waka kuaka

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AWARD OF THE 2022 NAYACAKALOU MEDAL

CAN THERE BE TRUST AFTER A HISTORY OF COLONIALISM AND EXPLOITATION?

PANDORA FULIMALO PEREIRA
Tāmaki Paenga Hira | Auckland War Memorial Museum

Fuli Pereira accepting the Nayacakalou Medal, 4 August 2022.

ABSTRACT: Pandora Fulimalo Pereira is the esteemed recipient of the 2022 Nayacakalou Medal, given for outstanding contribution to Pacific research and named after the late Dr Rusiate Nayacakalou (1927–1972). Dr Andrea Low, in her introduction of Fuli at the medal ceremony, referred to Fuli as "an innovator, advocate and champion for Pacific peoples and their treasures at Auckland Museum". Andrea highlighted Fuli's "singularity and leadership in developing and supporting radical Pacific methodologies", emphasising Fuli's national and international esteem as well as her impact as a role model and mentor in developing emerging Pacific museologists. This is a version of the talk that Fuli gave at the medal ceremony on her career and experiences as a Pacific curator in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Keywords: museum, Pacific curator, Indigenising museum practice, Nayacakalou

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My good friend Sean Mallon commented recently how well our respective children are doing at university, so much better than we had done. Though I agreed they were both doing well, I added that they are achieving as well as we expected. We had raised our respective children with our personal knowledge of New Zealand's social, political and educational systems, calibrated by our informed experiences—unlike our parents' generation, who were often at sea as to how to help and very often had untempered expectations.

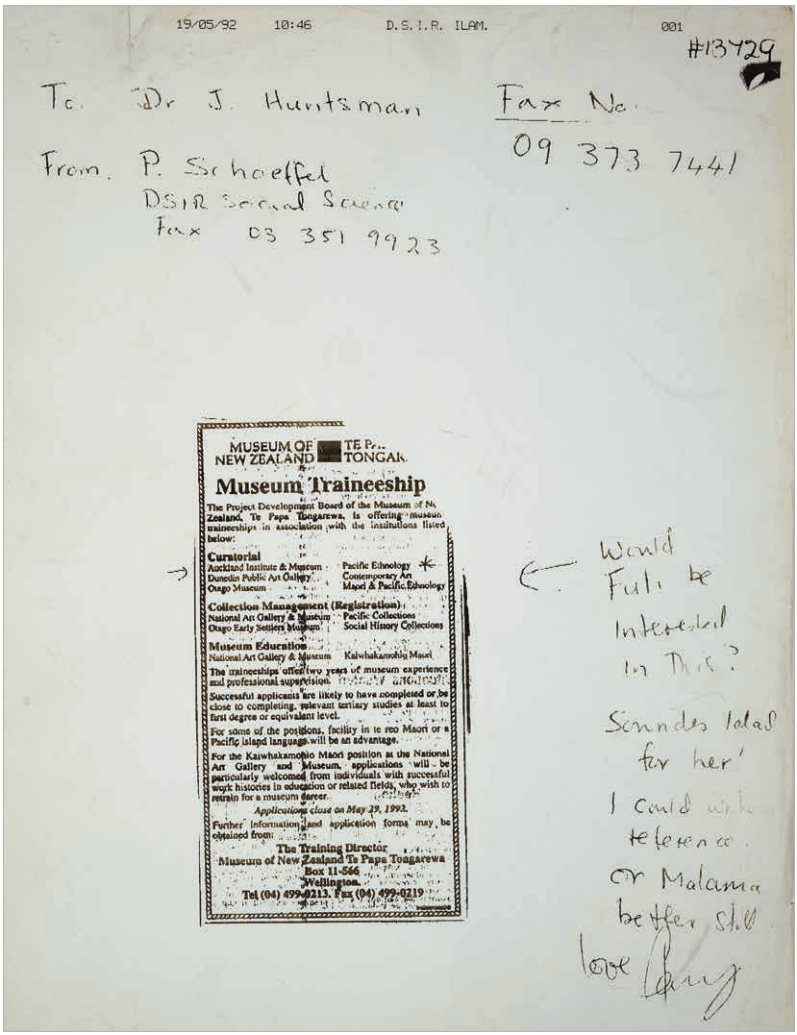
Sean Mallon is currently Senior Pacific Curator at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Sean and I grew up in Porirua, Wellington, which was often referred to as "the Ōtara of Wellington". I hadn't been to Ōtara when I first heard this phrase in the early 1980s, but I knew how both spaces were portrayed by the media and therefore I understood the reference: high Pacific and Māori populations working in low-skilled manufacturing jobs, lots of gang activity, easy access to alcohol and drugs, and poor. The typical deficit profile.

My response to Sean's comment above regarding our children's performances at university was not meant as a boast nor intended to minimise their achievements. Behind it is the knowledge that in the comparatively enriched environment that we provided them, our children's achievements are unsurprising. However, what might be surprising for many is that both of us, as children of new Pacific migrants raised in a low socioeconomic environment like Porirua, have achieved what we have today and hold curatorial positions at New Zealand's premier museums: Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

THE BEGINNING

In May 1992 Dr Judith Huntsman, then Associate Professor of social anthropology at the University of Auckland, received a fax from her friend and colleague Dr Penelope Schoeffel (Fig. 1). It was a newspaper advertisement announcing and promoting the museum traineeship programme at the Museum of New Zealand (MONZ) (now Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa). Five traineeships were offered, and of these two were curatorial positions in Pacific ethnology, one based at Auckland War Memorial Museum and the other at Otago Museum, alongside a collection management position with the Pacific collection at the National Art Gallery and Museum (Te Papa).

Following my graduation with an MA in anthropology in 1990 I accompanied Dr Huntsman to Tokelau as coresearcher on the research project Tokelau Women's Perceptions and Evaluations of Social Change. It was an opportunity for me to visit my homeland of Tokelau for the first (and only)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To. Dr J. Huntsman Fax No. 09 373 7441

From. P. Schoeffel
DSIR Social Science
Fax 03 351 9923

MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND TE P... TONGAR...

