

**Tonga National Youth Congress
Tonga National Canoe Festival
Press Release**

29th September 2007

The Tonga National Youth Congress - in partnership with master carver Sitiveni Fehoko - is proud to present the Tonga National Canoe Festival to be held the 1st to the 13th of October. This is the first festival of its kind in the Kingdom of Tonga. The aim of the Tonga National Canoe Festival is to revive the almost lost art of Tongan canoe carving and to celebrate Tonga's canoe history.

One youth team from each island group will learn how to carve a traditional Tongan canoe. They will be led by a master carver from their home island group. The Tongatapu, Ha'apai, Vava'u and Niuafoou teams have arrived in Tonga for the festival. The 'Eua team is scheduled to arrive Monday morning, October 1st right before the festival gets underway on the same day. There are 6 youth and 1 Master Carver per team.

Key Events of the Tonga National Canoe Festival, October 1 – 13:

Opening Ceremony – 1pm, October 1: The Opening Ceremony for the Canoe Festival will be held at 1pm this Monday the 1st of October at the Carving Site: the corner of One Way and Wellington Roads next to 'Uata Industrial Centre.

Carving Sessions – October 1 – 11: The youth teams can be seen carving their canoes during the first two weeks of October at the corner of One Way and Wellington roads in the centre of town. The general public is strongly encouraged to observe and show support for the canoe carvers in action each day.

History of the Tongan Canoe Session – October 9: A public session featuring a discussion about the History of the Tongan Canoe will be held Tuesday, October 9th in the evening. Details to follow.

Capacity Building Training – October 9: As part of the festival, youth carvers will also have the opportunity to attend different capacity building training sessions which will be held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the second week of the festival, October 9th – 11th. These training sessions will cover the following areas: leadership, small business, agriculture product marketing, lifeskills, HIV/AIDS, environment and communication skills. These training sessions are part of the Youth Summit put on by the TNYC.

Parade/Closing Ceremony/Launching of the Canoes – 11am, October 13: The Tonga National Canoe Festival will conclude on Saturday, October 13th with a parade featuring the finished canoes from each team, a closing ceremony and the launching of the canoes. Canoe Festival Parade will begin at 11am in town and end at Vuna Road at the ramp near the kalia. The Closing ceremony will be at 12 Noon and the teams will proudly launch their canoes and continue an exhibition in the water along Vuna road.

The public is highly encouraged to attend the final day festivities and support their island group teams and the conclusion of this national event. Members of the community can enter the parade in support of a particular island group team.

****See attached schedule which outlines the daily activities each day of the two week festival.**

Sponsors and supporters

This inaugural event is supported by the Tonga Traditions Committee and the Ministry of Education, Women and Culture.

The festival is sponsored by UNESCO, 'Uata Industrial Centre, Shipping Company of Polynesia, Pacific Timber and Hardware, Tonga Broadcasting Corporation, the Church of Tonga, Ministry of Works, Westpac Bank of Tonga, Mbf Bank and Punjas.

Interested sponsors should contact TNYC at 25-474.

Support Needed for youth teams

Teams from Tongatapu, 'Eua, Ha'apai, Vava'u and the Niuas are in need of community support. TNYC is seeking private businesses, church groups, village groups and families in the Nuku'alofa area who would like to support a specific island group team by providing food items or cash donations to be used for meals and t-shirts. There are 6 youth and 1 Master Carver per team, 36 carvers in total. Interested parties can for example support a meal or two for all teams, or for one or two teams in particular.

Contact

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Note: This festival will take place concurrently with the TNYC Youth Summit, Community Service Organization Forum, the Pacific Leaders Forum and the NGO Trade Fair.

Week 1						Week 2					
Canoe Festival						TNYC Youth Summit				CSO Forum NGO Trade Fair	
Mon 1 st	Tues 2nd	Wed 3rd	Thu 4th	Fri 5th	Sat 6th	Mon 8th	Tue 9th	Wed 10th	Thu 11th	Fri 12th	Sat 13th
Devotional TNYC ----- Site Clean up ----- Intro & Team building -----	Devotional Tt ----- Carving	Devotional Eu ----- Training Comm & Leadership Skills Venue: Carving Site	Devotional Hp ----- Carving	Devotional Vv ----- Carving	Devotional NS ----- Carving	Devotional TNYC ----- Welcome ----- TNYC Presentation (3 yr plan) YCs Present Venue: TBD (Carving)	Devotional Tt ----- Training 1. Lifeskills/ HIV/AIDS 2. Business 3. Enviro/ Gender 4. FFT/Fish Venue: Carving Site & TNYC	Devotional Eu ----- Pacific Plan Youth Forum	Devotional Hp ----- SPC Youth Program	Devotional Vv ----- Trade Fair Youth Reps Attend CSO Forum	Devotional NS ----- CANOE PARADE 11am Venue: Town and Vuna Rd. & Closing Ceremony/ LAUNCH 12 noon Venue: Ramp near Kalia off Vuna Rd. Youth Reps Attend CSO Forum
LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH			
Opening Ceremony 1pm Venue: Carving Site (corner of One Way and Wellington Rds)	Carving	Carving	Carving	Training Water Safety Venue: Swimming Pool	Carving	Revise YP youth issues (Carving)	Cont' trainings	Cont' Forum			
----- First Aid & Safety	Carving	Carving	Carving	Carving	Carving	Carving	History of Tongan Canoe – Open to the public (DVD) Venue: TBD	Carving	Carving	Carving	

* All carving will take place at the Carving Site: the corner of One Way and Wellington Rds. near 'Uata Industrial Centre.