

FIJI USP SUVA WORKSHOP
18-25 NOVEMBER 2023

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BALAZS NOTE
BOOK

GEORGE COMPOSITION

100 sheets/200 pages

"Confront uncertainty. Once we free ourselves from the illusion that science or technology, if lavishly funded, can provide a solution to resource or conservation problems, appropriate action becomes possible." - R. E. Johannes 1998

KASTAM

FIJI 2023

PAGES SCANNED 1-47;

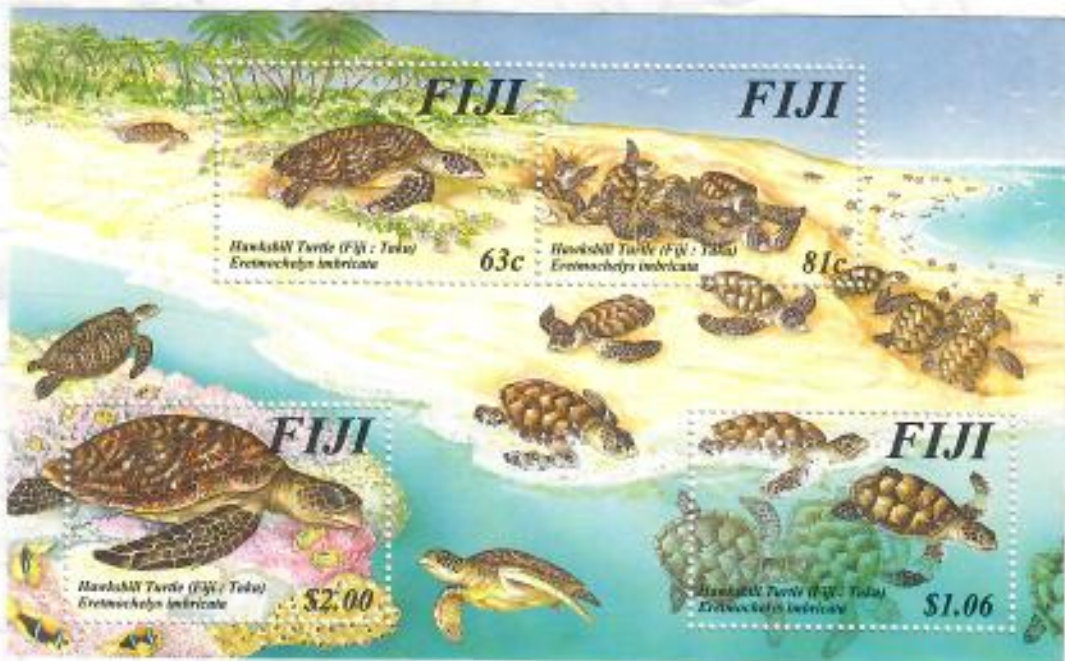
165-199.

2025 15-21 NOV.

FIJI USP WORKSHOP

11-18 & 19-2025

SCANNED 3-15-26



John P. TTA
Solomon Islands
2021

(5)

George,

Thanks for your email. The topic itself is a challenging one, when we talk about conservation; reviving turtle population. I have some thorough thinking about this as well and looking back at years of working with communities or resource owners to protect nesting and feeding habitats of marine turtles. There is one thing that we cannot separate from conservation of turtle and that is the cultural context; no matter how hard we tried and how much resources we used or spend; people still harvest turtle for their source of protein and part of their cultural value. Institutional frame work such as legislations and policies are only tools that can be used to minimise harvesting of turtles. So my thinking is that maybe we need to re-define the philosophy of turtle conservation and accommodate the cultural norms of harvesting turtles; only then maybe people will have a greater respect for the turtles and we can still maintain a manageable turtle population in our region. This is not my scientific views but only observations.

Concluding paragraph of: [Balazs et al. 2017. Ocean pathways and residential foraging locations for satellite tracked green turtles breeding in Hawaii, Micronesia](#)

"At this 45-year juncture of continuous research focused on the Hawaiian green turtle, the overall goal of conservation investigations should be adjusted to embrace more than the collection, archiving, and publishing of scientific findings. A new era should be initiated that encompasses cultural integration by and for the indigenous Hawaiian people that are themselves linked for millennia to their green turtles. Exactly how this will take place should be left to Hawaiians to decide."

11/90/95
BAVIS. TOURS +679
830 8446

(7)

How will
ECO TOURISM
replace TRADITION
USE? IN FIJI
CAPTIVE? SAMOA
TAHITI
ETC.

Unity -
other
meets?

Not much said
about AVST
in Dig.

3 TOMMY
1/2 COTT -
Message TO - ADD SLP MAIL GROUP
people
attending
YORK, LOYD
BIRK? TUCP
Hawaii
L.C.

PRESS.
SF GATE?

2023

Who owns the sea turtles in pacific islands oceania cultures?

George Balazs <itsahonuworldinhawaii@hotmail.com>

Sun 11/12/2023 2:11 AM

To: George Balazs <itsahonuworldinhawaii@hotmail.com>



You

who owns the sea turtles in pacific islands oceania cultures?

ChatGPT

ChatGPT

In Pacific Islands and Oceania cultures, sea turtles have been traditionally regarded as important natural resources, and ownership or stewardship of these creatures is often viewed collectively rather than by individual ownership. Many Pacific island communities have strong cultural connections to sea turtles and consider them an essential part of their heritage.

In these cultures, sea turtles are often seen as communal resources that are shared among the members of the community. The responsibility for protecting and managing sea turtles often falls on the entire community, and specific rules and traditions are in place to ensure their sustainable use.

Traditional practices regarding sea turtles vary among different Pacific island cultures, but they generally emphasize conservation and sustainability. Some islands have customary laws and taboos (known as "kapu" in Hawaiian or "tapu" in many other Polynesian languages) that restrict the hunting or harvesting of sea turtles during certain times of the year or under specific circumstances. These regulations are enforced by community leaders and elders.

In modern times, with the growing awareness of the need for sea turtle conservation, many Pacific island nations have also implemented legal protections and regulations to safeguard sea turtles. These regulations may include restrictions on hunting, harvesting, and trade in sea turtle products.

Overall, while ownership of sea turtles in Pacific Islands and Oceania cultures is a complex issue with variations from one community to another, the common thread is a deep cultural respect and responsibility for these creatures. Conservation efforts, both traditional and modern, play a crucial role in preserving sea turtles and their habitats in the region.

HNL

HONOLULU

FJ853

21NOV

1/15KG

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FJ 747016

EVOWNA

2025

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Carrier **FIJI AIRWAYS** TSA Pre✓*

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ECONOMY
SEQ NBR **0093** Gate **D2**

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Date **21NOV** Board Time **0930**
Class

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SEQ NBR **0106** Gate **2**

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49

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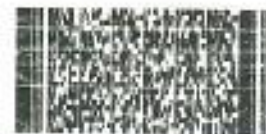
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To
NADI

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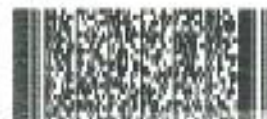
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Gate

SUVA

ETKT

ZONE : A



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Balazs



FIJI Sea Turtle Workshop
 18-19 Nov. 2025
 ~ 6.5 Hours - KAUJ
 11/15 SATURDAY 1155pm Depart
 11/17 MONDAY → 815AM Fiji Link
 2025

E-TICKET RECEIPT

FIJI AIRWAYS

This document provides important information related to your purchased fare. If your total payment was for multiple passengers and extra services, your Bank statement will reflect a transaction for each passenger document issued.

BOOKING REFERENCE:
FDQLMF

PASSENGER DETAILS:
MR GEORGE BALAZS

E-TICKET NUMBER:
2602427604272

Date issued: 07 September 2025
TIN 50-00123-0-9

PRICE BREAKDOWN		Amount Paid
Base Fare	188.00 USD	216.70 USD
Taxes & Fees	28.70 USD	

ITINERARY DETAILS		Details
Depart	Arrive	FJ3
Nadi (NAN)	Nausori (SUV)	Confirmed
17 November 2025	17 November 2025	PLUS
08:10 (8:10AM)	08:40 (8:40AM)	FJ6
Nausori (SUV)	Nadi (NAN)	Confirmed
21 November 2025	21 November 2025	PLUS
06:00 (6:00AM)	06:30 (6:30AM)	

2025

9 AM USP CAUCALA USP
EVACUATION PLAN Lower Campus
McDonalds

"opens Hearts, MUTUAL Respect"

- 1) "Center for Sustainable Future"
- 2) 2018 Professor USP ARRIVED
- 3) "Food water NATURAL Resources"

Reminds not only of biology but
our identity"

3 legal protections in Fiji

"Honoring wisdom of ELDERs"

SACA "cultural keystone species"

keystone GARIBADI & _____

Predator Modifier LINKS

Send Kitalelei
TOKELAU except
& Entire paper

Jeff
Kinch

PNG LISSENUMG Island Resort
ANCE AMON
NEW IRELAND PROVINCE

- SARAS. SHARMA

- HISHKE

11:25 AM

SH

PACIFIC BIOSPHERES PROGRAMME
Marine Turtle Activities

Pick up Chapter 3 "What is it
EXACTLY THAT YOU WANT
TO KNOW?"

11:40 AM

The TURTLE Cooling Project
CAILIN SMITH - JAMES COOK DIV.

