

PORIRUA MUSEUM HISTORY SERIES

No 11

P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. IN PORIRUA



BEGINNINGS

We need knowledge and understanding of this new life and wisdom to adapt to it. We need also the wisdom to keep faith with the best in our old ways and to bring this as a gift to enrich life in New Zealand.

Opening prayer, Pacific Island Women's Conference, 1996

Life was not easy for many Pacific Island women who came to New Zealand in the 1960s and 1970s. While their children and husbands were gaining confidence as they settled into schools and the workforce, the women's natural reserve, combined with all the difficulties of living in a different culture, meant that they were often rather isolated. Men were the only ones with a public voice even though the ideas they were promoting often came from the women.

This booklet tells the story of how the women claimed their own voice. We have used some of these voices to tell the story of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. in Porirua.



Convener, Paddy Walker (standing) and delegates attending the first Pacific Island Women's Conference listen to the Mayoress of Auckland, Barbara Goodman's opening address. Another 100 women watched the ceremony on a hastily installed closed circuit television. *NZ Magazines Archives*

Cover: A group of Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. 1997 members. The three in front, Oloka Viliamu, Jasmine Underhill and Ele Matagi have been members since P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A.'s beginnings. The membership trophies, for most financial members and most members at the conference, were won at the 1997 conference.

Porirua Museum collection

In 1975 Mira Szaszy from the Maori Women's Welfare League encouraged Paddy Walker to set up a Pacific Island women's organisation to help build up the confidence of the women of the Pacific living in New Zealand. At a meeting at Cannons Creek, Porirua, 50 Pacific Island women met Paddy Walker and supported her plan. The first Pacific Women's Conference was held in Auckland in February 1976.

This gathering in Auckland brought together women of many different ethnic origins, different denominations, women from smaller islands and from larger islands. Fanaura Kingstone

Pacific Island women from all over the country gathered at the conference. The group from Wellington, Hutt Valley and Porirua travelled up by train. There were so many of them - 28 from Porirua - that they needed two carriages!

Some women weren't sure what would happen when they arrived but they knew that it was something special. As one member commented:

It was very much a learning thing for us...we really did not know what we were doing there... It was a focus for Pacific Island women.

At this conference the women decided to set up an organisation specifically for Pacific Island women. The organisation became known as P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A..

PACIFIC ALLIED (WOMEN'S) COUNCIL INSPIRES
FAITH (IN) IDEALS CONCERNING ALL



The P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. logo is a canoe facing into the wind. The canoe carries people from all islands and faiths sailing together. The colours are the traditional tapa colours.

REFERENCE
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OBJECTIVES

1. To present policies and programmes that will provide opportunities for Pacific women to contribute effectively to the social, economic and political development of New Zealand and its people.
2. To give Pacific women opportunities to plan and work together for the stability and development of themselves, their families, their communities and so contribute to the development of the country.
3. To create ways and means of involving Pacific women in overcoming obstacles in the achievement of equal opportunities and responsibilities.
4. To master the means of communication bringing Pacific women to the point of understanding and vision of a life in which they are fully participating.
5. To inspire unity among women of Pacific Islands origins in the furtherance of these aims so that all can speak with one voice in true fellowship.

Just as in all other sectors of New Zealand society, this women's movement did not always meet with approval from everyone.

Some leaders did not approve of the women having such freedom; however others gave the women their whole-hearted support and where this happened P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. flourished.

The P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. logo features on a banner presented to the Housing Corporation by Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. members in 1986. Evening Post collection



After the 1976 Auckland conference a meeting was held in March at Cannons Creek, Porirua to report on what took place. Just over 100 women attended including 47 from Samoa, 28 from Cook Islands, five from Tonga, four from Niue, two from Fiji and two Pakeha. This group became the Wellington Branch of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A.. Meetings were held in Wellington once a month.

These women of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. tried to break down some of these invisible fences creating a rippling effect within the Pacific Island community of friendship.

Getting to these meetings was not easy for the Porirua members, as most families did not own a car. Porirua decided to break away from the Wellington organisation and form their own branch. As one of the early members commented:

This was not popularly received by the organisation at the time but the problem was transport. The meetings were scheduled for 5.00pm and it was very late by the time our representatives returned home and as well as this there was the cost of transport - we just could not afford it.