Museum Traineeship

The Project Development Board of the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, is offering museum traineeships in association with the institutions listed below:

Curatorial
Auckland Institute & Museum · Pacific Ethnology *
Dunedin Public Art Gallery · Contemporary Art
Otago Museum · Maori & Pacific Ethnology

Collection Management (Registration)
National Art Gallery & Museum · Pacific Collections
Otago Early Settlers Museum · Social History Collections

Museum Education
National Art Gallery & Museum · Kaiwhakamohio Maori

The traineeships offer two years of museum experience and professional supervision.

Successful applicants are likely to have completed or be close to completing relevant tertiary studies at least to first degree or equivalent level.

For some of the positions, facility in te reo Maori or a Pacific island language will be an advantage.

For the Kaiwhakamohio Maori position at the National Art Gallery and Museum, applications will be particularly welcomed from individuals with successful work histories in education or related fields, who wish to return to a museum career.

Applications close on May 29, 1992.

Further information and application forms may be obtained from:

The Training Director
Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
Box 11-566
Wellington.
Tel (04) 499-0213. Fax (04) 499-0219

Would Fuli be interested in this?

Sounds ideal for her!

I could write reference.

Or Malama better still

love Penny

Figure 1. Dr Penelope Schoeffel's fax sheet to Dr Judith Huntsman suggesting I apply for a MONZ traineeship. Her note suggests that she or her husband, Dr Malama Meleisea, then founding director of the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies at Canterbury University, would offer supporting references. This set me on my career path at the Museum.

time and to put into practice my academic training. In Tokelau my university degrees and high-functioning capabilities in the outside world meant little when I didn't have the basic skills or knowledge that any five-year-old has within the community. Tokelau was a poignant experience awash with contradictions because, despite the lack of skills and knowledge for life on an atoll, I had never felt so at home. I honed my language ability, discovered faces in my genealogy and practised the critical aspects of the maintenance of community in Tokelau terms.

I remained in Auckland on my return and applied for the Auckland Museum–based curatorial position. Unbeknownst to me, Sean, who had completed his BA in history and archaeology, applied for the collection management traineeship based at Te Papa, since he wanted to remain in Wellington. We never discovered whether the Pacific curatorial traineeship at Otago Museum was ever filled. As far as I know, Sean and I were the first and last Pacific graduates of this traineeship programme.

The purpose of the traineeship programme was "to increase the numbers of trained museum workers in New Zealand. Essentially, they offer an opportunity to gain supervised professional experience; and develop knowledge and skills in museum disciplines" (information package from training director Mike Capper, 1992). I'm unsure as to why Pacific traineeships were never again offered: perhaps "they" decided the country only required one Pacific curator and one Pacific collection manager.

My two-year traineeship at Auckland War Memorial Museum began in August 1992 and could not have been at a better time. The Ethnology Department had just started a programme of storage improvements for the entire World and Pacific collections, and parts of the Māori collections. This work included transferring collection items from old cardboard boxes with their newspaper wrappings, sorting them, and checking and updating the catalogue descriptions, measurements and provenance information. The items were then packed into new polypropylene corflute boxes and other neutral or acid-free boxes with tissue and ties if required (Fig. 2).

As well as this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to sort, view and handle the breadth of the collections, the rehousing projects gave me opportunities to learn museum practices: sorting, categorising, packing and storage of collections; assessing conservation priorities across the range of artefacts and materials; checking and updating documentation; and the basics of fumigation processes and photographic techniques.

Simultaneously, the Museum was planning two temporary exhibitions to which the Ethnology Department was contributing: *Treasures and Visions* (1992) and the women's suffrage centennial exhibition, *Reflections: New Zealand Women's Lives* (1993), presented through the collections of

Figure 2. The Pacific store holds a small reference collection of fibre, painted items, adornments and weapons from the Pacific and World collections. The white corflute boxes we initially used for storage are increasingly being replaced by grey acid-free boxes (right side of image). This is in line with the ongoing development of conservation care of collections.

Auckland Museum. Furthermore, the Ethnology Department was planning two new Pacific display galleries. The suffrage show put me in touch with the late Mrs Mereia Johnston (Fig. 3), a Pacific heritage artist who held demonstrations of tapa 'barkcloth' making and decorating as part of the public programme during the exhibition. Mrs Johnston provided us with an opportunity to acquire for the Pacific collection in 1992 a barkcloth wedding gown that she had made for her daughter Juliana Sucu (later Couper) (Fig. 4). This was the first item I was involved with acquiring into a museum collection.

Being at Auckland Museum at that time was extremely fortuitous. It gave me good grounding in the Pacific and World material culture, and I experienced the range of curatorial activities. More particularly, I gained insights as to how Pacific people might participate and be engaged with the Museum. And I worked with two wonderful people, Dr Roger Neich (Fig. 5) and Mick Pendergrast (Fig. 6).

Figure 3. Renowned masi ‘barkcloth’ maker Mrs Mereia Johnston was born at Mualevu Village, Vanuabalavu, Lau Group, Fiji. Mrs Johnston’s parents were Ratu Bale and Adi Fulori Yara. Ratu Bale made Mereia her first ike ‘beater’ with which she made her first piece of cloth at about six years of age.

Figure 4. The beautiful i sulu ni vakamau ‘barkcloth wedding gown’ made by Mrs Mereia Johnston in 1992 for her daughter Juliana Sucu. The barkcloth for the shawl was obtained from Somosomo, Taveuni, and for the gown from Vatulele Island. Auckland War Memorial Museum collections, 1993.34.

Figure 5. Dr Roger Neich (1944–2010) made a contribution second to none to the study of Māori and Pacific art, ethnology and material culture. In 1965 Roger gained a BSc in zoology and geology, and after some time in Papua New Guinea he returned to Aotearoa New Zealand to enrol for a BA in anthropology. In 1969–1986 Roger was an Assistant Ethnologist at the Dominion Museum, then moving to Auckland Museum, where he was Curator of Ethnology until his retirement in 2009.

