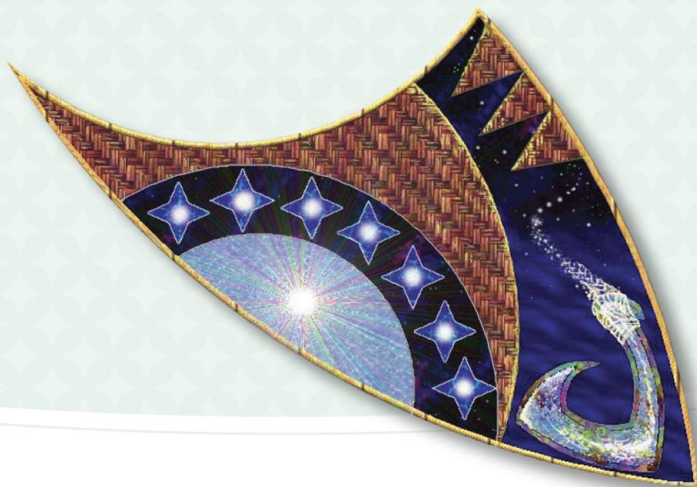




# Nga vaka o kāiiga tapu

A Pacific Conceptual  
Framework to address family  
violence in New Zealand



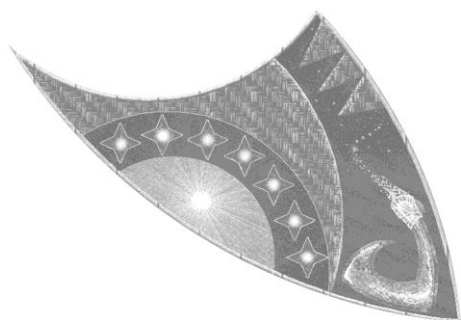
## Guide on the use of Tuvalu Conceptual Framework

This document was developed by the Tuvalu Working Group to assist with the development of a training programme for Tuvaluan practitioners and service providers working with victims, perpetrators, and families from our communities who have been affected by family violence.

The information in this document can be used for research purposes\*, educational activities and programmes which promote the wellbeing of our families and communities. The Working Group request that in using this material, that the integrity of the concepts and the work is maintained. These must not be interpreted in such a way as to cause any form of harm, or violate relationships between people. Nor should the meanings of these concepts, values, and principles be compromised or subsumed under the definitions of meanings that belong to other cultures and beliefs.

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\* <[http://by167w.bay167.mail.live.com/mail/RteFrame\\_16.2.4514.0219.html?dl=dl#\\_ftnref1](http://by167w.bay167.mail.live.com/mail/RteFrame_16.2.4514.0219.html?dl=dl#_ftnref1)> It is recommended that any research generated from this document is guided by Pacific research guidelines such as, Guidelines on Pacific Health Research (2005). Health Research Council of New Zealand.



### La Tapu (Sacred Sail)

The basic shape is that of a Pacific canoe sail. This represents the vaka/canoe which is important in traditional Pacific navigation and exploring new horizons.

The fishhook represents sustainability as well as traditional knowledge. The fishhook colour shows the colours of the paua shell, which represents our migration to New Zealand and adapting to a new way of life while maintaining our traditions. The fishhook is linked to a spiritual cord which disappears up to the heavens. This represents our link as Pacific Islanders with our creator and the importance of our traditional and contemporary belief system. The background of the fish hook represents the sea which merges into a star filled night sky. These natural elements were the navigator's pathways to new horizons.

The triangular patterns above the fishhook is a common design motif found in all Pacific cultures. I used this pattern to represent a common thread found between the Pacific Islands.

The woven pattern represents the Kaiga (family), as a close knit unit. Each member in the Kaiga has a role and purpose in the same way each strand supports one another.

The seven stars represent the seven Pacific Island nations/groups of; Cook Islands, Niue, Sāmoa, Fiji, Tuvalu, Tonga and Tokelau. Together, they represent a collective star formation which provides support and guidance to the vulnerable. To the left of the arched 7 stars is a lagoon with a radiating light emanating outwards. The lagoon represents a safe and protected environment. The radiating light represents a new life nurtured within this safe environment while surrounded and supported by family, cultural knowledge, belief, and alofa (love).

