

PACIFICA Women's Youth Conference Report.

On the 16th February 2019, PACIFICA Inc., held their inaugural Youth conference. The theme for the conference was 'Finding your voice'.

42 young women between the ages of 11 and 25 years old attended the conference, and thanks to the host of PACIFICA Inc.'s National conference they were able to attend that also (15th – 17th Feb.).

Young women were able to 'find their voice' by creating poetry with one of the Pacific community's leading poets and current director of Tautai Pacific Arts Trust, Courtney Sina Meredith. Many of the participants found a creative side that they didn't know they had.



Courtney telling her life's journey before beginning the creative process.

After putting their creative side into action, the participants then heard from and asks questions of a panel of women with very different careers. They discovered how an apprentice builder overcomes daily gender prejudices. Learnt of the struggle a Faifea'u's daughter had to have her voice heard and recognised under cultural pressure and expectation. They also heard how a young single mum is breaking down barriers to achieve her dream of being in local politics.



Of the panel one participant said “They were clear, articulate, inspiring, kind, loving, touching and surprisingly relatable”



After lunch participants heard from another strong pacific female leader Reina Vaai, who told of her journey in her professional career as a criminal defence lawyer, Tangata Pasifika reporter and budding actress.



The final workshop facilitated by Sela Faletolu-Fasi, the amazing founder of No Limits –a performing arts group for young pacific people. This is when the young women unpacked many of the things they had learnt from the day. They strengthened their friendships through an exercise that had them sharing some of their deepest feelings about being a woman.



Group photo with the majority of the participants.

Some of the feedback we received from the participants of this conference:

“This conference really impacted me helped come to new realisations in my life that needed fulfilment”

“Me as a young lady I’ve always been lost when it comes to my colour, my culture, my background, my ancestors and etc and I was worried because I was labelled as PLASTIC so I let people do that to me and the conference confirmed for me that I need to stop letting people do that to me and I need to stand strong!!”

“I am generally not a touchy –feely persons and shy away when comes to sharing, but during this event I very so open and felt really comfortable sharing my ideas and feelings”

“Awesome job for the first youth programme! Really set great foundation to form networks and bond with other branches”

In general, we received very positive and constructive feedback from participants, all were hoping that this initiative will continue.

We know that this conference gave at least two young women the confidence and strength to stand for executive positions within PACIFICA. Natalie Stolz stood for and was elected National Youth Rep, whilst Lisana Tifaga stood for (and was elected) the assistant secretary/comms position in Christchurch branch’s executive. We hope that in the months to come other participants will share the impact this conference had on them and how it has affected their future.