

TĀTAIAO

Environmental Education Conference

Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland
5 – 7 October 2026



Educating for Sustainability
Te Mauri o te Taiao



Keynote Speakers

Tuesday morning: Dan Hikuroa



Dan Hikuroa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato-Tainui, Ngaati Whanaunga, Pākehā) is a father, husband, surfer and gardener. He is Associate Professor in Māori Studies, University of Auckland, UNESCO New Zealand Commissioner for Culture and world expert on weaving indigenous knowledge and science to realise the dreams and solve the challenges of the communities he works with.

Dan has been spearheading alternative ways of undertaking development and assessing sustainability, including braiding indigenous knowledge and epistemologies with science and into policies, assessment frameworks and decision-support tools.

Tuesday afternoon: Rangatahi Panel

Our Tuesday afternoon panel features rangatahi participants from Tāmaki Makaurau, Taupō, Porirua and Waitaha. They will share their experiences as environmental and climate leaders, including advice for educators and other adults who play a key role in uplifting the voices and aspirations of young people, so they can develop the agency and leadership to take positive action for the health of people and te taiao.

Our confirmed rangatahi speakers represent these amazing projects and groups:

[REAL](#) – Rangatahi Environmental Action Leaders, Tāmaki Makaurau

[Future Unity](#) Porirua

[Kids Greening Taupō](#)

[Next Generation Conversation](#) Ōtautahi

[Te Māhuri](#) Bioprotection Aotearoa, Waitaha

[The Learning Environment](#) and [Gen-Z Aotearoa](#)

Wednesday: Educators Panel



Heidi Mardon is the Chief Executive of Toimata Foundation and has overall responsibility for the strategic direction of the organisation and relationships with key national funders. She is part of the creative team that developed the Enviroschools Programme and Te Aho Tū Roa with founding partner Te Mauri Tau. For 30 years she has brought her sustainable architecture background to the field of Environmental Education, passionately believing that deep learning can come from young people exploring, connecting, designing and co-creating buildings and spaces in harmony with nature. Heidi is excited about the transformational potential of holistic, collaborative teaching and learning, for a peaceful, equitable and truly healthy world.



Tara Solomon is Chief Executive of Kaitiaki Kindergartens, where she leads with a passion for creating cultures in which people thrive. Grounded in sustainability, innovation and equity, she believes education has the power to foster empowered learners who care deeply for people, place and planet. Creating the conditions for tamariki, kaiako and communities to flourish, curiosity is encouraged, people feel a strong sense of belonging and everyone sees themselves as capable of making a difference. Her leadership brings together people, purpose and possibility to help shape a more equitable and sustainable future.



Dr Cherie Taylor-Patel has been a West Auckland Principal at Flanshaw Road School for 23 years and part of the Enviroschools Programme since 2009. Having led a 'Green-Gold' School since 2013, Cherie completed an ASB-APPA Travelling Fellowship in 2025 focused on 'Education for Sustainability'. Travelling to seven countries, she was focused on learning from environmentally focused leaders working at global, national, regional and local levels. Cherie is the chairperson of the WAPA 2020+ Trust, which oversees six school-based 'Urban Forest' projects in West Auckland. She believes 'Education for Sustainability' principles need to be woven through school curriculum and adult workplaces, to create leaders, eco-warriors and kaitiaki who will lead positive, sustainable change. *Manaaki tangata, Manaaki whenua, Haere whakamua.*



Philippa Wintle is an experienced educational leader currently serving as Deputy Principal at Kelston Girls' College, bringing deep expertise in whānau-centred pastoral care, student wellbeing, and culturally sustaining leadership. Now in her 19th year in education, her career spans secondary teacher and senior leadership roles across NZ, Australia, and the UK, including curriculum leadership and teacher education. Philippa is passionate about socially just, equitable education and believes strongly in the power of collaboration, critical reflection, and strong relationships to transform outcomes for young people. Alongside her school leadership, she has contributed to the wider education sector through national leadership roles, published research, and conference presentations focused on reflective practice and community engagement.