



# Indigenous Research Network

**Newsletter Issue | March 2025**

## *Empowering Traditional Knowledge and Practices*

Launched in 2022, the **Indigenous Research Network (IRN)** is a collaborative network of the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA). Co-led by **New Zealand** and **Samoa**, the IRN aims to strengthen indigenous voices in global agricultural issues and empower traditional knowledge and practices to be used in our fight against climate change. We aim to overcome the barriers in career pipelines and use traditional knowledge and methods of learning to build capability and co-design indigenous-to-indigenous collaborations.

## OUR GOALS

### LEADERSHIP

*Build scientific capability and capacity within their communities and globally*

### INFLUENCE

*Ensure indigenous perspectives are actively and consistently considered in GRA decisions.*

### EDUCATION

*Provide immersive indigenous experiences through the exchange of knowledge & ideas*

### EMPLOYMENT

*Create experiences that retain indigenous talent in mainstream institutions*

# Roundup May-Dec 2024

## Second annual meeting in Samoa!



We had our second annual meeting and field trip hosted in Samoa, 24-25 May 2024.

More information on [page 4 & 5](#).



Ruth Aickin, former IRN Co-Chair featured her sustainable farm on Country Calendars. [WATCH NOW.](#)

## *We connected*

The Embassy of Mexico hosted the panel Voices across time and space: Native languages from New Zealand and Mexico. Katarina Edmonds, Professor at Waikato University and Ben Matthews, Senior Policy Analyst in International Maori Agribusiness represented the IRN and New Zealand in this exchange. This event was a step towards bridging the gap between scientists, policy makers, and traditional knowledge experts.

## *We empowered young leaders*



Shiloh Babbington, GRA Lead of the IRN hosted the second workshop of the series 'Indigenous Research Network: The Power of Inclusivity' in Trujillo, Peru. This workshop showcased young indigenous leaders from across Latin America and encouraged inclusivity and recognition of their efforts globally. See more on [page 6 & 7](#).



Shiloh spent time in Washington DC, U.S.A., where she met with policy makers and indigenous institutions to promote the IRN and further develop multilateral collaborations for the Indigenous Research Network. See more on [page 10](#).



# Welcome our new co-chairs

## *Angelika Tugaga, Samoa Co-Chair*

is an advocate of women in science, contributing to some ground breaking research in various areas of agriculture including postharvest, plant protection – pest and disease diagnostic and identification, Tissue Culture etc.



She holds a Master's Degree in Plant Pathology (nematology) from Zhejiang University in China, as well as a Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture from the University of the South Pacific Alafua Campus. Angelika is currently the manager for the Agriculture Research Division of the Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa. She accumulates valuable diversity of knowledge and experience including leadership and management throughout her career. She is a devout Christian, a hardworking mother of three, committed and very dedicated to her work and family.

## *Simon McDonald, New Zealand Co-Chair*

manages New Zealand's Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) Maori Agribusiness Climate & Water Group. He works with Maori landowners and agribusinesses to improve climate adaptation capacity to adverse events and to mitigate on-farm GHG emissions, all the while aiming to support productive and profitable primary sector businesses.



“My ancestral connection extends back to the original Old McDonald's farm on the opposite side of world, but I grew up on a dairy farm adjacent to my wider family's sheep, beef, and dairy interests in central Taranaki. My formative years were spent on-farm, building an understanding of all the things that contribute to rural community resilience. I was fortunate to have a grandfather that held true to his customary fishing interests, and from a young age I developed a passion for the ocean, more specifically kaimoana (seafood) and how and where I'd go about sourcing it. That passion eventually led me off the farm

and into post graduate studies that included oceanography and the impact of water temperature and currents on the distribution of marine organisms.”

Simon now works alongside Maori Agribusinesses, lifting up indigenous principles to support better management of our agricultural assets, and supporting their ambition and efforts to meet international market expectations for high-value products – particularly for authentic zero carbon products.

# IRN in Samoa

The 2024 annual meeting of the IRN was held at the Pacific Climate Change Centre of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) in Apia, Samoa on the 24 May 2024. This meeting was followed by a field visit to Savaii, Samoa on 25 May 2024.

