

Niuean

Prologue

Tuku atu e tau nava mo e tau fakaheke ke he Atua he lagi likoliko ha ko e haana tau Monuina oti kua fakatapulu aki a tautolu oti ko e tau tagata Niue.

Aga fakamotu mo e aga fakaniue encompass Niuean values and beliefs, customs, practices, language, heritage and songs. They describe the essence of what it is to be a Niuean¹.

Background

In 1900 Niue became a British Protectorate and was annexed by Aotearoa in 1901. In 1974 following an act of self-determination, Niueans adopted a constitution that provided for full self-government in free association with Aotearoa. Under the free association arrangement, Niueans are entitled to dual citizenship to both countries². Niue is part of Polynesia.

Niue is one of the biggest coral islands in the world and is favourably known as the 'Rock' of Polynesia due to its physical make up. The cliffs of Niue island rise up to around 70 metres high, providing some protection for its inhabitants from the rough sea³. Niue was settled by groups from Tonga, Samoa and the Cook Islands and their influences are visible in the Niue language (*vagahau Niue*)⁴. These groups used to war with each other until the arrival of Christianity.

Niue was originally named Nukututaha which means 'an island standing alone'. One legend goes that a group of Niuean men were gifted coconuts by people of Tonga and Samoa. The men were advised to return home and plant the fruits for their people. The value of the tree soon became clear, and the coconut has since become a symbol of life to Niueans. The people of Niue eventually changed the name of their island from Nukututaha to Niue in remembrance of this 'gift of life'. 'Niu' means 'coconut', and 'e' meaning 'here'; when Niu-e is translated it says 'here is the Coconut!'

Niueans hold precious their people, lands, cultural identity and language. Niue lands are considered sacred and cannot be sold although they can be leased. Fishing grounds have also been claimed historically as family property. In 2011 Niue had a population of 1,611⁵; the locals are often outnumbered by visitors on an annual basis.

¹ Ministry of Social Development. (2012). *Koe Fakatupuolamoui he tau Magafaoa Niue*. A Niuean Conceptual Framework for addressing family violence. Wellington. New Zealand.

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (8/12/2014). *Niue*. Retrieved from <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Niue.php>

³ Internet Niue. (2010). Internet Niue Ltd.

⁴ Internet Niue. (2010). Internet Niue Ltd.

⁵ Statistics Niue. (2012). Retrieved from <http://niue.prism.spc.int/>

Niueans in Aotearoa⁶

Niueans	2001	2006	2013
	20,148	22,476	23,880

The majority of Niueans in Aotearoa live in the North Island (95.8%, 22,884), while 4.2% (996) live in the South Island. Most (92.2%, 22,014) live in urban areas. The Auckland region contains the bulk (77.7%, 18,555) of the Niuean population, followed by Wellington (6.6%, 1,575), Waikato (4.3%, 1,038), then other regions. Of those living in the Auckland region, there are concentrations in Mangere-Otahuhu (18.4%), Otara-Papatoetoe (13.9%), and Manurewa (11.0%) areas⁷. Only 4,197 of Niueans in Aotearoa in 2013 were born overseas⁸.

