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## Day 8 Highlights of the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture



The eighth day of the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture (FestPAC) continued its celebration of the rich and diverse cultures of the Pacific islands. The day saw progress towards completion of the carving projects, culminating demonstrations of heritage arts, and short film showing.

### **Carving - Update of Hoe Uli (Foe) Project**

The carving project is currently in progress, with the team putting in extra effort to finish a distinctive piece that accurately reflects the essence of American Samoa carved into the Hoe Uli

(Foe). As of early Friday morning, it was 80% complete, with plans to finalize the project by Saturday.

Tile Tuala-Tuamalelagi, Judge Fauuga, and Brandon collaborated in the carving category at the 2008 Pacific Festival held in American Samoa. Witnessing their reunion, along with new members joining the carving circle, was a true blessing as they worked together on the Hoe Uli project.

Judge Faauga To'oto'o serves as a First Circuit Court judge in O'ahu. His mother, Paia Tago, comes from the Tago and Lavatai families of Nu'uuli, along with the Poloa family of Leone. His father is Laititi To'oto'o from Olosega, Manu'a. He graduated from Leone High School in 1976.

Brandon Avegalio is from the villages of Leone and Pavaia'i. He is the son of Papalii Dr. Failautusi 'Tusi' Avegalio. The first native from Oceania to become a professor at the Shidler College of Business.

The event on Friday also included discussions focused on "Creating An Oceania Carving Network & Carving and Tattoo Festival." The facilitators were Andre Perez and Kalehua Krug.

### **Fashion - Tuiga Fafau Demonstration at the Hawaiian Convention Center**

Festival goers witnessed a celebration of the Samoan culture as renowned designer Tuifaasisina Korina Seiuli Lee showcased the traditional *Tuiga Fafau* (four-piece headdress). Her presentations and demonstrations highlighted the beauty and historical significance of this cultural art form, captivating attendees and representatives from various island nations.

Tuifaasisina, known for her dedication to preserving and honoring Samoan traditions, presented the *Tuiga Fafau* in the festival village, emphasizing its role as a symbol of rank, status, and cultural identity among Samoans. The ceremonial headdress, traditionally worn by *ali'i* (men) during 'Ava ceremonies, weddings, funerals, and the *taualuga* (final dance), was brought to life through her meticulous demonstrations.

The event commenced with an enchanting Samoan dance, aptly titled "Welcome, Welcome, and Welcome," performed by Tuifaasisina's models. This opening number drew numerous visitors to experience the presentation, setting the tone for an immersive cultural journey.

During her demonstration, Tuifaasisina outlined the pattern of the *Tuiga Fafau*, showcasing each component of the headdress step-by-step. She illustrated how the headdress, composed of several individual parts, is assembled on the head of the *Taupou* (model) to form a unified structure. Each piece, crafted from the most precious and sacred materials known to Samoans, symbolized power, honor, respect, royalty, authority, and wealth.

The highlight of the presentation was the demonstration of the *taualuga*, symbolizing the conclusion of the event. Adorned with the *Tuiga Fafau*, Tuifaasisina and her *Taupou* graced the stage with elegance, proudly showcasing the unique headdress through the *Siva Samoa* (traditional Samoan dance). Their performance embodied the grace and dignity of the *Tuiga Fafau*, leaving a lasting impression on all who attended.

Tuifaasisina Korina Seiuli Lee's dedication to celebrating and preserving the art of the *Tuiga Fafau* on such a prominent stage highlights the importance of cultural heritage and identity. Her presentations not only honored this ancient tradition but also inspired a renewed appreciation for its beauty and significance among the global audience.

### **Short Film Showing of 'Bush Cutter' by Tulaga Whitcombe**

Tulaga Whicombe's short film, "Bush Cutter," made its FestPAC premiere at the Hawaii Convention Center. The short film is a heartfelt visual interpretation of a poem written by Tamiano j. Gurr, reflecting his upbringing in American Samoa as a half-caste Pacific Islander. It explores the profound sense of disconnect he felt with his ethnic identities.

The narrative captures his experiences of feeling segregated and out of place, labeled as *palagi* by his own Samoan community, and finding a semblance of acceptance only after moving to Hawaii. Through this film, we delve into his realization of the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Pacific Islanders during his college years in Hawaii.

This awakening led to the creation of Pacific Roots, a brand dedicated to elevating island culture and educating youth about their ancestral heritage. "Our aim with this film is not only to honor their journey but also to inspire others to explore their roots and strive for more than what is expected of them."

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