12:10 PM

DONALD WILLIAMS
Survey of MT USE Fiji, PNG &
by Communities in TONGA

"BA" - Fiji NOT the same
as BAU 6x what's reported

11-18-2025 Conv. Break ^{PT 2 GROUPS}
TUESDAY MARION OLIVRY (53)
1040AM SWOT Ashleigh
BANDIMERE

11AM

JULIE PEZIN - Blue Corridors
WWF New Caledonia for Turtles

12600 SAT TRACKS MICRO COT
2007-2024

1234 LUNCH 130PM



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Room:

253

HOLIDAY
INN



SEA TURTLE WORKSHOP

18th and 19th November 2025
USP Lower Campus, Suva FJ

GEORGE BALAZS

11-18-2025 Tuesday

(55)

After Lunch > 135 pm

MICHAEL Jensen

VIDEO

"STELL BANK"

Hawks Bills Lots & Lots & Lots

But is it of use to people,

Howick group are from Conflict,

MILMAN & SOLOMONS +

KAVIENGA and "other"

"hope communities understand
correctly and manage turtles
sustainably"

solomon 70% from RMI

"provides knowledge for
communities, researchers &
managers"

m Jensen Pwulf ID

2 PM

SEFA MUNDU

"Moms on the

Move: internet &

post nesting & a

Mariannos - 100 nesters

"late school maturity" = ? Growth
Rate

Include
Graham

11/18/2025

(57)

220 PM - "Eulogy Praise by Aisake"

230 PM Renee Rich Hill -
LEWENILOVO

"We are the Sea, we are the
ocean"

Bridging TEK AND Science
of Migratory Species for global policy

250 PM

The LAU Seascape

VATOA - VOMO -

CI
OND-I-LAU
MOST Southern

9 ISLANDS

↓ Off Reef 2020
turtle Sanct by TRADITIONAL
CUSTODIANS

3 turtles GPS in 2019

16 turtles GPS in 2023

310 PM Tea

440 PM

KATHERINE MOSEBY

~~Solomon's~~ ~~Kendora~~ ~~Solomons~~ - CARRYING CAPACITY? (59)
TETEPARE MPA - Body CONDITION
687 greens captured since 2004
TAGS? CCL

Webb

2010 TSUNAMI Seagrass cover Decline
• 74 to 144 Turtle per km²
• up to 1000 in Lagoon
Annual ^{leatherback} hatchlings 100 to 10,000 per year

KAIRU Foundation

405 PM FILIMONE MATE + MALAKAI

Sea Turtle Conservation in Fiji's No. LAU: Building Resilience Through Community Engagement

Local Consumption

ACIATA Community traditionally engaging in Sea Turtle harvest

IN 2022 deployed 15 sat tags

425 PM MARION OLIVY

Science LetTAB & Community 25 years

(61)

2000 — 2012 — 2020 — 2024
Close Refurb ECO Center

11/19/2025

Session I GB SALA LATIA

Wednesday (63)

9AM - TAXI DRIVER I-TAKAI
(wrong game)

Session II
Tutor "HAS TO BE LARGE"

a I will leave my
mark so everyone
will know I was here "

11/19/2025

(65)

wednesday

Room

107

M

9:15
pm

~~Table~~

Group Session

Harnessing the Power of Environmental
EDUCATION - JASON TŪATANI

JTUTANI ©

NATIONALTRUST.ORG.FJ



Take-Home Points from the Suva Workshop 19-21 July 2018:

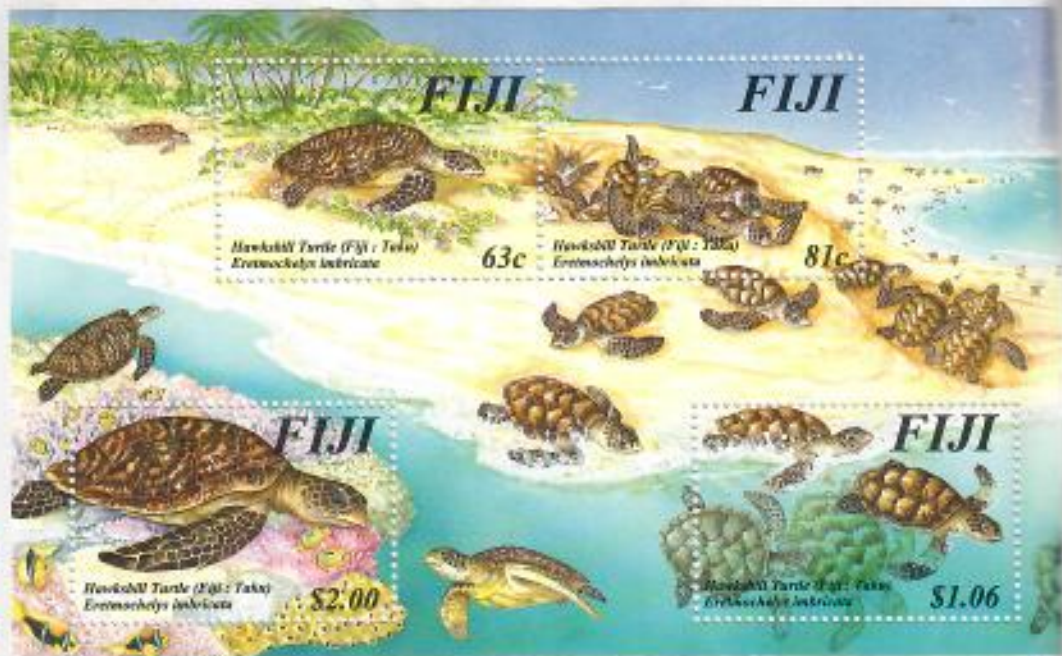
"Conservation of Sea Turtles within the Cultural Context of Oceania - Possibilities Beyond Protection"
As discerned by Co-Conveners George Balazs and Thierry Work MTSG Oceania Region Co-Chairs

- 1) An extended cessation of traditional hunting and use of turtles by indigenous people of Oceania may bring about the loss of those traditions within the cultures;
- 2) There are strong Biblical Church-Based Convictions to be good custodians of the marine resources God has given;
- 3) People want a better life for their families;
- 4) People and their families are more valued than turtles;
- 5) Culture and tradition bond people together;
- 6) The conservation of turtles cannot be separated from their cultural context;
- 7) There is the strong desire for traditional use, - indeed all use, - to be sustainable;
- 8) If communities can't manage their resources then nobody can because 'we are here and they are there';
- 9) Sustainable use is a part of conservation;
- 10) For some governments, provisions are in place for issuance of permits for case-by-case traditional harvest;
- 11) Conservation that relies solely on government enforcement capacity is unrealistic and can alienate communities hence lessen conservation;
- 12) The problem has not been traditional harvest but 'commercial greed';
- 13) Increased decision-making authority granted by government to the traditional village chiefs may serve to enhance conservation;
- 14) Turtle ecotourism and turtle cultural traditions can have conflicting goals;
- 15) Data deficiencies for the conservation status of turtles are widespread; there is little if any evidence of declines or increases;
- 16) Developing creative ways to encourage local communities to collect trend data in collaboration with government is a worthy goal;
- 17) There is merit in spending more time visiting and listening to local communities;
- 18) There are many turtle biologists but very few social scientists quantifying the indigenous community consumption of turtles;
- 19) The Government of Fiji deserves congratulations for instituting 23 years of moratoriums on the harvest of turtles which surely had a positive impact on their conservation status;
- 20) The Suva workshop achieved a long-standing need for focused participant discussions, listening, and talking about turtle consumptive use, cultural traditions, sustainability, conservation beyond protection, and the realities of village life. The door has been opened for additional workshops in Oceania;
- 21) Without remembering the past, we can lose our way.

KASTAM

11-19-2025
COVIS
MOROU
SHRITIKA

TAKRA
System
INTRO TO THE TREDS
BETH HILDER



**Post
Fiji**

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FIJI ISLANDS

We Deliver More...

Updated -13-11-2025



Fiji Sea Turtle Workshop

18th and 19th November, 2025 @ The University
of the South Pacific, Lautoka Bay, Suva, Fiji
(Hybrid Event)

*"Research and Restoration of
Sea Turtles Culturally Connected
to the People of Oceania"*

Co-convener by Miss Shritika Prakash (Ika Bala Consultants), Mr. Kelly Brown (Centre for Sustainable Futures, USP), Mrs. Nanise Kuridrani and Mrs. Turisi Toroca (Fiji Government - Ministry of Fisheries and Forestry) in collaboration with IUCN/SSC MTSG-Oceania Regional Vice Co-chairs Mr. George Baluzi, Dr. Thierry Work, Ms. Denise Parker and Miss Shritika Prakash

Program

(Note: all times in Fiji time zone)

AGENDA: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2025 - DAY 1

ROOM: Marine Lecture Theatre, USP Lower Campus

[In-person and online]

Join us on Zoom using this link:

<https://us20-fj.zoom.us/j/89796189046?pwd=4KJlUSI6eP6NwZuNFjla3JlUkZkZ3Qo.1>

* denotes presenters

8:30 AM	Registration open	Volunteers
SESSION 1		
9:00 AM	Opening remarks	Co-convener
9:15 AM	Welcome to USP	Centre for Sustainable Futures, USP
9:25 AM	Address by Director - Department of Fisheries	Mrs Nanise Kuridrani Ministry of Fisheries & Forestry
9:40 AM	Keynote presentation: Ke'u ika me'u ikabulu - stories of sea turtles as keystone species	Dr. Solanieta Kitolelei ZMT
10:15 AM	Group Photo	
MORNING TEA Sponsored by Conservation International		
SESSION 2		
10:40 AM	The Global SWOT Team	Ashleigh Bandimere* and Roderic Mist State of the World's Sea Turtles (SWOT) - Oceanic Society

