

Youths, Regaining and  
Protecting their Identities

# Honor Fiji

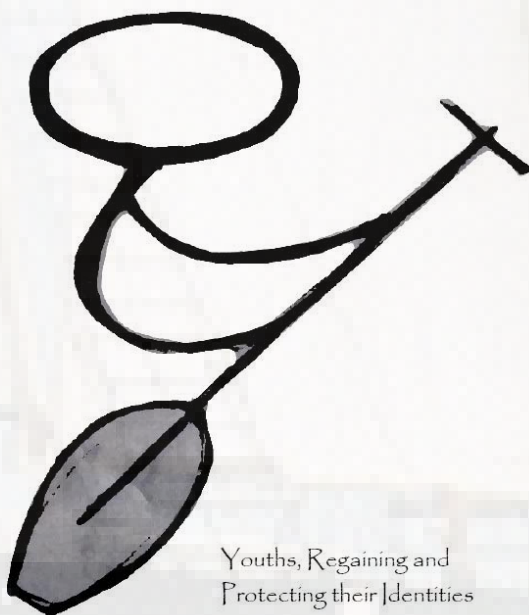
The Children of the World have the Inherent Right that the natural world remains intact and untainted—the rivers, the oceans, the forests, and their homelands.

Equally, they are entitled that their people's traditions remain, their language, their values, its intrinsic beauty and unique expressions; for they are the keepers of its future.

# Who we are



**THE ECONESIAN SOCIETY**



**HONOR FIJI JOURNEY (LOGO BY BRIAN MANGI)**

Econesian simply means being an eco-conscious Pacific Islander. We are a group of young people based out of the University of the South Pacific who are passionate about being part of the global effort to conserve and manage our environment.

We are a society of like-minded young people, not driven by money or influence, but by the desire to empower our generation and be the change we want to see in this world.

## WHAT DO WE DO...

The core objective is to build capacity amongst our members by involving them in real time projects.

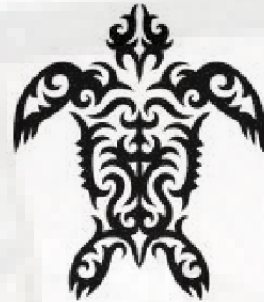
The society came into existence early 2007 upon the return of student delegates who attended the 2007 Pacific Future Environmental Leaders Forum in Apia, Samoa and other interested students. The society aims to create general awareness on environmental issues that faces our region. It also aims to promote environmental awareness, to allow young people to develop skills in conducting various environmental activities and to gain a better understanding of environmental issues that we face today.

HONOR FIJI is a transformational journey in honor of the great Cultural Legacy of Fiji while promoting stewardship of the land and water. A strong focus is on the youth, empowering them as keepers of their traditions, to participate in the movement for sustainability and positive change in the global arena, and to reach their highest potential.

The Honor Fiji Journey is a journey of the human spirit in reverence and preservation of our cultural and natural heritage. A focus is to create awareness regarding the vital importance Indigenous Peoples have in the greater circle of humanity.

- Our Cultural Heritage—awareness and preservation of the traditions and sacred cosmologies of Indigenous People and unique and distinct cultures as well as support for these underserved communities to reach their full potential.
- Our Natural Heritage--preservation and conservation of elements of the natural world, with an emphasis on water--freshwater and oceans.

# Background



## Statement of Need

Aspects of the great heritage of our earth and humanity are vanishing, often within a single generation. Particularly at risk are Indigenous cultures and their distinct ways of existing along with their priceless legacies: traditional teachings, philosophies, rare art, ecological wisdom, practical environmental knowledge, and worldviews.

Equally at this time, the loss of biodiversity around the planet is staggering and many of our bioregions are on the verge of collapse. Of grave concern is the recent report issued by the State of the Ocean (IPSO) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature revealing that our oceans have reached such a point of severity, that marine species are entering a phase of extinction unprecedented in human history.

In this time of critical environmental challenges, the in-depth knowledge of the Earth that Indigenous peoples have gained over millenniums can no longer be dismissed. Bound within their cosmologies are not just esoteric teachings but practical knowledge of a people's environment. They are repositories of information of particular unique bioregions needed for sustainable living and survival. Indigenous cultures carry within them ancient teachings; irreplaceable maps illuminating paths to inner and ecological wisdom. However, our stewards of this Earth have suffered deeply and equally in our destructive practices to our environment. Today many tribal peoples are at the brink of ethnocide. Thus, the preservation of Indigenous cultures and their traditional knowledge is essential within the Circle of Humanity.

