

TEACHING THEMES FOR ‘FORGOTTEN PROMISES’ Plastics Awareness Project.

Pacific Voyagers & how their connection to the ocean passes on a legacy for us to protect.

Aim:

- To connect Cook Islanders and others to the significance of how the ocean has shaped who they are today and who they will be tomorrow as guardians of the ocean.
- To develop educational material for schools and any other organisations planning to make better plastic choices and ultimately protect the ocean.

Pacific voyagers - Who were they? Where did they come from? Why did they voyage?

- They came from the Asiatic to be the first ever open water ocean going culture in the world.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuJk_a4iWj0

How did they voyage?

- The significance of the vaka - the way it is built, connected to the people, the land and the ocean. The social structure of the vaka. The connection of the vaka to Pacific islands customs, traditions, language and heritage. The connection of the vaka to the ocean.
- The developing significance of the ocean to Pacific islanders - It started with voyaging/ guided by the ocean - the tide, flotsam, currents, winds, animal migrations, clouds, the sun, the moon, the stars, the seasons, other islands etc.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8bDCaPhOek>

The cultural connections of Pacific people to the ocean grew over 4500 years or approx 180 generations.

- The Polynesians are sometimes referred to as the children of the gods because - The last area of the planet to be populated by humans is the Pacific Ocean / Polynesia. The place the gods last populated the planet was Polynesia. Their last children were placed on earth amongst the Pacific Ocean.

The state of the ocean today.

- 1) The south pacific island of Rarotonga in the Cook Islands is surrounded by a lagoon, which extends to the reef sloping steeply to deep water. Reefs support 25% of all marine life. Due to global climate change, sea level rise, coral bleaching, tropical storms, increased human activity and overfishing, coral reefs require great protection. Management and sustainable use of this vital resource is essential. In our island's we see healthy, diseased and dead coral. Healthy corals appear in shades of green, brown, pale yellow and tan. Reefs provide shelter for many species that find food in crevices. There are 800 species of reef building corals and over a million animal and plant species that live on reefs. Thousands of fish and invertebrate species are found nowhere else on Earth besides coral reefs.

- 2) Coral reefs are underwater ecosystems bonded by calcium carbonate structures, that are built by colonies of tiny animals (larvae) found in marine waters. The free-swimming coral larvae attach themselves to rocks or along the edges of islands. Rarotonga has formed a fringing reef. With proper sunlight and temperature, coral growth rates range from .3 to 10 centimetres per year depending on the species. When corals become stressed, such as experiencing warmer water temperatures & pollution, they bleach and appear pale. Corals can suffer from disease and become sick. They then become covered in algae that appears red or grey. Reefs can die and not recover. Although coral reefs are just 1 % of the Earth's surface, they represent the most diverse, and one of the most important ecosystems on the Planet. They support more species per unit area than any other marine environment. Scientists expect that there may be up to 8 million undiscovered species living among reefs. Rarotonga & some of the outer islands have started a reef regeneration program by replanting coral in the lagoon where it has been damaged.
- 3) The coral reefs of the Cook Islands have always been an extremely important food source. It is critical to keep this traditional island resource under protection from coral reef threats. A *Raui* is an area in the lagoon where customary rights are revoked and a restriction of the taking of animals is enforced by the traditional leaders of the community. *Raui* is a way to create sustainability in the surrounding lagoon and is part of the identity of the Cook Island's People. There is always an element of vulnerability which must be considered.
- 4) Despite the beauty of the reef, there is always an element of danger to humans. Be careful ... there are venomous creatures that could hurt you! Crown of thorns, stone fish, scorpion fish, lion fish, sea urchins are all dangerous. Why are there such poisonous animals on the reef? They protect the reef from predators. Even a soft brush up against a reef could lead to a serious infection. The threats of the reef include stings, bites and stabs. Fire coral can burn swimmers or snorkelers that brush up against it. On a positive note, coral reefs buffer shorelines. Wave action can cause erosion, property damage, and loss of life in cyclones and storms. The reef protects wetlands, ports, and harbors. Walking on the reef is not good for the reef or you. Coral reefs are essential for a vast and mysterious marine life. The zooxanthellae which live in the coral, provides the essential oxygen for the coral to live and proliferate. Without these symbiotic algae, the reef would not grow and without the coral, a score of marine organisms would not exist.

Today one of the greatest threats to our ocean is plastics:

1. *Up to 13m tonnes of plastic leaks into the world's oceans each year to be ingested by sea birds, fish and other organisms, and if we don't do anything about it research indicates by 2050 the ocean will contain more plastic by weight than fish.*
2. *A million plastic bottles are bought around the world every minute and the number will jump another 20% by 2021*
3. *Fewer than half of the bottles bought in 2016 were collected for recycling and just 7% of those collected were turned into new bottles. Instead most end up in landfill or in the ocean.*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ju_2NuK5O-E

<https://www.facebook.com/greenpeaceuk/videos/10154182438694229/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jun/28/a-million-a-minute-worlds-plastic-bottle-binge-as-dangerous-as-climate-change>

https://www.ted.com/talks/dianna_cohen_tough_truths_about_plastic_pollution

To be able to understand and participate in a positive solution to plastics pollution we have created our plastics awareness project that up cycles plastic bottles to art work called 'Forgotten Promises'.