11:00 AM	Blue corridors	Julie Pezin and Andrew Maurer <i>WWF</i>
11:20 AM	Pacific sea turtle conservation, monitoring and surveying	Belinda Norris <i>SPREP</i>
11:40 AM	Turtle coaling in the region	Dr. Caitlin Smith <i>WWF/James Cook University</i>
12:00 PM	Turtle use across Fiji, Tonga, and PNG	Duncan Williams <i>WWF Pacific</i>
12:20 PM	LUNCH <i>Sponsored by Conservation International</i>	
SESSION 3		
1:30 PM	Shellbank: Global marine turtle traceability tool	Dr. Micheal Jensen* and Dr. Christine Madden <i>WWF</i>
1:50 PM	Moons on the Move: Tracking the interesting movements and post-nesting migrations of Mariana Islands green sea turtles	Josefa Muñoz <i>University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Resources</i>
2:10 PM	Fiji post-nesting hawksbill turtle distribution	Karalaini Rereavosa <i>WWF Pacific</i>
2:30 PM	Bridging TEK and science of migratory species for global policy	Renee Richa Hill-Lewenilovo <i>The Nippon Foundation, University of Edinburgh</i>
2:50 PM	Duff Reef: A green turtle sanctuary	Kristian Miles* and Semisi Meo <i>Conservation International</i>
3:10 PM	AFTERNOON TEA <i>Sponsored by Conservation International</i>	
SESSION 4		
3:20 PM	20 years of community-based conservation for green and leatherback turtles in the Solomon Islands: successes and future challenges	Katherine Moseby ^{1*} , Cameron Masakolo ^{2*} , Hobete Gao, Meloty Sasa, Roy Famu, Johnson Haron, Metcalfe Dawson, Katy Soapi, Alec Hughes, John Read, Jack Palmer and James Mamarado. ¹ <i>University of New South Wales</i> ² <i>Tetepare Descendants Association</i>
3:40 PM	Protecting olive ridley turtles in Lalakua Village: A community-led approach to restoration and cultural stewardship	Christine Ibois* and Emma Oliver <i>ENB Sea Keepers</i>

Updated -13-11-2025



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*"Research and Restoration of
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Program

(Note: all times in Fiji time zone)

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ROOM: Marine Lecture Theatre, USP Lower Campus
[In-person and online]

Join us on Zoom using this link:

<https://usp-fj.zoom.us/j/897961890467?pwd=4KjUUSIbc2NwZuNFdldjU5UEZkNDZuJ>

* denotes presenters

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3:40 PM	Protecting olive ridley turtles in Lalakua Village: A community-led approach to restoration and cultural stewardship	Christine Ibois* and Emma Oliver ENB Sea Keepers

4:00 PM	Sea turtle conservation in the Northern Lau: Building resilience through community engagement	Filmore Mate*, Malakai Tuiono and Katy Miller <i>Kalbu Foundation</i>
4:20 PM	Science, Rehabilitation, and Community: 25 years of sea turtle conservation at the Eco Center Bora Bora.	Marion Olivry* and Erica Bonfanti <i>Eco Center Bora Bora</i>
4:40 PM	Closing Remarks	Co-conveners
End of Day 1		
AGENDA: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025 - DAY 2		
ROOM: Marine Lecture Theatre, USP Lower Campus		
[In-person only, Online-TBC]		
9:00 AM	Day 1 recap	Co-conveners
TALANOA SESSION 1		
9:10 AM	Local and traditional knowledge drivers of effective conservation <i>Panelists: TBC</i>	Co-conveners GB SARA LATIA Kelly Mad
10:15 AM	Group Photo	
	MORNING TEA <i>Sponsored by InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, Grand Pacific Hotel Sara and Holiday Inn Sara.</i>	
TALANOA SESSION 2		
10:25 AM	Strengthening sea turtle conservation through partnership <i>Panelists: TBC</i>	Co-conveners SARA SHARMA Kelly <i>Fiji High Degree?</i>
TALANOA SESSION 3		
11:25 AM	Inspiring conservation action through education and awareness <i>Panelists: TBC</i>	Co-conveners AN IN CONVENIENT TRUTHS
12:25 PM	LUNCH <i>Sponsored by InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, Grand Pacific Hotel Sara and Holiday Inn Sara.</i>	
GROUP SESSIONS ROOM: M107A, USP Lower Campus [In-person only - limited spots - sign in at registration desk]		
1:30 PM	[1] Harnessing the power of environmental education	Jason Tuatani <i>National Trust of Fiji</i>
2:30 PM	[2] Turtle talk with George Balazs	George Balazs <i>Golden Horn Services</i>
3:15 PM	AFTERNOON TEA <i>Sponsored by InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, Grand Pacific Hotel Sara and Holiday Inn Sara.</i>	
3:30 PM	[3] TREDIS: Turtle database for the Pacific	Belinda Norris <i>SPREP</i>
5:00 PM	End of program	

AN IN CONVENIENT TRUTHS

Rejuvenated sea turtle conservation

PET turtle preschool science

AI used analysis

Major Event Partners and Sponsors:



Centre for Sustainable Futures



This event is presented to you by our major partners, sponsors, and a collective of dedicated organisations and individuals committed to regional conservation and community empowerment.

Notes:

- 1. Register for workshop to receive updates.

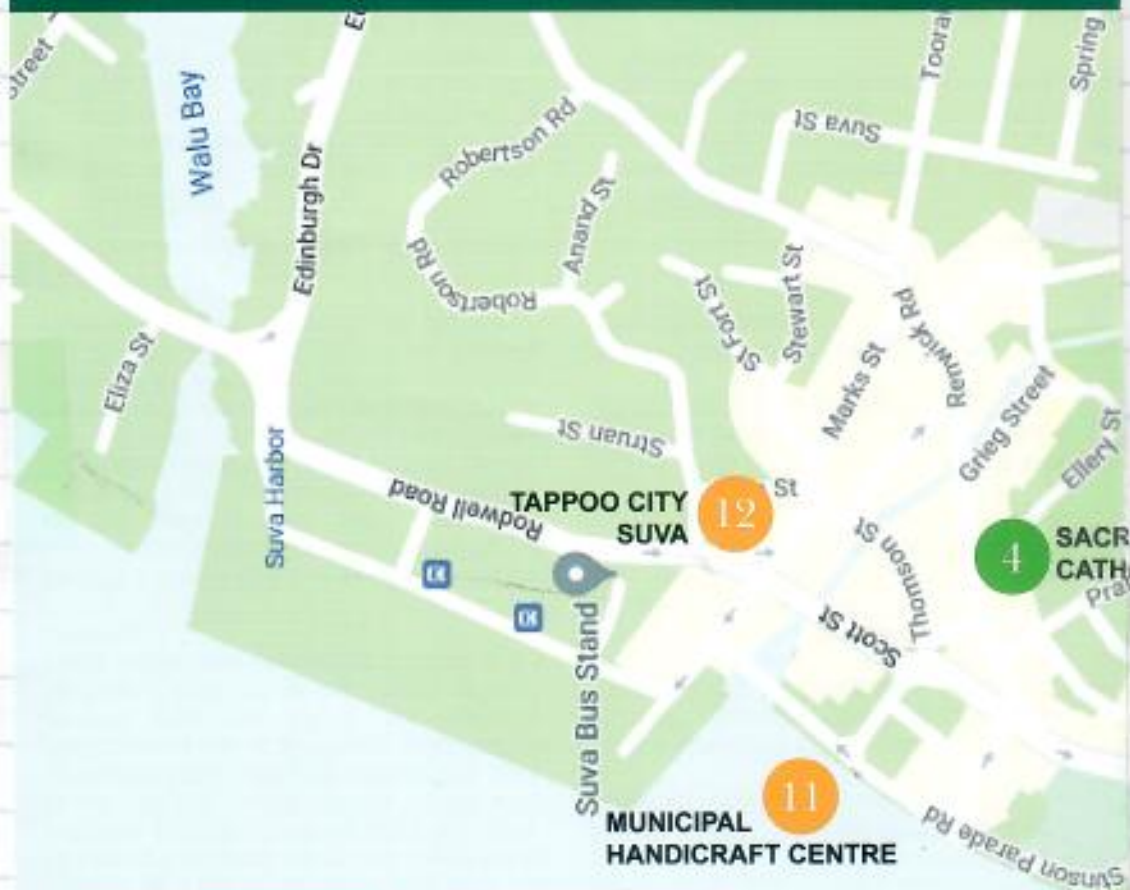
Link: <https://forms.gla/2IQZ4ce1bHqnX42a8>

- 2. Have questions? Contact organisers:

Shritika Prakash, shritika.prakash@gmail.com

Kelly Brown, kelly.brown@usp.ac.nz

Use this map to



Jogging Tracks

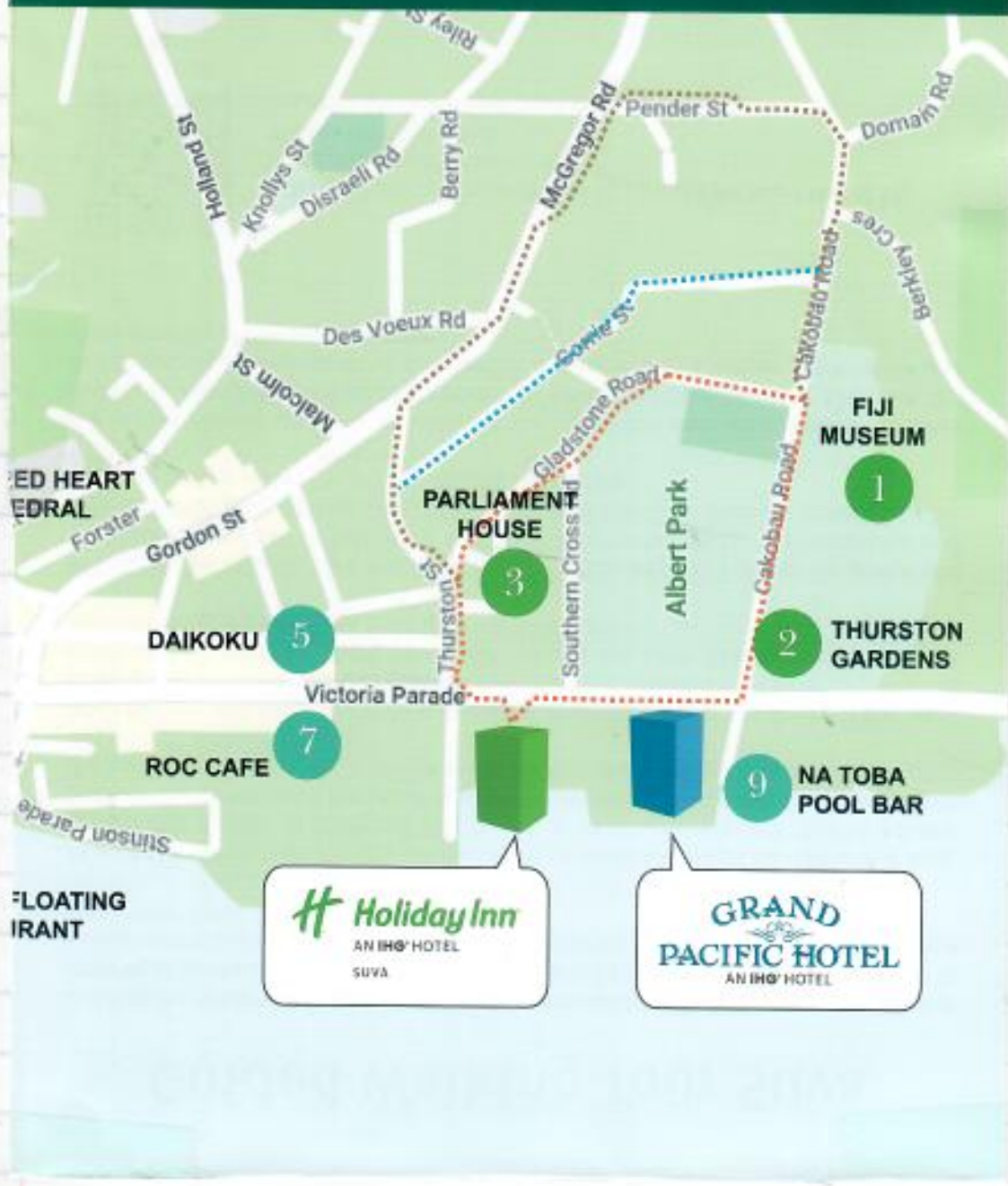
- Track 1
10 mins
- Track 2
20 mins
- Track 3
20 mins



