

NHPI AG 3.20.6 Workshop Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome, Framing, and Workshop Purpose

The workshop opened with reflections on Pacific Islander identity, sovereignty, and climate-related challenges—including the existential threat facing places like Tuvalu. Participants participated in a rock-designing activity where they were encouraged to reconnect with ancestral histories, reclaim identity, and consider how cultural knowledge shapes current work in diaspora communities.

Key themes shared by AG members as they presented their rocks to the group:

- Loss of land due to climate change, not conflict.
- How colonization influences citizenship and political status in the U.S. for Pacific Islander groups (e.g., COFA migrants, American Samoan nationals, Native Hawaiians).
- Importance of knowing where one's knowledge of the Pacific originates—family, schooling, media, or colonial narratives.

2. Mini-Lecture: Pacific History, Migration & Cultural Narratives (Dr. Fifita)

Dr. Fifita presented a condensed introduction to Pacific Studies, covering:

Challenges in Representations of the Pacific

- Most U.S. education systems portray the Pacific as remote, primitive, or “in the past.”
- Popular media perpetuates stereotypes (e.g., exotic paradises, noble savages).
- Academic understanding originally relied heavily on early European explorers' biased accounts.

Contemporary Academic Disciplines that Inform Pacific History

- Archaeology
- Linguistics
- Genetics
- Botany
- Anthropology

These fields provide modern evidence that counters colonial narratives.

Lapita Pottery (Archaeology)

- Found across Western Pacific (New Caledonia, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji).
- Distinct geometric patterns appear on bark cloth or tapa cloth, in tattoo motifs; art, and cultural designs still used today.

- Represents early Austronesian migration patterns, Pacific Islander origins, and cultural continuity.

Genetic Studies

- Mitochondrial DNA links many Pacific populations to Taiwan and Southeast Asia.
- Y-chromosome studies show deeper connections to Aboriginal Australian populations, suggesting multiple migrations.

Linguistics

- Polynesian & Micronesian languages are closely related Austronesian languages.
- Melanesian (Papuan) languages differ significantly, reflecting older cultures, dates of settlement and migration.
- Evidence shows movement across colonial boundaries, including Polynesian Outlier communities in Micronesia.

Two Major Migration Waves

1. **First Wave** (≈50,000 years ago)
 - a. From Australian continent (referred to as Sahul during the Pleistocene era) to Papua New Guinea, when land bridge connected both countries, and the settlement of Near Oceania.
2. **Second Wave** (Austronesian expansion, began 5000 years ago)
 - a. From Taiwan & Southeast Asia → Marianas → Palau → Near Oceania → Remote Oceania → Lapita Complex/Proto-Polynesia (Fiji, Tonga, Samoa) → Polynesia (Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Rapa Nui, Hawai'i, Aotearoa).

Colonial Mapping, Boundaries & Impact

- Colonial powers (French, British, U.S.) created artificial regional boundaries (e.g., Micronesia, Melanesia, Polynesia), borders, and classifications imposing a Western worldview upon the region.
- These classifications and borders enabled imperial trade and expansion leading to the eventual colonization, annexation, and militarization of the Pacific Islands region.
- Pacific remains formally colonized in some areas (e.g., French Polynesia, New Caledonia, U.S. territories).
- Mapping is an act of power—often erasing Indigenous identities and social-spatial connections and relationships.

3. Cultural Mapping Activity

Participants worked on:

- Identifying at least 25 Pacific Island nations.
- Discuss personal connections to homeland.
- Examining how cultural practices, knowledge, or symbols have “migrated” through their own lives.

This exercise reinforced the themes of:

- Continuity of culture
- Persistence of Pacific identity
- Diversity of Oceania
- Diaspora experiences

A group photo was taken before transitioning into content.

4. NHPI Advisory Group Structure & Roles

Introduction of Co-Chairs

New Co-chairs were introduced, each with distinct areas of responsibility:

- **Caleia:** Recruitment strategy & coordination.
- **Alyshia:** Project management & chair support.
- **Francesca:** Committee coordination and preparation for AG presentations.
- **Motu:** Membership experience, onboarding support, and troubleshooting.

Advisory Group Responsibilities

Reviewed from the NHPI Student Success Plan pamphlet:

- Provide expertise and insight into NHPI students and community needs.
- Groundwork in lived experience and community voices.
- Recommend strategies for student success.
- Showcase positive programming in communities.
- Maintain accountability through timely feedback and participation.

5. Dashboard Check-in

Participants were asked to rate familiarity (0–5). Responses varied widely:

- Some had not accessed it at all.
- Others used it consistently but noted access and navigation issues, especially with overlapping Smartsheet, Google, and Outlook systems.
- Suggestions included access to troubleshooting, clearer instructions, and onboarding.

6. Small Group Dialogue: Advisory Group Experience

Participants discussed:

- Comfort level navigating AG responsibilities
- Helpful/unclear processes
- Barriers to participation

7. Charter Review Process

- The charter will be revised based on gathered feedback.
- A final draft will be returned to the full Advisory Group for approval.
- Members preferred discussion-based reviews rather than line-by-line editing.

8. Closing Reflections

Participants emphasized:

- Appreciation for the cultural grounding of the workshop
- Value of shared stories, maps, and history
- Importance of structured supports to fully engage in advisory work
- Excitement and readiness to contribute with clearer direction

Key Feedback Themes

1. Difficulty managing time outside meetings
 - a. Members feel present during meetings but are unsure between sessions.
2. Unclear expectations & tasks
 - a. Documents such as the charter felt overwhelming without guidance.
 - b. Request for clearer, more specific questions.
3. Onboarding needs improvement
 - a. Desire for a structured “first 30/60/90 days” plan.
 - b. A buddy system pairing new and experienced members.
4. Communication overload
 - a. Too many separate emails from staff and co-chairs.
 - b. Suggested monthly bulletin or consolidated updates.
5. Access & technology barriers
 - a. Confusion with multiple platforms (Smartsheet vs. Google vs. Outlook).
 - b. Need clear login instructions and tech support.
6. Desire for impact storytelling
 - a. Members want to see examples of how past AG recommendations affected NHPI students and families.
 - b. Useful for motivation and recruitment.
7. Material distribution timeline
 - a. Mixed preferences, but many requested materials are available 1 week in advance of meetings.

Next steps:

- Co-chairs and ODE staff will integrate feedback into onboarding tools, communication plans, and charter revisions.
- Recruitment for new AG members continues.
- Onboarding for new members planned for summer, ahead of the fall retreat.