Ko e Niu-e: Niuean Cultural Framework for Practice

Purpose

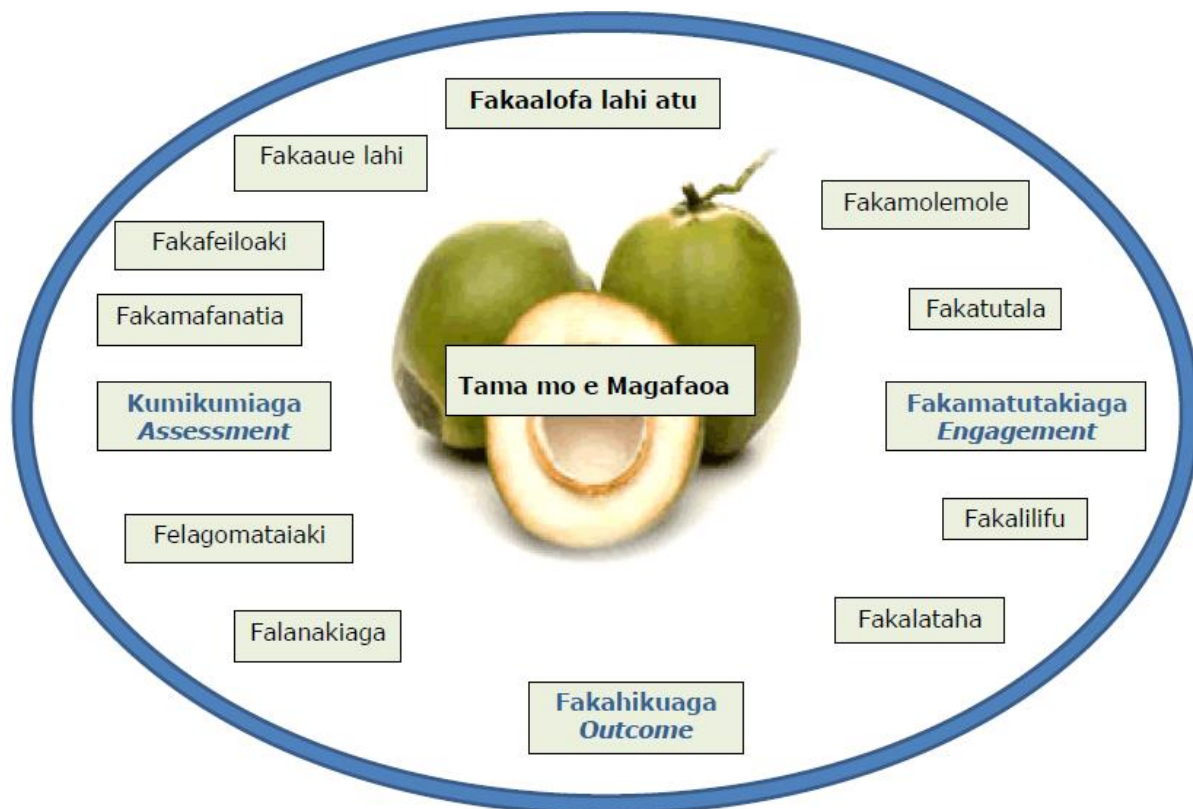
To give social workers insight and understanding of what defines a Niuean person and family. The aim is to help practitioners work more effectively with Niuean children and their families.

The framework name denotes its land of origin and the notion of 'gift' of life. The customary gifting of a coconut is symbolic of the gifting of life because the coconut is considered the most important tree in Niue. The *niu* (young coconut) symbolises the child, and whose interest is the central purpose of *Ko e Niu-e*.

⁶ Ethnic group (total responses), for the census usually resident population count, 2001, 2006, and 2013 Censuses

⁷ Statistics New Zealand. (n.d). *2013 Census ethnic group profiles: Niue. Population and geography*. Retrieved from http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24712&tabname=Populationandgeography

⁸ Statistics New Zealand. (n.d). *2013 Census ethnic group profiles: Niuean. Key facts*. Retrieved from http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24712&parent_id=24706&tabname=#24712



Falanakiaga – Ko e tau matua ni e falanakiaga he tau mena oti he tau fanau – Children are dependent on their parents for everything

Ko e Niu-e is informed by relational concepts and cultural principles that will enable the achievement of best outcomes for the Niuean child⁹.

Ko e Niu-e was developed by Niuean practitioners in consultation with *tupuna* (elders) and other advisors, and embraces all Niueans in Aotearoa.

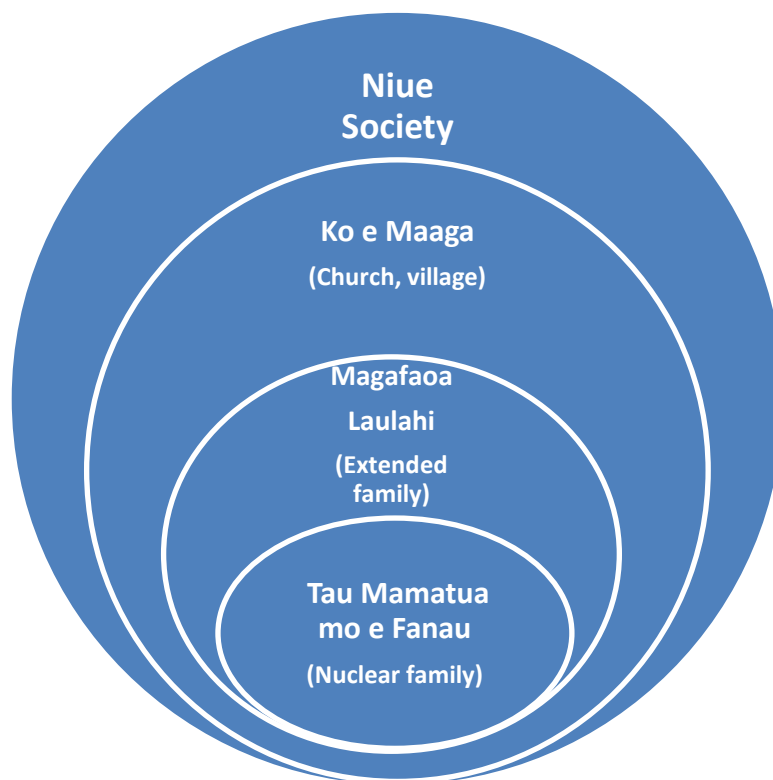
Description of Important Relational Terms