E-COPY OF
THIS GUIDE

6
TIKO'S RESTA

o explore Suva



Conservation status and cultural values of sea turtles leading to (un)written parallel management systems in Fiji

Salanieta Kitolelei¹, Allsi Soderberg, Nemillie Qaqara, Shritika S. Prakash, Malakai Tuiono, Joeli Veitayaki, Susanna Piovano

Received: 14 January 2022 / Revised: 30 May 2022 / Accepted: 5 July 2022

Abstract Globally and locally, conservationists and scientists work to inform policy makers to help recovery of endangered sea turtle populations. In Fiji, in the South Pacific, sea turtles are protected by the national legislation because of their conservation status, and are also a customary iTaukei resource. Centered on our interview-based study at Qoma and Denimanu villages, parallel management systems coexist, where both the (written) national legislation and the (unwritten) customary iTaukei rules determine the time and the quantity of sea turtle harvest. In addition, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions may influence local sea turtle management by providing scientific awareness and helping divert the economic values from the meat to the living animal. We suggest that the government and non-governmental organizations emphasize community management of sea turtles, and work alongside the customary chiefs and their fishing clans to understand the real harvest (eventually by allowing quotas) and to monitor the recovery of South Pacific sea turtles in Fijian waters.

Keywords Customary management · Fishermen · Formal and informal institutions · Legislation · Sea turtles

not deter a wide scale commercial trade (Allen 2007). In 1982, the International Union for Conservation Nature Red List¹ classified all sea turtle species as *endangered*, except for the *vulnerable* loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and the *data deficient* flatback turtle (*Natator depressus*). Fourteen years later, in 1996, the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and the Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) were reclassified as *critically endangered* due to the overall decline driven by unceasing exploitation and other factors (Motimer and Donnelly 2008; Wibbels and Bevan 2019). Temporal investigation into the ecological significance and biology of sea turtles has informed an increased scale protection at the global level, with multilateral and regional agreements and national laws to protect sea turtle species across their range of distribution. Some of the notable global agreements include the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), first signed in Washington in 1973, and the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), first signed in Bonn in 1979. In the South Pacific, the more recent regional guideline is from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Programme (SPREP) Regional Marine Species Program 2022–2026.

QOMA

Intro
Conc
corresponding author?

BLACKBIRDING IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

A Legacy of exploitation and resilience in Fiji

By EARNEST HEATLEY

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the South Pacific became the backdrop for a dark chapter in colonial history known as blackbirding.

This term refers to the coercive and often violent recruitment of Pacific Islanders to work as indentured labourers on plantations across the region.

some were lured with promises of employment, many were forcibly taken from their homelands, leading to a legacy of exploitation and resilience that continues to

resonate today. For Fiji, blackbirding left a particularly lasting mark, shaping the demographic and cultural landscape of the nation.

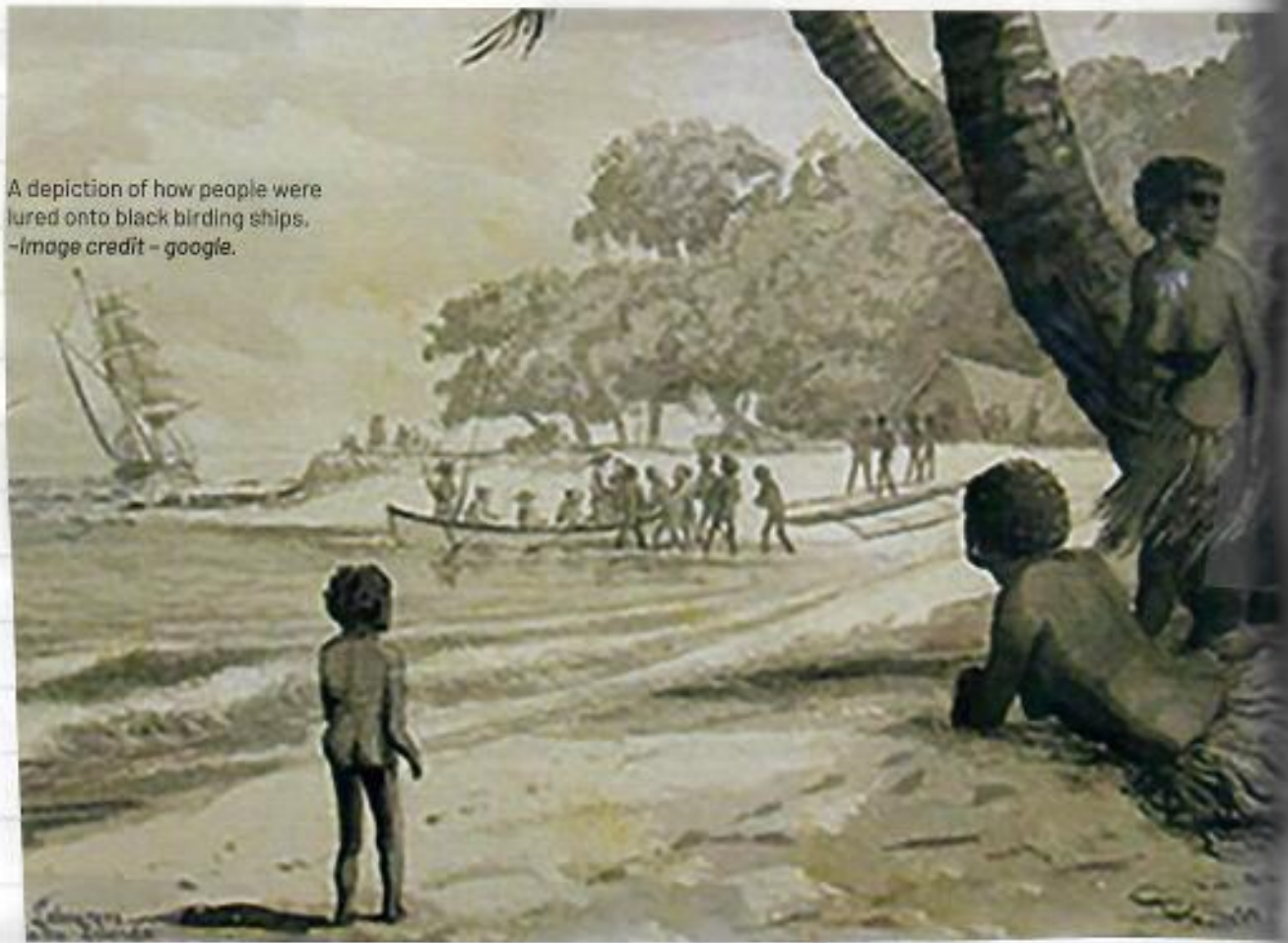
The Origins of Blackbirding

The practice of blackbirding began in earnest in the 1860s. Plantation owners in Queensland, Australia, Fiji, and other colonial territories sought cheap labour to work on sugar and cotton plantations. With a shortage of European workers willing to endure harsh tropical conditions, recruiters turned to the Pacific Islands. Between 1863 and

1904, tens of thousands of Pacific Islanders were taken from their homelands, including the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and even as far as New Caledonia, to work in Fiji and Australia.

Recruitment methods varied. Some Islanders were deceived with false promises of employment, while others were outright kidnapped.

The term "blackbirding" itself is believed to have originated from the practice of capturing individuals, much like birds, and transporting them against their will.



A depiction of how people were lured onto black birding ships.
-Image credit - google.

Blackbirding in Fiji

While Australia is often the focus of blackbirding discussions, Fiji became a central destination for many blackbirded labourers. Plantation owners on Fiji's sugar estates, particularly in the 19th century, recruited large numbers of Pacific Islanders to supplement local labour.

Tragically, most of these men and women never returned to their homelands, creating permanent diaspora communities in Fiji. Today, their descendants form part of Fiji's diverse Melanesian population, which includes people of Solomon Island, Vanuatu, and Kanak (New

Caledonian) ancestry.

These communities have become fully integrated into Fijian society, contributing to its cultural and social fabric.

Life on the Plantations

Upon arrival in Fiji, many Islanders faced grueling conditions. They were often housed in substandard accommodations and subjected to long hours of labour under the tropical sun.

