

The session provided delegates with an opportunity to hear directly from political representatives and reinforced the important role ACE organisations play in creating pathways for learning, participation and wellbeing throughout life.



## Adult and Community Education in Aotearoa 2025/2026

### Environmental Scan



Hannah Pia Baral

At conference, ACE Aotearoa CEO Hannah Pia Baral shared an early insight into key findings of the Adult and Community Education in Aotearoa 2025/2026 Environmental Scan completed for ACE Aotearoa by Fleur Chauvel, an Independent Researcher and Evaluator.

One of the strongest messages was that Adult and Community Education continues to make a significant difference in the lives of learners and communities across Aotearoa, despite operating in an increasingly challenging environment. The scan found that ACE provision reaches every territorial authority in New Zealand and serves a highly diverse range of learners through an equally diverse range of programmes and providers. More than 80,000 learners are estimated to participate in ACE each year, although the true figure is likely to be considerably higher.

The research highlighted several strengths that make ACE distinctive, including its accessibility, flexibility, strong community connections and ability to respond quickly to local needs. Providers reported that ACE continues to play a vital role in supporting learners who may have previously experienced barriers to education by offering welcoming, non-threatening learning environments and pathways into further learning.

Importantly, the scan reinforced that the impact of ACE extends well beyond educational outcomes. Providers consistently reported improvements in learner confidence, social connection, wellbeing, cultural identity, literacy and language skills, alongside progression into employment, training and further study. ACE was also recognised for its contribution to stronger communities, social cohesion and active citizenship.

At the same time, the sector continues to face significant challenges. Funding was identified as the most pressing issue, particularly as providers respond to learners with increasingly complex needs. Survey respondents reported growing demand for support related to wellbeing, employment, social isolation and the cost-of-living pressures facing many communities. The scan also highlighted concerns about tutor availability and the ongoing need to invest in professional development and workforce capability.

Despite these challenges, there was strong confidence from providers about the future role of ACE. The report concludes that ACE's strengths in accessibility, responsiveness and community engagement position it well to support learners and communities in a rapidly changing world. However, increasing the visibility of the sector, improving recognition of its value and securing sustainable funding were identified as critical priorities for the future.

The full report will be released later this year.

# ACE Aotearoa Awards 2026

A highlight of the ACE Aotearoa Conference each year are the ACE Aotearoa Awards where we come together to celebrate the educators, programmes and leaders making an outstanding contribution to Adult and Community Education. The awards recognise excellence, innovation and leadership across the sector, while also acknowledging the dedication and passion that underpin lifelong learning in communities throughout Aotearoa. Congratulations to all our 2026 award recipients, whose work continues to inspire learners, strengthen communities and demonstrate the transformative power of education.



ACE Aotearoa Award winners 2026.

## Leader of the Year Tangata Whenua

**Mākuini Kerehi** (Rangitāne,  
Ngāti Kahungunu-ki-Wairarapa)



Mākuini Kerehi is a Kaitakawaenga at REAP Wairarapa, connecting learners, whānau and communities through culturally grounded education. Guided by tikanga, mātauranga Māori and a deep commitment to manaakitanga, she leads a wide range of programmes that strengthen language, culture, wellbeing and lifelong learning.

A respected educator, connector and advocate, Mākuini works tirelessly to create safe and empowering learning environments where people feel valued and supported. Her influence extends beyond the classroom through her leadership in whānau reo revitalisation, community partnerships and professional development for colleagues.

Grounded in kaupapa Māori and driven by a passion for uplifting others, Mākuini's leadership continues to strengthen connections between education, whānau and community across the Wairarapa.

## Leader of the Year Tangata Tiriti Anne Cave



As Director of Selwyn Community Education, Anne Cave has dedicated many years to making lifelong learning accessible, relevant and responsive to the needs of her community in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Anne has been a champion for Adult and Community Education, creating opportunities for learners from diverse backgrounds, particularly migrant and refugee communities. Her leadership was especially evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, when she became a key point of connection and support for Community Education in Schools providers across Auckland.

Beyond her local impact, Anne has contributed nationally through Adult Learners' Week, ACE Aotearoa Awards judging and the promotion of lifelong learning. Her commitment to learners, collaboration and community development has left a lasting legacy within the sector.

