
[Aotearoa: Underlying Causes of Deforestation analysed at Indigenous Peoples Workshop](#)

The weekend of the 21st and 22nd of September PIPEC (Pacific Indigenous People's Environment Coalition) held a workshop on the Underlying Causes of Deforestation and Forest Degradation. The workshop was opened by the new Conservation Minister for New Zealand, Chris Carter, and had representatives from most of the Pacific nations' communities here in Aotearoa, along with Maori representation. Nearly all of the Pacific academics working in the tertiary sector attended, as did a representative of Siosiomaga Society from Samoa.

There were four case studies presented; Aotearoa, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga and the Pacific children were represented by speeches on the importance of forests in our lives by school children in the 10 to 13 year old age group. For most of us, this was by far the most moving part of the workshop as we got to see the next generation of forest activists in action. (many for the very first time)

The second day of the conference saw a facilitated brainstorm on Pan-Pacific underlying causes, hoping to draw out potential solutions and major causes and actors. Given that this was an Indigenous workshop, it is not surprising that most of the solutions focused around political leadership, policy and will. Education and capacity building of Indigenous Peoples was identified as being the single biggest potential solution and this was seen within the context of building true independence.

During the weekend, more than 65 people took part in the workshop, and PIPEC picked up several new members. We look forward to participating further in the International struggle for Indigenous Rights and Biodiversity.

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