The elders and the children of this generation play pivotal roles in assuring their success. The Honor Journey provides an opportunity for individuals to reconnect with our human origins, to rekindle our collective past and memories of living in harmony with the natural world. The ancient Peoples understood to live in accordance with the activities of the cosmos was the highest and finest way to live.

## Partners

This is a collective effort of many partners on behalf of our youth and our beautiful oceans; however, the ECONESIAN SOCIETY will serve as the non-profit and lead organization for the HONOR FIJI JOURNEY.

Other Partners: Alvei ([www.Alvei.com](http://www.Alvei.com)), MAI TV, Pacific Youth Environmental Network, University of the South Pacific (various departments, including: The International Department, Marine Studies, the Institute of Applied Science), Fiji Youth and Sports Department, Fiji Arts Council, Takalana, Nataleira Eco Lodges ([www.takalana.blogspot.com/](http://www.takalana.blogspot.com/)), The Fiji Voyaging Society, The Pacific Blue Foundation, Island Spirit, Fiji Library Services, and WantokMoana.

All projects will be developed with the utmost respect to cultural practices and values and relationships will be based on a foundation of trust of friendship. The process calls for potential supporters to deeply listen to the present challenges, the perspectives, the philosophy, and vision of the people and learn from the current organizations addressing similar issues.

## Honor Fiji Goals

*Water is a sacred gift, fundamental and indispensable for sustaining all life. It's the life-giving fluid of our planet needed by all organisms, humans, animals, and plants alike. Our very existence is intimately connected with - - and dependent upon - - the quality of water.*

*The Sacred Waters Journey is the first annual voyage from the rivers to the sea to promote stewardship and deepen our relationship with our vital, living waters. It is a vision for water that is heart and spirit centered. The goal is for all participants paddling rivers in canoes or kayaks to reach the sea by June 8th for Oceans Day and to join the participating maritime vessels.*



### THE HONOR FIJI JOURNEY

The Honor Journey promotes stewardship of our mother ocean and joins the vision of the Pacific Renaissance to revive and preserve Indigenous life ways and their rich maritime traditions.

The program primarily focuses on Fijian Youth, but also urban Fijian youth that do not have strong connections to their vanua (land) or their island village is exceptionally remote. The Honor Journey, however, is a program that people of all nations and backgrounds can take part in. The issues of protecting our oceans and preserving our world heritages for future generations are of global concern, thus the Honor Journey also involves the participation of international youth. This also creates a beautiful opportunity for Fijian youth to serve as ambassadors for Fiji and the South Pacific and to take part in the global youth movement as leaders for positive change.

### Goals

- Greater reverence for the Natural World, particularly our Oceans.
- Develop an international volunteer program to serve Fiji in the areas of cultural preservation, creative arts, academic support, ecology (reef restoration) and traditional Fijian and green-building/renovation projects.
- Support increased life skills for Fijian youth to direct their own lives, preparing them as community leaders and future stewards of the land and water.
- Strengthen youth cultural identity and support the passing on of traditional knowledge.
- Support youth in their academic needs, giving assistance to island village schools in terms of resources and library expansion.
- Sponsor Fijian youth in the island villages to be trained in traditional boat building and navigation, starting with the building of a traditional canoe house.
- Gift the completed traditional canoes to island villages.
- Support programs that empower women.
- Identify and support basic needs such as clean drinking water and medical attention.

### Purpose

- Create greater reverence, appreciation and love for our beautiful water systems throughout the world.
- Create greater awareness regarding the urgent global state of Water.
- Provide opportunities for cross-cultural perspectives, sustainable solutions, and the sharing of traditional knowledge.
- Inspire and implement actions to protect, manage, and restore the integrity and quality of our freshwater and marine eco-systems with an emphasis on establishing marine protected areas.
- Assist and sponsor youth in the necessary skills as future stewards.
- Promote declarations that honor our earth and water, such as the Earth Charter, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Indigenous Peoples Kyoto Water Declaration.
- Involve music, dance, and art in our experience of water as well as prayer and ceremony.
- Recognize and support Indigenous Peoples and their traditional roles as stewards of their ancestral lands with emphasis on customary river and marine management systems.
- Recognize and support the vital links between cultural and bio-diversity.
- Support the revival of traditional maritime vessels.
- Create peaceful relations around our mutual interdependence with water, with a focus on trans-boundary river basins.
- Create awareness of the interconnectedness of all creation and that we are all one.



**INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS**

The Honor Journey is open to all interested participants who wish to commit to service programs in 2012 and participate in the Sacred Waters Honor Journey aboard the tall ship the Alvei under the expertise of Captain Evan Logan. Programs thus far include reef restoration, planting of mango trees, water tank installation and academic support to village schools. Equally, the Alvei offers the opportunity for willing participants working with experienced crew to learn traditional maritime practices. We are also seeking sponsorship for Fijian youth participants to learn sailing skills.

**Fiji Youth**

Youth from the various islands will undertake an ocean voyage to participate in the Sacred Waters Honor Journey together to bring international awareness to their dynamic and living culture, to make global relations, as well as bring awareness to the vital need to protect our beautiful oceans that are essential to all of life. The journey will be charted by the village elders and participating youth.

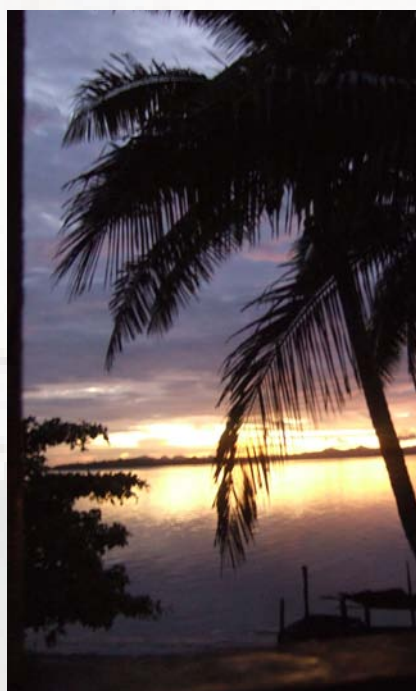
The youth serve as ambassadors of their respective cultures. Thus, this requires a huge commitment on the part of the young people that includes learning the necessary building and navigation skills, but also learning their oral history, becoming proficient in their island dialect, and contributing to the revitalization of their tribal communities in some capacity. Volunteer service could include assistance in the building of traditional homes, volunteering within their local schools, or restoration of the eco-system.

**Partnerships**

The first step in working with a community is to establish reciprocal relationships based on a foundation of trust of friendship. The process calls for potential supporters to deeply listen to the present challenges, the perspectives, the philosophy, and vision of the people. From here the Honor Journey Consultants, under the guidance of the Indigenous local advisors, island elders, governmental ministries, university partners, and dedicated individuals begin working to unite people in partnerships and cooperative actions, linking expertise and resources for direct hands-on support and advocacy of the selected communities.

## Calendar of Events

Date	Location	Event	Address	Time
27 JAN	USP, SUVA	Info Night: invited guests will be given a brief of the Honor Fiji Journey.	USP Marine Campus, Lecture Theatre	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
29 FEB	USP, SUVA	Honor Fiji quiz night - funds raised will go towards financing youth on board the Alvei	USP Gym Laucala Campus	6:30 PM - 10:00 PM
22 MAR	SUVA	Launch: Honor Fiji will be officially launched by the Honourable Patron. This will also begin the Honor Fiji Journey through its Rhythms of Life activities.	Suva Motor Inn/ Novotel	6.30 PM - 12:00 AM
24 MAR	USP FORESHORE	Rhythms of Life: youth will be instructed on the different traditional fishing methods. A "qitawa" fish-off will end this event.	USP Marine Campus	10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
21 APR	USP FORESHORE	Rhythms of Life: youth will be given lessons on traditional sailing techniques and navigation skills.	USP Marine Campus	10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
12 MAY	TAILEVU	Rhythms of Life: importance of forests to oceans. Youth will be instructed on jungle survival and expected to forage for lunch.	Buretu or Daku Village	10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
7 JUN	USP MARINE CAMPUS	Seminar on traditional knowledge and eco-opportunities for young entrepreneurs	USP Marine Campus	6:00 PM - 10:00 PM
8 JUN	USP FORESHORE	World Oceans Day.	USP Marine Campus	4:00 PM - 10:00 PM (TBC)
9 JUN	USP FORESHORE	Alvei departs for its 8 weeks journey to rural areas of Fiji.	USP Marine Campus	10:00 AM



## Honor Fiji Ambassadors



### **Prof. Konai Helu Thaman**

Professor of Pacific Education, &  
UNESCO Chair in Teacher Education & Culture, The University of the South Pacific

“I have been advocating for the valuing and inclusion of Pacific Knowledge & Value Systems in formal education and development ever since I began my teaching career in the early 1970s. This is what I do professionally as well as personally. It has always been a struggle to convince our people as well as others that our traditional knowledge is important (traditional here means both indigenous and local knowledge). Last year (2010) (finally), the Forum Education Ministers Meeting endorsed the Pacific Regional Strategy for Culture & Education in Port

Moresby, which is aimed at ‘culturally inclusive education for all Pacific peoples’. Now all educators and educational institutions will have to take Pacific peoples, their cultures and knowledge systems more seriously in Pacific education than they had done before. So why the interest NOW?