## Educator of the Year Tangata Tiriti Emma McLean

Emma McLean, Central Otago REAP, exemplifies learner-centred Adult and Community Education. Through her leadership and programme development, she consistently places learners at the heart of decision-making, creating opportunities that respond directly to community aspirations and needs.

Emma's programmes foster belonging, confidence and wellbeing, supporting learners who may be experiencing isolation, vulnerability or barriers to participation. Her work focuses not only on building skills but also on empowering people to recognise their own strengths and potential.

Known for her creativity, energy and commitment to community connection, Emma works closely with learners, tutors and volunteers to ensure programmes remain relevant and impactful. Her leadership continues to strengthen participation, wellbeing and lifelong learning outcomes throughout her community.



## Educator of the Year Tangata Whenua Heather Black

For more than a decade, Heather Black of Sew Simple, has been creating spaces where Māori learners can develop practical sewing skills while strengthening confidence, identity and cultural connection.

Through her kaupapa Māori sewing classes in South Auckland, Heather supports learners of all ages and experience levels, many of whom are engaging in education for the first time. Her teaching combines creativity, patience and encouragement, helping taira achieve goals they may never have thought possible.

A passionate advocate for te reo Māori and lifelong learning, Heather also delivers workshops for rangatahi and whānau – weaving culture, language and traditional knowledge into her teaching. Her warm, learner-centred approach continues to empower Māori learners and strengthen communities across South Auckland.



## Innovative Programme of the Year Tangata Whenua Te Hokinga Ki Uta



*Award accepted by Novi Marikena for Te Hokinga Ki Uta*

Delivered by Te Pā, Te Hokinga Ki Uta is a kaupapa Māori reintegration programme creating lasting change for individuals and whānau across Aotearoa. In just 18 months, the programme has supported around 200 participants through culturally grounded pathways that strengthen identity, belonging and community connection.

Combining housing support, clinical assessments, community reintegration services and tikanga-based guidance, the programme provides holistic support for people rebuilding their lives, including 501 deportees returning to Aotearoa.

What makes Te Hokinga Ki Uta particularly innovative is its focus on cultural reconnection. Participants are supported to rediscover their whakapapa, reconnect with whānau and strengthen their sense of identity as a foundation for long-term wellbeing and success. The programme demonstrates the power of kaupapa Māori approaches to create meaningful and sustainable change.



## Innovative Programme of the Year Tangata Tiriti Community Kaupapa



*Award accepted by Nigel Sutton & Anne Troy for Community Kaupapa*

Delivered by Wellington High School Community Education Centre, Community Kaupapa is reimagining how Adult and Community Education can be delivered in an urban environment. Recognising that traditional term-based courses can be difficult for busy learners to attend, the programme offers free, large-scale workshops featuring expert presenters and conference-quality learning experiences.

By removing fees and reducing barriers to participation, Community Kaupapa has significantly expanded access to learning opportunities. Workshop topics have included mental health, neurodiversity, conflict resolution, memory mastery, sustainability, healthy ageing and wellbeing.

The innovative model has attracted new learners while maintaining the quality and impact expected of Adult and Community Education. Developed in response to community need, Community Kaupapa has strengthened engagement, expanded participation and demonstrated a fresh approach to delivering lifelong learning in Aotearoa.



# Ako Workshop Sessions

## CultureQ | Technology Innovations Supporting Indigenous Communities



Steven Renata

Steven Renata (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Pakahi, Ngāti Rehia), Managing Director and co-owner of KIWA

Digital, shared his experience working at the intersection of culture, language, technology and business. Drawing on decades of experience in Māori enterprise and digital innovation, Steven spoke about how Indigenous communities can engage with new technologies while maintaining cultural authority and protecting valuable knowledge.

Steven encouraged participants to think differently about the pace of technological change. He compared artificial intelligence and emerging technologies to a large incoming wave. Communities can either move away from it or learn how to ride it and use its energy for positive outcomes. For Steven, the question is not whether technology will keep developing, but how Indigenous communities can help shape its direction.

