

#ZenAI Conference 2026

# Programme



**Dr. Jumoke Giwa**  
Convenor  
Founder, Fikun Trust  
GBV, CSAM, & Agentic AI



**Tea Mustać**  
Keynote Speaker  
AI governance & privacy specialist



**Tom Wu**  
Founder, Go Bear AI



**Juliet Kego**  
Co-founder  
Whole Woman Network



**Rochelle Stewart-Allen**  
Keynote Speaker  
Ethical and human-centred AI adoption



**Dr. Kamal Heidari**  
Applied Linguistics AI



**Modupe Mujota**  
Chief Strategy Officer  
Baltic Street Wellness Solutions



**Heather Newell**  
Aging futures & AI

26 February 2026

09:00 – 13:00 NZDT

AM106 Alan MacDiarmid  
Victoria University of Wellington  
Kelburn campus  
Aotearoa New Zealand

**Zen in the age of AI**

# #ZenAI Conference 2026

AGENDA		
9:00-9:15am	Registration and Tea/Coffee	
9:15-9:30am	Opening Karakia	
	Welcome Remarks	Dr. Jumoke Giwa #ZenAI Conference Convenor Founder, Fikun Trust
	Opening Remarks	Sue Sinclair Secretary, Board of Trustees Initiatives of Change New Zealand
9:30-10:45am	Session I: AI Privacy, Data Protection, and Learning Approaches	
9:30-9:50am	<b>Keynote I</b> Slowing Down the Machine: Why Governance Matters	Tea Mustać
9:50-10:35am	Panel I Presentations	
	Reasons and Consequences of Older People's Exclusion from AI Design	Heather Newell
	How AI is Redefining Input in L2 Learning: From Comprehensible Input to Contextually Conscious Input	Dr. Kamal Heidari
	Who is not in the Room? The AI Threats, Trade-offs and Transformations	Juliet Kego
10:35-10:45am	Panel I Q&A	
10:45-11:00am	Morning Tea break	
11:00am-12:15pm	Session II: Wellness and Wellbeing in the age of AI	
11:00-11:20am	<b>Keynote II</b> Living Wisely with AI	Rochelle Stewart-Allen
11:20-12:05pm	Panel II Presentations	
	Revisiting the Dark Web: GBV, CSAM and Agentic AI	Dr. Jumoke Giwa
	Balancing Career Acceleration and Progression in the age of AI	Tom Wu
	Humans First: Mental Health, Care and Belonging in the era of AI and robotics	Modupe Mujota
12:05-12:15pm	Panel II Q&A	
12:15-12:30pm	Closing Remarks	Nigel Cooper Chair, Board of Trustees Initiatives of Change New Zealand
	Closing Karakia	
12:30-1:00pm	Lunch & Network	

# Zen in the age of AI

# #ZenAI Conference 2026

## Zen in the age of AI

#ZenAI Conference 2026, **Zen in the age of AI** aims to bring people together across multiple countries to discuss and draw attention to wellness and wellbeing as technological acceleration into artificial intelligence and robotics creates anxieties across a diversity of fields and human endeavours. Fikun Trust organised this conference as part of global community engagement under its Advocacy and Dialogue focus areas. We are grateful to Initiatives of Change New Zealand for their generous sponsorship of the #ZenAI Conference 2026. As part of a global organisation that works on peace building initiatives and dialogues, Initiatives of Change New Zealand's involvement in the #ZenAI Conference aids Fikun Trust's efforts of strengthening people's inner peace and wellbeing while navigating this constantly shifting and vast landscape of anxieties brought on by technological advancements due to accelerated adoption and deployment of AI in all spheres of life. Fikun Trust also appreciate the numerous supporters, including Victoria University of Wellington for hosting this important advocacy campaign and global dialogue. For this 2026 edition of the #ZenAI Conference in Aotearoa New Zealand, we are privileged to be joined by keynote speakers, presenters and panelists from Canada, Croatia, Iran, Nigeria, and the United States of America.