Figure 6. Michael John "Mick" Pendergrast (1932–2010) was the Assistant Ethnologist at Auckland Museum (1981–1997) with expertise in textiles and weaving. Mick first became interested in Māori fibre arts while teaching in small Māori communities in the East Cape area—Tōrere, Hicks Bay, Cape Runaway, Whakaangiangi. Mick also taught in the Solomon Islands as a Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA) teacher, including on the remote island Tikopia, and spent more than 50 years learning about Māori fibre arts.

Near the end of my traineeship in 1994, I was seconded to Wellington during the planning phase of Te Papa's first Pacific gallery at the new Cable St waterfront building. Working alongside Sean and Dr Janet Davidson, the exhibition would come to be titled *Mana Pasifika: Celebrating Pacific Cultures in New Zealand* (1998–2006). I was astonished at the trust given to Sean and me by Dr Davidson—we were made responsible for the conceptual framework, much of the content and storylines, and object selection. We were young, and this was our first experience in "permanent" gallery planning, so the result was a fairly didactic display of Pacific cultures as reflected in the collections of Te Papa. We were of course conscious of the Pacific diaspora that we had grown up in and strove to reflect those experiences. The new Te Papa Tongarewa building and galleries opened to great fanfare (and some vociferous critique) in February 1998.

RETURN TO AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

In early 1996 Roger Neich informed me that a position within his team had been vacated and wondered if I might be interested in applying for it. Initially I thought this the perfect situation and the next logical step in my museum career. I would continue to be mentored by Roger, I had a great relationship with Mick Pendergrast, and the Ethnology collections hadn't been separated yet so I would continue to work across their breadth.[1] I learned much and had many rewarding experiences during my traineeship at Auckland Museum, but I was disturbed by the lack of diversity on staff. The only persons of colour working with collections across the museum were the Associate Ethnologist Te Warena Taua (Te Kawerau a Maki) and two young Māori men contracted to remove paint from the whare tupuna 'ancestral house', Hotunui. I was hesitant to apply for the position at Auckland Museum, recognising that the absence of Māori representation reflected a significant lack of understanding and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi 'the Treaty of Waitangi'. I contemplated what, in this void, would be the place of a Tokelau curator?

From earlier experiences I knew that as a Pacific person, my cultural worldview would be ignored, if not openly assaulted. There would be no place for Pacific languages and I would struggle in my advocacy for Pacific culture and communities and even more so for Māori representation. I would be alone and alienated; there was no Pacific support system or community within the institution for me, and this sense of isolation stayed with me throughout the duration of my traineeship and awaited me on my return to Auckland Museum. This was in stark contrast to what I had found at Te Papa. Though Te Papa felt uncomfortably close to central government, there at least I had a community of Pacific and Māori staff.[2] I felt a sense of

community because there were people like me; I felt safe. On returning to Auckland, I would be the only person of colour "back of house".[3] But a full-time permanent position at a prestigious institution was hard to turn down.

I applied for and secured the role of Associate Ethnologist at the Museum and returned to Auckland in 1996. Tellingly, I replaced the only person of colour in a curatorial role, Te Warena Taua. As far as persons of colour on staff it was one in and one out, as if it would exceed an unwritten quota to have us both on staff at the same time. I became the only Pacific or Māori permanent back-of-house staff member for several years. I continued to learn the job and become more familiar with the collections, and fulfilled the brief of a curator. At the time this meant my workload was divided into 30 percent on research and writing, 30 percent on collection care, acquisitions and antiquities registration, 30 percent on exhibitions and research and 10 percent on enquiries, collection visits, office duties, etc. From the beginning Roger Neich was very supportive of my cross-departmental activities: in public programmes, I helped host Pasifika Festival stallholders, makers, musicians and performers, and with the Auckland Multicultural Society's exhibition and public programme I assisted the Museum's Education Department with Ethnology collections–based programmes and the National Treasures and Celebrate Pasifika projects' presentations, workshops and demonstrations. The goal was always to increase Pacific staff levels and capabilities, by improving and expanding Pacific outreach, hosting capability and education and public programming.

In my first several years at Auckland Museum we completed rehousing the World and Pacific collections and assisted with Pacific, Māori and World exhibitions, and I also co-edited a couple of books and wrote journal and magazine articles and exhibition catalogues. The Ethnology Department mounted an exhibition every year or so, e.g., *Fanguna 'e he Manatu Ki Tonga: Awoken By Memories of Tonga* (1994), *ReDress* (1996), *Puti Rare* (1996), *Biddy Konui* (1997) and *When A Gift is Given* (1998), to name a few. The Museum was undertaking seismic strengthening of the building, affecting the foundations and requiring major structural work. Simultaneously the Ethnology Department was undertaking the renovation of the two Pacific galleries (Masterpieces and Lifeways, Figs 7 and 8). The impact of this was dismantling the existing galleries, decanting cases, removing display furniture and completely upgrading the electricals, floor and wall treatments, and installing a modern air-conditioning unit. We had also selected, packed and moved most of the Ethnology collection to the offsite storage facility. It was an intensely busy and exciting time and a great learning environment, but it did feel as if I had spent the first nine years of my museum career working on a construction site.

Figure 7. Pacific Masterpieces opened in January 1999 with large numbers from the Pacific communities in attendance. There are 560 collection items arranged by type, from the utilitarian to the ceremonial. The gallery highlights the inseparable nature of art and life in the Pacific and emphasises the cultural intent and aesthetic hand of the maker artist.

Figure 8. The Pacific Lifeways gallery opened in October 1999. Representation is key from West Papua to Rapa Nui, Hawai‘i to Aotearoa, from time of creation to contemporary Auckland, pre-contact to moment of contact, atolls to continental islands. There are 1,384 collection items displayed here. The Pacific had never been so well represented in the Museum prior to the new galleries.