A key part of his presentation focused on the work of KIWA Digital, a Māori-led creative and cultural technology company with an international reputation for supporting Indigenous language revitalisation and cultural storytelling. Its work includes te reo Māori versions of major international films and games, as well as language preservation tools used by Indigenous communities around the world. These projects show how technology can be used to strengthen cultural identity rather than weaken it.

Steven spoke about the importance of treating cultural knowledge as taonga. Language, pūrākau/stories, images, video and traditional knowledge all carry responsibilities. They need to be protected, respected and managed according to the wishes of the communities that hold them.

During the presentation attendees were introduced to CultureQ, a secure digital platform designed for Indigenous communities. CultureQ provides a culturally governed space where language resources, stories, images, artefacts and other knowledge can be stored and managed according to community protocols. Rather than placing control in the hands of external organisations or technology providers, the platform enables communities to decide who can access information, how it is used and how it is shared aka governance.

Steven stressed that technology should amplify Indigenous voices, not replace them. Digital tools can help communities tell their own stories, strengthen intergenerational knowledge sharing and make important cultural resources more

accessible to whānau and future generations. Throughout the workshop, Steven returned to a central message: technology itself is neither good nor bad. Its value depends on who controls it, how it is designed and whose voices are represented.

CultureQ – <https://www.cultureq.online/>

## AI and Digital Literacy: Feeling Lost? Remember That We Make the Road by Walking – Together



Leone Wheeler & Robbie Guevara

This ako workshop invited participants to bring their questions about AI and together explored how the growing international Learning Cities movement can play a role in not just advancing lifelong learning but helping adult educators learn about and engage with shaping AI relevant policies that can contribute to creating stronger, more connected and sustainable communities. Facilitated by Jose “Robbie” Roberto Guevara and Leone Wheeler, the session provided participants with practical examples and insights from Australia and highlighted how communities can place a learning-centred approach at the centre of social, economic and environmental development.

Robbie Guevara, President of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) shared the latest thinking that has emerged from his work across the adult education sector. Many participants were already familiar with Robbie’s AI| AI Diamond Framework, which he developed at the conclusion of the 2025 ACE Aotearoa conference. The AI Diamond Framework explored the relationship between Ancestral, Artificial, Andragogical and Academic Intelligences and argued for why we, as educators, need to tap in on our capacity for Adaptive Intelligence. Robbie explained how this Diamond Framework has since evolved into a Star Framework through the addition of Advocacy Intelligence, recognising that educators have an important role not only in understanding new technologies but also in advocating for equitable access, inclusion and lifelong learning opportunities. And as illustrated by the questions and discussions during the workshop, how we need to do this together.

Together with Leone Wheeler, Robbie connected these ideas to the global Learning Cities movement, which is championed by UNESCO’s Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). A learning cities approach recognises that learning

does not happen solely in classrooms or formal education settings. It seeks to create environments where learning is embedded throughout community life, supporting people of all ages to develop skills, participate in civic life, improve wellbeing and respond to changing social and economic conditions – much like the work we do each day in the ACE sector here in Aotearoa.

Leone shared her extensive experience supporting Learning Cities across Australia, the ASEAN region and internationally. Through her work, formerly as an academic, and now with the Australian Learning Communities Network (ALCN), she has helped communities develop collaborative approaches that bring together local government, education providers, businesses, community organisations and residents around a shared vision for lifelong learning.

Participants learned about several Australian cities that have successfully joined UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities, including communities in Western Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales. These cities have adopted learning-centred approaches to address local challenges, strengthen community participation and create opportunities for people to continue learning throughout their lives.

Leone discussed how a learning city approach can be adapted to different contexts, recognising that communities have unique strengths, needs and aspirations. Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model, successful Learning Cities build on local knowledge, partnerships and community leadership. These Learning Cities illustrate that once you have such a learning ecosystem in place which is translated into localised strategies and action plans, you can implement programmes that address current challenges, for example, digital literacy, navigating AI for families, business, communities and so forth.

## Safe, Ethical and Responsible AI Use in Education in Aotearoa New Zealand



Paula Gair

This ako workshop focused on the safe, ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence in education. Facilitated by Paula Gair from academyEX, the session provided participants with practical guidance on how AI can be used effectively in teaching, learning and organisational settings while ensuring that appropriate safeguards and governance processes are in place.

