

Title: TALANOA – Stories and connections across the Pacific

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Abstract:

Stories and story-telling is an art, it is powerful. Stories can connect people; they help us understand one another. They can heal people and empower people. The Auckland Museum is a skilled story-teller – in the way we develop our exhibitions, the selection of collection items, the design and layout of a room, the audio, video and images captured and selected. The Museum is full of stories about our people. In 2017 the Auckland Museum embarked on a pilot project within the Learning and Engagement and Pacific Collections Access Project (PCAP) teams. Both teams have a high make-up of Pasifika peoples – which will ensure the strength, authenticity and success of the project. It is a story gathering and telling initiative that holds our Pacific peoples and Pacific values at the centre.

The project has been called Talanoa because it is a story-telling initiative – Talanoa is not only the act of story-telling it also means “story”, moreover it is a space in which to create and tell stories. The Talanoa project is all these things – stories, story-telling and a space in which to tell stories. Finally Talanoa is common to most Pacific nations – the stages set out below (while being reflective of Tongan values) reflect values common to Pacific peoples the world over. The project sought to engage with 4 Auckland schools in a 4-stage process. This allowed sufficient time to talanoa, share, create and reflect. A 4-stage approach is meaningful and will build the strength of the engagement/relationship. The 4-stages have been adapted from the Talanoa model that was developed through the research from Manuatu (2002), Vaioleti (2006), Mahina (1998) and Seve-William (2009). These stages are: Ofa-Love, Mafana-Warmth, Malie-Humour, and Faka'apa'apa-Respect.

Through the four stages the Museum builds a connection and relationship with the school. The outcome being the students build a connection not only with the taonga/artefacts, but also with Pacific culture/heritage, and each other. The Talanoa process strengthens connection. Students are able to talanoa with each other to create a response to the visits, the staff, the taonga of the Museum.

For the Pilot the students created spoken word poetry which was shared with their families, classmates and Museum friends.

This paper seeks to acknowledge the importance of Pacific frameworks in how we engage with Pacific communities and around Pacific collections. It will explore the Talanoa process (combined with the Teu Le Va Strategy) in a Museum setting; and the success of engaging with formal learners within this framework.