

My Home - Oceania by Penina Waqatabu

The ocean is my home
The ocean is my sanctuary
The ocean is my Molikilagi
The old and wise are buried there
Even the clay pots, adzes and war clubs

Have you not seen? Have you not heard?
The children are crying in the fields
Where are our fathers? They cried.
Far away across the ocean they fled
The mana is gone, replaced by the foreigners

The voices of our ancestors awaken the vanua
'Remember; the land has eyes'
Lest we forget and loose our place
Our great bloodlines of memories- our genealogies

The ocean is crying
The ocean is consumed by pain
The beach, the space between the powers of the sea
And the authority of land
Why are the people silent?

During this auspicious conference, I have taken away some valuable lessons. I reflect on my home and the importance of ethical and sustainable development being a crucial component in the conservation of Oceania for our future generation. Being part of PARBICA 2017 has brought forth stimulating ideas and revelations that, as custodians of our culture, we have a huge responsibility to preserve and to maintain our traditions and culture. The conference reminded me that 'without our history, we have no identity'. Our history defines who we are. Although we do not know much about some aspects of our past, the archives contain records which could link together like pieces of puzzle to answer some of our questions about our origins. With the help of the government and

stakeholders in the conservation of archival resources of our heritage, it is possible.

I believe as a student in the History discipline that archival work is an essential part of our research. I was inspired by one of the speakers, Mr. Alefaio, who stated: "Archives is about communities. It is not about the building or the people in that building but is a holistic expression where owners engage with their heritage". Another presentation I enjoyed was the archivist/activist who spoke about ways of preserving and protecting archival resources by demonstrating disaster preparedness. It was interesting to see such enthusiasm and passion shown by all speakers for their work. Their commitment and continual engagement with the various communities were vividly highlighted in most presentations. I was also intrigued by some archival projects towards digital sustainability which showed how creating virtual realities could help save an endangered Pacific. Overall, I was in awe of the wonderful progress that is occurring in the various archival organizations and networks across the globe, and the hard work that these people do to protect records and make the accessible to members of the public like me. Amazing indeed.