## Fikun Trust

Fikun means Enrich. Fikun was established in 2015 with the aim of enriching people's lives by building their capacity through education. Our vision is a world where people have unhindered access to education. Our mission is to empower people by facilitating their access to education in and outside the classroom. Fikun Trust works to amplify the voices of the underprivileged and help people live well with focus on good health, mental health and overall wellbeing. We use digital media to coordinate capacity building services and programs. Our focus areas are Advocacy, Dialogue, and Research. Through strategic advocacy, impactful dialogues, and evidence-based research, Fikun Trust creates meaningful change in New Zealand, Nigeria and some countries around the world from which people engage with our psychoeducational teaching and learning. These are critical and essential community development engagements that closely align with our desire to contribute meaningfully to the sustainable development goals and build sustainable futures.

# Zen in the age of AI

## Opening Karakia

Whakataka te hau ki te uru

Cease the winds from the west

Whakataka te hau ki te tonga

Cease the winds from the south

Kia mākinakina ki uta

Let the breeze blow over the land

Kia mātaratara ki tai

Let the breeze blow over the ocean

E hī ake ana te atakura

Let the rip-tipped dawn

He tio, he huka, he hau hū

Come with a sharpened air

Tīhei mauri ora!

A touch of frost, a promise of a glorious day.

## Opening Remarks

**Sue Sinclair**

**Secretary, Board of Trustees; Initiatives of Change New Zealand**



I am the current secretary of the Initiatives of Change New Zealand Board of Trustees and I live in Christchurch.

Initiatives of Change (IofC) is a world-wide community of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds, who are committed to the transformation of society through changes in human motives and behaviour, starting with their own.

Later today, Nigel Cooper, our chair, will detail some examples of how individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand have taken up the challenge of being part of a movement for change personally and globally.

In so doing we can be part of building trust across the world's divides. My own experience is that in taking time to be quiet, inspired thoughts for action do come making us agents of change.

We support Fikun Trust with the focus on education that supports meaningful change for individuals.

## Session I: AI Privacy, Data Protection, and Learning Approaches

### Keynote I



**Tea Mustać**  
Keynote Speaker  
AI governance & privacy specialist

Tea Mustać is an AI governance and privacy specialist, currently pursuing an LL.M. at Harvard Law School. She works at the intersection of AI governance and data protection, helping organizations turn abstract regulation into practical action. Tea co-hosts *Reg Int: Decoding AI Regulation* and co-authored *The AI Act Compact*. Her work has been recognized with the European Young Lawyers Award and the My Data Is Mine Award. She has spoken at global events like Web Summit and Dublin Tech Summit and regularly leads workshops on AI, tech policy, and leadership.

### Presentation

#### Slowing Down the Machine: Why Governance Matters

Artificial intelligence systems are built for efficiency. Faster decisions, faster processes, faster deployment. Human societies, however, depend on understanding. When the pace of machines exceeds the pace at which humans can meaningfully engage, anxiety is a rational response. This keynote explores why AI governance matters not as a mechanism of control, but as a way of deliberately slowing down at critical moments. Drawing on practical experience with AI regulation and real-world implementation, the talk shows how governance can introduce pauses into automated systems. Rather than opposing innovation, governance becomes the condition that allows AI to develop in ways that remain intelligible and aligned with our values.

## Session I: AI Privacy, Data Protection, and Learning Approaches



Heather Newell  
Aging futures & AI

Heather Newell, MComms, FFIA Emeritus is a doctoral student at Massey University focusing on the impact of AI on older people and the organisations that serve them. As a former CEO of the Senionet Federation, ACE Aotearoa Educator of the Year (2022) and regular community commentator on AI issues, Heather is on a mission to ensure our older generations are included in the benefits of new technologies.