Drawing on her international experience in digital transformation, innovation and technology governance, Paula explored the opportunities and challenges presented by AI.

A key message throughout the workshop was that AI is no longer something educators can ignore. It is already influencing how people access information, create content



and solve problems. Rather than focusing solely on the technology itself, Paula encouraged participants to think about how AI can be used in ways that enhance human capability while remaining safe, ethical and aligned with organisational values.

The workshop examined the importance of AI governance within organisations. Paula stressed that ACE providers should be reviewing existing policies and considering whether they adequately address the opportunities and risks associated with AI. This includes ensuring that staff understand how AI tools are being used, what data is being shared and how decisions about AI adoption are made.

Participants also explored the importance of developing practical skills when working with AI tools. Paula demonstrated how the quality of outputs is heavily influenced by the quality of instructions provided to the system. To support this, she introduced the RACE prompting framework, a simple tool designed to help users create more effective prompts and achieve better results.

The framework encourages users to clearly define their Role, identify the Action they want completed, provide the necessary Context, and specify their Expectations for the final output. For example, rather than asking a general question, users can tell the AI who it should act as, what task it should perform, the background information it needs and the format or outcome required. Participants discussed how this structured approach can improve the quality, relevance and usefulness of AI-generated content.

Alongside practical exercises, the workshop addressed some of the limitations and risks associated with AI systems. Paula discussed issues such as bias, inaccurate information or "hallucinations", privacy concerns and the importance of maintaining a human-in-the-loop approach. Participants were encouraged to critically evaluate AI outputs rather than accepting them at face value and to recognise that professional judgement remains essential.

The workshop reinforced that successful AI adoption is about much more than technology. It requires clear governance, thoughtful policies, informed users and a commitment to ethical practice.



## NZSL, Deaf Learners and AI: Building Educator Confidence

Lara Draper's ako workshop provided an introduction to working with Deaf learners and understanding the role that New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) and emerging technologies can play in creating more inclusive learning environments.

As a member of the Deaf community and a leader at Deaf Aotearoa, Lara brought both professional expertise and lived experience to the session. She currently oversees Hauora and Employment services and leads Deaf Aotearoa's Adult and Community Education programme, which supports Deaf adults and seniors throughout Aotearoa.

The workshop was designed for educators who may have had little or no previous experience working with Deaf learners. Rather than focusing on technical aspects of AI or requiring prior knowledge of NZSL, the session encouraged participants to build their understanding of Deaf culture, communication and accessibility, while considering the opportunities and challenges that new technologies may present.

Lara provided an overview of the Deaf community in Aotearoa and highlighted the importance of recognising New Zealand Sign Language as one of New Zealand's official languages. Participants explored some of the barriers Deaf people can face when accessing education and services, and the role educators can play in creating learning environments that are welcoming, accessible and inclusive.

A key focus of the workshop was the growing conversation around artificial intelligence and accessibility. Lara discussed how AI-powered technologies, including sign language recognition, translation tools and other accessibility applications, have the potential to improve access for Deaf people. At the same time, she emphasised the importance of



Lara Draper

ensuring Deaf communities are actively involved in the design and development of these technologies.

Drawing on Deaf Aotearoa's involvement in the international SLxAI Summit, Lara highlighted the need for AI systems to reflect Deaf perspectives, values and culture. Participants were encouraged to think critically about how technology is developed and whose voices are represented in the process.

Lara's session was highly engaging for learners who may not have had any previous interaction with NZSL. She encouraged participants to seek out relationships to ensure better engagement and understanding with the Deaf community.

## AI for Storytellers: A Practical Media Toolkit

Carla Teng-Westergaard's ako workshop explored how artificial intelligence can be used as a practical tool to support storytelling, communications and media engagement without losing the human perspective that sits at the heart of every good story.

Drawing on nearly two decades of experience as a journalist, presenter and communications professional, Carla shared insights from both traditional media and emerging digital technologies.