Tiaki Fati Kirifi – Tokelau.

## **The Tuvalu Working Group**

Telaki Taniela, Reverend Alee Talava, Apiseka Eka, Sagaa Malua, Beniamina Maatusi, Salota Telematua, Manuila Tausi.

Prepared by Manuila Tausi.

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It is recommended that this document is read in conjunction with ***'Falevitu: A literature review on culture and family violence in seven Pacific communities in New Zealand'*** and ***'Nga vaka o kaaiga tapu: A Pacific Conceptual Framework to address family violence in New Zealand.'***

*A galiga o fenua  
ko te loto gaatasi  
ke maopopo tou malosi  
i mea katoa tau o ta ola  
ke lagona, kau lagona*

True beauty in a land  
lies in the unity of hearts  
to put our efforts together  
for the things we need in life  
you feel this, I feel this

Composed by Taumaia Faga, 1943  
Translated by Keith & Anne Chambers, 2008

## Fatele

The words of the *fatele* (Tuvaluan dance) emphasise the spirit of unity and sharing in all aspects of Tuvaluan people's lives. Unity and sharing are key values in nurturing strong and vibrant Tuvaluan families. These values are the basis of building a good society where people live together in harmony, leading a peaceful life and sharing a common culture.

The title **Toku fou tiale** means my garland of gardenia flowers. Like the gardenia garland, the Tuvalu Conceptual Framework hopes to provide a freshness of insight and vision to the work of transforming *fakasauaaga i loto i kaaiga* (violence in families) to *Kaaiga ola filemu* (peace and wellbeing in families). As a metaphor, *toku fou tiale* is a complimentary acknowledgement to words that are derisive and sarcastic.

## Introduction

Tuvalu was formerly known as the Ellice Islands in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands colony. The island nation gained independence from Britain on the 1st of October 1978, and became a constitutional monarchy with the British Sovereign as Head of State. Tuvalu is a member of the United Nations and the Commonwealth, as well as other international organisations.

Tuvalu's constitution is built on Christian principles, the rule of law and Tuvaluan customs and traditions. The cultural knowledge of Tuvalu is transmitted through oral tradition, so there is very little of Tuvaluan traditional history that is documented.

Family violence, especially against women and children, is a concept with which Tuvaluan people struggle, because it challenges Tuvalu's traditional values and culture, which give greater rights to men while marginalising women and children in most aspects of family life, as well as the wider community.

In July 2009 Tuvalu presented its initial and second periodic reports on the country's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (United Nations, 2009) to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The "Committee's experts expressed concern over the sanctioning of local custom in the [Tuvalu] Constitution and legal system, noting, for example, that husbands were permitted to 'discipline' their wives [as well as children]". Furthermore, an expert on marriage regulations called the situation in that area alarming, saying that it seemed like forced marriage was sanctioned in Tuvalu's constitutional and legal system.

As recent migrants to New Zealand, many Tuvaluan families continue to practise their culture, of which some aspects are in direct conflict with New Zealand's laws and social environment.

Toku fou tiale – the Tuvalu Conceptual Framework was developed by the Tuvalu Working Group for Tuvaluan and non-Tuvaluan practitioners working with Tuvaluan people and families living in New Zealand who are affected by family violence.

# Toku fou tiale: a Tuvalu Conceptual Framework

The Framework symbolises the setting of *fatele* – Tuvaluan traditional dance performances. In *fatele*, a group of people who form part of the singing group are seated in the centre of the circle pounding a wooden box. They are surrounded by the remaining members of the singing group. At the edge of the singing group is a row of dancers.

The Framework sets out to restore *kaaiga ola filemu*, and to achieve the optimum level of wellbeing in *kaaiga* Tuvalu. It begins with recognition of *fakasauaaga i loto i te kaaiga* – violence in the *kaaiga*.

