

World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education

Conference Report
2022



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

Overview

The World Indigenous Peoples' Conference in Education (WIPCE) was held this year on the traditional lands of the Kurna Nation, the original people of the Adelaide plains, at Tarndanya (place of the red kangaroo), Adelaide, Australia. WIPCE is the largest and most diverse Indigenous education forum in the world. The EI delegation to the Conference consisted of over 70 education unionists, attending both in-person and online. More than 2,300 delegates from 17 countries attended the Conference this year. Education International and our affiliates thank the Kurna people for welcoming us onto their traditional lands and pay respects to Elders past and present.

The WIPCE is a triennial event held in different places around the world. Since its establishment in 1987, participants are Indigenous leaders, teachers and academics, and their allies, who celebrate and share diverse cultures, traditions, knowledge, and strategies for Indigenous Peoples' education. EI and its member organisations have attended the conference since its first edition and use it as a space to liaise, engage, and strategise with members on EI's future work fighting for the rights of Indigenous Peoples in and through education.

This year's theme Indigenous Education Sovereignty: Our Voices ... Our Futures, with four subthemes of Sovereignty, Voice, Youth and Futures. These themes drove the main programmatic focus of topics discussed, with international perspectives presented. Language revival, research methodologies, and decolonisation were other prominent topics. The hybrid programme consisted of 7 keynote speakers, 380 seminars, yarning circles, and workshops – which spans across 16 different sessions each day, as well as cultural events. Speakers range from high level officials to union leaders, to activists, to classroom teachers, to researchers, and more. Two Knowledge and Sharing Circles focused on the Revision and Revitalisation of the Coolangatta Statement and Strategies to restore and revitalise Indigenous languages.

“While we were small in number among the 2,300 delegates (including 900 international delegates) we made our presence known! Union proud and union strong.”

Kevin Bates | AEU Federal Secretary



Participants

EI members from around the world joined the conference in-person and online. The following organisations were known to have delegates attend WIPCE:

1. Australian Education Union (AEU)
2. Independent Education Union (IEU) - Australia
3. National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) - Australia
4. Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA) Te Wehengarua - New Zealand
5. NZEI Te Rio Roa - New Zealand
6. Fiji Teachers' Association (FTA)
7. Solomon Islands National Teachers Association
8. Vanuatu Teachers' Union (VTU)
9. Cook Islands Teachers Union
10. Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of British Columbia (CAUT)-Canada
11. Alberta Teachers' Association (CTF/FCE) -Canada
12. The Alliance of Concerned Teachers' (ACT) - The Philippines
13. Centrale de Syndicats de Quebec (CSQ) - Canada

EI Engagement at WIPCE 2022

Social Reception

The EI delegation was welcomed to Adelaide with a reception co-hosted by Education International, the Australian Education Union, the Independent Education Union, and the National Tertiary Education Union, which created a space to build solidarity and community in preparation for the Conference. Welcoming speeches were given by each of the local unions as well as EI.

"WIPCE provides a space for teachers, union leaders, and activists, to strengthen our collective network and knowledge at the global level. With this network and knowledge, we bring back innovation to our unions, communities, and classrooms."

Raymond Basilio | EI Executive Board Member; Secretary-General ACT-Philippines

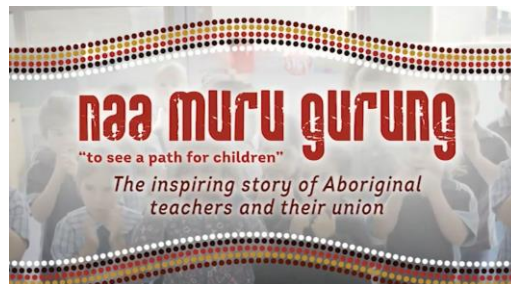


EI Member-led Seminars

EI members led five engaging seminars through the Conference focusing on the importance of Indigenous structures within the union, inclusive education, and various collective bargaining efforts to safeguard the rights of Indigenous educators more strongly, amongst other topics.

