

Pasifika Caucus Report, February 2008

A small group of Pasifika academics and post-graduate students from The University of Auckland's Faculty of Education, and University of Victoria College of Education organised a highly successful pre-conference symposium for the 2007 NZARE annual conference, held at Canterbury University, Christchurch. The theme was 'Seeing the Wood from the Trees of Opportunity: Growing Pacific Academics and Researchers in Education'. The overall aim of the symposium was to bring experienced and emerging academics and researchers together to learn from and share with one another.

The two keynote speakers were Dr David Gegeo of the Macmillan Brown Centre of Pacific Studies, Canterbury (who presented a stimulating treatise on Pacific knowledge and epistemologies) and Dr Meaola Toloa of the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland (who shared a moving and inspiring account of her own research journey). The symposium programme included two interactive workshops—one on Pacific research methodologies, facilitated by Dr Camille Nakhid of the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), and the other on academic writing and ways to maintain one's own Pacific voice. This workshop was facilitated by Dr Nesta Devine, of the University of Waikato.

Participants had the opportunity to share and discuss their own research in smaller groups. There were organised as *talanoa* sessions, with experienced academics and researchers (led by Dr Linita Manuatu of AUT) taking the role of *tuakana* to facilitate the rich, robust and very lively discussions that ensued.

The symposium ended with a dinner and closing comments given by Dr Airini, Pasifika Caucus Representative (2004-2007) of NZARE.

More than forty Pasifika participants attended the pre-conference symposium from different institutions and agencies throughout New Zealand. The symposium was privileged to have four colleagues from the University of the South Pacific in attendance.

This pre-NZARE Pacific research symposium is an example of effective collaboration between academics from various universities; establishment and development of reciprocal relationships between researchers and academics at varying stages of their development; as well as shared learning.

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