



AUSTRALASIAN DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION COMMUNITY Newsletter July 2015

INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION CONFERENCE NELSON AEOTOREOA/NZ 2015

All IDECs are different and 2015 had its own unique character. The organizers, Verena, Tania and the other members of the Ako-ā-Rongo Trust hoped to give space and voice to Indigenous and young people and this was very evident in the participants from 30 different countries. There were young people from such diverse groups as Navajo and Hopi Nations, Australian Indigenous people, Cyprus, Venezuela, a strong presence from Taiwan, Hong Kong and China – as well as many of our old and new friends in the Democratic Education Community from Japan, Korea, Israel, UK and US, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Nepal, Finland ... the list goes on.

Central to this diversity was the heart of the Maori youth and culture which permeated the whole event.

8th April 2015

THE JOURNEY

A long day! I arrived in Nelson NZ around 7.00pm and was met and warmly welcomed by my host family and taken to their home. It was great to meet Bea, Grace and Juli from Kinma enroute and to know that that they would be part of IDEC2015. Border business was so congested with so many people flying all around the world. Eventually I reached

the gate lounge and waited and waited. I thought I had plenty of time and had a wander and next moment I was paged. I thought how could that be? Anyway one of the officials found me and escorted me as last person on board!! This also happened to Juli in Auckland, so I did not feel so silly!

Auckland airport was awkward in its transit system. I had asked at Sydney if I needed to collect luggage and they said no, so I didn't. I should have! A very cute sniffer dog saved me that disaster! It would not leave my daypack alone so I had to empty it completely to prove that I didn't have any fruit or drugs, just the lingering irresistible smells of the banana, the apple and mandarin I'd had during the day! I asked about the luggage and they said I needed to collect it so they had to escort me back to the carousel and then back into the bio security area! Eventually we all arrived safely at Nelson Airport and considered ourselves lucky when we heard the stories of other people's delays, cancelation of flights etc due to weather.

Thursday 9th April 2015

OPENING CEREMONY

The gathering was based at the Whakatu Marae and Founders Park.

We were all introduced to the Whakatua Marae at a traditional pōwhiri, which is a moving and evocative welcome. A large group of us had missed the Wednesday pōwhiri at the Marae, so we had to have a second pōwhiri on Thursday morning. We were fortunate to have Dr. Rangimarie Turuki Rose Pere, Fire Rose, from the North Island as part of our group so the traditional calling and speeches created an amazing atmosphere and also on a practical level, enabled us to participate in the meals and events that were held on the marae and for those who were also staying and sleeping there. More than 200 people all slept together for many of the nights. We then gathered for the official opening which was full of Maori spirit, music and ceremony and the inclusive creating of the IDEC 2015 symbol shown in the photograph.

Keynote Speakers

We had many and varied keynote speakers. These are some that I managed to attend Dr. Rangimarie Turuki Rose Pere, Rangimarie Parata, Kate Lipkis (Council in Schools), Birgitte Sundvall (the founder of the Alfa-Pedagogik School in Sweden), Yaacov Hecht, Education Cities, Justo Menez Aramburu and Ana Yris Guzman Torres (from Nuestra Escuelita, Our Little School), Ann Qi (from isckool in Shanghai), Gail Thomas (from Soka University in USA) leading a discussion about Education Beyond Jobs, and Nikki Harre leading us in The Infinite Game. Kageki Asakura (Japan), Tae Wook Ha (South Korea) and Reshef Burde (Israel) all spoke about the situation in their countries where new laws about education will have major effects on the health of democratic education. There was strong youth participation and as with all IDECs it was difficult to attend all sessions so this report is just a taste.



Dr. RANGIMARIE TURUKI

ROSE PERE, Fire Rose, is a Maori elder who has been involved in education, community development and language revitalization for the past 40 years. Rose gave a passionate, challenging, cheeky and humourous session! She led us through a journey of sharing the ONENESS of the eight dimensions of total well-being and development. The energy is the Octopus, whose legs represent the 8 Iwi/Tangata Whenua. (Shown in the first photo.)

This model of learning and teaching has been transmitted from the ancient ancestors Nga Potiki and Nga Uri- A- Maui, who have always lived here in New Zealand as Peace- keepers, and intermarried with other ancestors who came to New Zealand in the Great Fleet from the Pacific Islands approximately a thousand years ago.

Some ideas that stuck with me in Rose's talk were

- Every day is perfect! Never take the day for granted.
- Always make sure the canoe stays upright,
- The Octopus has three hearts and

eight tentacles.