Pay was minimal, and in many cases, it was withheld or paid in company tokens that could only be used at company-owned stores.

This system kept workers indebted and tied to the plantations, effectively trapping them in a cycle of exploitation.

The mortality rate among blackbirded labourers was high. Diseases such as malaria and dysentery, combined with poor living conditions, led to significant loss of life. The graves of these workers, often unmarked, remain scattered across Fiji as silent witnesses to their suffering.

Legislative Responses and Resistance

As awareness of the inhumane treatment of Pacific Islanders grew, colonial and British authorities

attempted to regulate the practice. The Pacific Islanders Protection Act of 1872 required recruiters to obtain licenses and adhere to certain standards.

Despite these efforts, blackbirding persisted in Fiji and elsewhere, driven by the demand for cheap labour.

Pacific Islanders resisted their circumstances in numerous ways—some attempted to escape, while others maintained cultural traditions, storytelling, and communal networks as acts of defiance.

Their resilience laid the foundation for future generations to preserve their heritage and assert their place in Fijian society.

Legacy and Recognition

The descendants of blackbirded labourers have become an integral part of Fiji's multicultural society. While initially marginalized, these communities now celebrate their mixed Melanesian heritage, which encompasses Solomon Islander, Vanuatu, and Kanak ancestry.

Their presence is a living reminder of the historical injustices of blackbirding, as well as the strength and adaptability of those who survived it.

Recognition and education remain important. By acknowledging the history of blackbirding in Fiji, the nation can honor the contributions and sacrifices of these Pacific Islander communities, ensuring that their stories are preserved for future generations.

Blackbirding in the South Pacific was a chapter marked by coercion, suffering, and resilience.

In Fiji, it reshaped the demographic landscape and left a lasting legacy through the descendants of those forcibly brought to work on plantations.

Their stories remind us of both the human cost of exploitation and the enduring strength of Pacific Islander communities.

Understanding this history is crucial not only for honoring the past but also for reinforcing Fiji's diverse and resilient cultural identity.

Pacific islanders, victims of black
birding pictured on a farm in Celms,
Australia. -image credit - Museum of
Australia.



Descendants of laborers taken by force from Vanuatu during the black birding era. ~Image credit - Vanuatu Daily Post



It's time to embrace community-led conservation vs the colonial kind (commentary)

AUDREY MORENG

15 MAY 2023 Fiji

Comments

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MONGABAY
2023

- Conservation NGOs often enter countries like Fiji and advise local and indigenous communities on how to protect their land and sea territories, or worse, acquire land and preclude the traditional residents from it.
- More NGOs are embracing community-led conservation, though, and we must embrace this, a new op-ed by a former Peace Corps volunteer in Fiji argues.

See All Key Ideas

When I lived on the remote island of Beqa, in Fiji, I watched as foreign-based NGOs entered villages and told Fijians how to live their lives, saying things like "no more eating *ika bula* (sea turtle)," and "it is time you stop fishing *kawakawa* (grouper)." These environmental NGOs had good intentions, of course, but their work was ineffective.

Why would a Fijian man who has been eating *ika bula* for traditional occasions since childhood suddenly stop because some white guy who spent three days in his village told him to? Why do international conservation organizations often ask indigenous people to halt their traditional and sustainable practices instead of focusing on larger issues at play, such as the bycatch of giant fishing vessels?

dated and ineffective. If we want to make real change, we need to change our mindsets. We need to challenge current conservation practice.



The village of Naceva, Beqa, Fiji on a cloudy day. Image courtesy of Audrey Moreng.

Some of international conservation today still takes on a new form of colonialism. Colonialism is the exploitation of people, often Indigenous, by a foreign power. It usually involves taking resources, making the colonizer more powerful, all while furthering the objectification of the colonized. Today, it looks like NGOs from high-income countries entering low-income countries under the guise of conservation and bettering the planet. NGOs are coming into communities of people who have inhabited biodiverse lands for centuries and telling them how to change, how to help save the planet from the mistakes their own countries have made. Many NGOs will buy up land, or advise governments to create national parks, or protected areas. Most of the time these actions result in 'conservation refugees,' ineffective conservation, and an imbalance of power. Some NGOs are embracing community-led conservation, and we must embrace and push for these organizations.

When colonial forms of conservation are present, it can result in communities having to **fight for their rights**, especially in the face of conservation's favorite: the so-called protected area. Although there is a growing recognition among many institutions and academia that conservation must move in a more equitable direction, Indigenous communities, like the Maasai, are **still fighting** against international conservation decisions.

While many people from high income countries are on board for 'saving the planet,' many Indigenous communities who have not been part of the problem, are **left out** of problem-solving conversations. It is time to put this colonial form of conservation to bed. It is time to look towards successful examples of community-led conservation.

Fiji does not need new ideas on how to protect their *iqoliqoli* (marine areas). Instead, Fiji has a lot to teach the rest of the world.

Fiji is home to a diverse population of both Indo-Fijians, and iTaukei (native) Fijians. There is a wealth of knowledge concerning both the land and sea within the Indigenous communities. The inhabitants of villages across Fiji have an intimate awareness of both what is changing in their ecosystems and what can be done about it.



Lau banded iguana (*Brachylophus fasciatus*), a species endemic to the Fijian archipelago. Image by Rhett Butler for Mongabay.

The Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas (FLMMA) is a successful example of what community-led conservation looks like when it is properly supported and managed. FLMMA is a network in Fiji that is made up of marine conservation partners. It takes after the Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA) model, which is an evolving network consisting of communities, conservation organizations, research and training institutions, and government departments in the Pacific and Asian region. In Fiji, they have embraced and evolved this model, and were the first country to formally adopt the model in their government. FLMMA takes local knowledge and traditional resource practices and formalizes them as part of a country-wide learning initiative.

This study demonstrates one such example of a *tabu* – a ban on fishing during certain parts of the year in certain places: a 'taboo' area. Taboos have been used for centuries throughout the Pacific Islands, and in Fiji are controlled at the will and expertise of the village elders. Though these bans on harvesting look different throughout the world, these practices are doing a lot for local conservation. FLMMA combines traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) such as this, with modern science, and monitors outcomes through economic, social, and biological means. It is a holistic approach that concerns the entire system.

caught breaking a *tabu* could result in a ceremony of public apology, where the offender would have to present *yaqona* (bundle of kava) to the village.

The success of FLMMA is in large part due to the formal adoption of the program by the Fijian government. This is because the government plays a prominent role in returning ownership of coastal areas back to traditional *matagali* (clans). By situating power within small village communities and having this power both supported and strengthened by government support, FLMMA is demonstrating *polycentricity*. In other words, this is not simply a top-down approach. Neither the government nor NGOs are telling these small village communities what to do, instead their decision-making is reaffirmed by the Fijian government.

Although we know there is no such thing as a panacea, and conservation is not a 'copy and paste' field, we can learn a lot from Fiji. We can also take notes from *Conservation International* who have played their role well here, not by telling Fijians what to do in terms of conservation, but by providing funding so that local researchers could better understand why FLMMA is successful.

See related: Philippine women guard a marine protected area



Fijian fishers come ashore. Image courtesy of Audrey Moreng.

This leads me to takeaway number one – support local conservation efforts, because there has never been a need to reinvent the wheel. Bottom-up, locally-driven conservation is where we need to refocus our efforts. To do this, we must both erase the 'white savior mindset' and embrace the knowledge held by the world's Indigenous people.

Takeaway number two is to enhance the use of TEK in conservation. FLMMA has not created novel conservation practices. They have instead highlighted what different villages throughout Fiji are doing,

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Finally, we need to remember how essential people are in conservation efforts. Social empowerment and poverty reduction are just as important in FLMMA as species conservation.

Takeaway number three is that conservation must include people. People are the ones who are going to make change, they are at the forefront of conservation. The people who know their land best should drive these efforts. The choice is not people or conservation, it can and must be both

Community-led conservation is not only possible, but when supported properly, is extremely successful. It is already happening, and has been happening for centuries, but many communities around the world may not have the funding, access, or networking to be able to learn, share, or finance projects. These are not situations where NGOs should come in with money and power, just to further inequality. These are opportunities to enhance the rights of Indigenous communities, to listen, learn, and observe what is being, or has already been, done. We need to move away from 'saviorism,' and towards true empowerment.



The Fijian island of Yanuca lit up by a South Pacific sunset. Image courtesy of Audrey Moreng.

When I was a volunteer in Fiji, I listened over morning tea as my host aunt explained which day of the month was best to hunt for mud crabs. I nodded to my friend five meters underwater as he advised me against shooting for a small fish, later explaining that the fish had growing to do. I smiled and *obo* (respectful cupped-hand clap) before downing a *bilo* (cup) of grog, hearing about how things used to be from the village elders, hearing both their hopes and fears for the future of their island.

The next time you are thinking about donating to a conservation organization, do your research. Does the organization support community-led conservation, or are there stories of local Indigenous communities losing out?

Get involved in your own community's conservation, it's all around us!

