

ANCESTORS TALK



Global Alcohol Policy Alliance Inaugural Indigenous Pre-conference Event

**ExpoRio CIDADE NOVA, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
7 April 2026**

Executive summary

This report summarises the key discussion points and themes emerging from the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance's (GAPA) Indigenous pre-conference event. Key themes included:

- Alcohol was an introduced colonial drug that has disrupted Indigenous lives, and created a devastating, disproportionate and intergenerational impact on Indigenous peoples' individual and collective health and social wellbeing.
- The introduction of alcohol combined with assimilation policies and displacement, significantly eroded traditional structures, cultural identity, values and practices, which impacted on all facets of Indigenous society and (together with limited access to appropriate services) further increased the harmful use of industrialised alcohol in some Indigenous communities.
- The pervasiveness and predatory nature of the alcohol industry – driven by external profit rather than community wellbeing – has affected Indigenous people:
 - directly through alcohol marketing and industry targeting of Indigenous communities (and young people in particular)
 - indirectly through corporate lobbying and influence over government laws and policies that have resulted in cheap, visible and accessible alcohol in Indigenous communities, and broad-based normalisation of alcohol use.
- The harm that alcohol has had on the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples can be disrupted when Indigenous communities reclaim cultural authority and decision-making, restore language and ceremony, rebuild strong family structures, prioritise healing, return to Indigenous wellbeing systems, and lead out holistic approaches and Indigenous solutions.
- Governments must also play its part in preventing and reducing alcohol harm by:
 - supporting and resourcing Indigenous-led solutions, research, interventions and other aspirations
 - addressing the social and commercial determinants of health and inequitable alcohol harm among Indigenous peoples
 - putting in place more effective alcohol policies and regulation, and monitoring of Indigenous harm
 - facilitating genuine and effective participation of Indigenous peoples in policy and decision-making at local and global levels.
- Moving forward, GAPA and allies could support the realisation of Indigenous aspirations in the alcohol space by walking alongside Indigenous peoples to progress effective action on these aspirations; advocating for and resourcing Indigenous participation in policy forums; providing regular Indigenous-led events; and enabling ongoing relationship building.

Introduction

Indigenous peoples worldwide experience significant and intergenerational alcohol-related harm and inequity. At both local and global policy levels, this unacceptable state of affairs generally remains poorly understood, with Indigenous-led efforts to control alcohol use and effects in their communities largely thwarted or diminished by commercial interests and inadequate government responses.

Since 2023, the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA) has been actively pursuing opportunities to increase Indigenous participation and presence at the Global Alcohol Policy Conferences (GAPC) and to support Indigenous-led aspirations on preventing and reducing alcohol harm in the global policy space. At GAPC 2023, Indigenous and First Nations peoples came together and presented a call for

action that formed the basis of a draft interim policy statement ‘supporting Indigenous and First Nations peoples’ rights and aspirations for effective alcohol policy’. This call for action also formed the basis for developing an Indigenous alcohol policy position statement for the World Federation of Public Health Associations – officially released in Geneva in 2025.

Building on that momentum GAPA supported an inaugural Indigenous pre-conference event at GAPC 2026. The purpose of the event was to provide a space for Indigenous peoples and allies supportive of a stronger Indigenous voice and perspective on the prevention and reduction of alcohol harm in the policy space to come together, network, share ideas, and discuss matters in the alcohol space that are of importance to Indigenous peoples. At the same time, the event was to provide an opportunity for Indigenous and First Nation peoples to revisit and build on the work of previous Indigenous forums and to plan forward.

This report captures the main discussion points and outcomes of the Indigenous pre-conference event. It also includes the proposals that were developed and presented during the main conference by a group of primarily Indigenous Brazilian peoples, most of whom did not make it to the GAPA Indigenous pre-conference event (see Appendix 1).

Setting a sacred space for connection and discussion

Approximately 37 Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, from over 10 countries, participated in the event at some time during the day (a list of those attending is attached as Appendix 2). Participants spoke a range of different languages, so it was important to ensure that everyone was able to participate in the discussions and be heard and understood.