- i) there are over a thousand vibrant indigenous cultures in Oceania whose knowledge systems have been well established for thousands of years and have a right to be recognised in the modern development agenda of Pacific Island Nations;
- ii) Pacific indigenous knowledge is important for validating and legitimising modern development activities in our region (including those aimed at sustainable development), especially in the eyes of indigenous peoples themselves;
- iii) there is a need to integrate indigenous knowledge systems in the curricula of formal education (including higher education) in order to make teaching & learning more relevant and culturally democratic;
- iv) there is an urgent need to pass on Pacific values, knowledge, and skills to Pacific young people (a major function of schooling that have been neglected since schools were established);
- v) there is a need for all people living in the Pacific region to appreciate the importance of indigenous people having ownership of their own knowledge systems (rather than universities and other organisations and agencies); and
- vi), researching, learning about, advocating and using our own Pacific knowledge systems is a worthwhile activity in itself and I don't need any justification for engaging young people in conversations about the value of our knowledge systems for our sustainable development.

For further information, re: papers, publications etc - go to the usp web page and on Links, click on UNESCO Chair - or type [www.usp.ac.fj/unesco.chair/](http://www.usp.ac.fj/unesco.chair/) “



### **Prof. Vilsoni Hereniko**

Professor and Director, Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies  
The University of the South Pacific

I am honoured to be asked to be an ambassador for the Honor Fiji Journey. The land and the ocean, the land is static while the ocean moves, are the two most important resources we have inherited from our ancestors. The land and the ocean define our identities as Pacific peoples living on relatively tiny islands surrounded by blue water. All that is on land and all that is underneath the ocean need our protection and care so that we may lead sustainable lives. More importantly, we would be able to pass on to future generations an inheritance that is theirs, as well as ours. Over the years, our land and ocean resources have become depleted as a result of our abuse or greed, threatening not only our very survival, but the possibility that we might not have any worthwhile legacy to pass on to our children, and their children's children. As an ambassador, I

hope to support and encourage our young people to take more responsibility for our land and ocean resources.



### Prof. Randolph Thaman

It is both a great honor and a responsibility to be asked to be an Honor Fiji Journey Ambassador to assist in empowering Fiji's youth to reconnect with and to protect and enrich our natural and cultural heritage as a basis for sustainable island life. As a person who has taught young people for almost 40 years at USP and, before that, as a Peace Corps volunteer in Tonga, I have always been struck by the beauty, distinctiveness and fragility of our island and ocean world AND by the incredible richness of the indigenous Pacific Island cultures and knowledge that have co-evolved with this island and ocean world, a world that, along with its rich indigenous knowledge, is now very much under threat and in need of caretaking.

I strongly support the initiative of the Econesian Society and its partners in the Honor Fiji Journey to engage youth to re-energize our efforts to protect and enrich this knowledge as a basis for the protection of our island and ocean ecosystems and the plants, animals and peoples they support. It is, as the recent conference on rethinking Pacific Education stressed, akin to filling the sails of our modern canoes with the time-tested ancient winds needed to navigate the uncharted waters of a rapidly changing and globalizing, but still Peaceful (Pacific), Ocean world, a voyage that will end in disaster if we fail to marry the best indigenous and traditional Pacific knowledge with the most up-to-date modern science of how our world is being affected by environmental, social, technical and economic changes, many of which are beyond our control. We must inspire our youth to be the best hybrid scientists on Earth, scientists who clearly understand, value and can apply the best of both traditional and modern science in adapting to the winds of change. To do so, we must empower our youth to re-engage with their island world and mentor them as the future caretakers of this living heritage as we embark, together, on perhaps the most important voyage of our lives, a voyage through both past and future, two facets of island life that have traditionally been inseparable. I wish you success and thank you for including me in the crew!!

*Donu toka na madigi, cagi donu na laca ni nomuni waqa vaka turaga!!*