- Celebrate who you are. Love yourself. Don't try to be someone else.
- We are all brothers and sisters.
- Presence of the breath of our divine source is unconditional love.
- Teach, learn and share together.
- Link in to earth mother.
- Te Wheke
- Stand in our own tradition!
- Children know Mana. You are a unique individual with your own power.
- The Body is sacred. It is the micro of the macro. A small microcosm!
- The Mind is very powerful.
- We all get sustenance from around the world. We are One huge family!
- The hidden mother is the intellectual part of us. She has two children. Two sides of the brain. Whole brain!
- Maori express our emotions rather than repressing.
- No swear words in Maori. So she has to turn to English for these!
- The one that really struck me is Warrior stance. We have to stand strong for what is right. Hakka gives energy.
- Uphold traditions on the marae.

Friday 10th April

RANGIMARIE PARATA

CHAIR, TE PĀ O RĀKAIHAUTŪ,

AOTEAROA/NZ gave a keynote about the 21st Century Pa Wananga

Learning Village

Te Ahikaarua

The Learning Village for the whole whanau (family) really began in 1993 when some friends and families were

singing and dancing together and they started having their own families and set up the Nokia Te Ao in 2002 as a different kind of childcare. They found an early childhood person who could speak Maori.

This grew into a small school for young children. Māori was spoken all day and they generally had a holistic approach. After 22 years, in response to a need, it is still performing and an Inter- generational thing is happening. They wanted quality education in the Maori world. When the school started in 2009 the important things were one curriculum for the whole of life and to taken down the walls. The school was necessary because Maori education was in crisis. The statistics were and are appalling, nearly half the kids are out of the system. Completion rates at different levels of education are very low. Maori kids were being damaged and not all kids have the support of whanau. “We needed to shift the paradigm. (Ken Robinson). Our kids are our responsibility and we wanted to normalize their lives.” All good things take time! She spoke about how they are trying to keep their vision while dealing with bureaucratic constraints. They were just about to apply for special character and then the earthquake happened so the process was stalled. They decided to still apply but they experienced reverse nepotism and the proposal sat in the bureaucracy for three years.

In 2014, after many setbacks, the school was finally approved and they have become a public school of special character with buildings etc. The school opened with 92 kids on 26th Jan 2015 on a temporary site. It is Designated of Special Character School Section 156 It is devoted to educational success for the whole whanau; It provides seamless lifelong learning,

deeply embedding Maori values and stories and places. Like Ko Rakaihautu Te nTakatai, the goal is to send out to the world explorers, navigators and leaders who are able to critically think, Take action, Step up and Lead.

Whanau who can determine their own future.

Our Stories, our knowledge are central to curriculum, Maori is the language of choice in the playground. Academic sporting cultural brilliance is the norm. They want to stand with pride, passion and purpose, with connection to place. They want to reset expectations, and restore cultural foundations.

Don't teach me about my culture but use your culture to teach me.

Some of the key differences are what she calls tea towel tanga, our stories and our knowledge are all relevant and it does not look like a school.

BIRGITTE SUNDVALL is the founder of the Alfa-Pedagogik School in Sweden.



She shared with us her insights about the place of neuroscience in our understanding of how we learn and her unique learning system which has helped many children with learning difficulties to learn more effectively, and proven that in

a short time they can learn things that for years seemed impossible. Birgitta's method is based in findings by neuroscientists such as **Rolf Ekman, Marian Diamond, and Tore Theorell** which show that effective learning processes happen when the brain operates in the Alpha wave frequency and experiences positive, stimulating feelings. Conversely, negative feelings impair learning. She spoke of her own experience when she was struggling at school and the change that occurred when a friend helped her and this she now recognises as enabling her to be in a different state. Birgitta teaches by stimulating a child's senses, creating a harmonious learning environment, evoking positive emotions, engaging the brain, using breathing exercises to evoke the Alpha wave state, and providing variation between right and left hemisphere functions and processes. Neuroscience tells us so much. As long as we live we can always develop the brain. The current focus on brain plasticity seems to support many of these ideas. Many functions must synchronise. The left part of brain is regarded as analytic, the right as holistic.

Most teachers work from the analytical and need to integrate the holistic so that we can solve problems, finds solutions and create new ideas.

Someone good at maths would see the number 368 makes a picture and relates to life. Some of the practical ways to reach the optimum state for learning are to use different frequencies for ears and eyes. Look on the pupils with a deeper, wider perspective. Molecules of emotions and recognize that emotions affect every function in the body. We have peptides which the cells take up. If the negative peptides go to the brain we can't learn. Relaxing, Breathing are key.

www.alfa-skolan.se

KATE LIPKIS

Council in Schools, OJAI Foundation USA

Kate's describes her work

"Council helps students relax into the role of listening and speaking "from the heart" and reinforces the notion that, with good intention, a different, more compassionate school community is possible.