GAPA provided English/Portuguese translation, and those participants who spoke languages other than English or Portuguese were supported by others who were able to ensure that both the participant and the group understood what was being said.

After a few introductory words by the facilitation team and a warm welcome to country by our Indigenous Brazilian brother we set an intention to create a sacred Indigenous space for participants to connect and share their perspectives and experiences.

This process started with a round of introductions and participants were asked to share where their name came from and also something special that they had brought with them that grounded and gave them strength. We went around the room with everyone contributing in this way. Julian Ihaia Reweti from Aotearoa New Zealand was the last person to introduce himself. Julian had brought with him a very special taonga (treasure) of cultural and spiritual significance – a ‘mauri’ stone named ‘whakapapa oranga’ that he was gifting to GAPA as a symbol of interconnected wellbeing, ancestral connection and collective responsibility (see Appendix 3 for more information on the mauri stone).

Workshop discussions and themes

The workshop was divided into two themes – ‘Ancestors talk through us’ and ‘Anchoring ancestors talk in policy’, and the activities were designed to provide a space where Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples could:

- connect and discuss the impact of colonial/industrial alcohol on Indigenous peoples wellbeing, traditions and way of life
- collectively explore ways of returning to Indigenous practices and beliefs and how this might:
 - disempower the hold colonial alcohol has on Indigenous peoples; and
 - influence good public policy guided by what works for Indigenous peoples

- discuss how to ensure a strong and effective Indigenous voice at all policy levels to prevent and reduce alcohol harm in Indigenous communities.

Workshop Session 1 - Ancestors Talk Through Us

Participants were divided into three groups and invited to spend time across three workstations to identify events, insights and experiences at local, global and personal levels across three timelines (i.e., prior to 1951; between 1951 and 2000; and after 2000 onwards) in relation to the following questions:

- When and how was alcohol introduced by the settlers/colonialists?
- How did the introduction of colonial/industrial alcohol disrupt Indigenous culture and way of life?

Participants were then asked to explore ways of how we could return to Indigenous practices of wellbeing and disempower the hold alcohol has on Indigenous lives. The following account attempts to summarise and capture the main points of these discussions, as reflected in the post-its and facilitators summaries at each of the workstations, and from the feedback sessions. I have also attempted to use the actual words articulated on the papers, from each of the workstations, wherever possible.¹

When and how alcohol was introduced and its impact on Indigenous lives

Prior to 1950 alcohol was introduced after foreign settlement in all countries subject to colonisation. Alcohol was used for trading and payment despite bans, prohibition policies and other forms of regulation, and those involved in development projects and mining of roads consumed and introduced alcohol to Indigenous peoples. Many Indigenous people, therefore, came into contact with alcohol through work and while they didn't like alcohol at first, they developed a taste for it, and then it began to creep into their community. While alcohol was less available in Indigenous communities prior to 1950 (mainly because it was only used for rituals and traditional ceremonies/celebrations pre-colonisation), alcohol harm began to increase as alcohol became an accepted form of currency in communities.

From 1951 to 2000 alcohol restrictions were lifted enabling increased legal access to alcohol. Aggressive marketing and new ways of presenting alcohol to attract youth were also being introduced, and the alcohol industry was becoming a major sponsor of public events – both sporting and cultural. The development projects, especially in the Amazon, also continued through this period.

At the same time, knowledge about the harms of alcohol, including the impacts on Indigenous peoples, were becoming more well-known and public policies and regulations to control the effects of alcohol were increasingly coming on stream. For example, one participant mentioned that labelling (codex) was introduced in 1985 to clarify the application of general labelling standards to alcoholic beverages.

Despite the increasing awareness of alcohol harms and public policies to control the effects of alcohol, this was a period of increased alcohol-related harm for Indigenous peoples alongside and/or in reaction to social stress, poverty, racism, exclusion, and poor education and health access. There was also a noticeable change from traditional to recreational use of alcohol, with wide availability of industrial cerveza liquor and no controls over consumption of local beverages – 'chicha'. Drinking was starting at an earlier age and teen drinking was becoming normalised. One participant shared how

¹ Note that in some cases this was challenging due to some statements being written in Portuguese and/or because some of the words were a little difficult to read.

they had started drinking at 12 years old. More women were also beginning to drink. Some participants noted how alcohol had affected their parents' health and their ability to parent well.

