

Descendants of Pacific Island Indentured Labourers Access their Records

From Nov 7-9 2014 celebrations were held in Levuka town to commemorate the 150th year since the arrival of Pacific Island labourers in Fiji. Head of Secretariat of the Fiji Melanesian Council Paterisio Nunu said the presence of the National Archives of Fiji at the commemoration, and the ability to be made aware of and be given access to archival records was a big boost.

“As far as the community was concerned during the event and going through the Archives booth, the information and pictures made us very emotional, most of us were shy in the past in identifying themselves as *kai Solomone*, *Vanuatu* or PNG as their origins but this has changed and they are proud of their history and identity.”

“Without the presence of National Archives most of these descendants will still rely on the verbal history relayed to them through stories. They are now confident that what they know is not what is passed down from one generation to others but something that was recorded during that time then and there and are reliable information.”

He added that these descendants were also proud to learn that these records have been officially acknowledged by UNESCO with their inscription on to the regional MOWCAP register. These records were successfully submitted for consideration to be put on to the regional register by the Fiji Memory of the World Committee in May of 2014.

The UNESCO Memory of the World (MOW) programme is the sister programme to the UNESCO “World Heritage Sites” programme. MOW seeks to identify, preserve, and popularise key historical documents which together comprise the recorded memory of the world. This means that UNESCO has judged these Fiji records as being of significant importance as a historical record for the entire Asia-Pacific region. <http://tinyurl.com/p63to69>. This is the second such Fijian record on the MOWCAP register, the Indian Indentured Labour records being Fiji’s first inscription on the regional register. In 2011 the Indian Indentured Labour records were also successfully inscribed on the International Memory of the World Register <http://tinyurl.com/odlftxw> the first of only two Pacific Islands records on there, and the only one whose authorship was led by a Pacific nation.



Senior Archivist Timoci Balenaivalu providing information



The Archives tent drew many visitors keen to see their records