Some of the key messages I heard were that the COUNCIL

- Is a circle, a centre
- is beyond right and wrong
- engages, is hands on and heartfelt
- is a process not a programme
- is storytelling not therapy
- is a community building practice
- values stories not opinions and is a simple but not easy process
- has a way to open- a dedication
- has a talking piece
- has four intentions
- To listen from the heart and pay attention
- Speak from the heart and be authentic
- Speak spontaneously
- Speak leanly
- An acknowledging expression
- There has to be a way to close the circle, to witness and to ensure confidentiality.

YOUTH LEAD SESSIONS

The youth program was varied and wonderfully creative and with so much going on it is impossible to record all that was happening. This is just a taste of some that I was able to attend.

Tamariki meeting

At this IDEC we had many young volunteers, parents and families who had had little or no experience of Democratic Education, so the workshop about School

Meetings at Tamariki in Christchurch drew a large crowd of diverse and questioning participants. There was a large group of students from the school (primary ages) attending the conference and they were supposed to hold a meeting but they were having so much fun in the youth space, which was full of art and games and music and amazing performance and circus work etc, that they made a decision to continue on with the various other activities they were enjoying! So the adults held an improvised meeting and showcased the central role it plays in the daily life of the students and the school.

The students from the **Humanity School** in Taiwan presented a drama portraying the difference between conventional schooling in Taiwan and that of their school. As well as showing the stark contrast between the pressures and demands placed on young people and their desire to participate and make decisions about their own lives, the whole drama was scripted in English and even those who could not speak English learnt their parts so well. They also presented an indigenous dance from Taiwan, which had some very similar characteristics to the Maori dances.



Some of the young people from the **Navajo Nation** have been learning how to use technology to tell their stories and they shared some wonderful short films that they had produced. Their honesty and humour even in the face of many of

the difficulties in their lives meant they had captured some moving and original moments.

The young **Australia Indigenous students** from Perth, Brisbane and Cairns led the international group in a photographic protest about the Western Australian Government's proposed plan to close many of the remote communities.



The young men from the **Holistic School** in Taiwan spoke with candour and insight of the things that happened in their lives that made a difference to them and the changes they made once they started to attend the school:

- Ricky: How I started to make decisions
- Will: What I learned on the School Council
- Martin: Finding out who I am
- Wei Huai: What the school gives us is freedom
- Gee: Why we go mountain climbing



A Maori immersion school also performed for us and showcased their pride in their culture and traditions and determination to live full and productive lives.

Saturday 11th April

YAACOV HECHT

Education 2.0

Game Changer Education

History of IDEC

Yaacov articulated that the major goal is learning to live in a democratic society.

Democratic Education is a question not an answer, a Learning community not a knowing community.

A traditional education system pushes individuals inside the box. He now questions whether it is a box or a pyramid and what is your position in it. Do we recognize that the pyramid gets inside us? Yaacov spoke of the concept of Disruptive Innovation. He emphasized the need to find your element, your talent and make it your passion. When learning is in areas of strength, emotional development is supported. We need to take everyone out of the box and become network classrooms. Creating knowledge must be fun. Learning begins when you sit with someone with whom you disagree. He encourages us to perceive the city as one big school where everyone is both a teacher and a learner with a common goal. Yaacov was again encouraging thinking about the big picture and developing co-operation between education systems and public organizations.

Some of the practical tools Yaacov spoke about include:

MapMe

Skill share

Chalkie

MOOC which stands for Massive Open Online Courses

He was very excited about the prospects

that we can learn anything from anyone, anywhere.

GAIL THOMAS from Soka University in USA ran a workshop
Education Beyond Jobs



This was a wide ranging discussion about tertiary education and prospects in the countries represented in the group and the problems facing young people now in finding work.

91% of US students in public schools
51% of these are poor, from low socio economic situations.

How can we change this given that only a small percentage has access to alternative education.

The wellbeing of students is threatened. Statistics show suicides, drugs, alcohol are at high rates. We need a caring aspect, and to build social capital.

Steve from Otago Polytechnic, NZ, spoke about the program he runs called Degrees by Design.

75% in NZ go on to tertiary but not with the best outcomes

Young people need to be more empowered.

Justo Menez Aramburu and AnaYrisGuzmanTorres

Nuestra Escuelita

Our Little School in Puerto Rico spoke with their usual compassion about Democratic Education as a Decolonisation. The school was founded on love where youth and adults, like Quixote, accomplish their dreams and goals creating better well being for their families. They no longer

describe it as a school but as a community, learning to be, to know, to do and live together.

Students initially could not deal with the real world so what we do has to be in real world context. Puerto Rico imports 90% of its food, 55.2% not in labour force, 44.7% have economic assistance. Government debt is huge. Economic burden or investment equal to 13.529 billion dollars
Students learn to work to create a fair, just, sustainable and democratic country
Many need help with maths, science and with their children

We provide Childcare for children of the students.