PROVIDING PATHWAYS FOR PACIFIC COMMUNITIES

After the dust literally settled, after all that Pacific productivity, the Pacific collections–based exhibitions and public programming, the publications on Pacific artists and collections, there were still only half a dozen (at most) Pacific and Māori back-of-house staff. It had been a constant struggle that often felt futile. I remember an exchange I had with a senior manager during this time, when having reiterated yet again to him the need to increase Pacific staff numbers on his public programming team, he replied: "Fuli, if I give you a new Pacific staff member … [name of an Indian colleague] will want one too." "So what? Give her one too", I demanded as he turned and retreated. In these moments of defeat, it would be easy to give up as I felt change was too incremental and slow and that it was not the museum failing my communities but that I wasn't doing enough and was failing them, and I felt that failure at the deepest level. On reflection, however, the number of people of colour must have reached a critical mass, the results of which were better support and resources that increased outreach to communities and expanded opportunities to effect change more broadly across the institution.

This is the lot of the colonised, of Indigenous people: to provide the pathways and processes to equity. A Eurocentric institution cannot change itself as it doesn't see a problem requiring a solution. From Pākehā 'New Zealand European' perspectives there is nothing wrong with the museum institution. The structure and practices centre Pākehā, their language, their histories and their culture. All who are in museums are conditioned and trained to abide by that structure and world view. Change, therefore, must necessarily come from the colonised, from people of colour, from Pacific and Māori staff. We essentially must do the heavy lifting ourselves of educating Pākehā and revolutionising the systems to make museum institutions safe for each other and for our communities. We have to not only advocate for equity but also signpost the pathways to it, and devise the processes and practices for equity and representation in the vacuum of white privilege. Being responsible for revolutionising a system that disadvantages Indigenous people is exhausting. But only those who see the problem can provide the answers. We cannot shy away from the challenge, otherwise why are we here? What is our future? We must actively engage with the system to enable progress and change.

At this point I take this opportunity to acknowledge my partners in the early heavy lifting and four of the most amazing and hard-working women I know, without whom I may not have survived or at least not achieved as much—Venissa Freesir, Chanel Clarke, Nicola Railton and Vasiti Palavi (Fig. 9). The impact of their work in the Museum is immeasurable. Their work is woven into the fabric of the organisation.

Figure 9. Top: Chanel Clarke (Ngā Puhi, Te Rarawa, Waikato, Ngāti Porou), formerly Curator, Taonga Māori, Auckland Museum, now Curator, Te Rau Aroha at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds. Middle: Nicola Railton (Ngāti Kurī, Ngā Puhi), Māori Partnership and Development Coordinator. Above: Vasiti Palavi (Te Rarawa, Ngāti Kuia, Tonga), Collection Manager. Venissa Freesir (Sāmoa, School Programmes Coordinator) is not pictured.

Western museums have had two primary objectives—the collection and the display of history. Museums were a way for colonial powers to show off where they'd been and what they'd done when they got there. Auckland Museum, the oldest museum institution in Aotearoa New Zealand (established in 1852), is not free of this history of colonialism and exploitation. The colonisers' profoundly troubled encounters with the people they colonised or otherwise encountered are reflected in the museum collections.

In the later twentieth century, museums asserted a desire to change, be more inclusive, engage with source communities and realise meaningful representation for them. But museums do not have the means or competence to do this without us. Therefore, because colonial "invasion is a structure not an event" (Wolfe 2006: 388) and because "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1984: 111), it is on us to create new systems and structures that decentre the coloniser and create safe spaces for us, while building toward equity and improved representation.

Museums are powerful spaces; hence, for the institution change is something to fear, and transformation a power struggle. Improved representation is not recognised as innovative or transformative but alleges concession and relinquishment. Though stating new goals of antiracism, inclusion and agency on the one hand, museums on the other hand cling to the colonial structures and apparatuses of violence that sustain generational trauma, convey false views of Indigenous people and their histories, and nurture enduring loss of dignity and identity among them. Auckland Museum still largely assumes a Pākehā audience; labels continue to speak the traditional language of detached authority, and lighting and case design continue largely to reflect the designer's ego without sympathy for the cultural material to be displayed or the classic surrounding architecture.

Over the last several years, the Pacific team has experienced many of these barriers, too long accepted as museum practice, with the current Tāmaki Herenga Waka galleries. On occasion the rich personal or significant Pacific histories were mediated by the language of detached neutrality. Our requests for active and not passive language to reflect Pacific peoples' agency were denied: we were informed this wasn't possible as "that is not the voice of the exhibition".[4] The "voice" being promoted here is that of the colonial authority which cannot risk Indigenous agency or perspectives. On another occasion the Pacific project curator commissioned a tīvaevae 'Cook Islands quilt' from a renowned tīvaevae maker and submitted a measurement befitting a rectangular double-bed-sized quilt. The return design was the disappointing 1.5 by 1.5 metre square display case in the gallery. I felt diminished by their making diminutive a work of great significance and potential presence. The designers didn't care enough to educate themselves about Pacific cultures, and in their dismissive arrogance the seeds of coloniality continue to germinate in our galleries. Another example is of a Pākehā interpretation

developer (i.e., audience advocate) who appropriated the role of curator and made a photographic selection intended to reflect Auckland's social and ethnic diversity. Their selection reflected instead, except in two instances when obviously non-European faces appeared, largely Pākehā people's diverse interests, vocations and middle-class status, individually and in groups. Alarmingly men were depicted as active—running, swimming, playing sport—whereas the selection showed women reading, watching children eat ice cream or sitting and drinking coffee. Furthermore, men were depicted as professional—doctors, firemen, suited corporate beings—while women sat and smiled banally at each other, pushed strollers in "active wear" or meandered around parks with friends. The appropriation of the curatorial role, stereotypical selection of images and dismissive response when the selection was critiqued comes from a place of privilege that reflects the museum institution and those who have traditionally worked in it who have never having had to consider "others".