The workshop examined how AI is increasingly being used across media organisations and newsrooms, and what this means for people working in communications, education and community engagement. While AI can help streamline processes and support content creation, Carla stressed that human judgement remains essential. Good storytelling still relies on critical thinking, accuracy and an understanding of audience needs.



Carla Teng-Westergaard

A key focus of the session was the importance of effective prompting. Carla introduced participants to her preferred framework, RCTO – Role, Context, Task and Output. The framework provides a structured approach to working with AI by clearly defining the role the AI should adopt, the concept being explored, the background information required, the task to be completed and the format of the desired output.

Participants learned how a well-constructed prompt can significantly improve the quality of AI-generated content. By providing clear instructions and constraints, users can move beyond generic responses and develop more targeted, useful outputs. Carla demonstrated how these techniques can be applied to story development, media pitches and professional communications.

The workshop also explored the importance of evaluating AI outputs rather than accepting them at face value. Carla encouraged participants to think like journalists when using AI, approaching every response with a healthy degree of scepticism. Fact-checking, verifying sources and reviewing content for accuracy remain critical responsibilities, particularly when developing stories intended for public audiences.

One practical technique Carla shared was the value of cross-checking work between different AI platforms. Participants discussed how outputs generated by one tool can be reviewed by another to identify gaps, inconsistencies or areas for improvement. While this can strengthen results, Carla emphasised that human oversight is still required throughout the process.

Carla reminded participants that information entered into AI systems may be stored and processed externally, making it important to avoid including confidential, sensitive or personal information in prompts. Understanding the limitations of AI and using it responsibly is an important part of maintaining trust and professionalism.

The workshop reinforced a simple message: AI can be a valuable collaborator, but it is not a replacement for human creativity, judgement or expertise. The most effective storytellers will be those who learn how to combine the efficiency of AI with the curiosity, critical thinking and integrity that underpin good communication.

## AI for Enhanced Teaching Project: The ELPNZ Approach to Ethical Gen-AI in Adult ESOL

Dr Jia Rong Yap's ako workshop explored how artificial intelligence can be used to support adult ESOL teaching while maintaining a strong focus on pedagogy, inclusion and professional judgement. Drawing on the work of English



Language Partners New Zealand (ELPNZ), the session examined how educators can engage with AI responsibly while keeping learner needs at the centre of their practice.

As Centre Manager of English Language Partners Rotorua and AI Project Advisor for ELPNZ, Dr Yap has been leading conversations about the ethical integration of generative AI into adult language education. Her work focuses particularly on supporting migrant and multilingual learners, including those with limited literacy, and helping educators navigate the opportunities and challenges presented by emerging technologies.

The workshop shared insights from ELPNZ's AI for Enhanced Teaching project, which was developed in response to growing interest from teachers across the organisation. A national survey found that many educators were already experimenting with AI tools but were often unsure where to begin or how to use them effectively. This reflected a theme that emerged throughout the conference: high levels of AI use combined with relatively low levels of trust and confidence.

In response, Dr Yap established an AI working group within ELPNZ, then developed and delivered a series of professional learning workshops focused on ethical AI use in ESOL settings. *"These workshops provide practical guidance for teachers while encouraging critical reflection on how AI can support, rather than replace, effective teaching practice."*

A key message from Dr Yap was that the conversation has shifted. Rather than asking whether educators should use AI at all, the more important question is how it can be used responsibly and well. She outlined three guiding principles that underpin ELPNZ's approach: teachers must remain central to the learning process, AI should be used to support inclusion and accessibility, and ethics must remain at the heart of all discussions and decision-making.

Dr Yap acknowledged that learners are already using AI tools, making it important for educators to understand both their potential and their limitations. She stressed that educators need to stay informed and develop the skills necessary to guide learners in using AI critically and responsibly.

The workshop highlighted the continuing importance of professional judgement. While AI can generate content quickly and assist with planning, resource development and personalisation, it cannot replace the expertise of a skilled educator. Dr Yap encouraged participants to think of AI as a cognitive partner rather than an authority, with humans remaining actively involved in reviewing, adapting and evaluating outputs.