Within the next year sub-branches had also been set up in Hutt, Wainuiomata, Newtown and Wellington Central.

Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. Branch Presidents

Epirosa Setefano	1977-1980
Ele Matagi	1980-1981
Jasmine Underhill	1981-1987
Miriama Singer	1987-1989
Jasmine Underhill	1989-1991
Kale Vaega	1991-1993
Ann Allan-Moetaua	1993-1995
Jasmine Underhill	1995-



Porirua Branch annual general meeting 1982. Private collection

PORIRUA P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A.

Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. began with 37 members meeting in each other's homes once a month. Over the years membership has fluctuated, with 1997 membership being 57.

Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. was all about learning: how to adjust to a new culture while still preserving their own, learning about themselves, their health, diet and the need for exercise. Members had to learn how to write reports as the national organisation wanted a report each quarter. This was quite a challenge to the women, many of whom had never written reports before.



Yvonne Puleoti, Sepa Mohe, Mele Ranfurly, Kath Koteka (back), Oloka Viliamu, Taufou Malo and Noo Hosking creating tivaevae at the Whanau Centre, Cannons Creek for Conference 1997.

Preparing curriculum vitae was another challenge. For Pacific Island women, the whole idea of talking about yourself in this manner was totally foreign, and within their own communities would be seen as culturally inappropriate behaviour, but if they wanted to progress and get jobs then they had to learn to do it. For some, learning what not to put in was just as much of a challenge!

While the women of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. were learning new ways, so was the community learning from them. Within a short while members were being asked to send a representative to meetings with government departments such as health, education and social welfare. Local community organisations wanted their input also - the Porirua Social Justice Unit, Citizens Advice Bureau, the Wellington Hospital Board, Whitireia Polytechnic and many others. All wanted a member of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. to join their meetings and discuss such things as the "needs of the Porirua community".

Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A.'s activities were not restricted to Porirua. In the early 1980s they helped set up and run the Pacific Island Resource Centre in Wellington.

P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. HOUSE

Meeting in their own homes meant that the women of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. could not really meet the growing needs of Pacific Islanders in Porirua. Their own people, particularly the children, needed help. Premises that could be used for community activities were required. After searching for some time they found 196 Champion Street which they were able to lease for a peppercorn rental. On August 13, 1984 the members of Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. opened P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. House.

P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. House became the centre for their activities. Jasmine Underhill, Elaine Annandale, Miriama Singer, and many other members freely gave their time, day after day, to discuss problems that existed in the community and to give practical advice to whoever needed it. This help was for the whole community, not just the members of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A.. Often they acted as interpreters, helped fill in forms, and assisted people in dealing with government departments. They conducted language and reading classes, gave budget advice and set up a homework centre with a voluntary tutor to assist students after school. At first all this work was done voluntarily without any government assistance, but as time went on small



He Tanginoa, Vaine Ngaro, Erena Tiraa, Titera Masters and Tangi Masters with Jasmine Underhill and Elaine Annandale at the back, working at P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. House, 1988. *Private collection*



An aerial view of the Cannons Creek community in eastern Porirua, heart and home of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A.

P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. House was in one of the double units to the right of the shopping centre. (top centre). *Geoff Marshall Collection, Porirua Museum*

grants became available. Running P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. House required an enormous amount of organisation: rosters for volunteers, supervision of the groups and cleaning.

This degree of commitment took its toll. This was relieved in the late 1980s when some of the work load was taken over by other agencies. With the availability of public grants other directions could be explored. A new branch called Vairua was opened near the Waitangirua Mall. This P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. group made family welfare its focus but was disbanded after the death of Elaine Annandale, its driving force. Another branch, Tiale Puapua, was set up in 1996 for Tokelau women.

When the rent increased in the early 1990s it was time for P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. to leave P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. House and meet again in each other's homes.

