

Intercultural Understanding Guide: Polynesian Culture

Geographic context:

- Located in the southern Pacific Region, Polynesia is a subregion of Oceania, made up of more than 1000 islands.

Language:

- Approximately 30 Polynesian languages are spoken in the region.
- None of the 30 languages are spoken by more than half a million people, and about half of the languages are spoken by a thousand people or fewer.
- The languages with the largest numbers of speakers are Maori, Samoan, Tahitian, and Tongan.

Values:

- Belief systems in Polynesia tend to emphasize Animism, which is a belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence.
- Supernature is rooted within the culture.

Social norms/structure/hierarchy:

- It is considered that many Polynesian societies developed complex social hierarchies with ranked lineages and powerful chiefs.
- The rankings of these chiefs were derived from Polynesian's concept of godly inheritance.

Communication style:

- In many Pacific Island societies, it can be considered rude to look directly into the eyes of someone you are meeting.
- Pointing at someone or pointing in general is also considered rude.
- It is believed that stepping over someone's legs, passing one's hand over a person's head or standing are actions that could sap a person's mana.



References:

- [Cultural Atlas](#)