

# The Heart of the Matter

Addendum: A Pasifika Perspective



**Researcher:** Tina Rose, Education Unlimited

**Commissioned By:** Careerforce

**Published:** July 2015

# A Pasifika Perspective

**In 2015 Careerforce set out to speak with four more organisations working specifically at the coalface of the community services sector to listen again to the voices of those it seeks to meaningfully represent.**

The Careerforce Pasifika work plan is being operationally delivered this year. The key objectives of maximizing the industry training organisation's expertise around Pasifika learners; maximizing the team's capability to support those learners; supporting learners to achieve in 2015 and beyond and to celebrate Pasifika success are specific, measurable and achievable.

The way in which Careerforce as an ITO meets the objectives of increasing participation, engagement and completion of qualifications for Pasifika people was at the heart of this research in 2014. In 2015 Careerforce set out to speak with four more organisations working specifically at the coalface of the community services sector to listen again to the voices of those it seeks to meaningfully represent.

Fonua Ola is based in South Auckland and is led by Kathleen Tuai-Ta'ufo'ou. As Chief Executive Officer she is passionate about community development, innovation and effecting change. Kathleen has been with Fonua Ola since March 2010. From 2010 – 2012, as the Executive Officer she worked with the management and governance of Fonua Ola Network members to support them to build strong, robust, well positioned and resourced Pacific charitable organisations. Since 2012 with the Ministry of Social Development policy changes around collaboration through a new service delivery model, Kathleen has been responsible for formalising and driving the Fonua Ola strategy forward by forming the collaboration

model, securing a new board, funding, CYFS service delivery standards, premises, qualified staff, a quality management system and service contracts. She has also played a pivotal role in negotiating and supporting providers to form partnerships, subcontract or merge into the Fonua Ola umbrella of organisations. Kathleen is a New Zealand born Tongan and has three beautiful children. She holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Political Science and Sociology from the University of Auckland. She was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer in October 2014.

The Tuilaepa Youth Mentoring Service with its base in West Auckland was established five years ago by Robson Tavita to pick up, support and nurture Pasifika and Maori children and young people who have fallen through the cracks of the educational system. Through Robson's extensive experience he is fully cognizant of what happens when young people disengage from school and the impact this has on not only themselves, but also the communities and the economy. Robson is addressing this issue head-on using a strength-based approach.

As one of only a select few recipients of the Vodafone 'World of Difference' award for 2015, Robson Tavita is embedding the organisational learning from the first five years and developing the service. Tuilaepa Youth Mentoring Trust (TYMS) offers holistic academic mentoring programmes for at-risk youth, young dads and



children in the Auckland region.

Robson is uniquely qualified to develop the service from his experience of over 30 years working with young people as a social worker, youth advocate, and Pacific liaison.

The vision of Robson and his growing team is to ensure that Pasifika and Maori youth feel a sense of belonging and pride in their communities, and can achieve their full potential for their future. They aim to support this through academic mentoring that is informed by a holistic approach to wellbeing.

TYMS has grown rapidly, from working with six young people in 2010 to 135 people in 2014, reflecting the profound need in the community for the services it provides. Robson is a former professional basketball player, and senior social worker at the New Zealand Police. He holds a Bachelor of Social Work and a Post Graduate diploma of Education from the University of Auckland. He is currently studying for a Post Graduate Diploma in Not for Profit Management.

Peter Fa'afiu was acting Chief Executive Officer until May this year when a CE was appointed and Peter is now the General Manager of the Tāmaki Redevelopment Company (TRC). The organisation is a new entity jointly owned by the New Zealand Government & Auckland Council

The members bring extensive experience to lead the TRC with strong contacts within the Tāmaki community and iwi, and business skills, with deep knowledge of urban development.

The team of staff work in partnership with local residents and businesses, mana whenua, local and central government agencies, local service providers and the private sector to provide a

platform for successful regeneration of Tāmaki. This involves working with the right people and resources to plan, fund and deliver a programme of regeneration initiatives.

Prior to his most recent roles, Peter was TRC's GM, Communications and Engagement. He has a background in law, diplomacy, international trade, communications, management consultancy and stakeholder engagement. He was raised in Tāmaki and still has strong family ties in the area. Peter's governance experience covers human rights, media, education, and management consultancy.

Reverend Mua Strickson-Pua is an ordained Presbyterian Minister Pacific Island Church and Pasifika Development Tutor at the Tagata

Pasifika Resources Development Trust based in the urban heart of Auckland city, Karangahape Road. He is a man of passion, integrity, pragmatism and humour. His own formal educational experiences in the last 30 years in the compulsory sector and at tertiary level have contributed to his drive as a political advocate of social justice and the power

of community. He was born and bred in New Zealand and has many colourful stories of political protest throughout the late 1970's. He is a well-respected creative through his poetry writing and his influence and mana is well known both here and overseas.

Reverend Mua and the team at Tagata Pasifika work with young at risk people between the ages of 11 and 16. They use a Pasifika model which has a holistic approach, embedded with culturally appropriate practice when they deliver their training to students attached to families and communities.

