



This project's main goal was to increase self esteem and cultural pride amongst Tongan youth through intergenerational skill sharing and the celebration of the art of canoe carving. The Tonga National Canoe Festival was thus held on the 1st to the 13th of October 2007.

### **Who's involved?**

Project leader:

Lead organisation: Tonga National Youth Congress

Other organisations: Tonga Traditions Committee, Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture, Tonga Visitors Bureau, Professional PR, Sitiveni Fehoko (artist and master carver)

**Timeframe:** September-October 2007

**Objectives:**

- To provide youth with the opportunity to rediscover the lost art of canoe carving
- To boost self esteem and cultural pride amongst participants
- To create a forum for youth and elders to dialogue again
- To facilitate the transfer of skills between generations
- To encourage you to engage in productive past times and facilitate self expression through artisrity
- To teach youth handicraft artistry and other key skills that can be used to generate income
- To create a forum for the sale of handicrafts
- To teach independence and personal responsibility through the theme "paddle your own canoe"
- To teach participants invaluable life skills
- To teach local and international awareness of and interest in Tongan culutre, history and artisrity

### **Activities:**

- Opening ceremony
- Carving sessions - five teams of youth from each of the island groups working together under the tutelage of a master carver to carve a wooden canoe in the traditional style unique to their island
- Information and life skills workshops for carvers
- National Canoe Parade
- Official launch of five freshly carved canoes off the coast of Tongatapu
- Canoe race along waterfront

### **Results:**

The festival focused solely on canoe carving and was an exhibition rather than a competition. In the coming years, we hope to expand the focus of the festival to encompass canoe navigation and paddling competitions.

The festival took place in Nuku'alofa Tonga. During the two week festival the youth teams carved their canoes at a central location in town which was accessible to the public. The festival held an Opening Ceremony on October 1st. The festival parade, Closing/Awards Ceremony and the launching of the canoes was held on October 13th. Youth carvers also attended youth leadership and awareness trainings on several days throughout the festival. One training, which

was open to the public, covered the history of the Tongan Canoe which featured the UNESCO CD-ROM " [The Canoe Is the People](#) ".

All carvers considered the festival a valuable experience and would encourage the youth of their island groups to participate in the next festival. Additionally, there are a number of follow-up training activities with the master carvers and a project to build a Tongan kalia.

### Downloads:

[Final Report](#) [PDF 963Kb]

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More photos:

[Opening day](#) | [Day 2](#) | [Day 3](#) | [Day 5](#) | [Parade](#) | [Last day](#)