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TIN: 2900952481 TAX INVOICE

INV NO.: AC25 7224
 INV DT: 23/11/2025 05:11:54

Items Product	Qty	Price	Tot
1	1.00	6.75	6.75
2	1.00	1.28	1.28

RE: NET: 8.03
 TOTAL DUES: 8.03
 PAYABLE THRU: 8.03

Label Name n
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TOTAL TAX: 1.35
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Folio No. / Invoice No. :
Membership :
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Company Name :



TAX INVOICE

TIN NO : 50-01397-0-5
Room No. : 253
No. of Guest : 1
Arrival Date : 17-11-25
Departure Date : 21-11-25
Cashier : 203
Booked By : UEKAHE
Page(s) : 1 of 2
CRS No. : 40741033

Date	Description	Reference	Debit	C
17-11-25	Tapa Lunch Food POS	Room# 253 : CHECK# T22292 [SUVA4111]	25.40	
17-11-25	Tapa Bar Lunch Bev POS	Room# 253 : CHECK# T22292 [SUVA4111]	5.35	
18-11-25	Sirocco Bfst Food POS	Room# 253 : CHECK# S17994 [SUVA4124]	9.75	
19-11-25	Tapa Dinner Food POS	Room# 253 : CHECK# T20101 [SUVA4122]	41.05	
19-11-25	Tapa Bar Dinner Bev POS	Room# 253 : CHECK# T20101 [SUVA4122]	7.30	
20-11-25	Takeaway Corner Bfst Food POS	Room# 253 : CHECK# S18287 [SUVA4080]	15.80	
20-11-25	Dremz Destination Rm Charge*	0	60.00	
20-11-25	Tapa Bar Lunch Bev POS	Room# 253 : CHECK# T22426 [SUVA4047]	5.35	
20-11-25	Gratuity	Room# 253 : CHECK# T22426 [SUVA4047]	1.00	
20-11-25	Tapa Dinner Food POS	Room# 253 : CHECK# T28986 [SUVA4122]	44.00	
20-11-25	Tapa Bar Dinner Bev POS	Room# 253 : CHECK# T28986 [SUVA4122]	15.65	
21-11-25	Credit Card Surcharge*		6.92	
21-11-25	Visa - OPI			237.57
Total			237.57	237.57
Balance			0.00	FJD



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 TIN : 50-01397-0-5

ADVANCE DEPOSIT RECEIPT 39339

Received By	Amount
Visa - OPI	2,498.78FJD

The above deposit has been received for the following arrival date for George Balazs
 Your Confirmation Number is 10275215.

Arrival : 17-11-25
 Departure : 21-11-25

We look forward to welcoming you to the Holiday Inn Suva.

EFTPOS Customer Copy (Credit Card):

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 MID: 006003012135817
 TID: 81000043
 Version: 03.01.71

NOV 17, 25 11:30
 BATCH: 000565
 INV: 4614
 STAN: 014937
 ACCOUNT TYPE CREDIT
 RRN: 532022646632
 TOKEN: 1840225626900364
 VISA
 A0000000031010
 CHASE VISA
4036(t)
 SALE FJD \$2498.78

143

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BOOKING REFERENCE:

PASSENGER DETAILS:

E-TICKET NUMBER:

EWOWNA MR GEORGE BALAZS

2602427600901

Date issued: 05 September 2025
TIN 50-00123-0-9

PRICE BREAKDOWN

Base Fare	Taxes & Fees	Amount Paid
1,325.00 USD	172.31 USD	1,497.31 USD

ITINERARY DETAILS

Depart	Arrive	Details
Honolulu International (HNL) 15 November 2025 23:55 (11:55PM)	Nadi (NAN) 17 November 2025 04:45 (4:45AM)	FJ821 Confirmed PLUS
Nadi (NAN) 21 November 2025 10:15 (10:15AM)	Honolulu International (HNL) 20 November 2025 21:10 (9:10PM)	FJ853 Confirmed PLUS

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12.50 % VAT
12.50 % Goods & services tax

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\$106

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Meal Plan: There is no meal option with this room.

Private bathroom • Balcony • Terrace • Garden view • Free toiletries • Inner courtyard view • Air conditioning • Safety deposit box • Bidet • Streaming service (like Netflix) • Toilet • Sofa • Bath or shower • Towels • Linen • Socket near the bed • Tile/marble floor • Desk • Seating Area • Soundproofing • TV • Slippers • Refrigerator • Telephone • Ironing facilities • Satellite channels • Tea/Coffee maker • Iron • Radio • Flat-screen TV • Hairdryer • Minibar • Wake up service/Alarm clock • Electric kettle • Outdoor furniture • Wake-up service • Alarm clock • Laptop safe • Tumble dryer • Wardrobe or closet • Clothes rack • Toilet paper • Sofa bed

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SPN2 NOV 13
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Report



by Kaneta
Naimatau

The wisdom of Fiji's ancestors in reading ocean patterns and weather signs must now walk hand-in-hand with modern science to tackle climate change.

Permanent Secretary for Public Works, Transport and Meteorological Services Paula Baleilevuka made the call yesterday at the opening of Fiji's 8th National Climate Outlook Forum in Suva.

"Traditional knowledge tells us that the ocean is not an endless resource to be exploited, but a sacred space that demands balance and care," Mr Baleilevuka said.

"Our elders read the waves, the winds, and the movement of fish with the same precision that modern scientists use instruments for."

The two-day forum at the Fiji Meteorological Service's (FMS) at the Laucala Bay office focuses on oceans and traditional knowledge, bringing together climate scientists, traditional leaders, and community practitioners.



Permanent Secretary for Public Works,

Mr Baleilevuka said ancestors knew when tides would change, when cyclones would form, and when reefs needed time to heal, knowledge that remained relevant today.

"Science and traditional knowledge must now walk hand in hand, blending modern data with indigenous wisdom to restore balance to our marine ecosystems," he said.

Solutions

Acting FMS director Samisoni Waqavakatoga said the forum aimed to bridge modern climate science with traditional knowledge passed down through generations.

"By doing so, we honour the strengths of our people and the wisdom of our elders, while embracing the innovation that will



Transport and Meteorological Services Paula Baleilevuka (second from left), having a chat with participants on November 19, 2025. Photo: Kaneta Naimatau

support our communities into the future," Mr Waqavakatoga said.

The forum will review ocean conditions, discuss marine weather services, and introduce FMS work on traditional weather and ocean indicators.

Mr Baleilevuka said traditional knowledge taught that caring for the ocean began with caring for each other.

"It reminds us that we are not separate from the sea - we are part of it," he said.

The forum includes government agencies, traditional leaders, youth representatives, and development partners from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and Pacific Regional Environment Programme.

Feedback: kaneta.naimatau@fijisun.com.fj

“Traditional knowledge tells us that the ocean is not an endless resource to be exploited, but a sacred space that demands balance and care.**”**

Paula Baleilevuka
Permanent Secretary for Public Works and Transport

Fiji
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CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Kids lead mangrove planting initiative

Veiuoto Primary Year 8 students designed the project after their final exam give back to the community and contribute to climate solutions.



Staff and students of Veiuoto Primary School on November 19, 2025. Photo: Rariqi Turner

RARIQI TURNER
SUVA

As Fiji continues to face rising sea levels, stronger storms and coastal erosion, communities are taking action from the ground up, starting with its children.

Year Eight students of Veiuoto Primary School were involved in a mangrove planting project to help protect their shoreline and support families living closest to the sea from the threats climate change.

The students planted 1300 mangrove seedlings along the Nasese coast in Suva, marking one of their biggest environment projects.

Head teacher Ken Kafoa said the initiative allowed students to turn classroom lessons into real climate action.

"This is something they have learned, and this project has helped them to put it into practice," Mr Kafoa said.

The Year 8 students designed the project after their final exams as a way to "give back to the community" and contribute to climate solutions.

"We are located alongside the sea. We always talked about doing something to improve our shoreline, but we did not expect the massive support we received," he said.

The Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Forestry, and NGOs also joined the effort by providing seedlings, equipment, and T-shirts for students, teachers, and parents who helped on the day.

Mr Kafoa said the project gave students valuable hands-on experience while also showing the community how young people can take leadership in climate action.

"We want the children to explore what they learn and also show the community what we can do to help protect the sea-shore and fight climate change," he said.

The school plans to continue the mangrove planting project in the coming years.

Residents living in the area say the initiative brings hope.

Emeline Vakaloloma, 78, who lives in Korova Settlement, only a few metres from the shore, said the mangroves will help protect their homes.

"We face the sea every day, the rising waves, the flooding, the erosion. These mangroves will help protect our homes. We are thankful to the students for thinking about us," she said.

Feedback: rariqi.turner@fijisun.com

11/20/25 Fiji Sun

11-20-25
Fiji TIMES

Amele swamp



AT 85, Amele Serei's looks carry the quiet glow of a life well-lived, every wrinkle a testament to her strength and cultural wisdom.

The Barotu widow had spent decades gleaning the village waterfront, rising before sunrise to walk through the maze of mangrove channels she knew well like the lines on the palm of her hands.

While many of us view the swamp as a wasteland of tangled roots and shadows, Amele saw them as sacred guardian.

In her heydays, she could read the mangrove swamp with her fingers like the way the visually impaired reads braille. She knew which hole in the mud hid the fattest crabs and where the fish gathered when the tides shifted.

"I came from Navave in Bua but have lived in Barotu, Ra most of my adult life after I got married," she said.

"I was a fisherwoman for many years, feeding my family and selling seafood to pay for my eight

Retired fisherwoman, Amele Serei, 85, at her home in Barotu, Ra. Picture: JOHN KAMEA

3304111



the reader

children's school needs. The mangrove swamp was our source of livelihood."

Amele never had the education we now enjoy. Growing up, her classroom was the mudflat, nature was her teacher and her friends were the seashells, crustaceans and fish that ended up in the family pot by the fire.

When she got married, the sea was her daily playground. She understood the delicate, hidden world beneath the ebbing waves and knew every cluster of crab holes by name.

"I'd start from the front of the village and go past Gadigadinibelo (heron's retreat), Lekakina (where on falls short), Ma'adra (their eyes) and Qovu, returning after I reach 'Avuavuniciva (oyster toaster) which is the furthest crab nest."

"Knowing every nook and cranny on the swamp meant that I had to respect the mangrove swamp and be one with it. I was so skilled as a fisherwoman that I taught village women who were born in Barotu."

However, in 2016, Barotu's mangrove forest lost its magic after TC Winston struck the Ra coastline with relentless wrath. Twisted by damaging winds and carpeted by heavy silt, the health of the mangrove swamp declined.

"Straight after the cyclone, all crabs

and fish disappeared, together with our food and livelihood sources."

"We couldn't fish for damu, senikake, ki and qiawa anymore. We'd put out our nets but could not get the kanace and nuqa we used to take home."

