Forever Fresh Talanoa Series 2.2

Abundant futures and unashamed brilliance

by Anne-Marie Te Whiu, Grace Iwashita-Taylor, Ioana Gordon-Smith, Lana Lopesi

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In Episode Two of our second Talanoa Series, Anne-Marie Te Whiu, Grace Iwashita-Taylor and Lana Lopesi discuss their recent writing initiatives, each focused on fostering the conditions for Indigenous writers to flourish. Te Whiu offers her experience leading Fair Trade, a collaborative First Nations poetry project, while Iwashita-Taylor and Lopesi discuss their aims to support Moana writers through the recent launch of Flying Fetu, which featured a Writers Lab and festival.

*Click here to watch the second episode of the Talanoa series on In*ter*is*land Collective's website, and continue reading below for Ioana Gordon-Smith's response to the video.*



Forever Fresh Talanoa Series 2.2 Abundant Futures with Anne-Marie Te Whiu, Grace Iwashita-Taylor and Lana Lopesi, 2022. Courtesy In*ter*is*land Collective.



Anne-Marie Te Whiu. Courtesy of Anne-Marie Te Whiu.



Grace Iwashita-Taylor. Photo: Photo: Pati Solomona Tyrell.



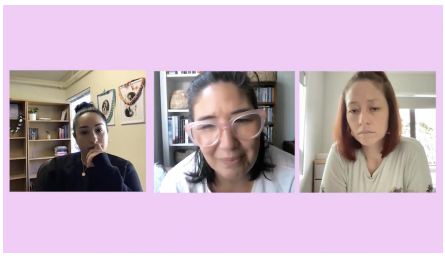
Lana Lopesi. Courtesy of Lana Lopesi.



Forever Fresh Talanoa Series 2.2, 2022. Facilitated in collaboration with In*ter*is*land Collective.



Forever Fresh Talanoa Series 2.2 Abundant Futures with Grace Iwashita-Taylor (on left), Lana Lopesi (in middle) and Anne-Marie Te Whiu (on right), 2022. Facilitated in collaboration with In*ter*is*land Collective.



Forever Fresh Talanoa Series 2.2 Abundant Futures with Lana Lopesi (on left), Anne-Marie Te Whiu (in middle) and Grace Iwashita-Taylor (on right), 2022. Facilitated in collaboration with In*ter*is*land Collective.

Anne-Marie Te Whiu, Grace Iwashita-Taylor and Lana Lopesi are invested in our futures: Moana futures, Māori futures, the futures of readers and writers alike.

This talanoa brought the three speakers together to discuss their recent writing initiatives. Fair Trade was initiated in 2021 by

Anne-Marie, a Māori writer and weaver based in Sydney. Anne-Marie is also the Senior Producer for Red Room Poetry, an Australian organisation that commissions, publishes and promotes poetry. Fair Trade pairs together First Nations poets across borders to collaborate on a poem, which is then published online during Poetry Month, itself a Red Room initiative.

Flying Fetu, led by Grace, a poet and theatre-maker based in Tāmaki, and Lana, an art critic and writer who recently moved to Oregan to take up an Assistant Professor role, aims to support Moana writers. The project was publicly launched in 2022, with an inaugural first Flying Fetu Writers Lab in June. Most recently, they held a three-day Flying Fetu Writers Lab in November, followed by a full day public festival programme.

Both Fair Trade and Flying Fetu are dedicated to creating generative conditions for Indigenous writers. It's significant to note that Anne-Marie, Grace and Lana are all amazing writers in their own rights, they've also taken on being commissioners and producers for their respective projects.

During the talanoa, Anne-Marie, Grace and Lana spoke of their respective aims, and supporting writers through not only the public-facing outcomes of online publishing for Fair Trade and public festivals or showcases for Flying Fetu, but also through the generative conditions of collaboration, workshopping, and financial. One of the moments that stood out during the talanoa was when Grace described one of Flying Fetu's future goals: the publication of 100 new works. Her description locates the ethos of Flying Fetu in not simply publishing for its own sake, but in the ability to nurture and draw out the many stories that sit within writers. In a recent Pantograph Punch article in the lead up to Flying Fetu's writers' lab and festival in November 2022, Tulia Thomson drew on the metaphor for a "whole bookcase full of our books". While the vision affirms the wealth of writing we know exists, it also draws attention to the obstacles of publishing and distribution of Moana and Māori writers.

Inspired by the talanoa, I began my own list of 100 books, articles, poems and essays from Moana and Māori writers that I'd either read and loved, or hoped to read with anticipation, like a crush I'd

been cultivating. I got pretty far in the double digits. I originally intended to publish the list here, but already the gaps of writing not included hugely outnumbered what I'd typed out.

The literary canon so far hasn't captured the wealth of Māori and Moana writers. During the talanoa, Lana noted that festivals are biased towards books: most of the authors invited to speak are launching books or have previously published books. Yet so many of our stories are published in different forms, as essays in journal articles or published online, in poems in anthologies, as well writing for performance, like scriptwriting, songwriting, spoken word, or broader productions.