They know that alternative education transforms lives.

Public education will transform the nation.

RESHEF BURDE

Strengthening Public Schooling in Israel



Reshef spoke about the work he and colleagues are doing to get official recognition of democratic schools as schools of the state.

Muchshar. Is recognised and not official
Rishmi is recognised & official.

19 are part of the process of dialogue.

10 are Muchshar, 9 are Rishmi

They brought together the Minister of

Education, General Director with advisors District Directors with 5 Deputy General Directors, Central district Director and North district Director.

IDE & Ministry are working on a joint project with shared needs and aims

In December in 2010, a foundation gathering of the schools happened. Schools came together and addressed why the schools were not cooperating and established a network, CDS Community of Democratic Schools. The had a National Parliament 3 reps Schools, IDE, and this helped in changing the schools' perspective

Main things that have happened;

- actions, fun, social, cutting joint expenses, enriching common knowledge,
- Communal budgeting, membership fee Management team
- Democratic Schools' Principals Forum

In January 2013 Elections were held in Israel and a new minister was appointed, Shai Piron. This was a professional choice not a political one, demanded by the parents' association. So they had a New General Director, new advisors, new policy. Variety is wanted and no more unofficial schools. So this was a window of opportunities.

Two major challenges were a stronger demand to reduce fees and the obligation to increase staff salaries.

Joint papers included a description of what a democratic school is and a call for dialogue about arranging their status.

Central District Director set up a committee for Democratic Schools, 3 school principals, Director of IDE, head of law department, two lawyers, finance people etc

In Jan 2014 a multi dialogue event between Minister of Education and Democratic Schools has begun. It was presented as a puzzle rather than a confrontation and a process of plenty of learning.

There are 5-6 thousand students in Democratic Schools

Students have freedom to chose what to learn, Schools cannot screen anyone.

New staff could be accepted

All democratic schools to be officially recognised as unique schools part of the public system. Reshef will be part of the team organizing IDEC2017 in Israel.

NIKI HARRE

Associate Professor, Auckland, University Niki has taught social and community psychology for twelve years. Her recent research projects have focused on sustainable communities and schools, positive youth development and political activism. Her Keynote was called The Infinite Game.

This session was lively and fun and full of thought provoking ideas. Niki highlighted the differences between Finite and Infinite Games and where they both lead us and what we learn from participating in them.

Niki described the difference between an Infinite game such as a game of beach cricket and a finite game, that of a test cricket match. The purpose of the infinite game is to continue the play while the finite game's purpose is to win or survive. Some of the characteristics of the infinite game are having fun and if we want to invite others in we may have to change the rules. It is sacred, precious, special and valued for its own sake. It is that which makes the world truly alive. Emotional relationships are involved and it is part of the natural world. The finite game, the test match has fixed rules and boundaries and is played for the purpose of winning,

thereby ending the game. We had great fun experiencing the differences when we made paper planes as an infinite game and then observing ourselves and other as Niki made the game ever more finite. A great deal of horse trading and corruption began to appear in the groups in which I associated!

We also looked at the infinite game as a tool for understanding the core values that underpin an inclusive, vibrant education system.

Niki has been collecting these values and they are graduated in size according to the number of repetitions she has encountered in her research. The stand out one as you can see from the photo is LOVE.



Countries represented at IDE2015

- Aotearoa/ New Zealand
- Argentine
- Chile
- Uruguay
- Brazil
- China
- Mexico
- Venezuela
- Canada
- Cyprus
- Hungary
- Netherlands
- South Africa
- Indonesia
- Taiwan
- Poland
- HongKong
- Finland
- USA
- Japan
- Puerto Rico
- Australia
- Nepal
- South Korea
- Italy
- Portugal
- England
- Papua New Guinea
- Ireland
- Scotland
- Spain



Australasian Democratic Education Community, APDEC

The minutes and Report of the APDEC meeting held in Nelson have been circulated but if you would like a copy contact Cecelia.

This is Phenix Hsieh and the group from the **Holistic School in Taiwan** who will host the APDEC meeting in 2016.



The ADEC COMMITTEE for 2015/16

President: Cecelia Bradley
Secretary: Sue Goode
Treasurer: Keith Goode
Committee Members:
Adrienne Huber, Chris Price,
Juli Gassner, Alison Brizzell, Tracey Mills,
Wendy Pettit.

Contact Us

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DESIGN A LOGO FOR ADEC

We need a logo for ADEC!

Why not involve your students and tap their creativity? Please forward suggestions and designs to The ADEC Web Site Committee via president@adec.edu.au

MINUTES for ADEC AGM2015 are available for those who would like to see them. If you would like a copy contact Cecelia.