

# Pacific Islands Committee

## NEWSLETTER

### SUMMER 2023



## SUMMER 2023 Contents

**A Word from the Chair**

**Page 1**

**Emotional Quotient Pilot Results Drive Expansion of Program**

**Page 2**

## A Word from the Chair

Of course, we have been closely monitoring the impact of Typhoon Mawar that hit Guam on May 24. Due to extensive water intrusion and wind damage, the district court remained closed through June 7 before reopening to provide emergency and essential services and conduct essential proceedings. Several members of the court family, especially those in low-lying areas, were displaced. The local courts in Guam experienced a similar impact on operations. As of the last report, the district court was in the process of finding housing for court employees in local hotels, but this was difficult due to limited hotel availability. The last report also noted that the island's power grid was operating at 61% capacity and only 43% of homes had power two weeks after the storm. In addition to the direct impact on Guam and the Marianas, the storm had a ripple effect, canceling flights throughout Micronesia and the Marshall Islands and leaving some travelers attending training on the mainland stranded in Honolulu for up to 12 days! Our hearts are with the many members of the court community with whom we work so closely.



*Hon. M. Margaret McKeown, Senior Circuit Judge, Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals*

It has been a very busy year with the Pacific islands since Micronesia and the Marshall Islands opened their borders after closing due to COVID-19. In September 2022, Guam hosted the Pacific Judicial Conference of Chief Justices Biennial Meeting in conjunction with the NMI District Conference and Courthouse Grand Opening, the Guam District Conference and the Pacific Judicial Council Biennial Meeting. These events were attended by more than 300 participants from the bench and bar. This series was by far the largest training provided with the grant funds administered by the Pacific Islands Committee.

The Emotional Quotient training series concluded with a conference in December 2022 and, as you will read in the article by Chief Judge Frances Tydingco-Gatewood, was quite successful. It is exciting to hear that this project was so well received that many jurisdictions are seeking funds to implement the project to a wider audience.

There are many interesting trainings in the coming training year: Traditional Law led by Professor Miranda Forsyth, whose current research focus includes the potential of restorative justice for the Pacific islands, particularly in relation to gender-based violence; the promise and challenges of

## Word continued

community rulemaking as a regulatory innovation; and a multi-year project on overcoming sorcery accusation-related violence in Papua New Guinea. Professor Forsyth is also developing a new agenda for environmental restorative justice internationally and in Australia. The PJC Biennial Training will feature judicial writing by expert Professor Joe Regalia of

UNLV – William S. Boyd School of Law, who co-founded write.law, an online legal writing resource. The committee staff has also arranged training regarding cyber hygiene and the use of social media by courts and court employees, which the Marshall Islands requested. ●

## Emotional Quotient Pilot Results Drive Expansion of Program

A pivotal Emotional Quotient (EQ) summit hosted by the Pacific Judicial Council in December 2022 set in motion the further development of tools and guidelines to assist in the prevention of family violence in Micronesia. The program, a unique approach to community conflict that began in December 2021, also addresses what has been referred to as an epidemic exacerbated by COVID—mental health.



*Hon. Frances Tydingco-Gatewood, Chief District Judge, District of Guam*

The summit was a forum for EQ curriculum and community outreach pilot teams to present their experience and findings.

“This was ... a very serious program with a goal of sustainability to ensure that our island people could truly reap the life-changing benefits of a higher level of emotional intelligence,” said Chief Judge Frances Tydingco-Gatewood of District Court of Guam, PJC President. Lawmakers and leaders, including governors, legislative speakers, “agreed that the EQ content material would be integrated into existing school curriculums and assigned to government agencies to continue education in their communities,” she added.

In praise of the program, Chief Justice Cyprian Manmaw of Yap State Supreme Court, co-chair of the PJC EQ Initiative, noted “Sometimes our cultures and traditions... are just not enough to help heal us of the natural negative thought patterns that we all experience from time to time because we are human.”

Planning for the EQ program started in late 2021, and the curriculum was tested in elementary, middle and high schools on participating islands in the first half of 2022. Outreach materials were presented in village community centers and other venues as well as online. Evaluation tools were included to help with further development of the materials.

Carmen Cantor, assistant secretary for the United States Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs, spoke at the summit. “The work you’re doing in your communities is vital to the future of our nations,” she said. “You are pioneering new frontiers where the solutions of justice reside at the crossroads of human need and social responsibility to save families and keep children, spouses, and elders safe.”

### Guam

On Guam, the outreach team presented their EQ information to over 2,000 participants, of which 90% of them found the presentations helpful. “We’re going to do [EQ] everywhere,” said Guam Governor Lou Leon Guerrero on day one of the summit.

## Pilot continued



Members of the Pacific Judicial Council along with district representatives, administrators from departments of education, teachers and others from the region gathered in Guam in December 2022 to review the results of the year's Emotional Quotient training. The curriculum was tested in elementary, middle and high school grade levels at public schools in the participating islands.

“Start with the children because then you’ll see less domestic violence and less sexual assault, less drug abuse, less crimes out there. I am very supportive of this... It’s worth the investment.”

Nelma Catunao, Guam elementary school teacher noted her students were disappointed when the EQ class would end each day. Another teacher shared that one of her EQ pilot students was always getting into arguments and fights resulting in suspensions. During a break, she was aggressively confronted by another student and just walked away. The pilot program teacher asked her, “What happened out there?” The student simply replied, “EQ.”

District psychologist Nadine Cepeda, Guam Department of Education District, said “The knowledge and skills gained by recognizing their feelings and what they can do about it through EQ allows [students] to self-regulate. This will reduce discipline, suspension, and truancy rates in our schools. With this result we will see a reduction in violence.”