**Figure 1. Tuvalu Conceptual Framework for addressing family violence**



## Elements and practice imperatives

Outlined below are six interconnected elements that inform integrated strategies that can potentially transform the behaviour of both the victims and the perpetrators of family violence. Included are guides on best practice standards for Tuvaluan practitioners and service providers:

1. **Akoakoga** is the overarching transformative process whereby Tuvaluans should take responsibility for changing their attitudes and behaviour through education. This a partnership between Tuvaluan communities, Tuvalu practitioners and service providers. The education process can occur through either a discussion of alternatives to violence, or a discussion of the detrimental effects of knowingly remaining silent about family violence in the community.
2. **Enivailomene** allows practitioners to look into the natural, physical and psychological environment of the family affected by violence. Opportunities are provided to explore, for example, issues of overcrowding in households as a possible trigger of violence in the family.
3. **Gagana** establishes the importance of being fluent in both the Tuvaluan and English languages. Practitioners are then able to make decisions on the need to include Tuvalu interpreters or work alongside Tuvaluan community leaders in the transformation and restoration processes. As most Tuvaluans are recent migrants to New Zealand, their command of the English language is very limited. It is essential that where English language is used, communication must be delivered at a very basic level.
4. **Kaaiga** determines the family connections that practitioners need to consider in transformation and restoration processes. The *pule* of the family needs to be identified as well as the extended family leadership group.
5. **Talitonuga/lotu** identifies the religious beliefs of individuals in the family affected by violence. This information enables practitioners to consider the involvement of leaders from relevant church groups (*kaulotu*). On rare occasions, differences in religious beliefs may also trigger violence in *kaaiga* Tuvalu.
6. **Fakapotopotoga** gives practitioners a sense of understanding of the social networks linked to the family affected by violence. The financial burden of too many *fakalavelave* may have played a part in family violence and practitioners should, at the very least, be conscious of this problem.

## Fakasauaaga i loto i kaaiga: violence in kaaiga

The term *fakasauaaga* describes violence. *Fakasauaaga i loto i kaaiga* or violence in *kaaiga* is a disruption in the optimum level of wellbeing in the *kaaiga*, resulting in a *kaaiga tupu taua* (volatile family) at the other end of the continuum of family wellbeing.

**Figure 2. The continuum of kaaiga wellbeing**



# Strengths-based concepts in Tuvalu culture

## Tulaga o te kaaiga Tuvalu – structure and role of the family

*Kaaiga* (family) play an important role in Tuvaluan society. The *kaaiga* in Tuvalu includes the extended family and kinship groups. *Fale* (households) may comprise more than one nuclear family and members of the extended family.<sup>1</sup> If the *kaaiga* is functioning well, the health and wellbeing of its members and the wider community are less likely to be compromised, and the foundation for strong communities is maintained.

The household is headed by the *pule*<sup>2</sup>, who is usually the eldest active male resident in the household. The *pule* is the main decision-maker. Each member of the *kaaiga* has a role to fulfil. The traditional role of women was to look after the children, prepare food, fetch water, undertake housekeeping, weave mats and baskets, tend animals, and participate in church and community activities.

It is normal practice for family members to come together daily for evening devotion. This is also a time for the *kaaiga* to catch up and discuss matters of interest; to address any developing conflicts within their household; and to address any issues of alcohol and drug abuse within the *kaaiga*. It is in this environment where, under the direction of the *pule*, everyone learns the division of tasks. In many *kaaiga* the decision-making process is the responsibility of the adults (especially the males), with the final decisions made by the *pule*. Nonetheless, all family members participate in the implementation of decisions.

## Kaaiga ola filemu – peace and wellbeing

*Kaaiga ola filemu* is the term used to describe a peaceful family where individuals and the family have reached the optimum level of wellbeing. Individuals in the *kaaiga ola filemu* exhibit the key values of *aava* (respect), *alofa* (deep concern and affection), *fakatalitonugina* (being trustworthy), *fealofani* (living in harmony with one another) and *fakatau fesoasoani* (helping one another) in their relationships with other members of the *kaaiga*.

In recent times, the differences in roles between men and women have become less defined within the *kaaiga*, particularly in the capital island Funafuti. This is mainly due to the lack of access to land for some *kaaiga*, employment and the cash economy lessening the need to live off the land, and women becoming income earners themselves, thus altering their role within the *kaaiga*.<sup>3</sup>

## Va fakaaloalo – respectful relationships

Respectful relationships between different members of the *kaaiga* are important. This is particularly in the case of the brother and sister relationship and opposite-gender cousins, where the *tuagaene* or sisters are venerated by their brothers. The sisters must not be provoked or embarrassed, as it is forbidden to spill the tears of the *tuagaene*.<sup>4</sup>

There is also a strong bond between *tuaatina* (the relationship between a mother's brother and her child) where the expectation of the uncle, regardless of the hardship or danger involved, is to assist and help his niece or nephew where requested. This exemplifies the mutual respect that is developed between the uncle and the nephew or niece.