"Living Treasure"
Lady Tagaloa
Rex from Niue,
1996
Private collection



Since 1990, "Living Treasures" from the Pacific have been brought to New Zealand specifically for conference. The first to share her knowledge and experience in this way was Mrs Margaret Karika Ariki from the Cook Islands. She is seen here (in red) with Pari Tamarua who accompanied her, Porirua City Mayor John Burke and Jasmine Underhill. *Private collection*



"Living Treasure"
Mrs Vaelua Lopa
from Tokelau, 1997
Private collection

A major event for P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. is the annual conference when members from all over the country come together. New friends are made and old friendships renewed. Conferences are seen as revitalising times for all member branches.



Tokoroa 1989.
Private collection

AGM Conference
1993, St George
Hotel, Wellington.
Private collection



AGM Conference February 1986, Whiti Te Ra Hall, Porirua College. Linda Burke (Mayoress of Porirua), Falua Masina, Rev. Setu Masina, Dame Georgina Kirby, Lady Uru Wall, Samoan High Commissioner, Ele Matagi (Convenor). *Private collection*

P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. IN THE COMMUNITY

Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. has always been actively involved in the national organisation, making sure that it was represented at council meetings and on the national executive.

Fund raising became necessary as travel to these meetings is expensive. Cake stalls, raffles and dances were the major fund raising events, with husbands, brothers, sons and daughters often called in to assist. Organising these events could create some problems as the Minutes from one such event in 1985 suggest:

The band had been the local gang widely known as the 'Mongrel Mob' - the feedback from members after the initial shock of seeing them had been favourable with reservations...the use of the 'weed' throughout the evening was worrying but fortunately we were not visited by the police... Our Young P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. members had been very pleased with the music presented - it was the best.

And a further comment reminds members of what they are about:

*1985 is the 'Year of the Youth' maybe this could be a first for Porirua extending the hand of friendship/opportunity to an 'unpredictable' part of the community... Mob members of the band had been nervous of us, just as we had been nervous of them...it is important that we be seen not to be ignoring this part of the community as they **are** an integral part of our community whether we like it or not.*

Another fund raising exercise involved being paid \$900 for taking part in the filming of the TV series "Roche".



Elaine Annandale, Jasmine Underhill, Miriama Singer and Oloka Viliamu. Porirua Museum collection

SOME ACTIVITIES ARE JUST FOR FUN!



Members from Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. and Young P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. and their families taking part in Porirua's Christmas parades. Porirua Museum collection

THE CONFERENCE

Conference workshops are held on topical issues such as health, education, employment, women and law, family violence, and sexual abuse. Traditional crafts are also a feature, often using materials flown in from the Pacific Islands.

Porirua Branch became known as the conference innovators. They were the first branch:

- to break away from the main body
- to have Pacific flowers flown in especially for the conference. In Dunedin they arrived with a load of frangipani - imagine the effect of that wonderful scent wafting round the conference centre!
- to bring a banner woven from Pacific Island flax. The first one was made by Flo Lukitau from Niue and the present one was made by Talauta Sakaio from Tokelau.
- to bring a local dignitary to conference with them. In 1978 they took Lady Uru Wall to the Dunedin conference. Porirua Branch has always involved key community leaders in their branch. Marie Willing, wife of a City Councillor, Rex Willing, was another of their special guests at conference.

At first all members of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. attended the conferences but as finances have become tighter only delegates are able to attend. Despite this, Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. frequently has the largest contingent.

Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. members planned and organised the tenth annual P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. conference held in Whiti Te Ra Hall at Porirua College in February 1986. Over 130 delegates attended from all over New Zealand. By then there were over 30 branches of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A..



Porirua Museum collection

P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A.'s 21st birthday conference in 1997 was organised by the Wellington Region and held at Te Akapu'anga Kuki Airani Hall, Cannons Creek. With the support of Creative New Zealand some large coconut leaves were flown in from the Cook Islands. These were quickly woven into baskets, hats, eye shades and mats, as members delighted in using traditional materials.



*Porirua
Museum
collection*



YOUNG WOMEN OF P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. PORIRUA BRANCH

This group was formed with the support of Paddy Walker about a month after the Auckland conference.

The "mothers" of the Porirua Branch organised a social evening inviting the young women to be their guests. The first executive included Tua Ai'ono, Amy Lepou, Ruth Wendt and June Underhill.