The Guam DOE, with support from the governor’s office, has secured funding for the full development of the EQ curriculum. The EQ team will roll out the initial curriculum and outreach guides by fall 2023.

### Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands curriculum team stated it was clear that students’ EQ levels had risen substantially after taking the class. Dr. Riya Nathrani, middle school teacher on Saipan noted, “In my own classroom ... a lot of students were having issues with interacting with their classmates face-to-face and having them share these journals with each other kind of helped with that communication.”

CNMI Supreme Court Justice Perry Inos said the EQ initiatives align with the Pacific Judicial Council’s goal of preventing violence and that everyone at the court, including staff and judges, were required to go through the EQ course.

Justice Inos stated that he is working on different ways that the courts can introduce EQ into the cases that come before them. He said leaders should consider completing an EQ course a condition for a number of offenders prior to completion of their sentences. Government agencies may require applicants to pass an EQ course prior to hiring.



## Pilot continued



*Audience members observe a demonstration during the three-day summit reviewing the Pacific Islands Emotional Quotient training. Organizers say the EQ program will provide a needed power boost to the emotional and psychological well-being of everyone living in the region.*

### **Yap State**

Maelynn Tiningidow, school principal and teacher at Dalipebinaw Elementary School in Yap State, reported she saw positive changes in students' demeanor and personal conduct. "Students started to understand their emotions, others' emotions and to manage their emotions on a daily basis."

Linda Teteth, gender support officer for the Federated States of Micronesia National Government, Anti-Human Trafficking Services Division, and head of the Yap EQ outreach pilot team, emphasized that if parents and families did not accept the EQ materials, the children would have to wait a generation before implementing EQ and teaching it in their own homes as adults.

### **Chuuk State**

Teachers in Chuuk State, a cluster of islands separated into multiple regions, were able to reach a large number of community members by teaching EQ in their schools, conducting outreach presentations during parent-teacher association meetings and even taking the material to the College of Micronesia Chuuk campus.

Three schools held training sessions and outreach seminars throughout the islands. Results were substantial, with 85% of participants noting it is important to care for their brain, up from 52% before the training, among other encouraging statistics.

The Chuuk outreach team, including Justice Kerio Walliby, Chuuk State Supreme Court, held sessions for parents, guardians, educators and other stakeholders, as well as young people. Feedback included: "[the program] teaches us how to control our emotions in a positive way," "helps build better relationships," and "motivates me to become more accomplished."

The Chuuk team is working to integrate EQ material into curriculums state-wide, and Speaker Lester Danny Mersai, Chuuk State Legislature, is working on a measure to prevent family violence in Chuuk. "Hopefully, and with assurance by the next session, a family protection bill will be introduced in the legislature," he said.

Sheena Arsenal, a teacher at Chuuk High School and member of the Chuuk EQ team, said the curriculum will be incorporated into their schools. "We will strengthen the working partners, expand to health services, clinics, government and private sectors, and continue working with the legislative, judiciary and executive branches to expand our scope and limitless opportunities."

### **Pohnpei State**

Pressler Martin, acting department director/director of curriculum and instruction of the Pohnpei State DOE, noted the post-assessment survey showed students had less anxiety over problems and were much more likely to forgive a wrong. One teacher noted that "[participants had] become respectful and mindful of others' feelings," following the training.

The Pohnpei EQ team visited the College of Micronesia Pohnpei campus general psychology class; Youth for Change, a nonprofit organization geared toward youth activities and mentorship; and many other venues throughout the region.

## Pilot *continued*

In the post-activity survey, participants stated, “[The program] could boost my self-confidence towards any situation that I might face,” and “If I were in a situation where negative thoughts only fill in my mind, I would use this presentation as an example to think positive.”

### **Kosrae**

The Kosrae EQ curriculum report, presented by Tulensa Likiaksa, area specialist, Kosrae State DOE, noted students enjoyed the hands-on lessons that helped them understand their brains better while adults learned from lessons on alcohol and tobacco.

The Kosrae community outreach report, presented by Marston Luckymis, administrative officer, Kosrae State Judiciary, and Rogalsky Henry, legal aide, Kosrae State Legislature, noted sessions were held in Utwe, Lelu, Walung and Malem. Governor Carson Sigrah endorsed the program and stated that he was looking forward to seeing more EQ outreach efforts in Kosrae.

### **Republic of Palau**

Judge Jerrlyn Uduch Sengebau Senior, vice-president of the Republic of Palau and Minister of Justice, said “...I believe it’s so important to bring this EQ to the young people and to be able to give them the tools to manage their emotions.” She mentioned a close relative had committed suicide. “I’m a strong supporter because I really believe that this EQ will help us prevent suicide... if we give (people) the right tools to ... manage their emotions in a healthy way.”

Palau’s public school system continues to teach the modules in different grades at different schools. They will continue to use the pilot program materials until the full curriculum becomes available because the program has brought notable results.

EQ expert and program developer, Dr. Neil Nedley explained, “Other programs might address narrow aspects exclusively such as substances, or seeking safety in angry situations, but this approach includes everything that affects brain health.”

“The EQ project was an ambitious effort bringing all three branches of government together for a solution to violence in these small island communities,” said Russ Mathieson, Ninth Circuit education specialist, Office of the Circuit Executive for the U.S. Courts for the Ninth Circuit. “The success of the pilot has proven that the program is viable on a larger scale and lays the foundation for expanded integration into the curriculum designs, and other services,” he said.

Chief Judge Tydingco-Gatewood embraces the EQ endeavor as one of the most meaningful and transformative programs for the island people. “Its success, with the very helpful support of the tri-branches of government in our islands, is defined through the improved mental health of our men, women, and children, and an elevated sense of safety in our communities because people are thinking more about consequences and how—from beginning to end—it is really the choice of the individual that will decide it,” she said. ●



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