Claims of not meaning anything by it or "Oh, I hadn't actually thought about that" rub the poison of colonialism deeper into the wounds. These are unconscious biases, microinequities and undermining attitudes and actions that people of colour experience daily. The writer moved to another institution to perhaps perpetuate colonial authority and "voice" elsewhere, the designers were not penalised for their lack of effort to educate themselves on cultural frameworks, and the audience advocate was never reprimanded for appropriating the Pacific curatorial role or creating an image of Auckland's diversity devoid of diversity. However, despite these examples, progress is incremental and change is occurring, and it comes from within Pacific and Māori cultures: cultures that value the collective over the individual.

INDIGENISING MUSEUM PRACTICE

My time in New Zealand museums has straddled some interesting times. The 1980s were a time of social unrest, political strife and financial instability. Coming into the late 1990s and early 2000s there was increased cognisance of Treaty of Waitangi obligations and a determined focus on the potential of biculturalism. This new era afforded us opportunities to create the tools if not to "dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1984) then to remodel it to better accommodate and include us.

"Indigenisation" holds for me more possibilities than "decolonisation" (see Cairns 2018, 2020); it has better outcomes for Pacific peoples. Indigenising practices are already in Pacific people's cultural toolkits. While we were conditioned to Pākehā culture at school, we were being counter-conditioned at home to centre our kaiga 'extended families', value unity and respect principled relationships over the Pākehā ideals of individual endeavour and personal autonomy. Pacific people in Aotearoa live between

Māori and Pākehā: we have familial ties to Māori and have been inculcated with Pākehā culture. Many Pacific peoples live in two or three, sometimes more, cultures today. And my Pacific team reflects this in every way. I could not have assembled the team I have today without the support of senior allies within the organisation. I'm blessed to work with an amazing group of Pacific women, all of them with links to three or four, and sometimes more, Pacific cultures (Fig. 10).

When I returned to the Museum in 1996 the only other non-Pākehā person was librarian Eddie Sun. I remember once discussing his Chinese heritage with him, and he said to me in his dry, deadpan manner, "Well, it's good you're here, Fuli, we just need more of us now". I found it interesting that a middle-aged Chinese man should find community with a 26-year-old Tokelauan woman. But in an overwhelmingly Pākehā institution unity can be found between non-Pākehā regardless of ethnicity, particularly in the colonial context that would pit us against one another, just as it has in the past.

Figure 10. Left–right: I have familial links to Tokelau, Sāmoa and Cape Verde Island (Curator, Pacific and World collections). Talei Si'ilata-Tu'inukuafe has familial links to Sāmoa, Aotearoa New Zealand Māori, Fiji and the Cook Islands (Collection Manager, Pacific). Juliana Satchell-Deo has familial links to the Solomon Islands, Daru Island, mainland Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait Islands (Associate Curator, Pacific). Dr Andrea Low has familial links to Hawai'i, Fiji, Sāmoa and Fanning Island (Associate Curator, Contemporary World Collection).

WORKING WITH ALLIES

Auckland Museum has had 11 directors in its history, and I've worked with over half of them. Accepting this award has made me think about allies and allyship within the museum space. Of the directors I have worked with over the past several years a few stand out as allies in our Pacific endeavours at the Museum.

Dr Rodney Wilson (Director, 1994–2007) was as tenacious as he was opinionated. He had vision, energy and an incredible capacity for work. The Auckland War Memorial Museum Act of 1996, which established a new Trust Board governance structure as well as the Taumata-ā-Iwi Māori advisory board, became an Act of Parliament during his time.[5] Soon after, the Tumuaki Māori Director and Māori Support Manager positions were established. Pacific and Māori staff numbers rose exponentially during the later years of Dr Wilson's tenure. And for the first time a Pacific person held a non-Pacific-specific role when Cecilia Gullery (Fijian/British) was appointed as the Head of Exhibitions and Public Programmes. With Roger Neich's support, Dr Wilson allowed me a lot of leeway in the promotion of Pacific programming and engagement across the institution. He supported initiatives that put the Museum into Pacific spaces: the Museum became a fixture at the annual Pasifika Festival and Polyfest, as well as the Auckland International Cultural Festival (held at Potters Park, Balmoral, for many years); the Museum sponsored Coach of the Year for the Samoan Sports Awards (two consecutive years); and we ran the most extensive Pacific education and public programmes during the *Vaka Moana: Voyage of the Ancestors* exhibition in 2006–2007. During the *Vaka Moana* exhibition 12 extra Pacific educators were contracted to teach, and the Museum sponsored a kilikiti 'Pacific cricket' tournament, organised a lecture series and public presentations and borrowed wonderful Pacific treasures from England and Hawai'i. Ron Brownson, from the Auckland Art Gallery, and I co-curated the contemporary art component of the *Vaka Moana* exhibition, called *Le Folauga: The Past Coming Forward* (2006–2007); we also held many public programmes alongside this show.

Roy Clare (Director, 2011–2016), who someone recently described as a class act, was always supportive of our Pacific endeavours. A major undertaking during Roy's tenure was the Pacific Collections Access Project. Roy, and Sally Manuireva (Head of Exhibitions and Public Programmes), through their support and advocacy, showed that where there really is a will there is a way, and I am forever grateful to them for their allyship.

Auckland Museum's *Future Museum* plan was published in 2012, in response to Auckland Council's landmark *Auckland Plan* of 2012. The Museum's Pacific staff took this opportunity to create another platform for change. Our contention was the Museum should acknowledge and celebrate

its Pacific location and local communities and promote its internationally significant Pacific collections. Significantly, the following statement was included in the *Future Museum* plan submitted to Auckland City Council:

> Pacific Context: We will develop a Pacific dimension for understanding the context of historic and contemporary Auckland through its relationship with the Pacific and Pacific people: seas, journeys, settlement, contemporary diversity. (Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum 2012: 12)

Consequently, the Pacific staff set forth a Pacific framework in the *Teu Le Vā: The Pacific Dimension* document (2013), which outlines the intent to focus attention on and embed Pacific cultural approaches and practices within Auckland Museum, and between the Museum and source communities. The Pacific dimension is encapsulated in the phrase teu le vā 'nurture the relationship', which is to nurture the relational space between teu 'to cherish, to nurture' and vā 'relationship, the space between' (p. 5). The document outlines Pacific aspirations; it articulates methods for achieving representation and expressing cultural principles of inclusivity, equity and meaningful engagement.