The concept of "human in the loop" featured strongly throughout the session. By maintaining human oversight, educators can identify inaccuracies, address bias and ensure that AI-generated content is appropriate for their learners and learning contexts. Dr Yap noted that AI systems are often designed to be agreeable and can confidently present inaccurate information, making critical evaluation an essential skill.

Participants also discussed the difference between deliberate and incidental uses of AI. Deliberate use involves

carefully crafted prompts and purposeful application to improve teaching and learning outcomes, while incidental use may involve smaller tasks such as refining language or adjusting the tone of written content. Both have value, but effective use requires thoughtful decision-making and clear educational goals.

Throughout the workshop, Dr Yap returned to the idea that AI is a powerful tool but not a magical solution. While it can increase efficiency and support educators in their work, it does not transform learning on its own. Learners still need connection, encouragement, pastoral support and meaningful relationships with their teachers.

## Using AI to Support Teaching and Learning

Educator and AI consultant Jam Mayer led two practical workshops focused on helping tutors to use artificial intelligence to support lesson planning, content creation and administration.

With more than 20 years' experience in digital strategy and education, Jam works with organisations across Aotearoa to develop AI workflows and automation systems. Her workshops focused on practical applications that tutors can use immediately in their teaching practice.

The first workshop introduced participants to NotebookLM, a Google AI tool that allows users to upload documents and generate learning resources from existing content. Jam demonstrated how tutors can use the platform to create

lesson outlines, study guides, summaries, slide presentations and even podcast-style learning resources. Rather than creating materials from scratch, tutors can use existing course content and quickly adapt it for different learners and learning contexts.

A key message throughout the session was that AI should be viewed as a tool to support educators rather than replace them. Jam encouraged participants to think critically about AI-generated content and to always check information for accuracy.

"AI can get you to about 80 percent," she explained. "Humans are still needed to review, edit and make sure the final content is right."

Privacy and security were also important topics of discussion. Jam highlighted the risks associated with free AI platforms and encouraged participants to understand how their information and data may be used when signing up to these services.

The second workshop focused on using AI tools such as Claude and ChatGPT Projects to streamline lesson planning and tutor administration. Participants explored how a well-designed "mega prompt" can help tutors adapt existing content for learners with different needs, abilities and learning levels.

Rather than recreating resources each time, tutors can build a set of instructions that AI can follow to generate tailored versions of lesson materials, case studies and activities. Jam demonstrated how a single piece of content could be adapted for multiple audiences within minutes.

The workshop also explored ways AI can assist with the administrative tasks that often take up significant teaching time. Participants looked at how AI can help draft learner feedback, prepare reports, summarise evaluation forms and manage routine communications.

Throughout both sessions, the emphasis remained on practical application.



## Circles of Knowledge: Learning Through Community and Relationship

Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga's ako workshop explored the power of collaborative learning and reflection through the Circles of Knowledge project, an ACE Aotearoa research initiative investigating the effectiveness of Teaching and Learning Circles (TLCs) in Adult and Community Education settings.

The project, funded through an Ako Aotearoa Research and Innovation Grant, is examining how Teaching and Learning Circles can support ACE educators to strengthen their teaching practice, share knowledge and ultimately improve outcomes for learners. Led by Dr Chu-Fuluifaga, alongside ACE Aotearoa's Tai Samaeli and Jennifer Leahy, the research is currently being piloted with Far North REAP and Hagley Adult Literacy Centre.

The workshop highlighted the central idea behind Teaching and Learning Circles: that educators learn best when they learn together. Rather than relying solely on formal professional development opportunities, TLCs create structured spaces where educators can share experiences, discuss challenges, reflect on practice and learn from one another in a supportive environment.

Drawing on early insights from the project, Dr Chu-Fuluifaga discussed how learning within Adult and Community Education is often deeply relational. Knowledge is not simply transferred from teacher to learner but is created collectively through conversation, reflection and shared experience. This approach recognises that learners and educators both bring valuable knowledge, skills and perspectives to the learning environment.

A key theme throughout the presentation was the concept of knowledge being grounded in community, culture and relationships. Dr Chu-Fuluifaga described how circles of dialogue create opportunities for people to contribute their lived experiences and draw on the wisdom of their communities. These spaces support learning that is based on trust, reciprocity and mutual respect, while also helping to strengthen confidence, belonging and connection.