Attendees included: 68 participants in-person and 10 participants virtually, representing 21 different countries.

This meeting began with an overview of the Pacific Islands efforts to adapt to the impacts of Climate Change from a traditional knowledge lens.

The IRN empowers the growing dedication to integrate traditional knowledge with contemporary scientific methods to forge pathways to sustainable development. Speakers each complimented this dedication by providing on ground examples in Samoa, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands.

*“There is greater potential for indigenous and local knowledge to contribute further to global challenges... where Indigenous knowledge and science can work together to address a jointly defined problem, each bringing their own expertise to the table...”*  
– Siosina Lui, Samoa







This trip has a major focus on the Pacific and its relation to other countries in related areas. The IRN meeting **highlighted the importance of local knowledge and identified gaps in resources** and the outflow of people seeking better opportunities. The IRN discussed how they could help address these issues.

The main outcome to come from this trip is that the IRN have decided to collaborate on creating their own GRA Flagship project. This project will be focused on Indigenous circular food systems according to traditional knowledge and led by Indigenous community leaders in different parts of the world.

For the IRN field visit, participants travelled to Savaii, Samoa to explore former IRN Co-Chair Ruth Aickin's farm. Ruth gave a comprehensive tour of Rea Farms, showcasing sustainable farming practices and the integration of traditional knowledge in modern agriculture.

During this field visit, participants were shown the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the island of Savaii.

*Highlight video of the POPCCC, IRN meeting, and extensive farm tour in Samoa:*

**[WATCH HERE.](#)**



# IRN in Peru

## ***“Indigenous Research Network: The Power of Inclusivity”***

is a workshop series created by Shiloh Babbington and brought to life through the collaboration of the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

Hosted by New Zealand and co-sponsored by Australia, the United States, Canada, and Peru. This workshop series focused on gathering young emerging leaders working in their communities to share their experiences and explore indigenous-led measures to reduce the impact of climate change on food systems and food security.

Following the first workshop online in November 2023, Shiloh hosted the second workshop in-person on 14 August 2024 in Trujillo, Peru. This workshop was simultaneously translated into English and Spanish and had a Latin America focus.

Attendees included:  
69 participants representing  
23 different countries.

Key objectives included:

- Strengthening the ability and leadership capacity of indigenous youth in food and agricultural systems and climate resilience.
- International collaboration to include indigenous youth in their work and empower them in their emerging leadership roles.
- Preserving and honouring traditional knowledge and practices passed down through generations.







Shiloh created this platform to be a safe space for young indigenous voices to lead the conversation, share experiences, and offer solutions to climate-related challenges. This workshop had collaborative activities to make the most out of the creativity and expertise of people in the room.

*Participants of this series:*

- recognized the vital connection between culture, language, land, and climate, and the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge into climate adaptation and food security efforts.
- were inspired to create inclusive spaces and partnerships for young indigenous people to contribute to decision-making processes.
- were motivated to design actionable outcomes to be implemented by participant economies, encouraging governments to involve youth in policy areas, particularly in food systems, agriculture, and climate resilience.

*Indigenous Research Network: The Power of Inclusivity* set the stage for future collaboration, ensuring that indigenous youth continue to have a platform in global conversations, decisions, and actions about food systems, agriculture and climate change. It has been noted numerous times as one of the most interactive workshops at APEC. 17 member countries of the IRN have come from this workshop series.

*Workshop series report:*

[\*\*READ HERE\*\*](#)



# Thai - Maori

*“I found my tribe on the other side of the world”*

The Thailand and New Zealand partnership project is the first research collaboration and exchange of the Indigenous Research Network. This project is being co-developed between the Whareponga Whenua Collective per Pahiitaua Inc in New Zealand and the Agri-Nature Foundation (Mab Aung Natural Agriculture Learning Centre) in Thailand.

This relationship began in 2023 when a delegation from the Agri-Nature Foundation cultivated relationships with Maori tribes in New Zealand at the IRN first annual meeting. The initial discussions in New Zealand laid the foundation for a meaningful partnership, where both parties could share insights and explore sustainable agricultural strategies that honour their respective cultural heritages.