Today, after years of coastal rehabilitation and mangrove reforestation through a project implemented by Conservation International Fiji, fish and crabs are slowly returning.

Unfortunately for Amele, after years of battling the sun and cold, fate has caught up with her.

Five years ago, after her 80th birthday, she suffered a stroke which debilitated the fisherwoman and sent her on retirement.

"I miss going out to sea but I am also enjoying my retirement and being home with my grandchildren."

"I want to tell young people to take care of mangrove trees because they will take care of the community. Protecting the environment ensures that there will always be enough for us now, and for those who will come after us."

Now in her twilight years, age may have slowed down Amele's movements on land, but in the mangroves, where she will always find her inner strength, her name will live forever.

Leaders told to cut kava, alcohol use

By SERAFINA SILAITOGA

TRADITIONAL leaders in Namosi have been told to reduce their kava and alcohol consumption and spend more time with their families, especially by helping their wives at home.

They were also told that reducing consumption would help them perform their duties better.

The directive by Tui Namosi Ratu Suliano Matanitobua was issued during the Bose Vanua (chiefly meeting) at Veivatuloa Village on Tuesday.

"I've told our clan leaders (yavusa and mataqali) to cut down hours spent drinking yaqona and even alcohol. In fact, reduce their consumption of these drinks," he said.

"There have been times when I'd drive up to my village and I see women carrying firewood and even root crops, making their way back home from the plantation.

"I'd pick them, take them to their village and often I would see their husbands drinking yaqona in broad daylight.

"So, I'd get off the vehicle, sit with them and growl at them to be ashamed that women are now doing their fatherly duties. This has to stop because our children need to learn their rightful duties at home."

Ratu Suliano has urged his traditional leaders to raise the issue in village meetings and



to remind men they play a vital role at home.

"Look after your wives and

children, fight domestic violence and let's respect our women."

"We may make decisions as

FISI TIMES



FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

■ EDITOR

The PM nearly skipped USP over unpaid fees - Fiji's most relatable moment of the year.

“ So, I'd get off the vehicle, sit with them and growl at them to be ashamed that women are now doing their fatherly duties

- Ratu Suliano Matanitobua

Namosi Think Tank chairman, Kali Vunidilo speaks at the Namosi Provincial Council meeting in Navua, yesterday.
Picture: ELIKI NUKUTABU

11/29/25
head of families, head of yavusa, mataqali and villages but it's the women who make things

happen. That's why we need to support them. It all begins at home.”



Akuila Baravi accepts the magiti presented by the people of Kubuna.

□ Inset - A pig is wheeled away in a wheelbarrow to the village ground for the magiti presentation.

Pictures: FILE

Traditional mourning lifted





Compiled by
ANDREW NAIDU

EVERYTHING was checked and checked again by the Vunivalu's traditional spokesman, Ratu Niko Komaitai, also known by the title of Tunitoga.

According to an article published by *The Fiji Times* on March 30, 1990, the burua (lifting of the 100-night mourning) of the late paramount chief of Kubuna, Ratu Sir George Kadavulevu Cakobau, had to be done with a strict eye to protocol and tradition as nothing could be left to chance.

So, when the time came for about 500 people to descend on the chiefly island of Bau to mark the bogidrau or the 100th night since the Vunivalu's death with a thanksgiving *magiti* or feast, everything went like clockwork.

When Ro Jone Mataitini, the Ombudsman and Vunivalu of Rewa, arrived as the head of the Burebasaga group - one of the major traditional delegations at the function - no time was

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wasted in escorting him and his party to a place of honour where they were accorded all the ceremony and close attention his high rank warranted.

In Ro Jone's party were the Tui Tavuki Ratu Peeli Nanovo, the Vunivalu of Serua Ratu Peni Latianara and Ratu Ifereimi Buaserau of Namosi.

From the Tovata confederation came Ratu Finau Mara, leading the Vuanireta people and Maika Ravula at the head of a Cakaudrove group representing the Tui Cakau, Ratu Sir Peniaia Ganilau.

The *magiti* prepared by the Kubuna people to thank everyone who had attended the Vunivalu's funeral included piles of cooked and uncooked food shared out for people to take home.

Parties that were unable to attend the Bau functions had their *magiti* sent to them.

The article stated the people of Tallevu began pouring onto the island with their *magiti* to be presented to the people of other provinces - these included slaughtered cattle, pigs, and tons of *dalo* and yams.

Customs and traditions called for them to do this as the Vunivalu was head of the Kubuna confederacy.

After the traditional ceremonies of welcome, the *magiti* was then distributed.



Ratu Tua'akitau Cokanauto among a group of Bau elders sitting on the village ground after presenting their *magiti*. Picture: FILE

140 villages need seawalls

By **NACANIELI TUILEVUKA**

AT least 140 villages across Fiji have been identified as needing seawalls.

Climate Change Minister Mosese Bulitavu said the Government faced a massive task in protecting coastal communities already feeling the brunt of climate change.

"The construction is done by the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways," he said.

However, Mr Bulitavu said the prioritisation of the villages depended on assessment.

"The Director of Waterways and his team conduct assessments to determine which villages are key priorities. They look at it on a priority basis."

Mr Bulitavu said they allocated between \$5million

and \$7m from the Climate Trust Fund to the Ministry of Waterways for the construction of seawalls.

"With the additional funding from the national budget, the Ministry of Waterways has been able to undertake more of these projects.

"They have just completed seawalls at Naviyago in Lautoka and Navakaka in Cakaudrove."

With the effects of climate change intensifying, many coastal communities

remain exposed, waiting and watching as the ocean inches closer to their doorsteps.

"There are still some villages along the coast in the North that remain on the list."

Mr Bulitavu said they too would be assisted by the Government for the construction of their seawall.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Write to us at letters@fjtimes.com.fj to share your views on this topic

The bamboo which is believed to have been thrown by the demigod and landed on

Sacred conn



By NACANIELI TUILEVUKA

ON Nawi Island in Cakaudrove Province stands an ancient bamboo plant.

It is not just a plant, but a living part of the island's history.

According to our tour guide Losefati Ligairi, the bamboo was thrown onto the island by a demigod from Naitasiri and has been growing there for thousands of years.

"The bamboo you see is part of our history. It has been here for centuries, and it is a symbol of our island's past, which is still alive today," Mr Ligairi said.

But the bamboo plant's significance goes beyond its age.

Mr Ligairi said it was deeply tied to a long-standing traditional rivalry or *veitauvutaki* between the people of Naitasiri, on Viti Levu, and those of Vanua Levu.

"We have a friendly rivalry with Naitasiri," he said.

"It has been going on for generations, but it is not one of anger or hate. It's a rivalry built on mutual respect, and not about who is better or stronger.

This rivalry is also linked to sacred places on the island, such as hot springs, which are important to the people of both regions.

"The bamboo plant, just like the hot springs, is part of the old stories that shape our culture. These are not fairytales, but important legends that guide our



Nawi staff Losefati Ligairi while giving an interview with this newspaper. Picture: NACANIELI TUILEVUKA

beliefs and actions."

Mr Ligairi said indigenous Fijians, who arrived on the island around 3000 years ago, brought with them their language, customs and beliefs in spirits and gods.

"Our ancestors worshipped demigods or *Kalouvu*. They believed that the land, the trees and the water were all sacred and connected to the gods."

He said the bamboo plant on the island was considered part of this sacred connection.

"It is a living link to our past, which is why it has never been disturbed.

"It has been here for centuries, and it is an important part of who we are."

In a world that changes quickly, Mr Ligairi said the bamboo plant stands firm, representing the strength of tradition.

"The bamboo plant is a reminder of where we come from. Even as the world around us changes, this plant remains, just like our culture and our beliefs."

Mr Ligairi and others in the community are committed to protecting it, not only for the sake of tourism but also to preserve their identity.

"We must protect our origins and our traditions.

"The bamboo plant is a symbol of our past, and we must ensure future generations continue to honour it."

Nawi Island. Picture: NACANIELI TUILEVUKA

ections



Our ancestors shared their history through words, not through books; that is how our culture has been passed down, from one generation to the next

- Losefati Ligairi

parts of our culture."

The stories that surround the bamboo plant are passed down orally from generation to generation. Unlike written records, these stories are alive, changing and adapting as they are told.

"Our ancestors shared their history through words, not through books; that is how our culture has been passed down, from one generation to the next."

The history of Nawi Island is deeply intertwined with Fijian culture and heritage.

"Indigenous communities originally inhabited the island, and the island was a focal point in the region due to its strategic location."

Over the centuries, Nawi Island has witnessed numerous historical events that have shaped its cultural landscape.

Today, traces of this rich history can still be seen, providing a fascinating backdrop to the island's modern developments.

Today, as tourism continues to grow in Fiji, the people of Cakaudrove are determined to ensure their sacred places, like the bamboo plant, are preserved.

"We must protect our past," Mr Ligairi said.

"The bamboo plant is a symbol of our connection to the land and each other. And we must make sure it continues to stand strong for generations to come."

While enjoying the island visit with a \$5 boat ride, be sure to ask the tour guide to show you this famous bamboo plant.

If you are from Naitasiri and have been overstaying on Vanna Levu for years and have forgotten what this unique bamboo plant looks like, I suggest that you make a visit to Nawi.

Maybe take a plant and plant it in your backyard.

E sa re!

As Fiji grows in popularity as a tourist destination, the protection of cultural and sacred sites becomes even more important.

Many visitors come to learn about the history and culture of Fiji, but there is a concern that commercialisation could threaten the preservation of these sacred places.

Local guides, many from nearby Savusavu, lead visitors to the bamboo plant and share its history and meaning.