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# Key messages

**The key messages of these articulate, passionate industry leaders are straightforward and powerful.**

## **Recruit well-qualified staff**

Robson recruits well-qualified teachers to support the at risk youth he and his team work with. He values their experience and pays them appropriately. He acknowledges their individual family needs and ensures they have all the tools they need to deliver the best service possible for their young people. They provide an open, transparent model of delivery and take the time needed to make a meaningful, sustainable difference to the lives of their clients. This includes getting to know them, their family situation, their aspirations and their fears. They are not interested in box ticking and filling quotas, they are all about long term success as defined by the individual. “Alt Ed is an alternative educational environment, but education is still the key. He sets the bar high and believes that pastoral care is crucial to success. It’s not the programme and the resources that determine success; it’s the people. When hiring teaching staff Robson ensures that they are from the region they will be delivering in. “It puts the onus back on them that they must take responsibility for their own community. It’s huge to be able to have the funding to be able to fund people to work with their own communities and to take pride in their community.”

One of the challenges is that there are people who have been working in the social service sector for a long time, even decades, and who have the skills and experience to make a genuine difference to the lives of the people they touch. The likelihood of going to university to acquire





a formal degree level qualification is not always an option that these people might take. The 'earn and learn' model that Careerforce offers can be far more attainable. Kathleen identified that as Pacific literacy and language is a strength when working with Pacific families, it also means that for some practitioners whereby English is a second language, English literacy and language gaps can be a definite barrier to formalising their experience through qualifications. "For the organisation it will be about ensuring that they provide best practice for the clients. For Careerforce, it will be about ensuring that the information and knowledge that they will gain and have as Pacific practitioners that are culturally competent is translated into the qualification that they will attain. It will be about collating data and

evidence as Pacific workers working with Pacific families to provide effective practice".

Peter observed that the opportunity for people to come across to their organisation and have a role change is being embraced. "As long as we give them clear guidelines around their roles and deal with the other variables, there's a willingness to expand their skill set." The challenges are significant but the boundaries of the Tamaki region are totally measurable. This new model of service delivery is in response to a region that has deprivation levels, which, have not improved over a long period of time. In order to make change, the model or system needs to change. This comes with risks and Peter is not scared to acknowledge that things will go wrong. "I think failure should be





an option, that's the only way one can learn. Risk averse for me means opportunity averse and not embracing new ways of thinking. Governments are looking at different ways of doing things better."

## Collaborate

Building relationships is second nature to any Maori or Pasifika person. Peter Fa'afiu from TRC sees the company's role as catalysing, facilitating and enabling. There is a Master Plan and everything the agency does every day, every week, every month and every year will reflect that plan. When negotiating with any entity, including the various industry training organisations, collaboration is key to engagement. "They must have the willingness to collaborate, co-operate and play by our rules. At the end of the day, there's only one accountable entity and in this case that's the Tamaki Redevelopment Company."

The Tuilaepa Youth Mentoring Service has collaborated formally with the Te Kura Correspondence School. "They've got clients sitting at home doing nothing. They go on correspondence and do all their school work, but they're not learning any social skills. I combine my young guys from the mentoring programme and their guys and they have a learning programme every Friday. They get excited about education then they get disappointed because when they want to come back to school, they can't."

Reverend Mua invites successful Pasifika to talk with the young people. Sometimes this is past students, which is really powerful. "We've got alumni who are now scholars and artists. We have two schools here, the Pasifika School of Hospitality and Catering, which is attached to Mt Albert Grammar. Michael Meredith came through our organisation and he was quoted in the NZ Herald last year and acknowledged that he had come from an at risk background. I run the Pacific School of Social Sciences and Daren Kamali who is highly respected through his street poetry and art works is a past graduate of the centre."

For Kathleen the last two years has been all about collaboration and partnerships. "We have the opportunity to be innovative and future focussed in the way we provide services

and how we determine the outcomes for our families. We have spent the last two years forming partnerships, subcontracting and bringing services under our umbrella. The next step is to consolidate the wealth of knowledge and experience that we have gained. The aim is to provide sustainable professional services for our Pacific families."

## Build Cultural Competence

Robson's team has a genuine presence in the communities they serve. They are always looking at how to build on the work they are doing and how to build the cultural competence of their communities. "Our next step has always been helping older men and women with their education. We run language classes every Thursday. It's not learning about the language, its learning about the culture. It's really embracing and targeting New Zealand born Samoans. We have families there, husbands and their wives and their kids. They're all there and they're all learning about their culture."

Kathleen from Fonua Ola cannot stress enough the value of cultural competence. Each ethnic group has its own identity and when a community support worker, family support worker, counsellor, social worker or practitioner goes into a home they must have these competencies when dealing with that ethnic specific group. "It is not about just how do you work with a Pacific person. But rather how do you work with a Tongan, a Cook Island or a Samoan person. It is also about how do you work with their families, the different generations at different locations with differing social issues. It is about being truly effective in your role as a practitioner, in terms of engagement, understanding family dynamics, social issues specific to different cultures due to historical and genealogical backgrounds. It is about understanding their stories and working with the families to tell positive and meaningful stories for the individuals and their families."