As a continuation of this project, in early 2024, a New Zealand Maori delegation from the Whareponga Whenua Collective travelled to Thailand.

This trip was crucial for the development of this partnership project as it facilitated a deeper understanding of the Thai Agri-Nature Foundation to inform elements of resonance and divergence for each partner. Both delegations have been able to immerse themselves in each other's cultures, values, and practices.







This trip not only deepened their understanding of Indigenous sustainability practices but also provided NZ Maori with invaluable firsthand experiences in cultivating crops within the Thai context.

*It was an enriching experience, allowing us to forge stronger ties and gain practical knowledge that we could bring back to our community.*  
- Turuhira Keelan-Dell



Looking ahead, the Thai Agri-Nature team will return to New Zealand in September 2025. This visit aims to assess their progress, share what they have learned, and further strengthen their partnership. Through this continued exchange, these two diverse communities are fostering a lasting relationship that promotes cultural collaboration between Thailand and New Zealand.



*“Even though we live on different sides of the world and we speak different languages, what's important is that we share the same values of honouring the wisdom of our ancestors.”* - Tang



The connection that has grown between these different cultures, lifestyles, and languages has been incredible to watch and the IRN are looking forward to supporting more relationships like this in the future.





# IRN Opportunities



## Lima, Peru

While in Peru for APEC, Shiloh spent a few weeks in Lima. Significant relationships were cultivated with government officials and indigenous organizations, positioning Peru as a key player in the IRN's ongoing research collaborations in Latin America. Shiloh immersed herself in the vibrant essence of Peru's culture, lifestyle, and language. She gained valuable insights into the dynamics of indigenous communities in Peru and best practices for connecting within the IRN. Shiloh reconnected with Profonanpe, an environmental organisation that has strong ties to indigenous communities across Peru. The relationship with Profonanpe was built during APEC in Seattle, 2023. The IRN looks toward working closer with Profonanpe and will continue to build upon the relationships made during this trip.



## Washington DC, The United States

Through the Climate Smart Agricultural (CSA) Initiative, the New Zealand Government gave Shiloh the opportunity to extend her trip to Peru by including two weeks in Washington DC, The United States. Shiloh met with policy makers and indigenous institutions to promote the Indigenous Research Network and brainstorm potential multilateral collaborations. An IRN flagship project focused on indigenous circular food systems, grounded in traditional knowledge, is currently in development. Shiloh actively promoted this project to gauge global interest and secure potential partners ahead of its formal adoption. In Washington DC, a snowball effect of connections unfolded. Those who met Shiloh eagerly took on the mission of linking her with organisations focused on indigenous food, agriculture, and climate change resilience. The relationships made during this trip opened doors she may never have encountered otherwise.



*"This trip was crucial for promoting what we have done and the potential we can do"*



# Member Spotlight



## *Turuhira Dell-Keelan*

*Intern Graduate to the  
Indigenous Research Network  
and New Zealand's Tangata  
Whenua Alliance*

"My experience with the Indigenous Research Network has shown me the importance of fostering connections and supporting the development of our rangatahi (youth). Throughout my internship, I witnessed the profound connection that Indigenous peoples have with their land and food.

During my internship, I had the privilege of playing a pivotal role in the development and execution of a groundbreaking project that artfully bridged Indigenous knowledge with agricultural practices spanning Thailand and New Zealand. This immersive experience not only deepened my insights into land block governance and community engagement but also illuminated the powerful role research can play in inspiring and uplifting Indigenous youth.

*My internship has not only equipped me with practical skills in project facilitation and cross-cultural communication but has also underscored the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing global agricultural challenges through Indigenous perspectives. I'm eager to see the long-term impact of this initiative on the communities involved and the knowledge that will continue to flow between our two nations.*

This internship has taught me essential tools and strategies for navigating the academic landscape, thus, enabling me to fulfill multiple roles within my community. I have had the unique challenge and privilege of balancing my responsibilities as a stay-at-home mother during this internship. I am immensely grateful for the ability to navigate both motherhood and professional commitments, as this experience has provided me with a distinct perspective and reinforced my dedication to excel in both spheres of my life.

