

Reflection Report: Dubai Future Forum Indigenous and Inclusive Futures Workshop 22 November, 2025

What is possible when we connect, in fresh air and sunlight, with gratitude and honouring the caretakers of lands, past, present and future?

Forty plus great minds from across the globe connected in the warmth of the Dubai Future Lab Gardens for the Dubai Futures Forum Learning session: **Indigenous and inclusive Futures: How Can Identity, Culture, and Stories from Oceania Weave connections for collective futures.**



Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu opened the space with a sevusevu – the traditional Fijian kava ceremony, that acknowledges with deep respect Emirate elders and the Dubai Future Forum as hosts and seeks permission to guide conversations and sharing. This pure act of humility

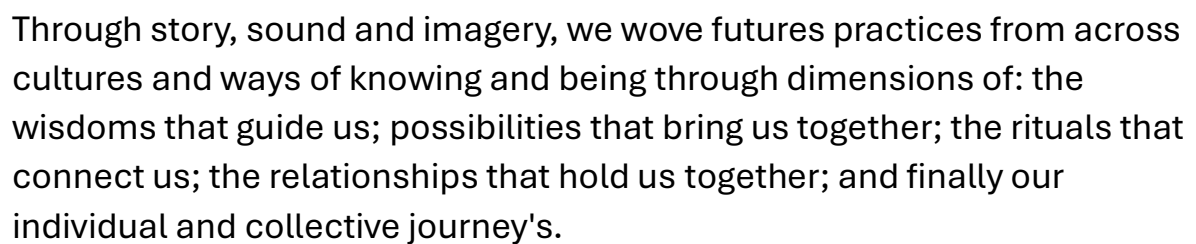
broke the ground, and through the cracks, provided space and permission for participants to also open their minds and hearts to create connections for collective futuring.

We journeyed through the Pacific – a region of large ocean states, the Pacific Ocean connecting us all, rich with culture expressed through more than 1400 languages. Our shared aspirations for participants was to find a sense of connection, to be with us in this time and space, to feel welcomed, to be immersed in Pacific ways of knowing and being, and to be inspired for hopeful and courageous collective futures.

On this journey, 3 kaitiak's or stewards led the conversations: Alice Dimond, Marissa Asen and Sarah Mecartney, sharing the importance of the notion of welcoming and being and feeling welcomed being so important across our countries and contexts, starting with the art of garlanding.

The garland, being a common ritual of welcoming guests, not only as a product but the process of creating the garland.

The Tongan Kakala Research Framework guides inclusive, respective and reciprocal processes; the Teu of conceptualising, the Toli of collecting data, experiences, wisdom, the Tui of analysing and sensemaking, the Luva or reporting, the Malie of finding relevancy and the Mafana – transferring, and gifting back.

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The conversations were ripe to continue exploring using the Futures Triangle – and the curious question *‘If we can make connections through these experiences, what next? What might be possible?’*.



A common push from the present, was a desire to ignite the super power of the human connections made during the Dubai Future Forum, to find more safe and creative spaces to take the personal learning and reflections from panels and workshops, and give them energy and co-create ideas and projects inspired by the DFF.

One participant mused ***‘If every participant had one light bulb moment or one vision for the future during the DFF– that is 2,000 potential connections waiting to synergies and take flight. Imagine what we could ignite and follow progress year on year’***.

The passion for more hopeful futures resounded across the mats – where crossed legged, participants, engaging as story tellers rather than passive participants, shared tears, laughter and images of futures with common elements of culture, connection and Indigenous wisdoms.



The final act of making garlands, weaving the energy shared on the mats into each flower, pondering the stories connecting each flower on the garland, as a metaphor for the stories and connections of each participant. Garlands were made for others, and for loved ones. Garlands were made to honour the past, to celebrate the present moment and to look with kindness and hope, to collective futures.

To transition our collective experience back to our individual agenda's, we shared kava, not to say goodbye but 'sota tale' which means 'to see you again' in Fijian iTaukei language.

Much gratitude to the Dubai Future Forum for trusting in the spark, that seeded ideas and grew into the workshop. For the Pacific contingent, the entire Forum provided fertile ground to grow our future conscious, our connections and inspirations from across the globe.