Teachers are deadly!
Summary of delegate feedback

MATSITI National Conference | July 9-11 2012

The following notes and comments were summarised from 82 paper-based responses by conference delegates collected on 11 July 2012. All responses from conference delegates have been recorded and considered by the MATSITI Project Management Team to inform future events and project actions.

Formal actions arising from conference workshops will be captured separately and communicated to delegates.

1. Did the MATSITI conference meet your expectations?

Responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive as the first get together for Indigenous teachers, leaders and supporters.

Common responses were:
- Inspirational and empowering
- A great opportunity to hear people’s stories. Some inspiring and fantastic ideas shared that I am going to take back to my school.
- Looking forward to the follow-up.

Some responses about limitations
- Interesting in so far as sharing stories - a little short on the explicit problems faced and how each was approached and the strategies to overcome them.
- There didn’t seem to be enough opportunities for teachers to get together.

2. What did you like about

a. Keynote presentations
   “Inspirational”, “Engaging”, “Informative”, in particular the international speakers.

b. Workshops
   Comments generally positive and perceived as a forum to discuss ideas. A good range, collaborative and well run. A few criticisms about not enough allowance for discussion time and off-topic in some cases.

c. Action planning
   Generally positive comments on participation and planned strategies to make change. Some concern that direction was agreed but how will the action happen or be sustained

d. Facilitators
   Comments generally positive. Facilitators seen as professional, friendly, informative and inclusive. An individual concern was raised about facilitation of a specific workshop.

e. Dinner
   Good feedback on meal, entertainment and fun! A few minor niggles.
f. **Venue**
   Overall very positive feedback about the venue. A few individual criticisms of being dark, and too flash.

   g. **Other (specify)**
   Many positive comments about the opportunity to network with colleagues – see 4. below.

3. **Indicate your feedback by giving a rating**

   ![Bar charts for different categories: Speakers, Workshop choices, Program / timetable, Organisation, Venue, Food, Dinner, Information provided prior to the conference.](chart_images)
4. What was the highlight for you?

Networking and sharing and celebrating were the major highlights – some called this reconnecting:

- Seeing so many wonderful dedicated ‘DEADLY’ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers.
- Seeing the passion. Meeting amazing people.
- Meeting so many ‘DEADLY’ and ‘ON FIRE’ Indigenous teachers.
- The strength of the conversations.
- Meeting other people, hearing their stories - realising there are a lot more Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people so passionate about education & improving outcomes for our children.
- Celebrating us” The fact the conference happened (inaugural).

5. Tell us briefly your conference story (eg your experience or testimony)

Networking and friendship

- Arrived alone, leaving with an entire community with me. A bit ‘corny’ but true.
- I thoroughly enjoyed the conference and the opportunity to participate and network with speakers, presenters and participants.
- Thoroughly enjoyed meeting other educators and listening to their stories. Came down not knowing anyone and returning home with new friends and taking on board their ideas & what works within their roles, schools & communities.
- Tuesday night's celebrations & having the opportunity to network with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators.
- First time in a very long time that I had been in a room where I knew no-one, gave me a great opportunity to start new friendships and expand my professional network.

Next steps

- The fire in the tummy has been rekindled / ignited. Seeing the energy and commitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers.
- Having been in the education game for 32 years, it’s good to see a major shift from the emotive - deficit model to being pro-active. It's also refreshing to see lots of younger teachers with can-do attitudes.
- Networking and sharing has inspired me to aim higher and not settle for less; to become the change I want to see.
- This conference has shown me that some states are much more ahead than others. All the good things from each state need to be shared and implemented nationally.
- The opportunity to be a part of the learning, communicating & action planning to move forward has been a privilege.
- I’ve been a teacher for a long time but didn't step up to leadership role - so would like to encourage others to step up and provide support from key leaders in our state.
- As a school leader, I listened to the speakers and was able to reflect on what my school does and what can be done better. Look out everyone… here I come!
- I came to join a movement that will build the energy around how Aboriginal people can influence the education of all young Australians (and older ones who are our colleagues).
Identity
- Attending a conference like this, encourages me to feel good - PROUD - to be an Indigenous school teacher.
- As someone who has only recently identified I now have a bigger feeling of belonging.

Careers
- The conference really made me think about my current teaching career, the attributes, skills and experiences I have gained already, and now what the future might hold for my career.
- I am truly inspired to continue my journey. My head is filled with more ideas and enthusiasm to continue to close the gap and celebrate our amazing people.

