

TESTIMONIALS

Carol Thomas
Indigenous Evaluator, Australia

I was delighted to be given the opportunity to attend the conference in Wellington. I was able to meet other people involved in evaluations in Indigenous communities which has provided me with a far greater insight into the area than I had previously had. I have since been employed in an evaluation company and the tools received and networks made at the conference, are proving a great help to me. I look forward to learning more in the evaluation area. Attendance at the conference has been a great start for me.

Dr Amohia Boulton,
Whakauae Research Services, New Zealand

I have recently begun working as a community evaluator in an iwi [Maori tribal] research unit after training in evaluation methodology in the late 1990s. Being awarded a conference grant in 2010 was therefore not only timely but also incredibly valuable in so many ways. Attending the conference provided the opportunity to meet with other indigenous researchers and evaluators; to participate in the indigenous forum; to network with new, and re-connect with old, colleagues; to hear advancements in the field of evaluation from some of Australasia's, and the world's, best evaluation practitioners; and to generally be inspired! I heartily recommend indigenous evaluators make the most of this fantastic opportunity for learning and development.



Mili Burnette
Health Services Research Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

I received an AES support grant in 2009 to attend the Canberra Conference. At the time I was a student about to embark on my Masters in Public Health using a case study as my methodology. Also I had been working on evaluation projects through my work. The support grant covered all my expenses enabling me to attend the whole conference including the workshops.

Overall, the experience gave me the opportunity to learn about evaluation and how it is used across a number of disciplines. As I was new to evaluation, it was good to meet experienced evaluators and to hear about their experiences. The atmosphere was very welcoming and the committee members very friendly. I would encourage those who are new to evaluation and have a particular interest in working with indigenous communities to apply for this grant. It was a very informative conference and well organised.

Kirimatao Paipa

Kia Maia Ltd, Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand

Mā te huruhuru te manu ka rere – with wings and feathers a bird can fly

Kia ora, I was fortunate enough to receive a scholarship in 2008 to attend the Australasian Evaluation Society Conference held in Perth. As I was a full time student at the time undertaking a Post Graduate Diploma in Social Sector Research and Evaluation at Massey University, Aotearoa/New Zealand and a single mother, it was beyond my financial capacity to attend the conference. However, the scholarship gave me the wings I needed to take part in pre-conference workshops and the conference itself.



On reflection, this opportunity was invaluable for me as a shy emerging indigenous evaluator. I learned that evaluators were interesting and interested people, and that a wider global community exists of like minded people. I have a distinct memory of meeting and being overawed by the number of renowned specialists who attended the conference, and being appreciative of their interest in having a conversation with me – a little Maori girl from Aotearoa. My awareness about the growing indigenous evaluation community and our emerging strength within mainstream evaluation also grew.

In closing, I would like to confirm that the opportunity that AES scholarships offer to emerging evaluators like me is incredibly important. Even after two years, I remember the effect it had on me and the renewed vigour in which I was able to apply to my study afterwards. Indigenous evaluation is a critical field that requires support to gain traction and fly, AES scholarships offer this opportunity. To my indigenous brothers and sisters who are testing their toes in the waters of evaluation and research, the AES community is definitely an exciting start.

To the AES community, thank you for allowing this bird to stretch her wings and fly.

Salend Kumar

Fiji Islands, PhD student, The University of Queensland

The AES Conference Support Grants is a very generous gesture on the part of the organization and I am grateful that I was awarded a grant in 2010. I wanted to attend the 2010 conference as evaluation is part of my PhD study and the grant made it possible. I realised that the AES Conference offers an opportunity to listen, share and interact with scholars and experts from diverse fields but talking on one subject: “evaluation”. The conference provided an opportunity for me to learn from the real life application of methods, tools and approaches in the area of evaluation; it enabled me to reflect on my own practices and helped me to identify areas of improvement so that I can perform better. I see the AES Conference as one of the key means to build capacity in evaluation. The conference also enabled me to develop my personal network with experts



and to meet with people whose work I have previously read in books and journal articles. I encourage other Pacific Islanders to apply for this grant to gain knowledge and experience from the conference as this will enable us to communicate better on evaluation in the Pacific Island Countries.