- *Fakaalofa lahi atu* – greetings (*Fakaalofa* – to show compassion and love)
- *Fakatokolalo* – humility, to bring yourself down to the same level as the family, to be humble
- *Fakafeiloaki* – to agree on a peaceful settlement, to reconcile
- *Fakalataha* – to come together
- *Fakamafanatia* – to encourage, to uplift
- *Fakamolemole* – apologising for the intrusion (expression of respect)
- *Fakalilifu* – respect towards the family, prayer, spirituality
- *Fakaaue lahi* – thank you, appreciation, acknowledgement
- *Falanakiaga* – to lean on, to depend on
- *Fakatutala (Tutalanoa)* – using small talk to build rapport and break the tension
- *Fefakaalofaaki* – to love one another
- *Felagomataiaki* – mutual support and assistance
- *Tama mo e Magafaoa* – child and family
- *Magafaoa* – family connections, genealogy, village, identity

⁹ Coconut image borrowed from http://www.red23.co.uk/Fresh-Young-Green-Coconuts_p_1566.html

Traditional Societal Structure

"A person is complete when he or she knows who they are and where they belong"
(Audrey Talima, Oranga Tamariki practitioner)¹⁰.



- The inner layer of a young coconut consists of the juice and the flesh which represent the *magafaoa*, the core Niuean Family. The child or children in the unit are supported by their parents or caregivers. The father is traditionally the head of the family unit, although not all families are the same.
- The second layer is the coconut's hard shell that protects the family unit. This represents the *magafaoa laulahi* (extended family).
- The third layer is the netted husk that represents the family's community, particularly religious communities and village affiliations.
- The final outside layer is the skin of the coconut, which represents one's unique cultural identity as a Niuean: '*Ko au ko e tagata Niue*'.

Traditional Context

A child's wellbeing is linked to her/his *magafaoa*, church, village/community and cultural identity. Every child belongs to a traditional family of a mother, father, siblings, extended family, and for some, close friends. People in Niue often know each other, so it is safe and acceptable for a child to wander to a nearby home in the village, as long as the parents know where the child is and who they are with. Extended family and friends in the community/village will sometimes feed the child, and then later use the opportunity to return the child home to catch up with the family.

¹⁰ Audrey Talima. Oranga Tamariki practitioner and cultural advisor. (6/7/2014). Personal communication.

Traditional Niuean society was organised according to the village system. Every married man was entitled to take part in discussions about village affairs. Over time, this somewhat individualistic mechanism influenced Niuean people to pursue interests from a more individualistic rather than a collective view, as in most other Pacific cultures¹¹.

Language

Niueans regard their language (Vagahau Niue) as the essence of their identity. Niue has one indigenous language although some words and phrases are linked to certain villages. When Niue was ruled by New Zealand, their children were obligated to speak English and were punished if caught speaking Niuean. This has had long lasting detrimental effects on the Niuean language and culture, a situation further exacerbated by the outflow of people from the homeland to places like Aotearoa. In 2006, only 25% of the Niue population in New Zealand were able to hold an everyday conversation in Vagahau Niue. For NZ-born Niueans, this rate was only 11%. Vagahau Niue is now considered a language at risk of being lost.

Vagahau Niue is used to convey humility and consideration for the others. The loss of the language has been linked to a degradation of traditional values, cultural traditions, and affected rituals of engagement that acknowledge and convey respect between people.

Social Conduct

Dignified conduct and observation of protocols of engagement are important to Niueans, as they are in other Pacific cultures. People who openly express their views and feelings with little consideration for others, or who fail to recognise their contribution to their own predicament may be perceived to lack respect and humility.

Social Work Engagement - Fakamatutakiaga or Matutakiaga

Engagement should primarily involve the core family, the extended family, village and church contacts, depending on the child/young person and the family. Schools, professionals and others are also part of the external layer of associations and influences especially for the child or young person.