In 2013, the establishment of a Pacific advisory committee was proposed by Pacific staff. This would be crucial for keeping Pacific staff safe and supported. Pacific staff personally held community relationships on behalf of the Museum; in the absence of familiarity with the Museum structure we become the face of the Museum for Pacific peoples. We were looked to for advice regarding the "Pacific perspective" within the organisation, with Pacific staff called upon as translators and for cultural expertise that was not part of our job descriptions. But because we all keenly feel the obligation to represent our communities in any way the institution demands, we relented. These are burdens not carried by Pākehā staff members, nor skills expected of them just by being Pākehā. Pacific staff across the organisation have been doing double and triple duty in this respect, which of course continues through the advocacy for change.

Culturally appropriate ways to spread the load and responsibility for advising on Pacific education and public programming had to be established. Once again Roy Clare and the director of public experience gave their full support, and in 2014 the Pacific Advisory Group (PAG) was established. I had been involved with setting up two previous Pacific Advisory Committees for Auckland Museum, in 1996 and again in 2005.

In 1996, the development of the current Pacific galleries led to the establishment of the Museum's first Pacific Advisory Committee. Invitations were widely distributed through the Pacific communities to island, sector and church leaders, artists, educators and lecturers. After the welcoming pōwhiri 'welcome ceremony', presentations regarding the renewal of the Pacific

galleries were made and followed by lively discussions. Of the almost 100 Pacific attendees, the resulting committee was largely self-selected. After several consultative meetings the committee felt a more effective process would be for the Museum to have a smaller committee work closely with the Museum curators. Following that advice, the Museum contracted two of their number, Jim Vivieaere (Fig. 11) and Albert Refiti. This enabled weekly rather than monthly meetings, which resulted in more effectual discussions regarding content and display, and more efficient object selections and single points of contact with the broader Pacific communities when necessary. This collaboration ended with the opening of the Pacific galleries in 1999.

In 2005, the second advisory committee was established around the broad educational and extensive public programmes for the *Vaka Moana* exhibition. Membership of this committee was focused on representation from media, performing arts and education as well as the community. The committee was highly motivated and very involved during the planning phases and for the duration of the exhibition. This advisory committee was brutally disestablished by a new director who simply refused to meet them or even to acknowledge they existed.

Figure 11. Jim Vivieaere (1947–2011) in the mezzanine of the Pacific store. Jim assisted with case layouts, packing and moving of collections, object selection and community liaison during the Pacific gallery renovations. With an exhibition career beginning in the 1970s, Jim was passionate about contemporary art and worked tirelessly as curator, gallerist and art commentator.

In contemplating a new Pacific advisory group, the earlier offensive dismissal made me anxious. I recognised the potential for backlash from our communities for the Museum's past conduct. In such situations an advisory committee would be crucial for the safety of staff as well as to maintain an effective link to our communities. I worried how many times our communities would answer the call if this was the reception they received. What level of tolerance could I reasonably expect from them after the Museum's high-handed behaviour? In those moments of exposure and abandonment I was ashamed to represent the Museum. Yet our communities proved themselves incredibly supportive of the Museum and particularly for its Pacific staff when we created PAG in 2014. Members of PAG were knowledgeable about the Museum and understood the lack of status and support for Pacific staff while we simultaneously carry heavy workloads. These were the primary areas of advocacy for PAG in 2014 and 2015—increased capacity, improved resources and rigorous development of programmes. I acknowledge here Marilyn Kohlhase, the inaugural chair of the 2014 PAG.[6] We are forever grateful to Marilyn, who continues to work tirelessly within the museum sector and the Auckland Museum Institute (AMI) to support the Pacific staff of the Museum and our endeavours on behalf of our communities.

Representation on PAG continues to emphasise sector experience. Our experience is that community leaders are spokespeople and advocates called on by many government representatives to be advocates in health, welfare, education and justice. Not to overburden those leaders, our focus turned to those with sector experience—business, education, arts and culture. I am happy to report that PAG is still going strong eight years on and continues to have strong and mutually respectful relationships with the Museum Trust Board and Taumata-ā-Iwi (the Māori advisory board), as well as the executive officer, executive team and museum staff. The chair of PAG is now an ex-officio member of the Trust Board, and PAG meets regularly with the Taumata-ā-Iwi.[7]

THE PACIFIC COLLECTIONS ACCESS PROJECT (PCAP) AND INVOLVING OUR COMMUNITIES

In preparing for the overdue gallery renovation of the current Pacific Lifeways and Masterpieces galleries, curatorial staff initiated Collections Readiness Projects; a flagship project was the Pacific Collections Access Project (PCAP). The Museum's Pacific collection of over 30,000 artefactual items is the most diverse and significant collection of its type in the country and is recognised internationally. PCAP was launched on 27 May 2016 and completed in August 2019. We were to work collaboratively with Pacific communities through the Museum's collections from 13 Pacific nations. The collaboration would help us inform Pacific communities of the Museum's

holdings, enrich the information regarding the treasures and strengthen connections between the communities and the Museum. It was decided the project would concentrate on the largest Pacific populations in Auckland, which are Polynesian. The collection items comprised a range of significant and everyday items including musical instruments, weapons, textiles, carvings, tools and ornaments. Treasures were attributed Indigenous names and described according to Indigenous knowledge and languages. This was a first step in establishing new practices of indigenising Museum practices and to enact principles articulated in the *Teu Le Vā* document and develop new ways of engaging with the Museum's Pacific source communities. We would finally be able to centre our communities and knowledge holders. The exchange of information and discussions could be held in Pacific languages and the communities could engage in meaningful ways with the Museum's staff and collections.

It was important for me that the project provide training and development opportunities for Pacific peoples. The two collection cataloguers, the senior cataloguing manager and the community engagement facilitator were all of Pacific descent. However, there were no trained applicants of Pacific descent for the technical positions of packing and storage technician and conservator. Ways to close these gaps in the technical aspects of collection care among Pacific Museum workers are currently being devised.