Listening to Anne-Marie, Grace and Lana, I was reminded of an onl ine archive created by Léuli Eshrāghi, in which they reconstruct a repository of Sāmoan research for a hopeful, yet-to-be-created introductory course on Sāmoan visual culture. In their introduction, to support the need for recollecting existing texts and gathering them together, Léuli quotes from Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson:

> Resurgent organizing must create a future generation that never has to ask how to live free, because they've never known anything else—a generation that does not know shame, because they are embedded in each other's light.[01]

Léuli describes Simpson's text as an 'Indigenous futurity of unashamed brilliance', a description I think could be equally applied to the goals and desires of both Fair Trade and Flying Fetu. I approach Fair Trade and Flying Fetu not as a writer, but as a reader. Reading Fair Trade's collaborations to date, and stalking Flying Fetu's Instagram stories, I'm reminded that the existing field of Indigenous writings to date is already so abundant.

As tempting as it is to be glib about abundance, writing is work. Publishing is work. Building connections is work. Financial support, trust, relationality are all key preconditions for the creative conditions Anne-Marie, Grace and Lana imagine. Behind the scenes of making connections and time for writing is a huge amount of admin. Anne-Marie, Grace and Lana are working in the

space of duality, both the private, inward-facing spaces of generative writing environments, and the public, outward-facing spaces of publishing and speaking.

At the heart of Fair Trade and Flying Fetu is the importance of investing and making space for writers to do the work in generative conditions. Being a writer can be isolating; being a Māori or a Moana writer doubly so. In her introduction, Grace spoke of her children as bringing in new gafa. I like to think of Fair Trade and Flying Fetu in that way too, of introducing new kinship lines with their own histories through writing. I think of Anne-Marie's Fair Trade project and its emphasis on connection and collaborations. I think of Flying Fetu and its aims to build a creative community. Abundance isn't just for readers, it's for writers too. Fair Trade and Flying Fetu are seeking futures not just for our libraries or bookshelves, but for writers to be embedded in each other's light.

This is the second of three edited talanoa in our second series produced with In*ter*island Collective. Click here to view the first episode and click here to view the first Forever Fresh Talanoa Series, released in 2021.

Footnotes

01. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, As We Have Always Done, 2017, as quoted in Léuli Eshrāghi, *AOAULI*, https://aoauli.acca.melbourne/. Accessed November 2022.

Biographies



Anne-Marie Te Whiu (Te Rarawa) is a poet, editor, cultural producer and weaver based on unceded Gadigal lands in Australia. She has edited works such as *Solid Air: Australian and New Zealand Spoken Word*, *Whisper Songs* by Tony Birch and *More Than These Bones* by Bebe Backhouse. She is dedicated to platforming the creative output of Indigenous peoples around the world and is especially interested in the rigour of the artistic collective. She was previously the Co-Director of the Queensland Poetry Festival and was a recipient of The Next Chapter Fellowship through The Wheeler Centre. Her writing has been widely published in journals, books, sites and magazines such as *Another Australia*, *Sport*, *Te Whe ki Tukorehe* Volume 1, *Cordite*, *Rabbit*, *Australian Poetry*, *Tupuranga*, *Debris*, *SBS*, *Running Dog*, *Ora Nui*, *In*ter*is*land Collective* and *Contemporary HUM*. She is an Associate Editor of *Contemporary HUM*.



Grace Iwashita-Taylor, breathing bloodlines of Sāmoa, England and Japan. An artist of upu/words dedicated to carving, elevating and holding spaces for storytellers of Te Moana nui a Kiwa. Recipient of the CNZ Emerging Pacific Artist 2014 and the Auckland Mayoral Writers Grant 2016. Highlights include holding the visiting international writer in residence at the University of Hawaii 2018, Co-Founder of the first youth poetry slam in Aotearoa, Rising Voices (2011 - 2016) and the South Auckland Poets Collective and published collections *Afakasi Speaks* (2013) & *Full Broken Bloom* (2017) with ala press. Writer of *MY OWN DARLING* commissioned by Auckland Theatre Company (2015, 2017, 2019) and Co-Creater & Curator of UPU (Auckland Arts Festival 2020). Co-Director of Flying Fetu and the first moana writers festival Flying Fetu Festival (2022).



Ioana Gordon-Smith is a Sāmoan/Pākehā arts writer and curator living in Aotearoa New Zealand. Across her work is a commitment to Moana arts practices and their histories. She has held roles at Artspace Aotearoa, Objectspace and Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, and currently works as the Curator Māori Pacific at Pātaka Art + Museum. Ioana is the Assistant Curator of *Yuki Kihara: Paradise Camp*, the Aotearoa New Zealand Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale, and co-curator of the international Indigenous triennial, *Naadohbii: To Draw Water* in Winnipeg, Canada. She is also the co-founder and co-editor of *Marinade: Aotearoa Journal of Moana Art* and a trustee for Enjoy Contemporary Art Space, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington. As well as writing for art journals, magazines and exhibition catalogues, Ioana has contributed to publications produced by Thames & Hudson, Routledge, ARP Books and Te Papa Press.



Lana Lopesi is Assistant Professor in the department of Indigenous Race and Ethnic Studies, University of Oregon. She is the author of *False Divides* and *Bloody Woman* and co-editor of *Towards a Grammar of Race: In Aotearoa New Zealand*, and *Pacific Spaces: Translations and Transmutations*. In 2022, she co-founded Flying Fetu with Grace Iwashita-Taylor, an organisation committed to uplifting the work of Moana writers, and in November they held their inaugural writers festival at Basement Theatre.

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