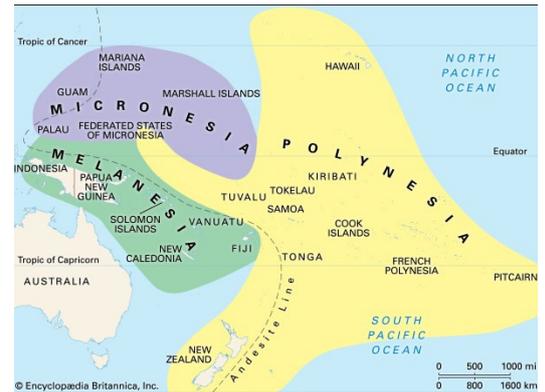


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Pacific Islanders & the Maori of New Zealand

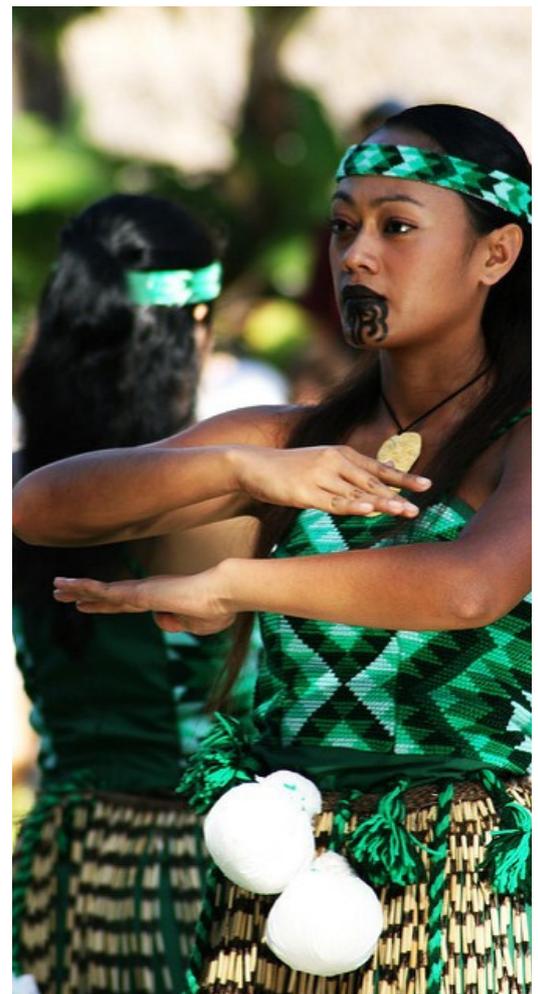
Background

- The Pacific Islands are Australia's closest neighbour to the North and East coast of Australia
- The Maori are the indigenous peoples of New Zealand and for the Australian context are noted also as part of the Pacific Islander group
- The term 'Pacific Islanders' refers to the people from the 23 countries of the Pacific
- Pacific Islanders are categorised into three groups: Melanesian, Polynesian and Micronesian



Climate

- Many Pacific countries consist of multiple islands and of these only a third are habitable
- The climate of the majority of Pacific countries are hot/dry and cold/wet
- These countries are prone to cyclones or hurricanes during the cold and wet seasons from November to February
- The majority of Pacific countries are located in the Pacific/Oceania region
- The lifestyles, food, and culture of many Pacific Islanders is considered coastal



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Governance

- Many of the Pacific countries were colonised by countries such as Britain, Australia, France, Germany, New Zealand and the United States of America
- The majority of Pacific nations are now independent and enjoy sovereignty under 'Native Title' constitution
- Some Pacific countries were 'allies' during WWII (1939-1945) and housed Allied Armed Force defence bases
- Australia's 'Pacific Solution' uses Pacific countries such as Papua New Guinea and Nauru for the detention of illegal immigrants
- The Pacific Solution is cause for major concern amongst other Pacific countries



Language

- English is a second/third or even fourth language for some Pacific Islanders
- Each Pacific country has its own specific languages and dialects
- Countries such as PNG, have hundreds of languages and dialects amongst their various cultural regions
- Melanesian countries such as Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and PNG also speak Pidgin or Creole which is a derivative of English and was developed as a 'trading language'
- Most countries also speak the language of their colonisers
- The written word for many Pacific islander countries is phonetic
- The spoken word for some Pacific languages is also phonetic however, emphasis on vowels may differ to that of the spoken English
- Communication amongst Pacific islander groups are usually respectful and there are protocols of language indicating a person's status and/or standing in their communities
- Language protocols also differ between children, adults and elders
- Some Pacific Islanders may have difficulty communicating proficiently in English