For the period **beginning 2001 to the present day** several participants noted some of the progress that was being made globally in alcohol harm reduction policy and in relation to the recognition of Indigenous rights. Key points included that:

- the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was passed in 2007
- the World Health Organisation (WHO) SAFER initiative was launched in 2018 to help governments implement effective public health policies to reduce alcohol harm
- alcohol and cancer framing and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) made it easier to communicate that all alcohol is harmful
- there was lower alcohol use in some Indigenous communities – potentially due to successful alcohol management programmes, community education and intervention, increased resources, better access to health services, renaissance of culture and language, and self-determination
- there was an increased recognition of the intergenerational transmission of trauma, poverty, and other poor outcomes interlinked with alcohol harm, and the need for holistic approaches, which also focus on factors such as trauma, housing, education, employment, and loss of culture in order to effectively address alcohol harm within Indigenous communities.

Simultaneously, several participants also highlighted and/or reinforced the following issues:

- Alcohol is available everywhere and alcohol consumption is normalised.
- There has been an increase in the variety of alcohol products that are more attractive to women and young people.
- There seems to be an inability to control when young people start drinking alcohol and new generations have a different mindset and experience with alcohol, with social media and access to endless information having a key influence on drinking behaviours, and the cost of living also potentially contributing to the way youth drink and their relationship with alcohol.
- Industrial alcohol has a predominant presence in society, has a strong market, and is frequently present in Indigenous communities and community events.
- There has been a reduction of traditional practices, traditional alcohol is becoming stronger, and the consumption of alcohol has changed from being part of a special ritual to daily use in some communities.

At a **local** level participants raised several specific examples of how alcohol use progressed in their countries. For example, one participant highlighted that in Uganda alcohol formed part of pre-colonial surgical knowledge, sharing that in 1879 banana wine was used by an Indigenous surgeon to perform an advanced abdominal delivery. However, in the 1960s to 1970s alcohol distillation began in Uganda, and there were many instances of alcohol poisoning, with this alcohol epidemic continuing to ravage Uganda. Several participants mentioned the rubber bonanza caucheria system, sugar cane production and slavery all forming part of how industrial alcohol was introduced to Indigenous peoples in Brazil. Also mentioned was that in some villages alcohol is forbidden now and that this has helped these villages. One participant shared that 20 years ago there was higher level of consumption of alcohol among the Sami people of Norway, and another noted the post first world war prohibition laws in the Nordic countries.

One local discussion, primarily driven by the experience of the Amazons, provided the following narrative on the introduction of industrialised alcohol and its impacts on Indigenous communities:

- small Indigenous communities experience disproportionate harm from alcohol while having the least political and economic power to control it
- alcohol disrupted local economies and family wellbeing and was used as a form of currency to pay workers and to trade with, therefore leading to reduced economic stability for families and communities
- once industrialised, alcohol became stronger and cheaper, more accessible and commercial sales expanded into remote areas
- distillation and industrial production transformed alcohol into a commercial product with significant social impacts driven by external profit rather than community wellbeing.

This narrative ended with the statement that there was a need for a mindset change and to restore cultural pride, reconnect with culture, protect traditional knowledge, and rebuild community authority. Furthermore, others raised concerns about:

- the normalisation of alcohol use in Indigenous communities, particularly where heavy drinking becomes accepted as part of culture and identity – leading to an erosion of cultural values and social controls, and reducing one’s connection to their identity and sense of belonging to community
- alcohol being introduced to children and young people at earlier ages, meaning that younger generations are growing up in environments where alcohol is becoming more visible and accessible
- young people being influenced by social media, peer pressure, commercial marketing, changing social norms, and intergenerational trauma
- the negative impact on family relationships, parenting, cultural responsibilities physical and mental health.