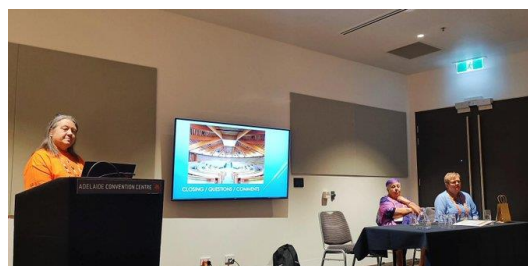
naa muru gurung - to see a path for children Documentary Film - The inspiring story of Aboriginal Teachers and their union

The New South Wales Teachers' Federation (NSWTF) hosted a session on the documentary film "naa muru gurung - To see a path for children". The documentary presents the inspiring story of the many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Federation members past and present, who campaigned, supported, and advocated for Aboriginal education, the rights of children, and inclusion of the First Peoples in the early years of the Australian public education system. In 2019, created lesson plans were created to accompany the documentary. More information about the documentary can be seen here in English: [Home | Naamurugurung](#)



Union-Based approaches to operationalizing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of British Columbia Indigenous Peoples: Honoring the dignity & cultural integrity of the Sásm̓

The Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of British Columbia, affiliated to CAUT, hosted a session on union-based approaches to operationalising the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, sharing good practices and current struggles in putting the Declaration into practice. This included addressing challenges to Indigenous academics acquiring tenure, affirmative action and more equitable hiring practices to improve the number of Indigenous professors and staff, amongst others. A key lever for change has been the creation of the Decolonization, Reconciliation, and Indigenization Subcommittee in the union.



Staff Collective Agreements vs. Policy – Increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment across the Australian Higher Education Sector

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) hosted a session entitled “Staff Collective Agreements vs. Policy: Increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment across the Australian Higher Education Sector”. NTEU leadership and colleagues presented the work of the NTEU in negotiating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment claims and other entitlements, such as cultural/ceremonial leave and language allowance, into Staff University Collective Agreements. These claims incorporate binding targets that can be enforced if required, providing a greater level of responsibility for universities compared to policy alone.



Leading Aboriginal Education in Your School Centre for Professional Leading NSWTF

The New South Wales Teachers’ Federation also hosted a session where participants and presenters shared their insights on implementing the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Policy. The seminar focused on strategies for building understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Islander students, histories, and communities. It explored personal and professional reflections, links to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, policies and declarations, the use of student data, making connections and building relationships in school to improve educational outcomes of students.



Progressing Our Tiriti (Treaty) Relationship - The New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association Te Wehengarua experience

The New Zealand Post Primary Teachers’ Association (PPTA) Te Wehengarua hosted a session on “Progressing Our Tiriti (Treaty) Relationship”. PPTA Te Wehengarua has a proud history of bicultural partnership with tanga te whenua Māori (first nations people in Aotearoa New Zealand), evidenced by the fact that the union has included “to uphold and advance Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi)” as one of its three constitutional objectives. Moreover, the organisation has a Māori Executive (Te Huarahi) and hosts an annual Māori Teachers’ Conference. Despite the union providing a great example of Māori involvement in the

organisation, a feeling emerged in recent years, from members, both Māori and non-Māori, that further progress needed to be made, so they could not only survive but thrive as a bicultural organisation. The seminar explored their journey, including the policy changes made over the last 5 years to embed the new position of Māori Vice-president in union leadership and Te Kaihautū (Māori staff in the policy team) to elevate the union to the next level in its Tiriti partnership journey. The PPTA Te Wehengarua Maori Vice-President Vincent Hapi (Tainui iwi) reflected, “We’ve come too far not to go further, we’ve done too much not to do more.”



Participant Reflections

Below are some reflections from union participants:

Australian Education Union: “It was imperative that there were representatives from Australia’s largest education Union at WIPCE as many of the educational settings that were presented were based in Government/Public/Residential schools. The Unions have a huge role to play in ensuring that the rights to a complete education for our Indigenous students stays accessible, affordable and relevant. I would like to see the AEU engage more with our sister Unions and their Indigenous members and delegates in the countries that were represented at WIPCE as our challenges are universal, so too will be the solutions and more so in great unity with comrades from all points of the globe.”

“I think there are some interesting tensions in ensuring Indigenous communities maintain self-determination in creating, developing and maintaining education systems that are culturally appropriate and how that works with the union’s stance on public education. There needs to be space in public education for Indigenous communities to contribute to the education their children are receiving in public schools.”

