



Dr Vasemaca Alifereti during Indigenous Language week celebration at FNU Natabua Campus, Lautoka.

We need to preserve our Indigenous Language – Dr Alifereti

Civoniceva for the great initiative to revive the traditional unwritten protocols. According to Dr Alifereti, such indigenous revitalisation initiatives should encourage first nation peoples to take a stand and revive their mother languages in collaboration with policymakers and associated stakeholders.

FNU's Department of Communication, Language & Literature lecturer, Alisi Duaibe said such events are essential for young teachers as perspectives of natives are not always available on e-books.

"Most of the traditional cultural protocols, registers, literature are not written, and it is imperative to teach our trainee teachers the importance of indigenous sustainability, as they are the moulders of tomorrow's iTaukei generation," she said.

Maria Kalougata, a second-year Bachelor of Education (Secondary) majoring in iTaukei and English, said that she enjoyed taking part in the cultural activities, especially singing of traditional songs from her province (Vucu ni Vanua).

"I was pleased to sing in front of other students and at the same time delighted to hear songs from the fourteen provinces of Fiji. This has helped me understand the importance of our culture and language, which we need to pass on to our future generations," she said.

The programme culminated with displays of traditional ceremonies, dances, chants and storytelling, unique to each of the fourteen provinces, which was an excellent platform for reconnections of traditional ties and revival of dialects and indigenous iTaukei languages.

Students displayed iTaukei artefacts like wall decorations made from pandanus leaves and traditional wedding attires to create awareness about the itaukei culture and planted uci (evodia hortensis), banana, bele (abelmoschus manihot) and lemongrass around the periphery of Natabua Campus.

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages to raise global attention on the critical risks confronting indigenous languages and its significance for sustainable development, reconciliation, good governance and peacebuilding.

Indigenous languages, which are estimated to be spoken by a meagre 3% of the world's population, are endangered and on the brink of near extinction if not revived, according to Fiji National University's (FNU) Head of School, Communication, Language and Literature, Dr Vasemaca Alifereti.

Paying tribute to the United Nations (UN) Declaration of 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages, trainee teachers undertaking iTaukei studies organised academic and cultural activities from 30 September to 11 October to raise awareness on the importance of reviving the indigenous language at Natabua Campus, Lautoka.

The senior academic emphasised the pivotal role played by indigenous languages, as the foremost frame on which other languages, knowledge, philosophies, values and beliefs are viewed against and knowing indigenous language identifies and connects one to a community of relations that goes beyond the physical world.

"Sadly, it is estimated that by the year 2100, if indigenous language revitalisation is not rigorously pursued, indigenous languages might be extinct.

"We all need to make a concerted effort to revive and transmit our indigenous languages to our children and future generations," she added.

International Year of Indigenous Languages also revisits Article 13. 1 of UN Conventions on Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008) to revitalise, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and works of literature, and to designate and retain their names for communities, places and persons.

She commended the students pursuing studies in iTaukei and lecturers Alisi Duaibe and Rosa



Staff and students enjoying the performance at the Indigenous language week celebration at FNU Natabua campus, Lautoka.