Young P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. insisted they be autonomous from the mothers' group, meeting separately and with their own agenda. A decision that the older women found a little hard to take as they did like to control their daughters!

Fund raising with cake stalls and dances was an early focus. In the 1970s there was very little in the way of entertainment available for the young people of Porirua so the dances had a dual purpose of raising funds and providing entertainment. The young women were taught various action songs and traditional crafts by the mothers and organised themselves to attend the P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. conferences.

Young P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. of the 1980s was a much more politically active group. They had been attending conferences with their mothers for some years and so were aware of what was happening throughout New Zealand and overseas. They investigated and protested about youth rates, the Springbok tour, immigration, and young people's rights. They developed skills in letter writing, and in public speaking which gave them the confidence to take leadership roles in other community organisations.



The first Young P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. representative on the national executive was Kalisi Viliamu from the Porirua Branch.

AGM Conference 1980 - Porirua Branch & Young P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A.
Back: Miriama Singer, Lina Aiono, Ele Matagi (obscured), Elaine Annandale
Centre: Lola Revelu, Iena Matagi, Aone Matagi, Kalisi Viliamu, Sose Annandale, Oloka Viliamu
Front: Hannah Singer, Joanne Viliamu. *Private collection*

P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. SONG

We sing our song

Our song of Pacifica

We come from islands, both near and far

We come to build our homes in Aotearoa

Our hopes and our dreams are in this land

We come from Tokelau, Niue and Samoa

Cook Islands, Tahiti, Fiji and Tonga, too

We come together to help one another

To reach all the aims of Pacifica

Pacifica - inspiring faith

Pacifica - concern for all

Our hearts lift high in unity

By love we live in harmony

Pacifica, Pacifica, Pacifica, Pacifica

Composed by Paddy Walker, OBE
 Founder and First President of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. Inc.

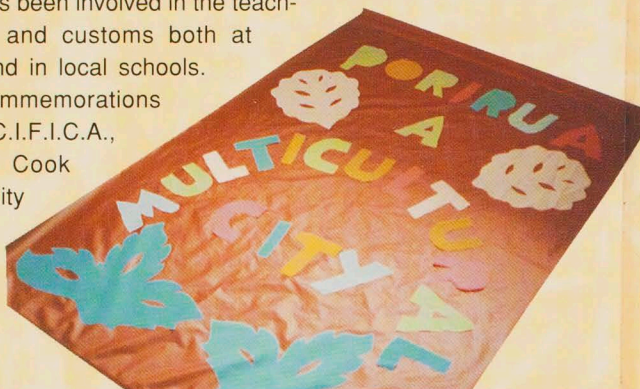


AGM Conference 1980 - Aone Matagi, Koke Annandale, Joanne Viliamu. *Private collection*

Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. has been involved in the teaching of traditional crafts and customs both at P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. House and in local schools.

As part of the 1990 commemorations members of Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A., in conjunction with the Cook Island Women's Community Group, made 21 banners which hung in the city centre.

Private collection



For many years Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. has been the strongest and most stable of all the P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. branches. Membership has always been open to all island groups as the emphasis is to create a unity among the Pacific Island community. In 1997 there are eight different groups involved. This ethnic mix is what makes P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. in Porirua so rich. As one member put it:

It doesn't matter what P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. does or doesn't do... the fact that we have touched each other is P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A.'s biggest strength.

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FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Porirua Museum

Vertical REF photograph collection & oral history archives

Porirua P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A.

Maori MAORI STUDIES reports & pamphlets

This book could not have been compiled without the assistance of current P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. members, especially the assistance of current P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. member, Mrs. Viliamu whose photo

REFERENCE ONLY

FUTURE TOPICS TO BE COVERED

Farming and Industry

Planned Suburbs

Immigrants of the 20th Century

Porirua Women

Getting There in Porirua

Whitireia Peninsula

TITLES PUBLISHED

Shore Whaling

Mana Island

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The Bountiful Harbour

The Old Porirua Road

Seaside Towns

The Austrian State Houses, Titahi Bay

Early Schools of Porirua

Paremata Point

From Village to City Centre

P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. in Porirua - written by Helen O'Callaghan

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