Alliance of Concerned Teachers: “My most important takeaway from the conference is on the idea of what kind of education program do we really intend to develop for Indigenous communities. I was taken aback by the speaker from Europe where he talked about how education was used to subjugate them and take advantage of his ancestors. This strikes hard for me because he is correct - that we should think first if the education program that we are

putting in is really for them or is it for us - for us to make them think the way we do or for us to push them to take the kind or way living that we do and for them to totally abandon their own. It is not only about constructing schools, teaching them to read and write - it is first and foremost about a liberating education that addresses their needs. They should be involved in every step of the way! It is at this point that I think our Union program of assisting teachers in the Indigenous schools be altered. Yes, we provide them training on teaching but we should always be mindful that this will not alter their own ways of teaching and that this will not have any alteration or negative impact to their language and culture. Culturally-sensitive and respective programs must be implemented.

Fijian Teachers' Association: "I've learnt a lot of new ideas. The traditional values of Indigenous people around the world. Our roots, our languages and respecting each other's culture. I will take this back to my union as my union is the only Indigenous Association in my country. We need to re-strategise so we could maintain what is really ours. This can also be taken into the classrooms where students are to learn the importance of our tradition, culture and to preserve our identity with its languages... We are strategising so we could celebrate the World Indigenous day in 2023. We are going to include in our national budgets also in the Fijian Teachers Women's Network Strategic Plan. I was the only one represented so I have to make sure that more delegates from FTA are represented in the upcoming WIPCE conference. This will enable the ITAUKEI in Fiji to showcase the importance of our traditional rights."

PPTA Te Wehengarua: "WIPCE plays a pivotal role in the global education community, represented by the many indigenous peoples who are the knowledge keepers. This was captured in WIPCE 2022 providing both a primacy of purpose and of place, where national movements of individuals and organisations dedicated to the design and development of culturally affirming and intellectually enriching education for Indigenous peoples in their current climate of politics and education. The conference attracted Indigenous education experts, practitioners, scholars, students, organisations and communities by First Nation educators around the world. The keynote speakers and presentations over each day represented the actions and aspirations of indigenous peoples and nations growing capability, capacity, and resources to advance culture, language, and wellbeing."

"My three key takeaways were: multiple workshops on decolonising the curriculum; being able to keep an eye on the well-funded Hawaiian charter schools movement; and catching up with Council of Pacific Education colleagues for the first time since covid broke. Bring on WIPCE 2025 in Aotearoa!"

Vanuatu Teachers' Union: "It was my first WIPCE and I have learnt a lot from the different speakers and sessions that I attended. From any part of the world, we come from, we need to teach culture in schools because that is where we come from. EI can continue to advocate for this program and can include unions in the Pacific with any research, webinars and meetings



before the next WIPCE 2025. The Vanuatu Teachers Union is not planning any events with regards to the right of Indigenous People, but attending WIPCE 2022 it has given me an opportunity to see and understand how important this program is and I have some plans for 2023 Union strategic plan to insert lessons from this event...The WIPCE 2025 needs participants from the pacific unions after a number of participants from the union during WIPCE 2022."

Conclusion

In the closing ceremony, it was estimated that over 5 million words were shared during WIPCE, and it is salient to consider how these words are transmitted to other EI members who could not attend WIPCE 2022. Representation and participation of EI membership at WIPCE continues to be a highlight and important moment on the triennial calendar. Connecting, collaborating, and learning with other teachers, unions, researchers, and activists at an international Indigenous conference is a key moment for agenda setting and reflection.

Items for follow-up:

- Follow up with presenters as potential contributors to Indigenous Peoples' caucus, webinars or relevant network meetings
- Engagement with member organisations to consider action prior to/at the WIPCE 2025
- Consider how EI and it's members can be involved in the revision and/or revitalization process of the Coolangatta Statement, including a celebration of the 25-year anniversary in 2024
- Explore the ways in which the rights of Indigenous Peoples can be a topic of focus at the 2023 EI Higher Education Conference

WIPCE 2025

The next WIPCE will be hosted by the Te Ara Poutama, Faculty of Māori Development, at AUT, Tāmaki makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand in November 2025. Save the date and follow [this website](#) for more details.

View this short [video](#) for the 2022 WIPCE closing ceremony and handover from Australia to Aotearoa New Zealand.

EI looks forward to attending and engaging at WIPCE 2025!