The community engagement facilitator was appointed to work within the communities to identify community liaisons. Being from the community the liaisons know their knowledge holders, are fluent in the language and would introduce the knowledge holders to the PCAP team. Community liaisons often participated in the knowledge-holder sessions (Fig. 12), assembled word lists, assisted the team with orthographies and helped clarify information shared between the Museum and the knowledge holders.

We were able to negotiate cross-department opportunities for secondments of other Museum Pacific staff to the PCAP to upskill current staff, especially staff from the front-of-house departments. They were trained in data entry and operating the collection management system (Vernon). They were given object handling, packing and storage solutions training, and opportunities to learn about our record-keeping and registration systems. These other staff also participated in community visits, gallery tours and other hosting activities.

Museum staff were aware that "Pacific Collections Access Project" would be an externally meaningless title and only served internal Museum reporting purposes. Therefore, this title was replaced with a more meaningful title from within each community (see Table 1). These Pacific titles were included in all the marketing and communications collateral the Museum produced around the project during the appropriate times. It enhanced a

Figure 12. Auckland Tokelau elders after a successful knowledge-holder session. Left–right: standing, Reverend Iutana Pue (community liaison), Leone Samu-Tui (collection cataloguer); seated, author (staff, of Tokelau descent), Mrs Matafele Pereira, Mrs Malau Poasa (weaving), Mr Fofo Poasa (canoe and house construction, fishing), Mr Foai Foai (then president of the Tokelau Association), Mrs Feagai Foai (weaving).

sense of ownership and would raise excitement as they all resonated with the spirit of treasures from the ancestors.

Talanoa 'discussions' revealed detailed Indigenous knowledge previously absent from the Museum collection archives. Other information about collection items, origins, use and significance may also be embedded in chants, songs and prayer. We found ways to accommodate the communities' needs. Discussions with community members about the collections were recorded by note-taking and by audio and audiovisual recordings now lodged in the Museum library archives, with the written notes remaining with the cataloguers for record enhancement purposes. The recordings can only be accessed through the Cultural Permissions process, developed by then Head of Library Services Michaela O'Donovan, and the wonderful Zoe Richardson, then Imaging and Permissions Manager, and in collaboration with the Pacific curatorial team. The Cultural Permissions process provides a cultural lens to the assessment and suitability of access and reproduction of archival images and recordings of ancestors. The copyright of the PCAP recordings is vested with the knowledge holders, requiring their permission to be gained prior to Museum access approval.

Table 1. List of participant island nations, the number of their collection items examined, conserved and stored during the project, the Indigenous name gifted by the community and the translation offered.

Country	Number of Collection items worked on during PCAP	Community name	Approximate translation
Cook Islands	946	Akairo a te Taunga	The Signature of the Creator
Fiji	1,328	Nai Yau Vakaviti—Na Ka Mareqeti	Fiji Treasures—They Are Treasured
French Polynesia	376	Tupuna Māʻohi ka Ora	Māʻohi Ancestors You Will Live On
Hawaiʻi	215	No Indigenous name provided	
Kiribati	1,147	Rikian Tungaru	Kiribati Culture
Niue	304	Lavahi Mau e tau Taoga Tokiofa ma e Atuhau	Treasure and Honour Our Sacred Taoga
Pitcairn Island	13	No Indigenous name provided	
Rapa Nui	24	No Indigenous name provided	
Sāmoa	528	E Taua au Measina, Lau Gagana ma Lau Aganuʻu	Treasure Your Taoga, Your Language and Your Culture
Tokelau	251	Poupouaki a Tatou Koa	Hold Fast to Our Treasures
Tonga	531	Ngaahi Koloa Tukufakaholo ʻa e Puleaeanga Faka-Tuʻi Tonga	Traditional Treasures of the Kingdom of Tonga
Tuvalu	114	Fakaakoigina te Olaga o Tou Tuaa mo Fakatautai Toe Olaga Fano ki Mua	Embracing the Past to Navigate the Future
Wallis and Futuna	22	Maʻu meʻa Faka Fanau—ʻUvea mo Futuna	Family Treasures from ʻUvea and Futuna
Total	5,799		

Note: Numbers of items given are not the entirety of an island's collection as textiles and some weapons were not included.

The Pacific Collection Access Project was just that, a project. In practice what was achieved was immeasurable. Pacific staff wanted to alter the extractive nature of the museum's engagement with Indigenous communities. We vested agency as much as possible with the communities; the enriched record was community-led, the language of engagement was Indigenous and access to the recordings must be granted ultimately by the knowledge holder. For source communities PCAP was an opportunity to see material often only ever heard about before, to study and revive their arts and to educate their young people about their cultural inheritance, engendering pride and strengthening self-identity. The communities were able to investigate the origins and provenance information of collection items held in the museum. We safeguard the recordings with additional filters and improved available images for web access. PCAP was a showcase of a decentred museum, increased representation and improved community relationships.

During PCAP we engaged with 13 Pacific Island groups: the Cook Islands, Fiji (including Rotuma), French Polynesia, Hawai'i, Kiribati, Niue, Pitcairn, Rapa Nui, Sāmoa, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna. We worked with 58 cultural knowledge holders with whom we held 62 knowledge-holder sessions. Approximately 7,000 people visited the project and at least two community days per island group were held during the weekends to enable as many community members as possible to attend. The project was also visited by tertiary classes, groups of artists, visiting dignitaries, local and central government representatives and even on occasion as part of team-building excursions by interested parties. Almost 6,000 treasures have been catalogued, conserved, rehoused and photographed in this project. Our practices continue to evolve and be refined. Our aims are simply to normalise practices of inclusivity and representation, make the decentred museum a reality and collaborate in meaningful ways with source communities.

