

# 8<sup>th</sup> Health Services & Policy Research Conference

**2-4 December, Wellington, New Zealand**

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I was very grateful for the opportunity to attend the 8<sup>th</sup> Health Services & Policy Research Conference because the program was very relevant to the research I have been involved in around supporting Indigenous health services in a mainstream health system. It was also my first time visiting New Zealand so seeing this beautiful country and meeting with the Indigenous people and learning the history of the land was also a great personal experience for me.

I attended the Indigenous pre-conference workshop, Monday and Tuesday conference sessions, the ERGO conference dinner and displayed my poster '*Taking care of business: corporate support models and Indigenous primary healthcare services*'.

## ***Sunday 1 December Indigenous Health Services Workshop at Te Raukura Te Whareweka o Poneke***

For me the highlight of my experience at the conference was being welcomed by the Maori people to the Indigenous Health Services Workshop at Te Raukura Te Whareweka o Poneke. The workshop started with a Mihi Whakatau an official speech in Maori language. There was also a presentation about the Maori people of the Wellington and surrounding areas. The cultural rituals, language and singing were very strong and this gave me great confidence in how Indigenous people would be able to participate in the conference. As an Aboriginal person learning the stories of the people was very important to me as this gave me an understanding of the local history. Hearing about the how Maori leaders used passive resistance in their struggle for a treaty was very inspiring. This gave me a good platform for engaging with the sessions throughout the whole conference. It was also a great opportunity for me to meet with Indigenous people from around the world and listen to each other's stories and share common experiences. The strong Maori presence throughout the conference also emphasised the potential for further incorporation of Indigenous content for future conferences.

Some of the key themes discussed at the workshop included addressing health inequities, focus on prevention, social determinants of health, Indigenous knowledge systems, Aboriginal health ethics, social justice, measuring, interpreting & managing data and the use of technology in health.

Being a part of the Indigenous Workshop gave me the chance to network with Indigenous people from New Zealand, Canada and Australia and these

connections could develop into future research collaborations. I would particularly like to thank the organisers of the Indigenous workshop and all the Indigenous presenters.

### **Monday 2 December**

I attended the official opening and it was great to be able to participate in the Powhiri and take part in the cultural protocols of the Maori people. The opening plenary session also set the tone for the rest of the conference and I learnt a lot about some potential future dangers to the sustainability of our current health systems. Dr Jeff Reading's talk was another highlight for me because I connected with the stories of multi-generational trauma and the struggles the First Nations people of Canada are still experiencing. To fight disparities of health it is so important to understand and analyse the social determinants of health. This made me think a lot about the environments we live in and the impact this can have on our health.

After the plenary I attended all the sessions in the Indigenous Control stream because this was the area most relevant to my work. I got a lot out of the presentations but the one that had the most impact for me was around the Manitoba First Nations community setting up structures for governance of research information and data. Having referenced the principles of Ownership Control Access and Possession (OCAP) in some previous work I was very grateful for the opportunity to hear more about their processes and the development of this work.

After the sessions I was invited to go to the ERGO Dinner for emerging researchers. This was another great experience because I had the chance to meet with other young researchers from around the world. The relaxed atmosphere gave everybody a chance to get to know each other and find out about our common research interests. Many of the emerging researchers at the dinner were Indigenous and were involved with community research, similar to myself, so this was an excellent opportunity for networking and sharing ideas.

### **Tuesday 3 December**

On Tuesday my poster presentation for '*Taking care of business: corporate support models and Indigenous primary healthcare services*' was displayed at the conference. This gave me the chance to share some of the findings from our research around Indigenous services development of innovative models of corporate support.

Overall I feel I gained a lot from attending the conference and I would not hesitate to attend the next one. One of the most rewarding aspects of the conference was the reinforcement of my own knowledge and experience of Indigenous research processes. Meeting like-minded Indigenous researchers from Canada, NZ and Australia has inspired me to continue to learn and develop my research skills so that I can continue to use them to help my own Aboriginal community.