

Fonua: A Model for Pacific Health Promotion

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January 22, 2007



The Need for a Pasifika model

- For Pacific peoples to see the world through their own worldview
- To provide a tool that is appropriate and effective for Pacific peoples as they improve their health and wellbeing



Some Pacific Models

- Fonofale – Karl Pulotu Endemman
- Fa'afaletui –Carmel Peteru and Kiwi Tamasese
- Tivaevae –Teremoana Maua-Hodges
- Kakala – Konai Helu-Thaman
- Ta and Va (Time and Space) – 'O.Mahina



Fonua: Definitions

- *Fonua* means land and its people and their on-going relationships, a concept that is present in many other Pacific cultures.
- It is *vanua* in Fiji, *fanua* in Samoa, *whenua* in Maori, *'enua* in the Cook Islands.
- It refers to the intricate web of connected, on-going relationship between the entire physical and social environment and humanity



Fonua: Purpose

- The ultimate purpose of this relationship and exchange between the environment and humanity is to maintain harmony in life in sustainable ways.
- The concept of *va* refers to the relationship
- The concept of *tauhi va* refers to the maintaining of the relationship



Views on Fonua

- The concept of 'health'...means the well being of the whole person: that is his/her spiritual, mental and physical well being, which is an interpretation that is consistent with the Pacific's holistic worldviews. Well being and health refer not just to individuals but also to communities, the environment in which they live, and the relationship that binds them together. This set of interdependent relationships is what I meant by 'fonua' in Tongan, 'vanua' in Fijian and 'whenua' in Maori. In other words, 'fonua' is a Pacific concept of community (Dr. 'AnaTaufe'ulungaki, 2004).



Views on Fonua

- As a 'model' fonua espouses a philosophy of the life that systematically combines both society and ecology, in on-going relations of process, cycle and exchange to one another, with sustained aims of creating harmony and beauty between people and their environment (Dr. 'Okusitino Mahina, 2005).



Some Views on Fonua

- *Fonua* is a Tongan framework that encompasses most, if not all aspects, of the Tongan culture and society...*fonua* is the framework through which Tongans view the full cycle of life – from birth to death, and maintaining relationship, *tauhi va*, and sustaining community, *tauhi fonua*. As a model it has political, economic and spiritual dimensions, offering structures and practical tools such as *langa fonua*. (Sione Tu'itahi, 2005)



The Significance of Fonua

- Certain processes in the Tongan culture, and elements in Tongan language, illustrate the significant influence of the *fonua* construct in Tongan thinking and socio-political and economic organisation.
- Example: the natural cycle of human life. In the world of the womb, the baby is sustained by her *fonua*, the placenta. The baby is later born into the *fonua* (land), where she experiences life and builds relationships with the *fonua*: the entire ecology, including its human inhabitants. As part of the birth process, the remains of the *fonua* (placenta) that sustained the baby are returned by burial to the *fonua* (physical land). The *pito* (umbilical cord that connects the baby to the *fonua*, placenta) once it falls off, is also returned to the *fonua* (physical land) through a similar burying ritual. Upon her death, she is returned to her *fonualoto*, (land within the land), or her grave. (Sione Tu'itahi, 2005)



Fonua as a model

- *Fonua* is holistic and it embraces all dimensions of life
- Provides a philosophy or set of principles
- Provides a framework
- Provides tools
- An appropriate model for framing, understanding and addressing Pacific health



Fonua

- Five Dimensions Identified
- *Sino* –Physical –
- *‘Atamai* – Mental
- *Laumalie* – Spiritual
- *Kainga* – Community
- *‘Atakai* – Environment
- Fonua is holistic and encompassing



Phases and Tools

- There are four phases in the natural order of *fonua*. These same phases can also be regarded as tools.
 - Kumi Fonua – search, explore, navigate new *fonua*
 - Langa Fonua – form, build and construct
 - Tauhi Fonua – maintain and sustain
 - Tufunga Fonua – reform and re-construct
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- Tauhi Va – maintaining the relationship
 - Liliu – Change. Fonua accepts change as natural.



The Global Nature of Fonua

- *Kumi Fonua* refers to the process of movement and searching for meaning and relationship with a new context.
- Our Pacific diaspora(migration) is *kumi fonua*
- *Pacific peoples are now global*
- The world is one home/ *fonua* and we are global villagers/citizens/*tangata whenua*



Some Final Points

- Suggest *Langa Fonua* (Pacific community development) as an approach for addressing all socio-economic and political issues and needs
- Because it is meaningful, natural, and holistic for Pacific peoples
- It is a framework, model and tool that has been tested and proven successful over the years