The concept of having a license to operate in a community is modelled from the energy sector. The TRC has taken this model on board and judges its success with the community using this measure. For example, states Peter, "Three protestors outside the office on a Friday afternoon out of a community of 16,000 is a

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positive sign. Stakeholder engagement is key. Last year we had a Powhiri at the marae and the TRC were asked by the local Maori community to sit on the mana whenua side. This also shows that we have the social license. Keeping that license is much more difficult so every day is spent doing good things that have a positive impact.”

## **Validate the individual**

Reverend Mua Strickson-Pua observes from his extensive experience that successful people have a strong cultural base. Increasing their education is the key to being able to integrate their values and practice and be able to deal with the real world. When a person is culturally validated they have a strong sense of service. They understand that their investment into the young person is going to “feed the nation, be that village that will raise another generation”.

Kathleen is clear that Careerforce needs to work with trainees in such a way that trainees need validation that they can be Tongan or Samoan and still do a good job. “A generic practice model is one of many frameworks that our practitioners can utilise. Careerforce will need to implement Pacific practice models and frameworks that are ethnic specific and specific to the social sector profession to ensure practitioners who are not Pacific are enabled to work effectively with Pacific families and Pacific practitioners are validated for their cultural knowledge and language.”

With Peter’s experience as a Pacific person

working in mainstream organisations he has a different perspective. “There are plenty of hard-nosed Pacific leaders in this country. Rather than the starting point being that the majority of our workforce (at TRC) is Pacific, just put normal business measurements in place. We will do customer journey mapping. We will do data analytics and database mapping and then the next level is that they will just happen to be of Pacific descent. The current generation of Pasifika leaders are different to the church-going, union member quiet achiever. That’s not necessarily the case now. Big CEO’s in this country are Pacific Island. Patrick Wilson is the CEO of McDonalds. Tim Murphy just retired as CEO of the NZ Herald; he is the youngest of eight kids and grew up in Glen Innes. Isi Tupou is the Director of Investments at Rank Group and lives in Glendowie. Leo Foliaki is a Transaction Services Partner and Assurance Leader for Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC). They just happen to be in mainstream organisations, and really good at what they do.”

## **Question the structure and people in your organisation**

Reverend Mua puts it simply. “How your organisation will be identified is by the choice of the people that you pick to be the interface of your organisation with our Pacific nation communities. Selection of your personnel is really critical.”

Every person interviewed asked the same questions of the structure and personnel.

- Does the organisation have robust back office systems and evaluation frameworks in place so that the work is measurable?
- Is there anyone of Pacific descent or strong understanding of the Pasifika community on the governance board?
- Is there anyone of Pacific descent on the leadership team? Or if not, is there anyone with a good understanding of Pacific communities?
- If the answer is no to these questions, then how much training has the governance and leadership team had around cultural competency? Cultural competency is good customer service and employee training.
- How does Careerforce develop performance measures that are meaningful to Pacific trainees?
- What is the structure of the organisation?
- Where are your Kaumatua?
- Where are your Cultural Advisors?
- Who's at the door welcoming the stakeholder in? How do you share the work? How do you empower your communities?

## Pathways are Key

For an organisation that supports formal training opportunities in perceived low skilled and low paid roles, it is important to acknowledge that these roles are the entry point of the industry and begin to look at the investment as a long term process. To show people a pathway, identify this entry point and show that there are opportunities to move.

Robson at TYMS has a positive but realistic way of approaching this perspective. "I like the analogy, we're the parachute. Kids do jump but why is there an ambulance at the bottom? Why can't I be the parachute where they can float off to a different destination? They might float off to a course, or float off to a job or somewhere else. I'm definitely not the ambulance; I'm the parachute. The kids are going to jump anyway; you just need to change their destination. Instead of making up wings, why can't it be a parachute? You can jump and parachute to safety. You can paraglide to anywhere, and that's my analogy every time."

***These messages confirm and validate the research published in 2014. All these words of wisdom guide the way to increasing participation of Pasifika in training; increasing successful outcomes for Pasifika and enhancing the capability and capacity of Careerforce support Pasifika and mainstream organisations with high numbers of Pasifika employees.***



# Acknowledgements

This research was conducted by Tina Rose, Education Unlimited, on behalf of Careerforce.

The project was overseen by a Careerforce Advisory Group comprised of:

- Gill Genet, Business Development Manager
- Joel Rewa-Morgan, Business Development Consultant
- Dr Nicky Murray, Research Manager
- Deb White, Careerforce Workplace Advisor
- Denise Mackres, Careerforce Workplace Advisor

We wish to sincerely thank all of those who generously gave of their time in discussions and interviews.

Meitaki maata

Fakaaue lahi

Fa'afetai tele lava

Tank iu

Fakafetai

Malo 'aupito

Fakafetai lasi