At a more **personal** level some participants shared that their grandparents didn’t drink alcohol, but now close relatives have alcohol use disorder. Others mentioned older friends or parents introducing them to alcohol in their early teens. Another shared how their former partner struggled with alcohol and how that had damaged him and their relationship. Others also mentioned that they had given up drinking alcohol, or shared how their experiences with alcohol had affected them or family members and how this became a catalyst for becoming an advocate for reducing harmful alcohol use.

A general theme at the **global** level, was that alcohol policy, regulation and government commitments often do not reflect the reality experienced in Indigenous communities, and that policies and laws are often developed ‘about’ Indigenous peoples’ rather than ‘with’ Indigenous peoples. The counter to this was a general consensus for Indigenous communities (including young people) to lead their own solutions to protect future generations from the transmission of alcohol-related harm.

In addition, another common issue that was raised referred to the power of the alcohol industry, and the significant resources that they have to lobby governments and considerably influence policy and alcohol consumption. The lobbying issue in particular was seen as one of the worst in the world and that this was a problem without any effective response at present. For example, in Aotearoa, successive governments have failed to enact effective evidence-based policy measures to reduce alcohol harm and equity (such as the WHO SAFER initiative policies) despite the increasing evidence base supporting such measures, and repeated calls from the public and recommendations from various policy reviews to do so.

Overall, responses to the question of *‘when and how alcohol was introduced and its impact on Indigenous lives’* highlight alcohol as a devastating tool of colonisation, power and control. The introduction of alcohol combined with assimilation policies, displacement, poverty and limited access

to health, education, employment and housing, significantly eroded traditional structures, impacting on all facets of Indigenous society including traditional lore and governance, and leading to a loss of land, cultural authority, practices and language; the destruction of the family system; and physical ill-health, child neglect, violence, and racism. This situation increased harmful alcohol use in Indigenous communities, further weakening traditional values and practices, and decreasing individual and collective wellbeing. Commercial determinants played a significant role in all of this.

Ways of returning to wellbeing and addressing alcohol harm

“Our ancestors had a blueprint in place that worked for centuries - we just need to go back to it”.

Common themes on the ‘ways of returning to wellbeing and addressing alcohol harm’ included:

- family being a catalyst for change, as strong family connections is central to healing and transformation
- returning to ancestral knowledge and values, connections to the earth and spirituality, as Indigenous wellbeing systems already existed long before colonisation
- changing the current commercial alcohol narrative to a strengths-based narrative with harm reduction messaging
- Indigenous peoples (including young people) making grassroots bottom-up decisions for their communities and leading the solutions to address alcohol harm
- access to education, tools, and resources to reduce alcohol harm and broader alcohol harm-related factors
- regulating alcohol advertising, promotion, media, and social platforms targeting young people and replacing these with targeted promotion on healthy living/choices and increasing physical activity (such as sport) to support one’s physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing
- speaking in one’s own language and working within the language and cultural foundations known
- connecting, talking and learning from each other, as Indigenous know their people, and know what works and what doesn’t for their community.

Significantly, the discussion on ‘ways of returning to wellbeing and addressing alcohol harm’ generally highlighted that intergenerational harmful cycles of alcohol use can be interrupted when communities reclaim cultural authority, restore language and ceremony, rebuild strong family structures, create alcohol-free spaces, and prioritise healing over punishment. Such an approach would ensure that Indigenous children and young people are appropriately cared for and thrive. Governments must also take an equitable approach to improving health, education, housing and employment and listen to, and recognise the cultural authority of Indigenous communities.

Workshop Session 2 – Anchoring Ancestors Talk in Policy

This session focused on how we can return to our collective wellbeing and prevent and reduce alcohol harm in Indigenous communities by ensuring that we have a strong and effective Indigenous voice at all policy levels. Participants were tasked to identify key actions and priorities that would accelerate progress toward these aspirations, guided by the following questions:

- What are the key priorities and policy levers for reducing alcohol harm in Indigenous communities at global/national/local levels?
- What needs to urgently happen, and why?
- How can we ensure an effective Indigenous voice in local/national/global policy forums moving forward?
- How can we stay connected moving forward?