The workshop also explored how Circles of Knowledge reflect forms of ancestral intelligence. Learning is informed not only by contemporary educational practice but also by intergenerational knowledge, cultural values and community experience. Participants considered how these approaches align strongly with many Adult and Community Education settings, where relationships and local knowledge are often central to successful learning experiences.

Throughout the session, participants were reminded that some of the most effective learning happens through connection with others. While new technologies and innovations continue to shape education, the Circles of Knowledge project reinforces the enduring importance of relationships, shared inquiry and community wisdom as foundations for meaningful learning.



Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga and Helen Lomax

## Reconnecting Through Craft: Ancestral Intelligence in Men's Sheds New Zealand

Helen Lomax's ako workshop introduced participants to her PhD research exploring the role of Men's Sheds in supporting learning, wellbeing and community connection across Aotearoa New Zealand.

While Men's Sheds are often recognised as places where practical skills are shared and projects are completed, Helen's research takes a broader view, examining these spaces as important sites of adult learning and knowledge exchange. Her work explores how craft, storytelling and mentoring create opportunities for men to connect, learn from one another and strengthen their sense of belonging.

A key theme of the presentation was the concept of ancestral intelligence. Helen discussed how knowledge is often passed between generations through relationships, shared experiences and practical activities. Within Men's Sheds, skills and traditions are not simply taught but are embedded within conversations, stories and ways of working together. These interactions help preserve knowledge while also fostering connection and mutual support.

Drawing on Indigenous perspectives and understandings of whānau ora, the research highlights the importance of community-led learning environments that value lived experience and collective knowledge. Participants explored how Men's Sheds can provide spaces where dignity, purpose and resilience are strengthened through meaningful participation and contribution.

The workshop encouraged attendees to reflect on how Adult and Community Education can better recognise and integrate ancestral intelligence within learning programmes. Rather than focusing solely on formal teaching approaches, the session highlighted the value of relational learning, cultural knowledge and community connections as powerful foundations for lifelong learning.

Helen's presentation offered an important reminder that learning takes place in many different settings and forms. Through craft, conversation and shared experience, Men's Sheds demonstrate how community-based learning can strengthen wellbeing, foster belonging and support the ongoing exchange of knowledge across generations.

## Tūhono Impact – Showing the Difference We Make: Simple, Shared Ways to Understand Impact

This ako workshop focused on how Adult and Community Education providers can demonstrate the difference they make in the lives of learners, whānau and communities.

Facilitated by Dr Rosie Gallen, the session explored practical ways to notice, gather and communicate impact without creating unnecessary reporting burdens for providers. The workshop began with a simple but important idea: when the difference we make is not shared, it can remain invisible.

ACE providers see change every day. Learners grow in confidence, build connections, keep participating, develop skills and take meaningful next steps. But these changes are not always captured or communicated in ways that others can understand and value.

The workshop encouraged providers to start small, use what they already have and add one simple method only if it helps. Rather than building complex reporting systems, participants explored how everyday evidence, such as learner voice, tutor observations, attendance patterns, reflections and stories, can help show both measurement and meaning.

A key part of the session was the introduction of He Māra Mahi Tahī – Our Shared Garden, a Tūhono Impact framework that helps organisations think about impact as a living cycle. The framework begins with Ngā Kākano, or seedlings, which represent purpose and why the mahi exists. Ngā Pakiaka, or roots, help organisations define what “good” looks like in their own context. Rā Putiputi, or sunflowers, focus on how change is noticed and measured. Te Puoto, the watering can, represents learning, reflection and adaptation. Te Kete Hauhake, the harvest basket, brings together the outcomes, evidence and stories that can be shared with others.

Importantly, the model is circular rather than linear. It recognises that learning, improvement and impact are ongoing. Each part of the garden supports the others.

By the end of the workshop, participants had tested practical tools to help them tell fuller, more meaningful stories about their work. The session reinforced that impact is not only found in numbers. It is also seen in confidence, connection, participation, learner voice and the small shifts that matter deeply in people’s lives.