As I contemplate my future aspirations, I am increasingly drawn to the prospect of pursuing a research pathway, particularly in ways that connect to Whareponga, my cherished home. I possess a deep commitment to contributing to the well-being and development of our valley, and I am determined to engage in community initiatives, research endeavours, and other avenues that support its growth."







# IRN Flagship Project

The Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA) Indigenous Research Network and Circular Food Systems Network are wanting to create our first flagship project.

A GRA flagship project is a multicountry funded and implemented project with a predetermined outcome to be achieved within a 3-4 year period. The value of establishing a flagship project for the IRN is its ability to create internationally transferable knowledge and practices.

It is proposed that this flagship project focuses on

*‘Indigenous circular food systems according to traditional knowledge.’*

The project will explore how indigenous traditional knowledge and practices can enhance the sustainable adoptions of circular food systems, increasing food production in communities with minimal emissions. This project will:



- ◌ explore sustainable food systems,
- ◌ develop case studies,
- ◌ create transferable knowledge, and promote global collaboration on food security.

The IRN are looking to develop a portfolio of case studies highlighting different indigenous communities.

We welcome the opportunity for YOU to be involved!



**Do you want to join  
the first ever  
IRN Flagship Project?**

**Sign up HERE  
to be involved!**





# Upcoming Events

## ★ IRN Third annual meeting

Date: 11-13 June 2025

Location: Taranaki, New Zealand

## ★ IRN/FONTAGRO Webinar series

Date: Multiple throughout 2025 (tbd)

Platform: ZOOM

## ★ Adaptation Futures Conference

Date: October 2025

Location: Christchurch, New Zealand





# International Opportunities

## *JOB OPPORTUNITY*

Position: Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity (AFSE) Program Director

AFSE is an Indigenous-led social change program based at the University of Melbourne. The Program Director to help lead the fellowship, this role offers a unique chance to shape the future of the program through innovative curriculum development and academic leadership.

The ideal candidate brings lived experiences of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Māori or Pacific cultures and communities. They will have an intrinsic understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of knowing and doing.

More information [HERE](#).

## *STUDENT/GRADUATE OPPORTUNITY*

Hoover Institution's Indigenous Student Seminar at Stanford University

Apply now for the Indigenous Student Seminar at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University! This FREE, 4-day residential seminar from August 4-8, 2025 is an incredible opportunity for Indigenous college students and recent graduates to deepen their understanding of:  
tribal governance, federal policy, and Indigenous entrepreneurship.

Application materials include:

CV, transcript, a 1,000-word letter of intent, and Letter of Recommendation.

- ★ **Eligibility:** Current undergraduate students (sophomores, juniors, seniors) and recent graduates (undergraduate or graduate).
- ★ **Cost:** Fully funded (Lodging, food, and program fees covered. **Travel costs are not included**).
- ★ **Certificate:** Participants will receive a Certificate of Completion, endorsed by Stanford's Hoover Institution.

More information [HERE](#).



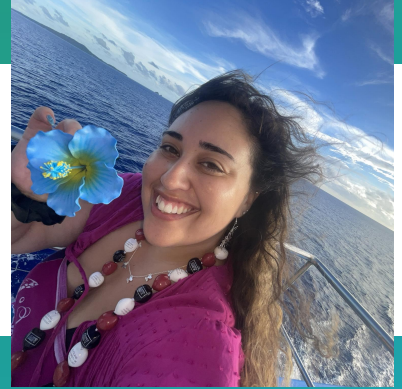
# Our Co-Chairs



Angelika Tugaga  
(Samoa Co-Chair)



Simon MacDonald  
(NZ Co-Chair)