### Presentation

#### **Reasons and Consequences of Older People's Exclusion from AI Design**

The potential benefits of AI to the wellbeing of older people are significant yet their voice is often unheard by AI developers and designers of AI products and services. This presentation explores the reasons and consequences of older people's exclusion from AI design, and reminds us of the responsibility we all have for ensuring the wellbeing of our older people.

## Session I: AI Privacy, Data Protection, and Learning Approaches



Dr. Kamal Heidari  
Applied Linguistics AI

Dr. Kamal Heidari is an applied linguist and language educator at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, where his research sits at the intersection of cognitive psychology, second language acquisition, and educational technology. His current research critically examines the role of AI-driven tools in L2 learning, asking not only whether they improve outcomes but how they reshape motivation, identity, and learner agency. With over 15 years of teaching experience across diverse contexts, including Iran, China, and New Zealand, Kamal is deeply committed to inclusive, evidence-based pedagogy trying to bridge theory, practice, and emerging technologies in second language acquisition in the 21st century.

### Presentation

#### **How AI is Redefining Input in L2 Learning: From Comprehensible Input to Contextually Conscious Input**

In L2 learning, Krashen's notion of comprehensible input ( $i+1$ ) has long guided pedagogy, but today's AI systems are transforming passive exposure into dynamic, context-aware interaction. This presentation explores how intelligent algorithms now curate linguistic input not only by proficiency level but also by learner emotion, cultural background, time of day, and even physiological state, detected via voice stress, typing rhythm, or wearable data. Rather than merely simplifying syntax, AI can simulate authentic, socially nuanced communication, offering learners dialogues that reflect real-world complexity while remaining psychologically accessible. Yet this hyper-personalization raises critical questions: When does adaptive input become a linguistic echo chamber? How do we preserve the productive friction essential for growth? Drawing on recent classroom pilots and ethical design frameworks, this presentation invites educators and technologists to reimagine AI not as a silent instructor, but as a mindful mediator attuned to both language and learner humanity.

## Session I: AI Privacy, Data Protection, and Learning Approaches



**Juliet Kego**  
Co-founder  
Whole Woman Network

Juliet 'Kego is a financial services consultant and transformational leader, poet, and co-founder of Whole Woman Network and Black Women Professional Cooperative. An emerging leader in Canada's Cooperative and Solidarity Economic sector, Juliet's pioneering work spans empowering immigrant women and youth, building thriving cooperatives, and driving culturally relevant financial literacy and social innovation across continents. As a strategist behind initiatives such as FLY (Financial Literacy for Youth) and FLOW (Financial Literacy & Opportunities for Women), Juliet inspires communities to lead with vision, solidarity, and impact. A passionate champion for equity and inclusion across intersectionalities, ethical leadership, and economic justice and empowerment, Juliet sits on several boards and has built networks that amplify diverse voices and unlock the potential of women and youth worldwide.

### Presentation

#### **Who is not in the room? The AI Threats, Trade-offs and Transformation**

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly embedded in every aspect of society, it mirrors both the potential and the prejudice of the data that fuels it. This presentation explores the critical question: who is being left out of the AI revolution? In a rapidly evolving socio-economic and political landscape, ethical, inclusive and human-centred AI design has become not only a moral imperative, but a strategic one. The discussion delves into how AI platforms can proactively ensure that historically underserved and equity-denied communities are represented and not further marginalized through biased data, algorithmic manipulation, or inequitable funding structures. It also examines how we can embed agency, privacy protection, data sovereignty, and fairness into AI development to avoid creating a digital environment that amplifies systemic disparities. By challenging assumptions of what counts as "valid" data, the presentation broadens the understanding of knowledge itself, and recognizes embodied experiences and implicit, informal wisdom from women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and racialized communities, including Black and Indigenous peoples. The audience will be invited to reflect on how inclusivity and justice can transform AI from a tool of exclusion into a catalyst for collective progress and ethical innovation.