- How can GAPA and non-Indigenous peoples/organisations best support these aspirations and create space for Indigenous to lead in this area at all policy levels?

The purpose of the final workshop session was to inform an update of GAPAs draft interim policy statement, and provide GAPA with some direction on how they could best support an authentic Indigenous voice in national and global policies to prevent and reduce alcohol harm. Responses to each of these questions follow.

Key priorities and policy levers

Common themes emerging from the discussion of key priorities and policy levers included GAPA supporting and advocating for:

- Indigenous-led approaches - for Indigenous by Indigenous (design, implementation, and evaluation)
- Indigenous self-determination and community control (not just regulation) - Indigenous peoples making their own decisions – including Indigenous writing their own laws; the reclamation of historical practices; the strengthening of Indigenous languages and identity; and restoration of traditional values
- holistic, cultural, and spiritual healing practices and equitable outcomes
- improved representation of Indigenous peoples in policy decision-making bodies at local and global levels
- funding of Indigenous-led research, treatment, early intervention/prevention, and healing practices
- effective ways to address the predatory nature of the alcohol industry and targeting of Indigenous communities
- smarter alcohol regulation and global monitoring of Indigenous harm.

In addition, it was raised that Indigenous communities themselves needed to step up and say ‘NO’ to alcohol in their communities.

Urgent actions

There is an urgent need:

- for a shift in power and authority so that Indigenous peoples are making genuine decisions on alcohol policies, rather than engaged solely as consultants or advisors
- for longer-term solutions to addressing alcohol harm among Indigenous communities – recognising that generations of colonisation cannot be fixed immediately
- to break intergenerational cycles of alcohol-related harm by focusing on young people and addressing issues such as homelessness, loss of language and culture, and providing appropriate education pathways, employment opportunities, early intervention, and trauma-informed approaches
- to put a spotlight on industry interference and impact on Indigenous peoples, and effectively regulate industry lobbying and alcohol advertising in all media, especially marketing targeted to teenagers and young people in indigenous communities
- to control smuggling and address the black market for alcohol beverages (tax evasion) in Latin America.

These issues and actions urgently need to be made visible and placed on the public agenda at the global level. It was also raised that training was required on how best to collaborate as Indigenous peoples and others to address these harms.

Ensuring an effective Indigenous voice in policy forums

Conditions for ensuring a strong and effective Indigenous voice in policy forums include:

- Indigenous representatives having shared decision-making power, rather than being included in an advisory capacity
- ensuring that Indigenous representatives reflect those communities most impacted and that those representatives are chosen by those communities, so that local knowledge systems are considered alongside Western academic evidence, and the multiple lived realities of Indigenous communities can be heard
- providing appropriate funding and resources to support Indigenous participation
- strengthening Indigenous networks globally to influence alcohol harm reduction and health policy
- supporting, funding and sharing Indigenous-led research on what works for Indigenous peoples
- providing translation services, so Indigenous peoples can speak in their own local languages, and an environment that makes Indigenous peoples feel comfortable, welcome and listened to, and able to speak freely without feeling threatened or like a minority voice.

Staying connected moving forward

Ideas for staying connected included:

- regular Indigenous-led focused forums and/or events
- ongoing relationship building and strengthening (not just one-off conference engagements)
- virtual collaboration and networking spaces and shared online resource hubs
- shared policy and research platforms
- peer learning, mentoring and leadership support networks.

How GAPA can support these aspirations

Suggestions for how GAPA could best support the aspirations that emerged from the Indigenous event included:

- creating a platform that would give Indigenous leaders and practitioners a voice and seat at the policy table to drive community-led grassroots policy, rather than government and mainstream controlling the global agenda
- supporting the priorities identified by Indigenous peoples at this event
- resourcing and/or advocating for the provision of funding for Indigenous-led forums, research, and other initiatives to prevent and reduce alcohol harm in Indigenous communities
- creating cultural and safe spaces and continuing to provide opportunities for Indigenous peoples to come together, similar to this Indigenous event
- advocating for the Indigenous voice as an ally – not speaking for Indigenous peoples
- committing to and establishing a genuine partnership – not just a tack on consultation arrangement.

