

Pasifika Arts

"O Tufuga Tomai I Aganu'u o fa'amalama e fa'aali ai a latou Tu ma Aga I Fanua. Afai latou te le mafaia o le a le mafai foi ona Fa'ailoa Tu ma Aga a o latou Atunuu".

"Artists are the windows to their own cultures. If they fail, then their communities fail."

Fatu Feu'u, ONZM



"As Pasifika, we are proud and resilient, since our strength lies in our collectiveness. My success is our success. When our foundations are strong, we are future proofing our very existence."

Dagmar Dyck

For the majority of our Pacific learners the community is a source of inspiration for their artmaking. From their homes to their neighbourhood, Pacific learners' imaginary and visual narratives come from their communities. From a Kaupapa Pasifika perspective the knowledge your Pacific learners tap into originates from relational experiences with their elders, families and community. When students are free to employ narratives from their community in visual arts, there is the opportunity of shifting from a focus purely on 'knowing' to one of making cultural connections that align with Kaupapa Pasifika philosophy.

Reflecting on the strategic aims of *Tapasā - Cultural Competencies Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners* (MoE, 2018) these art lessons seek to address the notion of the importance of all teachers, including non-Pasifika, developing a broader understanding of their own identity and culture. By being able to reflect on beliefs and ideas held within one's own culture, teachers can be supported to recognise inbuilt assumptions. There is an importance for all teachers to develop relationships with learners who have cultural knowledge, languages and experiences that may be different to theirs. A key feature is being able to bring both a Pasifika and non-Pasifika lens to teaching and learning content and context. When activated it has the potential to provide space for more than one worldview to sit side by side, validating equally multiple bodies of knowledge.

Providing space (*vā*) for visual arts in classrooms allows all learners the opportunity to determine their own narrative and expression and explore personal issues and interests. Wellbeing is fostered through this Pasifika concept where the value of maintaining and nurturing relationships is front and centre. A powerful drive for connection and enactment of *tauhi vā* is completed when teachers themselves share an openness

and vulnerability, thus offering grounds for authentic and reciprocal relationships with learners. The socio-cultural concept of *vā*, literally meaning the intervening space between people, is significant to the Pasifika peoples as it is a value of maintaining and nurturing kinship, and helping one another in times of need for each other, completing the concept of *tauhi vā*.

Considering the ever-evolving nature of our Pasifika arts ecosystem it has not been an easy task to appropriately name this landing page. More time and space is needed for *talanoa* to be extended across our Pasifika Arts community in order to aptly reflect worldviews that are more strongly connected to Aotearoa. The 'Arts of Moana Oceania' scoping document by Lagi-Maama Academy & Consultancy (2020) sheds light on the potential that is required.

“Just as the sea is an open and ever flowing reality, so should our oceanic identity transcend all forms of insularity, to become one that is openly searching, inventive, and welcoming.”

Epeli Hau'ofa

References

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