The use of Vagahau Niue and common terms (refer to table at the end of section) will generally help to establish rapport and build relationships during engagement with families. However not many Niuean children or young people speak Niuean fluently. It is important to ascertain the most appropriate language of engagement with the child or young person concerned, and to ensure that they are meaningfully engaged in discussions that are not conducted in her/his main language.

Children and young people who are not fluent in Vagahau Niue may still understand common terms and cultural concepts used during engagement. Hearing their native language may help alleviate a child's or young person's anxiety, and build rapport.

¹¹ Manukau City Council. (2005). *FALA Pasefika: Pacific Connections*. Manukau City Council. Auckland. New Zealand.

Pointers for Meaningful Engagement

Introductions

- Greet the child or the family with '*Fakaalofa lahi atu*' or 'Hello' in a genuine way.
- Apologise for the intrusion into their time – show humility and respect.
- Clearly state your name and who you work for.
- If you are Niuean, families will often find it comforting to know that fact. This helps alleviate anxieties about state power. The family may then expect you to be able to understand their story, ways, and to care about their child and them.
- If you are Niuean, families may make some connection with your kin in Niue, some may know who you are and respect you accordingly. They may see you as someone who can help, whether or not you can speak Niuean. It will not be unusual for them to ask about your cultural lineage and affiliations. Forming connections will help to break the ice while collecting meaningful information.

Conveying the Concerns – Ko e heigoa e lekua kua hoko taki ke he magafaoa

- Acknowledge everyone in the room. Ascertain who is the leader or spokesperson in the home.
- Reiterate/explain why you are there, and what you would like to share and discuss with them.
- Give the family opportunities to tell their story.
- Ascertain people's understanding of Oranga Tamariki, emphasise the role of the Ministry in the protection of children and work with young people who offend.
- Express your wish to work with them and the importance of exchanging the right information. Give an assurance of confidentiality considering small communities.
- Explain in simple terms the role of Police, courts and any other agency that may be involved or may become involved, and why.
- Know that you may have to return and go over the same conversations in future – families need time with the information. Discuss the next visit.

Assessment: Kumikumiaga (ke he nofoaga he tama)

- Ascertain the family's economic situation as this plays an important part in how the children are cared for.
- Ascertain the type and quality of relationships between the tau magafaoa and other supports.
- Ascertain the view of the child/young person and their needs.
- What is the form of discipline practiced in the home?
- How are the children viewed? What is their place within the family?
- Explore views on the value of education, understanding of the law.

Decision Making – Ko e higoa e fakahikuaga he fekau

- Ensure that decision making processes are explained, transparent, inclusive, and that the magafaoa (family) is fully informed. This affirms the family's place in their child's life and in statutory process involved. The child's magafaoa existed before Oranga Tamariki and will be there after intervention ends.
- The father is traditionally the decision maker. Not all families are traditional however and some are headed by women.

Fakaauae lahi – Closing an Engagement

- Do not be eager to leave once you have obtained your information.
- Tell the family what will happen next. Give people the opportunity to ask questions. Respond as well as you can, without making promises.
- Tell the family that this is the beginning of gathering information and that you will be talking to others such as school, Police, and other professionals as needed.
- Thank the family for their time, hospitality and for having you in their home.
- You may be embraced and offered food. It can be seen as rude to turn the food down as sharing symbolises willingness on both sides to work together. It is not about the food. Handle the offer sensitively.
- The family may want to end with a prayer or blessing of sort. Be respectful.
- Leave on good terms regardless of any hostility shown to you. If you do not leave a good impression the family may not be as forthcoming in future.

Useful Words and Phrases - Niue

Common Greetings and Phrases	
Fakaalofa lahi atu	Greetings, hello
Hau, Omai ki kaina (or) ki fale	Come, Welcome (come) home
Malolo nakai a koe?	How are you?
Malolo fakaauae lahi	I'm fine thank you
Fakamolemole - Fakamolemole la ma Matua, (or) ma matakainaga.	Please, would you please excuse me; I apologise for the intrusion.
Fakaauae lahi	Thank you
Tulou	Excuse me
Koe kia Mua kia; Mutolu kia	Goodbye (to one person) Goodbye (to two people; many people)
Monuina e aho (or) Mafola e aho	Have a good day, all the best
Family Terms	
tama fifine	daughter
tama taane	son
tama mukemuke	baby
pulapulaola tau pulapulaola	grandchild grandchildren
tama	child
tau fanau	children
matua fifine	mother
matua taane	father
magafaoa	family
tau mamatua	parents
tau mamatua tupuna	grandparents
magafaoa laulahi or tau magafaoa	extended family