To summarise, Indigenous peoples generally shared a desire to: determine what happens with alcohol in their communities; break the cycle of intergenerational harm by returning to their traditional cultural practices and holistic approaches to healing; have appropriate Indigenous representation within Indigenous-friendly policy forums and genuine decision-making powers at local and global policy levels; and be funded to lead their own research and interventions. They called on GAPA and allies to support these aspirations.

Also highlighted was the need: to address alcohol industry targeting of, and impacts on Indigenous communities; for more effective alcohol regulation and monitoring of Indigenous harm; and to tackle the socio-economic factors impacting on inequitable alcohol harm in Indigenous communities.

Finally, participants were keen for GAPA to: provide regular Indigenous-led forums; establish a platform to enable ongoing relationship building, support and sharing of resources; commit to a genuine partnership with Indigenous peoples; and support and resource Indigenous priorities and participation at the policy table.

Appendix 1: Proposals by the Brazilian and Colombian Indigenous peoples' working group

Alongside GAPAs Indigenous pre-conference event, a group of Indigenous people from Brazil, representing seven different groups (Huni Kui, Guarani Kaiowá, Tukano, Tariano, Pitaguary, Madija, and Terena) and one from Colombia (Makuna) developed a list of proposals for GAPA, which were to complement the outcomes of the Indigenous event. A total of eight Indigenous people and three non-Indigenous people formed part of this group. The session was facilitated by Georgia Silva and Pablo Montoya. The proposals developed by this group are as follows:

- Effective participation of indigenous and native peoples is ensured in the construction of global instruments and deliberative forums on alcohol policies (including the development of a new Global Action Plan on Alcohol post-2030), ratifying the principles of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization.
- Linguistic and methodological adaptation of the Global Action Plan on Alcohol 2022-2030 for indigenous languages.
- Regional and national discussions with indigenous peoples for the presentation of the Global Action Plan on Alcohol 2022-2030, definition of priorities and adaptation of interventions for 2030, with the construction of specific targets and indicators.
- Funding for investigative and research processes on the impacts of interventions carried out to prevent alcohol use and consumption among indigenous peoples, with the effective participation of indigenous peoples in the development, implementation, and evaluation.
- State funding for community-based strategies for the prevention and reduction of risks and harms from alcohol use, strengthening indigenous organizations, peer education, and educational communication processes with indigenous youth.
- Monitoring of slave-like labour practices where indigenous peoples are paid with alcohol and other drugs.
- Funding for projects aimed at territorial and environmental protection in Indigenous territories where drug trafficking and environmental crimes are present, considering that one of their impacts is the intensification of violence and alcohol use.
- Implementation of public policies for access to rights (health, education, social assistance) and addressing violence (interpersonal and self-inflicted) in Indigenous territories, with a view to mitigating the social, environmental, and political conditions that make Indigenous peoples vulnerable to problematic alcohol use.
- Implementation of culturally and age-appropriate services, programmes, and actions for the prevention of alcohol use among Indigenous peoples, with the effective participation of these peoples in the development, planning, execution, and evaluation.
- Funding for projects of Indigenous communities and implementation of public policies to strengthen Indigenous medicines and ancestral care technologies for protection and prevention of alcohol use and associated problems among Indigenous peoples.
- Improvement of the monitoring and control of the trade in alcoholic beverages, considering the vulnerabilities associated with alcohol consumption among Indigenous peoples and communities.
- International seminar specifically for indigenous peoples, with funding for the participation of these peoples, to discuss alcohol use, share experiences, and develop effective and appropriate proposals for the prevention and reduction of alcohol-related risks and harms.
- Development and funding of opportunities for intercultural education, leisure, and cultural activities as strategies for protection against and prevention of alcohol use in indigenous communities.

