

Ceremony: Vanua O Ba Welcomes Girmityas Descendants

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The *vanua o Ba* has formally accepted the descendants of the Girmityas who will now be known as *Luvendra Na Ratu*.

This is after a *veisa* ceremony (traditional exchange) took place during the *vanua o Ba* Festival in Nadi yesterday.

Earlier in May, the people of Noco with the endorsement of the *Gone Marama Bale Na Roko Tui Dreketi*, Ro Teimumu Kepa had formally accepted the descendants of Indian indentured labourers who were given the title *Luvendra na Ratu*.

Speaking on behalf of the Girmitya descendants, Sashi Kiran said their communities have always desired to belong.

"Many have yearned to be part of the *vanua* and today (yesterday) you have opened new doors and opportunities to enter a new relationship," she said.

"This is a clear indication of a strong united *vanua*; the ceremony has made us feel safer, united and stronger in the bosom of the people of Ba."

Ms Kiran said most descendants were born in Ba and have deep connection with the *vanua o Ba*.

Tui Noco Ratu Isoa Damudamu who was also present at the event said they are hopeful that other provinces would take the next step and be a part of the initiative.

"They are part of our families, *tikina*, *yasana* and *vanua* and together we have to take the next step to help build up our nation," Ratu Isoa said.

Head of the European Union (EU) Delegation for the Pacific, Ambassador Julian Wilson observed that communities that work together and build on what they have in common can progress.

“The holding of the *veisa*, the barter, the exchange of gift ideas, skills and knowledge established the bond between communities on the common challenges of development and issues that affects you all equally.”

Mr Wilson said the dialogue releases the incredible power of participation and co-operation.

Edited by Rosi Doviverata

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