## Olaga fakatau fesoasoani – reciprocity

The 'Tuvaluan way' is a communal life that gives a spirit of togetherness and sharing. In this context, reciprocity plays a big part in Tuvaluan life as relatives, friends and neighbours help each other in times of hardship.<sup>5</sup> Since it is often difficult to refuse requests for assistance, families will spend most of their income

<sup>1</sup> *Fale* literally means a house or building and is used interchangeably with household to identify family members living in the same house.

<sup>2</sup> *Pule* refers to the recognised head of the household. A widowed woman who is the eldest in the household may become the *pule*, at times handing over responsibilities to her eldest son.

<sup>3</sup> This change is also occurring for Tuvaluans living in New Zealand.

<sup>4</sup> Selu *et al*, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Niuatui, 1991.



on extended family obligations and community contributions, leaving little for family needs and virtually no savings.<sup>6</sup>

## **Taaua o manafa – importance of land**

Tuvaluans value their land above any other possession. *Manafa* (pieces of land or land areas) are not simply economic assets, they are a symbol of status in the community and are more important than money.<sup>7</sup>

Land in Tuvalu is held by families and is passed on through generations. With the exception of land that has been gifted, adopted, exchanged or bequeathed under the terms of a will, land is passed on through the eldest son. All families, including extended family members, live and eat together on their inherited land areas. The division of land among siblings is a matter for the family. The law only intervenes if there is a dispute among the siblings.

## **Pulepulega faka-fenua – Tuvalu local (island) governance structure**

The *Falekaupule*<sup>8</sup> is known as the ‘house of knowledge’ and is traditionally the place where the community conducts its meetings and holds its celebrations. Young people are generally not permitted to speak or be involved in decision-making as it is regarded as disrespectful to the elders. The traditional community structure comprises the *aliki* (chief) and his advisers: his speaker, chiefly clans, healers and canoe builders, followed by women and young people.<sup>9</sup>

## **Tulaga o te Lotu – role of the church**

Although an introduced practice, Christianity now plays an important role in the life of a Tuvaluan. On every island people look after the welfare of their pastor by providing him with a home and building a church. Each island appoints a family as guardian for the pastor’s children and they provide for the daily needs of food, clothing and money through gifts. “One of the main causes of hardship experienced by people in Tuvalu is the fundraising activities imposed by the church.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Refer also to *fakalavelave* below.

<sup>7</sup> Faaniu *et al*, 1976.

<sup>8</sup> *Falekaupule* literally means the house from where chiefs make decisions, but also includes the island and its people.