Appendix 2: List of participants

Name	Country
Jason Alexander	Aotearoa New Zealand
Anne Babb	Finland
Øystein Bakke	Norway
Claire Biribawa	Uganda
Aimee Brownbill	Australia
Shirleyanne Brown	Aotearoa New Zealand
Sally Casswell	Aotearoa New Zealand
Julia Dolla	Brazil
Carina Ferreira-Borges	Portugal / Denmark
Nancy Fitzpatrick	Canada
Jasmine Graham	Aotearoa New Zealand
Julian Kama Adrian Ihaia Reweti	Aotearoa New Zealand
Sherie Ihaia Reweti	Aotearoa New Zealand
Tonoman Marcos Kulina	Brazil
Maria Florencia Leiva	Argentina
Aadielah Maker-Diedericks	South Africa
Kristen Maynard	Aotearoa New Zealand
AJ Montesa	Philippines
Pablo Montoya Chica	Colombia
Jordan Moon	Aotearoa New Zealand
Ronei Antonio Morais	Brazil
Lesly Naminez	Guatemala
Fabiane Bueno Ormerod	Brazil / Aotearoa New Zealand
Maria Pizzaro	Argentina
Ana Lucia Pontes	Brazil
Edel Rosane Ristow	Brazil
Maria Camila Rodriguez van der Hammen	Colombia
Estefania Suarez Arregui	Ecuador
Richard Albeiro Valencia Uribe	Colombia
Jose Julio Villalba Vasquez	Ecuador
Anders Wengen	Norway
Janine White	South Africa

Emmett Isaac and Justine Maynard from Aotearoa New Zealand also attended in a supportive capacity.

Appendix 3: Mauri stone: Whakapapa Oranga



The name of the mauri stone 'whakapapa oranga' speaks to the life-giving threads of whakapapa (genealogy) that bind all beings across time and space affirming that oranga (wellbeing) is sustained through our relationships with each other, with our environment and with our ancestral foundations.

Sourced from the Hokianga harbour in the Far North of the North Island of Aotearoa – a place imbued with the legacy of the Māori ancestor Kupe – this stone carries the mauri (life force) of departure and return. Hokianga is remembered as the point from which Kupe journeyed back to Hawaiki and thus sustains and embodies cycles of migration remembrance and renewal and helps us to reflect on origins, destinations and the pathways that shape human behaviour.

The kowhaiwhai patterns (traditional Māori artform) enveloping the stone invoke the flowing currents of wai (water) representing the movement of energy, knowledge and life force. These patterns remind us that wellbeing is not static but dynamic requiring balance and continuous care.

The three Mangopare designs symbolise protection, leadership and resilience. Drawing from the form of the hammerhead shark they represent guardianship of people and kaupapa – the courage to navigate complex environments and the strength to uphold integrity in the face of adversity. Together they speak to the role of collective leadership in advancing equitable and life affirming courses of action.

The base of the mauri stone is crafted from totara – a revered ancestor of the forest. It signifies endurance and wisdom. As the foundation it anchors the mauri stone in stability and continuity, while also representing Papatūānuku our earth mother. It is a reminder that all strategy must be grounded in respect for the land and the ecosystems that sustain life.

The whakarei (surface design) of kiri kiore (rat skin) symbolises adaptability, resourcefulness and the intimate relationships between species within an ecosystem. It acknowledges the complexities of human behaviour and the need for distinct culturally grounded responses to issues we face.

The protective cover also adorned with the kiri kiore patterns serves as both a spiritual and physical safeguard. When placed over the mauri stone it protects its sacred essence. When removed it becomes a base to elevate and support the mauri stone in its display. This dual protection reflects the balance between protection and openness and the responsibility to uphold the mauri.

When the mauri stone is placed on display it also gives life to the proverb 'he toka tumoana a ki nga a tai' – like a rock standing firm in the ocean lashed by the tides. It represents resilience, steadfastness and the enduring strength to withstand the changing currents of the world. In this way Whakapapa Oranga stands not only as a taonga but as a living metaphor of courage, balance and the unwavering pursuit of oranga.