## Session II: Wellness and Wellbeing in the age of AI

### Keynote II



Rochelle Stewart-Allen is a governance advisor, executive coach, and facilitator working across Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific. With over two decades of experience in open government, data-informed decision-making, and nonprofit leadership, Rochelle supports leaders and boards to navigate complexity with clarity, care, and courage. Her work sits at the intersection of governance, wellbeing, and ethical leadership, helping people adopt new tools — including AI — without losing sight of their purpose, values, or humanity.

### Presentation

#### Living Wisely with AI

Drawing on experience across open government, big data, and the nonprofit sector, this presentation explores AI not as a threat or a miracle but as a powerful tool shaped by human choices and values. Rochelle Stewart-Allen looks at what it takes to engage with AI calmly and confidently, including how mindset, wellbeing, ethics, and boundaries shape our relationship with new technology. She also unpacks generational friction around AI adoption, misuse and bias, and how our everyday inputs quietly train the algorithm. Rather than getting technical, the presentation centres on agency, responsibility, and wise use, offering a grounded, human way to live alongside AI without fear, dependency, or losing confidence in our own thinking.

# #ZenAI Conference 2026

## Session II: Wellness and Wellbeing in the age of AI



**Dr. Jumoke Giwa**  
Convenor  
Founder, Fikun Trust  
GBV, CSAM, & Agentic AI

Dr. Jumoke Giwa is a researcher and community development advocate with extensive experience working in Canada, China, New Zealand, and Nigeria. Her research interests include the use of digital technology for community and civic engagement; the intersection of wellbeing, aging, gender-based violence and mental health; policy development and its strategic implementation for sustainable futures. Jumoke's work has been recognized in the public, private, and community sectors on four continents. She envisions the #ZenAI Conference as a recurring event that brings academics, community and industry experts to multiple advocacy and dialogues about the complexities of life disruptions resulting from accelerated adoption of AI and robotics, and how to navigate and negotiate the inevitable accompanying changes with calmness, clarity, and confidence.

### Presentation

#### Revisiting the Dark Web: GBV, CSAM and Agentic AI

Arguably we all live online now, although our digital footprints are to varying degrees. Nonetheless, almost all of us are part of the digital production and consumption lines. Increasingly as Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption accelerates, more people are becoming producers than consumers or prosumers. The rise of agentic AI is a critical shift in AI deployment. There is a need to pay closer attention to this ongoing development. The pace and rate of pay-per-view sexually exploitative digital content is significantly increasing. The pre-existing epidemic of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Child Sexual Abuse Materials (CSAM) is now further complicated by human-prompted AI-generated materials. How do we safeguard vulnerable communities? What guardrails are already in place and which new ones need to be developed and deployed to ensure that agentic AI's benefits far outweigh its risks?

# Zen in the age of AI

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## Session II: Wellness and Wellbeing in the age of AI



Tom Wu  
Founder, Go Bear AI

Tom Wu arrived in Auckland in 2001 as an international student. His career journey began far from the corporate world — washing dishes in Asian restaurants and selling toys at night markets — before he steadily worked his way into large corporate environments. Tom is a large corporate veteran with 20+ years of experience in AI (Artificial Intelligence) and BI (Business Intelligence). Tom has worked across major organisations (ASB and Fonterra) and is now the founder of a job-seeker-centric AI startup, leading a small team focused on helping people access better career opportunities. Grounded, practical, and refreshingly honest, Tom brings real-world experience from both sides of the table. He is never short of insightful lessons and memorable stories — especially for those navigating their own career transitions.

### Presentation

#### Balancing Career Acceleration and Progression in the age of AI

In this presentation, Tom covers two powerful perspectives: from an employer's lens — learn how to land your first IT role faster in today's competitive market — what hiring managers are looking for, how to stand out, and how to beat the competition; from a former large-corporate veteran lens — discover how to grow beyond 'good' to 'great', accelerate your career progression, and increase your impact and influence within the corporate world (or maybe start your side hustling). Tom shares practical, no-fluff insights you won't find in textbooks.