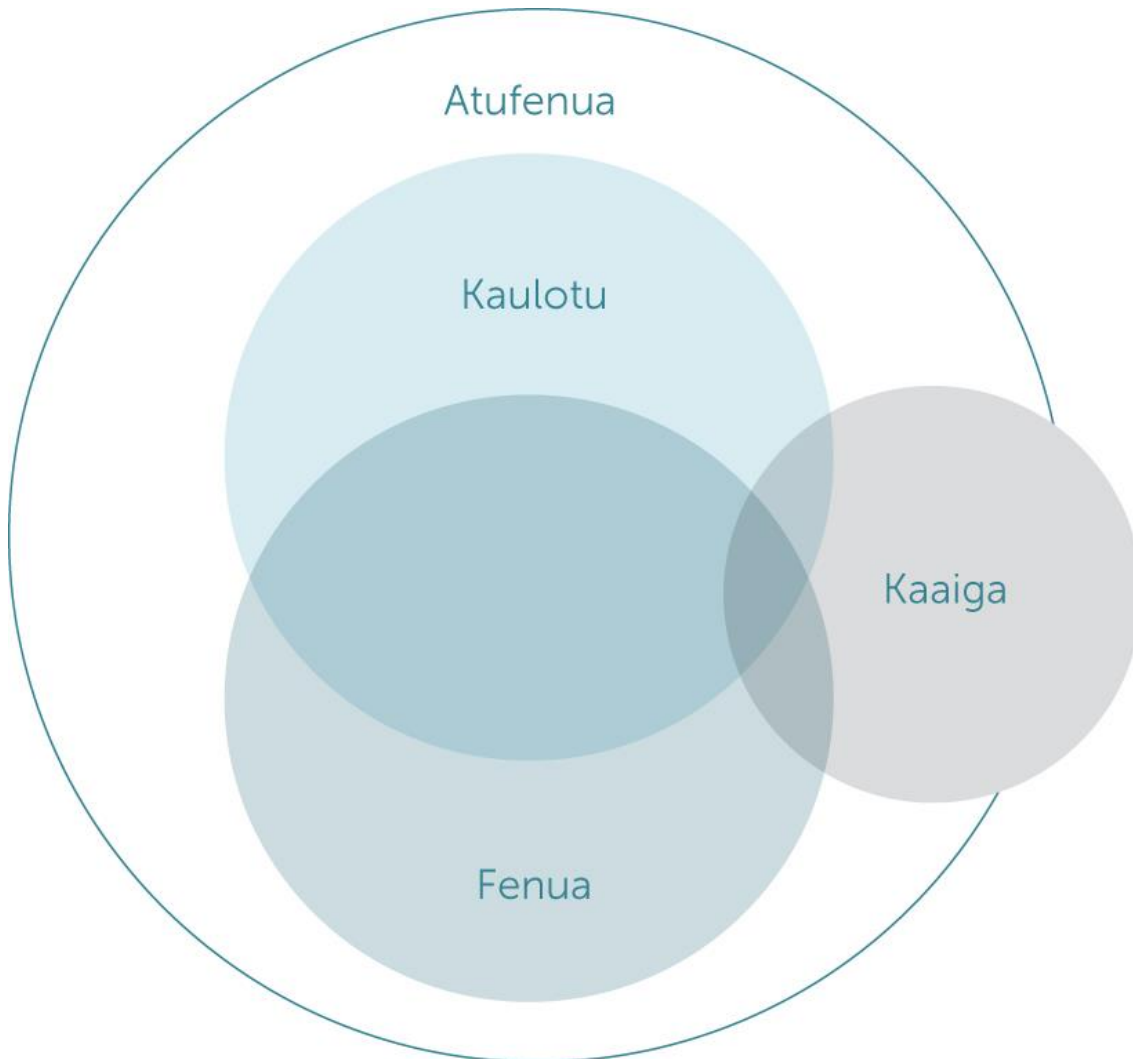
<sup>9</sup> Faaniu *et al*, 1983.

<sup>10</sup> Asian Development Bank report, 2003.

# Te olaga ko mafuli: a contemporary New Zealand context

Tuvaluans living in New Zealand gather as *kaaiga*, *fenua* (island of origin), *kaulotu* (church congregation) and *atufenua* (country). As individuals, Tuvaluans can belong to one or more of these collective identities. Leaders of *fenua*, *kaulotu* and *atufenua* are elected by individuals in those groups.

**Figure 3: Tuvaluan-based collectives in New Zealand**



Moving to a new country with different values, beliefs and expectations creates change in the structure of the *kaaiga*. For Tuvaluans living in New Zealand, money is now more valuable than land. Instead of relying on social welfare programmes from the New Zealand Government, the *pule* of the *kaaiga* are expected to ensure that the health and wellbeing of their *kaaiga* are provided for by taking up employment. The necessity for both parents to work in order to meet financial commitments means that they have less time to support their children's development and wellbeing.

As employment opportunities are available for both men and women in New Zealand, Tuvaluan women have the opportunity to become main income earners in their *kaaiga*. As with their Funafuti counterparts, their roles within their *kaaiga* have significantly changed, where, for example, a woman

*... is able, for the first time in her life, to work fulltime and become the main breadwinner in the family ... A change in family roles was identified in this case, as the wife had become the main income earner in the family, whereas her husband (who was the main breadwinner in Tuvalu) was working part time and looking after their children. (Simati, 2009)*

**Addictions:** The availability and accessibility of alcohol, drugs and gambling amenities in New Zealand are contributing factors in preventing successful settlement in New Zealand, and often lead to violence in the family. A significant number of Tuvaluans whose families are struggling to make ends meet have become

addicted to gambling. The health and wellbeing of their children are often compromised. These risk factors must be included when addressing violence in Tuvaluan families in New Zealand.