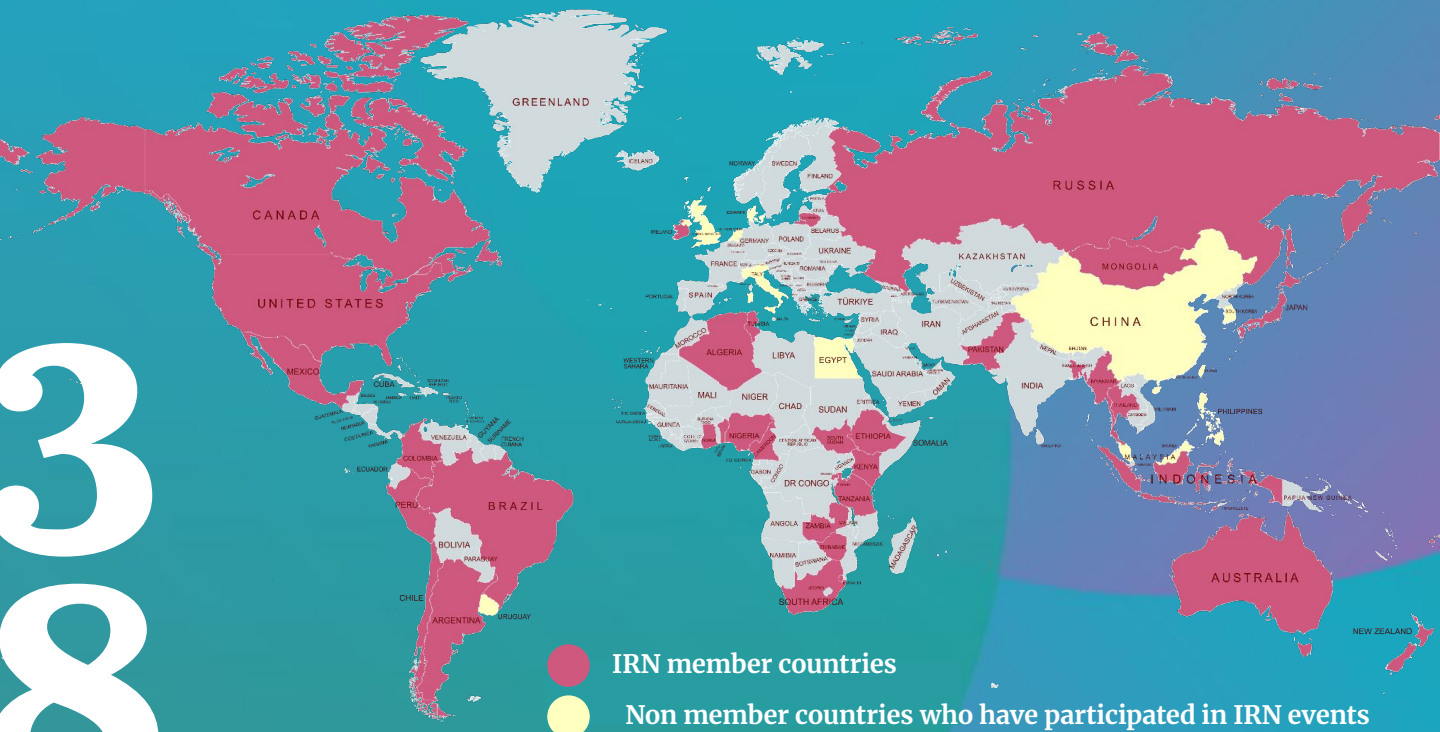


Shiloh Babbington  
(GRA Lead)

*No Taranaki ahau  
Ko Te Atihaunui-a-Paparangi  
me Te Atiawa oku iwi  
Ko Ngati Ruaka toku hapu  
kainga*

*Ngāti Porou,  
Ngāti Kahungunu  
ki te Wairoa*

# Our Member Countries





# We want to hear from you!

We want this newsletter to be for you, and by you.

We're always looking for things to share – be it resilience stories, something awesome you've recently done, or events happening in your area.

[Email us your idea](#)

## WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR...



### Events

Let us know about upcoming events relevant to the IRN in your area.



### Our People

Want to share a great story? Get in touch so we can celebrate our communities together.



### Updates

Promote your programmes in our newsletter – send us a short description and a nice picture, and we'll include it.



Indigenous  
Research  
Network



GLOBAL  
RESEARCH  
ALLIANCE  
ON AGRICULTURAL  
GREENHOUSE GASES

For more information, please visit our website, or contact Shiloh Babbington at [Shiloh.Babbington@globalresearchalliance.org](mailto:Shiloh.Babbington@globalresearchalliance.org)

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