Dr Rosie Gallen

## Thank You

**ACE Conference and Hui Fono would not be the same without the generous support of our valued suppliers and partners.**

A special thank you to Jessica McMillan and Ben Marr of Āio Media, our videography partner, for capturing the energy, learning and connections that make the ACE Aotearoa flagship events so special. Their high-quality storytelling helps preserve the event and share its impact with a wider audience.

We also acknowledge Jo Moore, who has been photographing both events for many years. Her ability to capture authentic moments and the spirit of the event is always appreciated.

Thank you to the Office of the Ombudsman for attending the conference, engaging with delegates and sharing valuable information and insights. We particularly appreciated the presentation from Alex Schröder, General Manager Outreach and Engagement at the Office of the Ombudsman.

Thank you to and the Electoral Commission for joining us at Hui Fono and sharing information on the vital role they play.

Literacy Waitākere also had tables at ACE Conference showcasing their literacy books available for purchase.

We are grateful to our partners and supporters who help make ACE Conference and Hui Fono possible.



# ACE News

## Supporting Neurodiverse Learners Workshop

Arrowtown – Tuesday, 14 July 2026

Neurodiversity presents itself in many ways. Understanding how to support your learners can be challenging. In this workshop, we will demystify neurodiversity. We'll break down the labels and simplify the topic, so you can effectively support your ākonga. Together, we'll explore practical strategies to help your neurodiverse learners overcome challenges and achieve their full potential.

**Date:** Tuesday, 14 July 2026

**Time:** 9:30 am – 4:00 pm

**Register on the ACE Aotearoa Website:**

<https://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/what-we-do-ace-workshops/supporting-neurodiverse-learners>

### What You'll Learn:

- Key types of neurodiversity
- Understanding sensory and cognitive differences
- Myths and misconceptions – cutting through the misinformation
- Challenges faced by neurodiverse learners
- Strategies for supporting learner success
- Hot Seat: Ask Me Anything – no question is off limits!

## Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga

September 7–13, 2026

Our theme for 2026 is ***Finding Our Voice – Ko tōku reo, ko tōku ohooho!*** (My language or voice is my awakening power).

Adult Learners' Week He Tangata Mātauranga is a UNESCO initiative celebrated in more than 40 countries. We are part of an international movement dedicated to self-determination through learning.

ACE Aotearoa has celebrated this festival across the motu for more than 25 years. It's a chance to showcase the learning on offer in our communities, acknowledge the achievements of learners who have returned to learning, and have fun.

Adult learning can take place in many different spaces and at many different levels of the community. Every week, thousands of adults are learning together in places like libraries, community centres, church halls, schools and marae. Through our annual festival, we want people to know that learning is joyful, directly linked to wellbeing, and even more powerful when we learn with others – building relationships and strengthening community as we go.

### The aims of Adult Learners' Week are to:

- Celebrate learner success
- Raise the profile of community education and its benefits
- Encourage learning and make it accessible to all

Visit our website to find out more and how you can participate.

<https://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/events/adult-learners-week-he-tangata>

## Noticeboard

### Update our Mailing List & Send in Your News!

ACE Aotearoa currently sends out hard copies of the quarterly newsletter to those on our mailing list. But did you know the newsletter is also available on our website? If you want to save paper and postage costs and just download the newsletter from the website, then please email Viv Reti at ACE Aotearoa: [Vivienne.Reti@aceaotearoa.org.nz](mailto:Vivienne.Reti@aceaotearoa.org.nz) and we will remove your hard copy subscription.

If you have any stories you would like to share, please email the editor:

[jackie@cherryred.co.nz](mailto:jackie@cherryred.co.nz)

### Stay up with the Play!

Membership of ACE Aotearoa offers significant benefits. You have access to our carefully curated and well-thought-through suite of courses that are ACE focused. You receive regular updates on the sector and initiatives that are changing the way we work; you can attend the annual ACE conference, and your support helps us to deliver the advocacy and policy advice that keeps our sector strong.

The cost of membership is extremely affordable, and your support enables us to support you.

You might also want to share membership benefits with other organisations and encourage them to join our movement.

To join please visit our website

<https://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/who-we-are/membership>