In Australia

- Pacific islanders have been described as being 'statistically invisible' because many have migrated from New Zealand and are formally identified as New Zealanders
- Migration to Australia is easier for those who hold New Zealand residency and citizenship
- Other Pacific islanders migrate to Australia through categories such as skilled migration, family reunion, students on AUSAID and seasonal workers
- The majority of Pacific islanders migrate to Australia in the hope of better lifestyle based on economic and educational opportunities
- Approx. 280,000 Pacific islanders resided in Australia
- Most of these people live on the East coast of Australia, in Qld, NSW and Victoria
- The largest Pacific islander groups in Australia, are PNG, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Cook Islands

Family

- Pacific Islander Culture embrace the family and the spirituality or 'MANA' of their heritage, their village or community and their faith in God
- Their traditional ties to their ancestral land significantly informs a person's identity
- The 'family' remains the fundamental unit of the education of cultural values, beliefs, spirituality and daily life
- The family structure evolves around community or village living and this is reflected in their communication styles and was of thinking

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Religion

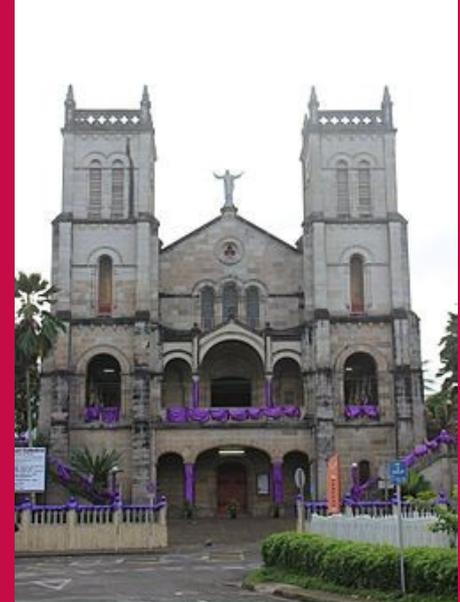
- Religion is fundamental to the upholding the cultural values, beliefs and traditions of Pacific islanders
- Faith in God, community, culture and family are significant values for the majority of Pacific Islanders
- Christianity is the main religion of Pacific countries, with Catholicism and Methodist being most common
- In some Pacific countries spiritual and pagan practices such as witchcraft are still believed to exist, alongside Christian practices, especially in instances of unexplained illnesses and or death

Food

- The majority of Pacific Islanders are coastal people, whose diet is significantly seafood and local vegetables including root crops such as tapioca, dalo and sweet potato or kumala.
- Traditionally food is offered to anyone who visits or who may be passing
- However, the graciousness of offering food is still important
- It is not acceptable to eat alone if other people have not been invited to eat as well
- Normally people are asked repeatedly to join in eating
- Pacific islanders place a lot of Important on having 'good manners' or 'graciousness with strangers'



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Getting Older

- It is traditional that families look after their Aging family members, however this is changing for Pacific Islander Communities in Australia
- Many older Pacific Islanders wish to return to their original country and villages for family support, maintaining cultural values and upholding traditional beliefs as an elder
- Request a family spokesperson to whom all messages and information will be received and relayed to the family
- Ask this spokesperson about the communication protocols of gender and aged physical and spoken relationships
- This role is Similar to the assigned patterns of village role responsibility
- In a service delivery assessment, it is important to know that it residential care is usually a last resort for Pacific Island families and is generally as a result of medical reasons

End Of Life

- Pacific Islanders mostly believe that death and dying are all part of the circular cycles of life, it is natural
- Funeral practices vary through throughout the different Pacific Nations
- Religion (mainly Christianity) plays a key role
- Gift giving is common in burial ceremonies, including food, money or traditional crafted items befitting the social status of the deceased
- Burial ceremonies may go for several days and include feasts and large family gatherings

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References

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 - Quinn Dombrowski,
 - denisbin,
 - Flying Kiwi Tours,
 - The U.S. Army,
 - chrisinphilly5448,
 - Jenny Scott,
 - Stefan Krasowski,
 - Victor Ulijn,
 - Tomoaki INABA,
 - Archives New Zealand,
 - Bo Kage Carlson,
 - COMSEVENTHFLT,
 - Global Panorama,
 - Tatters ✨,
 - UN WOMEN Pacific,
 - Leocadio Sebastian,
 - Kay Adams,
 - Graham Crumb,
 - Alex Kehr and
 - lin padgham.

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