# Zen in the age of AI

## Session II: Wellness and Wellbeing in the age of AI



**Modupe Mujota**  
Chief Strategy Officer  
Baltic Street Wellness Solutions

Modupe Mujota is the Chief Strategy Officer at Baltic Street Wellness Solutions, the leading peer-run behavioral health organization in New York State. She is an executive strategist with over 15 years of leadership experience across mental health, public policy, education, and organizational transformation. Modupe partners with executive leadership and boards to drive multi-year strategy, governance alignment, and systems change, with a focus on peer-led, recovery-oriented models that advance equity and community wellness. Her work sits at the intersection of data-informed decision-making, policy, innovation, and human-centered care. A Certified Peer Specialist, she brings a unique perspective on how intelligent systems, including AI, can responsibly support workforce effectiveness, service quality, and sustainable mental health outcomes.

### Presentation

#### **Human First: Mental Health, Care and Belonging in the era of AI and robotics**

As artificial intelligence and robotics accelerate across sectors, conversations about innovation and efficiency often outpace attention to human wellbeing. This presentation explores the mental health, emotional, and social implications of rapid technological change, including rising anxiety, identity disruption, and questions of belonging experienced across diverse fields and communities. Drawing on executive leadership in mental health and wellness systems, peer-led care models, and organizational strategy, the session examines how technological acceleration affects psychological safety, meaning, and connection. It challenges individual resilience narratives and instead centers care as a systems-level responsibility shaped by policy, design, and institutional values. Participants will leave with a renewed perspective on integrating innovation with compassion to support mental health and human dignity in an increasingly automated world.

## Closing Remarks

**Nigel Cooper**

**Chair, Board of Trustees; Initiatives of Change New Zealand**



I have had over 60 years of experience with Initiatives of Change and have been in many situations where listening to the inner voice has been critical to solving seemingly impossible situations.

In the 1960s, I was one of several MRA workers involved in helping Papua New Guinea's Paul Lapun, Member of the House of Assembly, find inspiration and direction through the country's largest crisis, when violence broke out over the development of a copper mine on Bougainville Island. Lapun, who later became Minister for Mines and PNG's first knight, had thoughts while meditating that made all the difference: "Go for solutions, not headlines", "If God put the copper in the ground, He can show us the right way to get it out again", "Appeal not to the High Court to stop the mine, but to the Prime Minister and Minister for External Territories to allow us to negotiate directly with the Mining Company Conzinc-Riotinto of Australia Ltd (CRA)."

In 1990, on board the *HMNZS Endeavour*, I was one of three MRA people asked to help the Bougainville negotiators and PNG Government come to an agreement, after more than two years of fighting and the loss of thousands of lives. Bernard Narokobi (Attorney General, PNG) had key thoughts when the talks were deadlocked, as he prayed and meditated. His thoughts led to unity when the newspapers were saying there was no chance of resolving the deadlocked situation.

Initiatives of Change identifies with the aims of Fikun Trust's *Zen in the age of AI* event, promoting both listening to the inner voice, meditation, God, and education.

I encourage you to meditate and reflect on the information the speakers have shared today, with a willingness to take action on the thoughts that come, whether it is putting right the wrongs you might have committed, helping others, solving problems, or taking inspired action without knowing what the results might be.

## Closing Karakia

Tuia ki runga	Stitch (unite/combine)
Tuia ki raro	Those that are above
Tuia ki roto	Those that are within
Tuia ki waho	And without
Tuia te here tangata	Bind the kinship strands of humanity
Ka rongo te pō	Permanent, consistent are the fibres of light
Ka rongo te ao	Draw these matters together in unity
Tūturu, whakamaua kia tina!	And give them substance
Tina!	The wisdom is bound, it collects
Haumi e, hui e! Tāiki e!	It is held!

# #ZenAI Conference 2026

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