Pre-service Teachers
- It was amazing to be able to meet other Aboriginal pre-service teachers and talk to them about their university * professional (practicum) experiences.
- It was great to meet fellow pre-service Indigenous teachers, and to feel so welcomed and supported by teachers already working.
- This conference has made me want to reach higher up on the career ladder from my current course of Primary Education to Honours, Masters, Doctorate, becoming a leader in all areas of my life.

Community
- Over the past few days I have been motivated & inspired by so many different people I have met. It has encouraged me to work harder to involve my local community in educational outcomes.
- My conference story is capturing Corey Warrior’s message. I think this is a great message for future Teachers - “Teaching - you achieve, your family achieves, your community achieves”.

6. What should happen now after the conference?

Suggested actions
Numerous responses emphasizing the need to build on the passion and energy of delegates:
- Create a national voice through formation of an advocacy group
- Implement and track identified actions
- Two teacher delegates “at the coalface” should be on the reference group
- “Keep the "bush fire" burning with all of us present or absent as Indigenous educators. Keep us informed through meetings, networks, online community and email
- “Spread the word” - encourage other Indigenous educators to become part of the MATSITI network
- Conduct follow-up teacher meetings in each state and territory
- Delegates speak to Indigenous teachers and elders in their communities
- A conference for Year 11 and 12 students would encourage these students to become teachers. They need guidance to decide on their careers and we should be the ones to give it to them”.
• Host an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers conference annually
• A series of smaller follow-up forums on specific topics and actions
• Gather evidence and assumptions on the impact of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, including those in remote communities, NARIS schools and focus schools
• Make hard data and evidence on teaching and student performance more visible

7. What are your suggestions for future events?

Presentations and workshops
Many comments were received on balance and focus of presentations and workshops, and recommendations for a greater classroom teacher voice in sessions:
• Less personal stories incorporated into presentations (even though lovely and interesting), they eat into time for the workshop content.
• Encouraging more interaction and collaboration ie sitting at different tables to generate cross partnership, getting out of familiar mob groups.
• Focus groups for teachers/ administrators to discuss positive programs and issues in sectors eg early childhood, primary, middle schooling & secondary.
• Plan events that are action-based, and that expand our traditional approaches to creating a movement that bring results.

Participants and timing
• Send open invitation to ALL interested in promoting Indigenous education (some notable absences)
• Continue to hold conference in the holidays¹ to allow majority of all Indigenous teachers to attend
• Establish local and state-wide groups for a National Network, with an annual meeting to keep momentum. Meet with other participants in our region and deliver our experience to other teachers, leaders, then discuss - what works well in our region - what our region needs to work on.

Government and senior official support
Many comments were received about the need to engage senior education officials:
• Need State & Federal Ministers² present, Deans of Education from universities. They must hear messages up front.
• All state education systems MUST support.

Community engagement
• We need more of us together with our elders. Organise events that involve community particularly elders who hold our wisdom and learning.

Recognition
• Hold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher awards at each conference (in categories).

¹ Not all state and territory school holidays align
² Federal Minister was invited
8. Any other comments or suggestions?

Generally positive comments expressing thanks and that the conference was a valuable and rewarding experience. Many wanted to continue to be involved in getting more quality Aboriginal teachers into our system, and looking forward to our revitalised conversations on our journey.

Further delegate comments:

- Request for a list of delegates and positions.
- Intensity of the conference could do with an extra day.
- A need to refine the focus of the conference to be a time for teachers to discuss their barriers rather than involve students/student-teachers.
- Use of storytelling to learn from each other.
- A need for leadership renewal to ensure sustainability.
- Regular meetings at a national, state and local level. Some comments on a regular national meeting, whether annual or biennial.
- Include ALL education systems – government, Catholic, independent sectors
- Set up an evaluation form online as often have thoughts after the conference.
- Now ready to be a mentor, feeling of being invigorated to go back to school.
- Disappointment at missing some of the workshops – too many workshops to choose from!
- Need to continue to the momentum towards developing an academy/network to be administered by a designated officer for sustainability. Can MATSITI provide funding to support a position to help implement key actions in each state? Identify the senior officer in each HR unit within each state - to be part of a network too. Get each state to identify 3 actions for implementing. Check at the next conference how each state fared.
- Networking – would have to like to identify people from the same state.

Didn’t get to have your say at the conference?

If you have further comments and suggestions on the conference or future MATSITI events, email info@matsiti.edu.au or fax MATSITI Project Team on 08 8302 7034.

Delegates can also add further comments on www.matsiti.net forums.