

## IV. Fiji Museum

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### 1. Organisation Overview

The Fiji Museum is located in Suva, Fiji. The idea for a museum was to display and preserve traditional Fijian culture as discussed in 1904. Later that year, Sir William Allardyce presented his collection to the Suva Town Board and it was put on display. In 1908, the Fijian Society was formed with a specific aim to research and preserve the country's history and culture, and the formation of a museum was included in this aim. In 1910, the government approved an annual grant of A£25 to appoint a collection caretaker. With the passing of the Fiji Museum Ordinance in 1929, the museum was formally inaugurated as a Government Statutory Body with a Board of Trustees.

Local residents presented pieces and collections to the town board and artefacts were purchased by the Trustees. These contributed towards a growing collection which filled the Town Hall. The collection remained on display in the town hall until 1919 when substantial part of the hall was destroyed by fire. The collection was moved to a variety of venues until the government was persuaded by the Trustees to build a national museum.

The current museum was opened in 1955 by the Governor Sir Ronald Garvey of Fiji. This building was used to house the display, reserve collection, and provide storage. Today, the building has two adjoining sections; the first of these was constructed in 1972 and the second in 1978. Together these buildings provide a history gallery, masi gallery, art gallery, temporary exhibition space, storerooms, and gift shop. The archives, photographic studio editing suite, library, and administration office are located in what was the Nawela Hostel for women, adjacent to the main museum building.

The recent employment of key professional staff has enabled the Museum not only to effectively discharge its responsibilities according to professional museum standards, but also to develop educational programmes aimed at generating greater support from the community.

The Museum, in terms of ICH, is specialised in performing arts, dance, music, rituals, and ceremonies mostly associated with historical sites and building and cultural objects and artefacts. Other ICH elements include some music collected from the 1970s and some rituals and oral traditions of all groups in Fiji.

The Museum is classed as a statutory body that has memorandums of understanding (MOU) with other museums, such as the Museum of Anthropology, museum for the University of British Columbia, Canada, the Museum of Victoria, Australia and the Museum of New Caledonia. These MOUs are done to aid the museum in training staff, exchanging ideas, to help in purchase of equipments, and working in partnerships for exhibits (for artefact loans). Also the Museum's source of funds come from admission (into museum), sales from the gift shop, sale of soft drinks and snacks and a small grant from the government. Embassies and private companies also make donations for special projects.

The Museum has a minimum of 5 Department which gathers information via research and field and conservation work on artefacts, archaeological and photographic collection and also identifies historical buildings, and records oral traditions of both indigenous and other races who have made Fiji their home. The Museum also documents and makes inventories of collections as well as builds databases and archives. Other activities include publishing and distributing materials, such as *Domodomo*, a scholarly journal that reports on the work of the Museum and research in archaeology, anthropology and other related fields. The Museum also uses digital content on facebook/tweeter to market and publicise the events happening at the Museum.

### **Vision**

The Fiji Museum will become known as a world-class museum. It will enhance this reputation by working locally, nationally and internationally to maintain and strengthen its focus on the diverse cultures of Fiji. It will be a place where the tangible and intangible heritage of these cultures is safeguarded and made accessible to community members and researchers. Its innovative and imaginative exhibitions and programmes will serve local communities and be a significant draw for all visitors. It will make a difference in people's lives.

### **Mission**

The Fiji Museum inspires and promotes respect for all the diverse cultures of Fiji.

## **2. IP Issues in Information Building and Sharing**

The Museum works mainly with international and domestic researchers in the field of archaeology and palaeontology and is responsible for issuing permits for archaeology and palaeontology work. It also keeps a journal on the latest progress of this particular field in Fiji. (Domodomo Scholarly Journal) The Museum also deals with anthropologists and ethnologists, and most researchers and research are covered under the Fijian legislation, specifically the Preservation of Archaeology and Palaeontology Interest Act.

The Museum works closely with grassroots communities; for example, the Museum staff and researchers go out to the villages in order to carry out their work (Archaeological field work or Archaeological General Survey and Impact Assessments as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment done in any area in which the museum is called in to help with, usually under the Mineral Resources Department, Mining companies, Environmental Consultancy companies and so on.

The Fiji Museum has set up its work to closely work with the general public and invites the public to participate in museum activities and exhibitions – for example – asking Artists to exhibit and sell their art in their temporary exhibit space for a month for a minimal fee, in this way, the museum hopes to encourage artists, and encourage the public to support a growing art movement in Suva and Fiji as a whole. However, there is no code or guideline that governs the relationship between the Museum and the community. The public may make use of the research library for copying and enjoyment. If the public wants to buy photos, then they are required pay and they are advised to acknowledge the museum when using the images.

IP questions are raised for the Museum in matters related to research; this is when researchers are keen to listen to tribal information. Thus, if this is what they need, then they would follow the same procedures used when accessing photos. For information on genealogy and family, researchers would need to get approval from the families concerned. However the Museum does not have IP-related protocols nor do IP options or issues form part of its visions or objectives. Overall, the Fiji Museum believes that IP issues should be taken into account by institutions and that there is a need to train museum staff on intellectual property matters and to compile IP best practice guidelines and protocol.

Fiji has had many collaborative projects that have involved domestic and foreign cultural experts with the helpful support by the DNHCA, and the iTaukei Institute of Language and Culture. This collaborative effort by these institutions led to the establishment of a training manual.<sup>8</sup> This training manual was designed for field officers who are conducting cultural mapping. The manual acknowledges Fiji's legislation—Copyright Act, Performers Protection Act, Patent Act, and Trademarks Act—but it also notes that the current legislation is inadequate to protect Fijian cultural heritage. Thus, to address the limitations of current IP laws, Fiji has worked on other initiatives. Currently Fiji is working on the Traditional Model Law to include all multicultural groups and has established a national database to collect Fijian cultural heritage.

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<sup>8</sup> This collaborative effort also included both local and foreign researchers and anthropologists. The role of anthropologists in training and in the formulation of the training manual was instrumental.