"When we guide tourists, we tell them the stories of the bamboo plant, but we also teach them to respect these sacred places. These are not just sites for pictures, they are living

The Fiji Times

YOUR VOICE

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VUNAYASI DISTRICT PLAYGROUND

A Project Funded by
Prime Minister's Office

"This playground was officially commissioned
by Honourable Prime Minister of Fiji
Hon. Sitiveni Ligamamada
on Tuesday, the 25th November 2025"

Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka commissioned the new playground for the Vunayasa District School in Dratabu, Nadi yesterday. Picture: RENAL CHAND

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Excerpt page 202- Kinan and Dalzell 2005

"Flagship Species for Pacific Islanders: While generalities for cultural aspects over a geographic area as vast as the Pacific Islands can lead to misconceptions, it is worthwhile to note that Pacific Islanders, including those residing in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and CNMI, utilise and have a strong cultural relationship with their marine resources, including sea turtles (Johannes 1978; McCoy 1982; Campbell 2003; Frazier 2003). Turtles are an intrinsic part of the culture, subsistence, traditions, and folklore of the region (Balazs 1982; McCoy 1982; Campbell 2003). Traditionally, they are known to have played an important role in religious ceremonies, and perpetuating community relationships and identities through the exchange of turtle meat and turtle products (Johannes 1978, 1981; Balazs 1982; McCoy 1982, 1997). McCoy (1982:279) concluded that turtles contribute significantly to the overall cultural stability of the people [in the Marshall Islands] and that 'their contribution in protein is not nearly as important as their cultural role.' However, the indigenous people residing in the US and US Pacific territories (Hawaii, Guam, America Samoa, and CNMI) lost their cultural rights to harvest turtles when the US Endangered Species Act rendered harvest illegal. They have since requested an allowable cultural harvest of turtles, green sea turtles specifically, to perpetuate and strengthen cultural identity¹⁰ (McCoy 1997; Hara 2002; Ilo 2002). In this regard, sustainable use may allow turtles to assume a flagship role for indigenous Pacific islanders to promote cultural integrity (McCoy 1982, 1997; Hara 2002), and may further convey resource conservation ethics to younger generations (Johannes 1978; Morauta, Pernetta, and Heaney 1982; Spring 1982; McCoy 1997; Poepoe, Bartram, and Friedlander in press).

Although this concept may be controversial, islanders believe that strengthening cultural practices will revive traditional authority, resulting in limited harvest and increased protection of nesting beaches (Spring 1982; Ilo 2002); as has already proven to be the trend in certain Pacific Island nations, such as Fiji (SPC no date) and Vanuatu (Petro 2002). It is the belief of elders in Papua-New Guinea that '[by] following old traditions, turtles will still be plentiful' (Spring 1982:295). Furthermore, socio-cultural studies conducted in CNMI by McCoy (1997) suggest that the continuation and regeneration of cultural practice could allow limited use, yet provide more effective conservation measures than laws imposed from afar."

CULTURE

ADV 6/28/98

Hawaiians value
green sea turtles

It is absolutely stunning in this age of awareness to read the remarks of two letter writers regarding the cultural taking of green sea turtles.

It appears both perceive modern Hawaiians as mindless, wanton killers hell-bent on slaughtering and causing the extinction of the honu. Nothing can be further from the truth. Most of us are responsible people who deeply cherish the natural resources left to us by our ancestors.

Our role as stewards of the land and sea is a deeply ingrained tenet of our culture. Please be assured we fully understand that the elimination of the honu from our waters is not in our best interest. So much so, that many of us have taken active roles and dedicated part of our lives to help facilitate the resurgence of sea turtles.

Make no mistake, the perpetuation of the species is of utmost importance to us Hawaiians. Thus, come the time when the population of turtles is judged

stable enough to tolerate a limited harvest, we ask simply to be allowed to resume our millennia-old relationship with this cultural entity.

If you think the uniqueness of our Hawaiian culture is of some value to the state, then you must be willing to allow it to occur. It is unprincipled to restrict Native Hawaiians to only Merrie Monarch festivals and Kamehameha Day parades because you've decreed these practices acceptable. It is not fair for you to pigeonhole us into a box for your convenience.

Just as Native Hawaiians over the centuries have accepted you and all your idiosyncrasies, so, too, we ask to be accepted — here in this, our very own home.

Bill Puleloa
Kaunakakai, Molokai

751

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By DR JALESI NAKARAWA



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Voreqe Bainimarama, when conducting his coup

End the

FROM the outset, people should accept that the political problems Fiji faces today originated from the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) in 1987. Since then, the country has gone through three constitutions — and perhaps we will be counting more.

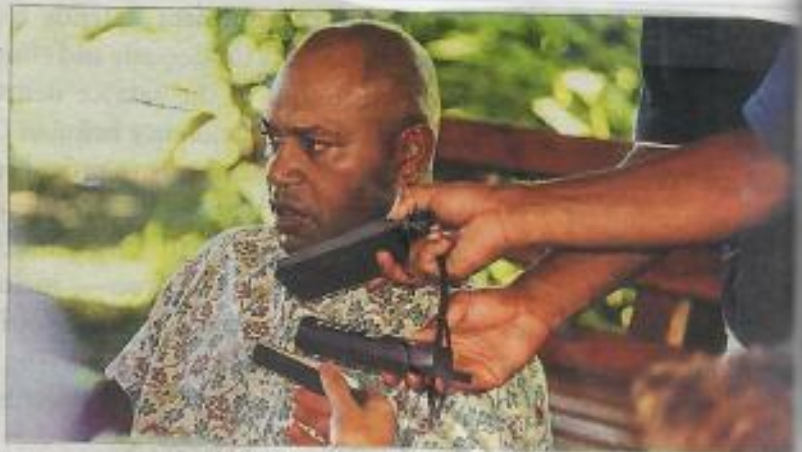
Whatever the rationale, there is no justification behind the coups and the entrenchment of the RFMF in the political landscape. People are angry and tired of watching the standoff or the overbearing stance of RFMF over government decisions (which never existed under the FFP government).

Voreqe Bainimarama, when conducting his coup in 2016, uttered the infamous words that his coup was to end all coups. In retrospect, the military buildup following the 1987 coup never subsided, sustained by expanding peacekeeping operations.

Simply, the military never returned to barracks after the 1987 coups.

The military expansion continued and culminated in section 131(3) of the 2013 Constitution regarding the powers of RFMF. On its face, it entrenches the military in politics.

Judicial interpretation of the clause is required to untangle the



George Speight speaks to the media. Pictures: FILE

Former commander and prime minister Voreqe Bainimarama. George Speight, left, speaks to Dr Tupeni Baba, right, at the old parliament complex in Nasese, Suva.

in 2016, uttered the infamous words that his was the coup to end all coups. Picture: FT/ FILE

coups culture

debate and confusion.

Meanwhile, it may be appropriate to think outside the box for a solution.

The current Prime Minister, Sitiveni Rabuka, is the architect of the coup culture in Fiji. He is a former commander and prime minister. Similarly, the leader of the Fiji First Party (FFP), Frank Bainimarama, who conducted the 2006 coup, is a retired commander and prime minister.

Most senior military officers who supported the coups are still around today, either in uniform, in government, or politics.

They remain influential at the national level despite the postur-

ing of being in opposing camps.

The problem is inextricably linked to RFMF; thus, senior officers who participated in or supported previous coups would be the best people to find a solution.

Therefore, it would not be too difficult or costly to organise a military retreat for all senior officers serving and retired at either RFMF HQ or Blackrock in Nadi.

In the process they must consider inviting retired Colonel Jim Sanday, the only senior military officer who stood his ground during the 1987 coup and bowed out of the military with dignity, honouring his oath of allegiance.

He might be able to teach them a few things about the role of the military and their oath of allegiance.

They should be in uniform to meet and discuss the best way forward for Fiji and RFMF — particularly the disengagement of the military from politics, and returning to barracks permanently. Simply put, they started it, and they should find a solution to end it.

■ DR JALESI NAKARAWA is a legal scholar and law lecturer at Fiji National University. The views expressed in this article are the author's own.





Take-Home Points from the Suva Workshop 19-21 July 2018:

"Conservation of Sea Turtles within the Cultural Context of Oceania - Possibilities Beyond Protection"
As discerned by Co-Conveners George Balazs and Thierry Work MTSO Oceania Region Co-Chairs

- 1) An extended cessation of traditional hunting and use of turtles by indigenous people of Oceania may bring about the loss of those traditions within the cultures;
- 2) There are strong Biblical Church-Based Convictions to be good custodians of the marine resources God has given;
- 3) People want a better life for their families;
- 4) People and their families are more valued than turtles;
- 5) Culture and tradition bond people together;
- 6) The conservation of turtles cannot be separated from their cultural context;
- 7) There is the strong desire for traditional use, - indeed all use, - to be sustainable;
- 8) If communities can't manage their resources then nobody can because 'we are here and they are there';
- 9) Sustainable use is a part of conservation;
- 10) For some governments, provisions are in place for issuance of permits for case-by-case traditional harvest;
- 11) Conservation that relies solely on government enforcement capacity is unrealistic and can alienate communities hence lessen conservation;
- 12) The problem has not been traditional harvest but 'commercial greed';
- 13) Increased decision-making authority granted by government to the traditional village chiefs may serve to enhance conservation;
- 14) Turtle ecotourism and turtle cultural traditions can have conflicting goals;
- 15) Data deficiencies for the conservation status of turtles are widespread; there is little if any evidence of declines or increases;
- 16) Developing creative ways to encourage local communities to collect trend data in collaboration with government is a worthy goal;
- 17) There is merit in spending more time visiting and listening to local communities;
- 18) There are many turtle biologists but very few social scientists quantifying the indigenous community consumption of turtles;
- 19) The Government of Fiji deserves congratulations for instituting 23 years of moratoriums on the harvest of turtles which surely had a positive impact on their conservation status;
- 20) The Suva workshop achieved a long-standing need for focused participant discussions, listening, and talking about turtle consumptive use, cultural traditions, sustainability, conservation beyond protection, and the realities of village life. The door has been opened for additional workshops in Oceania;
- 21) Without remembering the past, we can lose our way.

KASTAM

Suva

City Centre Guide

11/2025



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Italics are used with the titles of books, movies, newspapers, television programs, magazines, and long plays. (In handwriting, use **underlining**.)

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