Active participation in Pacific Language Week programming since its inception in 2010 afforded the Museum increased presence within our communities. The numbers reached increased exponentially from 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdowns, when much of the Museum's programming and outreach went digital. PCAP added to the initial digital collateral with its additional rich content, new webpage stories and short films. All this was promoted across the Museum's Facebook and Instagram profiles and through online shares and likes from our communities, which in the end reached 553,916 viewers and participants across nine Pacific Language Weeks.

After the *Teu Le Vā* document had circulated for a while, we worried about its efficacy without the ability to socialise Pacific values and principles articulated in the document through staff training programmes. Yet again we advocated, this time for a Pacific development manager who would run the training programmes, review the Museum's processes and policies through the lens of the Pacific dimension, and further assist with managing

the Museum's relationships with external Pacific bodies, government departments and Pacific Island–based leaders, who visit frequently. The outcome is the establishment of the Teu Le Vā Manager position in 2016. It has been a key appointment and is the only one in the country. Olivia Taouma, the incumbent, has worked tirelessly in this role to extend Pacific connections nationally and internationally. Relationships established with government ministries has enabled staff from museums in Kiribati and Sāmoa, and soon Tuvalu, to travel to the Museum for training across all areas of collection care and management and exhibitions. The Teu Le Vā Manager plays a critical role in the embedding of Pacific principles throughout the institution. Olivia will author new policies: an important one she is currently leading is the Inclusive Writing Guidelines, which frames a language use that respects individuality, Indigenous communities, culture and diversity, is free from stereotypes, and avoids phrases and words that may make people feel excluded, offended or undervalued. The Teu Le Vā Manager role was initially within the Māori and Pacific Development Team under the leadership of the Tumuaki Māori; however, a new realignment will see it shift to the chief executive's team with the support of a full-time Teu Le Vā Coordinator, support that has been long overdue.

WHAKAWHANAUNGATANGA

Te Aho Mutunga Kore: The Eternal Thread is the current project I am involved with, alongside Dr Kahutoi Te Kanawa, Pou Arahi Māori Curator, and Chantal Knowles, Head of Human History. This project builds on the two landmark projects carried out between 2016 and 2019 by the Māori and Pacific teams, Te Awe Phase II and the PCAP. Te Awe Phase II enriched the information on the extensive collections of Māori kākahu 'cloaks', kete 'bags' and other Māori textiles.

Te Aho Mutunga Kore is a textile and fibre research centre, with an initial focus on Pacific and Māori textile research that will again decentre the Museum. It will give agency to our communities and nurture creativity, knowledge sharing and knowledge creation. To a large extent non-Pākehā women's arts were not a priority in the past, and if the 1980s international exhibition *Te Maori*, which overlooked women's arts in its selection of artefacts, is anything to go by, one could be forgiven for thinking Māori women made nothing of "value". In Aotearoa and the Pacific, women in fact made the most prestigious garments and textiles that adorned our chiefs, clothed our dead and covered our god figures. Te Aho Mutunga Kore will improve knowledge and bring focused attention to the fibre arts of the Pacific.

To return to the question in the title of this speech, can there be trust after a history of colonialism and exploitation? I've described, from my own experiences, monumental shifts for Pacific staff and communities in relation to the Museum. Microaggressions and casual racism (which will take a lot longer to overcome) aside, Pacific representation, programming

and resources have substantially increased. Though there is still a long way to go for equity in representation, institutional structures and policies, there are hopeful signals for continual change through the encouragement and acknowledgement of Pacific languages demonstrated through our programming for the national Pacific Language Weeks celebrations, the creation of the Teu Le Vā Manager role and the establishment of projects that decentre the Museum, like PCAP, Te Awe and now Te Aho Mutunga Kore, amongst a number of others currently underway. Additionally, research scholarships are offered specifically for Pacific and Māori to carry out independent research and as avenues for training opportunities. Pacific staff at the Museum are working to grow internship programmes and establish residencies and institutional exchange programmes, because one Pacific curator and one Pacific collection manager has never been good enough. It is gruelling work, often heartbreaking and always confronting to challenge the structures that violate Indigenous people and Indigenous worldviews, but our communities require our service, and they deserve so much more from museums. Trust from my perspective is so far beyond reach to be almost meaningless at this moment because racism, classism and sexism are too deeply embedded and people too frighteningly ignorant of this fact. But our progress to date keeps me optimistic, and our plans for the future are exciting.

The young Pacific scholars, artists and researchers that have come through our museum's programmes have been artistically gifted, intellectually savvy and incredibly inspiring. Museums are powerful spaces, and the stories these young Indigenous people will tell, the perspectives they will amplify and the ways in which their stories will be manifested will be just as powerful. Their histories and their telling will reflect the changed cultural and social contexts that they, as well as Sean's son and my daughter also, inhabit and will continue to change for themselves and their communities.

NOTES

1. In 2000 the Māori collection was separated from the Ethnology Department, and two years later in 2002 the Pacific collection became a separate entity and the Foreign Ethnology collections were renamed the World collection.
2. Pacific staff at the time were Sean Mallon, Grace Hutton, Maile Drake and Shane Pasene. Māori staff were Awhina Tamarapa, Megan Tamati-Quennell and Arapata Hakiwai.
3. "Back of house" refers to curatorial, collections or display staff whose work and office spaces were largely in non-public spaces, as opposed to "front of house", which refers to the security, maintenance and cleaning staff that generally worked in the public spaces of the museum.
4. This is a direct quote from a previous staff exhibition writer.
5. The Auckland Institute was established in 1867. The following year it took over the management of Auckland Museum and changed its name to Auckland Institute and Museum. The Auckland War Memorial Museum Act 1996 separated the Institute from the governance of the War Memorial Museum. Today this learned society is the Auckland Museum Institute.

6. An explanation for the name of the Pacific Advisory Group is that a "committee" denotes board-appointed membership. The Pacific Advisory Group is not board-appointed and advises and reports to the Executive Officer.
7. The PAG's current chair is Pakilau Manase Lua and deputy chair is Fesaitu Solomone.

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AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Pandora Fulimalo Pereira, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland Domain, Parnell, Auckland 1010, New Zealand. fpereira@aucklandmuseum.com