**Overcrowding:** While the spirit of togetherness and sharing is important in Tuvaluan life, it can often lead to more than one nuclear family living in the same household, resulting in overcrowded households. On top of the impacts of poor health and lower educational achievement of children in these households, overcrowding “may also lead to sexual violence and children abuse” (Selu *et al*, 2010). However, the reality of overcrowded households may be a direct consequence of the low disposable incomes experienced by recent migrants from Tuvalu, and it will take a longer timeframe for them to settle successfully in New Zealand.

## **The impact of Tuvalu culture on kaaiga Tuvalu in New Zealand**

As earlier mentioned, there are strengths-based Tuvaluan concepts. There are also beliefs and practices that undermine the status of women and children. An area of conflict is between respect for Tuvalu’s male-dominated culture and human rights issues on improving the status of women and children in *kaaiga* Tuvalu in New Zealand.<sup>11</sup>

The victim(s) does not speak up because: the perpetrator may be someone well liked and of high status in the community; and/or the victim(s) “may feel that nobody will listen to them”; and/or the victim may feel “shame of violence occurring in the family”.<sup>12</sup>

The community may not report the violence, believing that it is a private matter for the family concerned and not for public comment.

**Tagata e pule ite kaaiga** expresses the dominance of men over women in the traditional Tuvaluan family structure, with regard to decision-making and authority in the household. This role can lead some men to have the misconception that they can do anything to their wives/spouses and children. Men can physically abuse their wives/children or put limits on some of their basic human rights simply because of their status as heads of the family.

**Kini tamaliki** Tuvaluan culture tolerates the smacking of children as a form of discipline, and is not viewed as violence.

**Fakalavelave** are obligations and responsibilities of reciprocity fulfilled towards an individual’s *kaaiga*.<sup>13</sup> Some of these *fakalavelave* require financial contributions from individuals for which it is difficult to budget.<sup>14</sup> The majority of first-generation Tuvaluans in New Zealand have a strong sense of duty towards their *kaaiga*, *kaulotu*, *fenua* and *atufenua* both in New Zealand and in Tuvalu. This sense of obligation can have serious implications for individuals and *kaaiga* who live beyond their means by borrowing money that they struggle to repay. The ability of *kaaiga* to achieve successful settlement and financial independence in New Zealand is limited.

**Arranged (or forced) marriages:** There are two forms of this type of marriage. *Filifiliga o avaga fakamaatua* is where the parents of the man and/or woman are predominantly involved in arranging the marriage. The detrimental effects are experienced more by young women who are forced by their parents to marry much older men. The second is *potulama*, where the marriage is arranged through the community. The *potulama* is usually associated with a community-related work activity wherein a man makes an impromptu marriage proposal to a woman of his choice and the woman usually accepts the proposal of marriage. The community will then promptly conduct the marriage ceremony. *Potulama* is less likely to happen in New Zealand because of its association with a community work activity.

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Selu, *ibid*.

<sup>13</sup> Examples are 21st birthdays, weddings and funerals; *fenua* (building a community hall or contributing to an event in Tuvau; *kaulotu* (building a worship centre); and *atufenua* such as natural disasters in Tuvalu.

<sup>14</sup> Refer also to ‘reciprocity’ above.

## Conclusion

It is the hope of the Tuvalu Working Group that the Tuvalu Conceptual Framework will inform the development of intervention programmes and training materials to eliminate family violence from our Tuvalu families. Furthermore, the Tuvalu Conceptual Framework should be seen as one possible approach to addressing family violence.

While the issues discussed in this report are unique to Tuvalu culture, the Tuvalu *fatele* 'A *galiga of fenua*' reminds us that 'the beauty in the Pacific lies in the unity of hearts' and we 'need to put our efforts together for the things we need in life', such as preventing violence in our Pacific families and communities and nurturing strong and vibrant Pacific families.

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