VIDEO FILE: vimeo.com/253948768

**FROM AN OCEAN HONoured TO AN OCEAN FORGOTTEN - '*FORGOTTEN PROMISES*'
'DON'T LET IT BE REAL' - MAKE BETTER PLASTIC CHOICES.**

As Cook Islanders our ocean is what defines us as pacific people. It's in our DNA. Our ancestors honoured the ocean for safe passage, for sustenance, for a better life, but over time we have taken the ocean for granted and now it suffers.

To make a change we need to understand the disaster we now face and once again honour our ocean.

From small beginnings come great things. We've taken a plastic bottle from our sea and created an object of beauty. A fish (ika) made of plastic. A parallel, a paradox of what we are facing. A message and action of change.



To make others aware we have launched this campaign to help us turn discarded plastic bottles into messages of hope by up-cycling them and building with our community two major enviro-educational art works and in that way creating awareness and actually removing plastic bottles from landfill and the ocean.

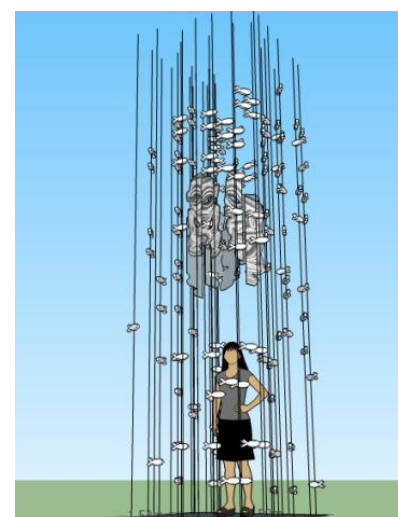
Supporters:

<https://vimeo.com/287231911> Rick Rosenthal

<https://vimeo.com/295046805> Laura Wells

<https://vimeo.com/295047077> Nan Hauser

- **Our first work** is titled '*Forgotten Promises*', an installation linked to our ancestral and cultural connection to the ocean and the gods especially Tangaroa, god of the sea. Our people, as do many cultures, say blessings over the ocean for safe passage, a bountiful catch, a connection to our ancestors and more, but today those promises are seldom said, seldom fulfilled - today they are 'Forgotten Promises'. Today Tangaroa's creatures are filling with plastic. We need to become aware of the state of our ocean and honour our promises and the ocean once again.



This piece will open the mind with a smile, prompting it to question how plastics are polluting our ocean, killing our marine animals and entering our food chain.

It will be an installation that permanently hangs at the Te Ara Cook Islands Museum of Cultural Enterprise to help educate Cook islanders, visitors and the world to make better plastic choices.

- **Our second and larger work** for permanent public display, will be an iconic 4m tall outdoor statue of Tangaroa, god of the sea, made of plastic bottles and filled with ocean waste. It will sit at the front of Te Ara symbolizing the state of the ocean but also Te Ara as a platform for dialogue and action for ocean conservation. By supporting our campaign, you will help build awareness of how our pacific islands are the canary in the coal mine for the rest of the world when it comes to plastics in our ocean. You can directly help remove plastic bottles from our islands by taking plastic fish art, to a place where it can be better recycled and help spread a message to the world of our fragile ocean and its animals – 'Don't Let it be real - Make better plastic choices – The 5 R's: rot, refuse, reuse, refill and recycle to save our oceans.'



Build your own - If you are interested, we can help you learn and even raise funds for your organisation and support us by following our plans and building a version of our first sculpture.

A demonstration video of 'How to up cycle a plastic bottle into a fish.'

VIDEO FILE: <https://vimeo.com/248669715> - This video is password protected.

For anyone applying to use this video: Send us an email and a few words about you to receive the password. info@tearacimce.com

We'd love to meet you and welcome you to our team of plastics awareness educators around the globe. Please let us know if we can help you teach others about our great ancestral Pacific navigators, plastics pollution and ocean conservation. We have many resources and can share the work and connections to many other educators and supportive organisations around our world.

We wish Te Ara Cook Islands Museum of Cultural Enterprise's video 'How to up cycle a plastic bottle into a hope fish' to be a platform for better plastic choices and ultimately greater ocean conservation learning.

We'd love to be able to share the results of your Forgotten Promises exploration so stay in touch.

- Important to us is your interpretation of - How does the ocean or your waterway impact on you?
- How do plastic bottles impact your ocean or waterways?
- What would you hang inside your fish ball sculpture and why?

Let us know at info@tearacimce.com

Kia Manuia – wishing you well.

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