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LIS 450 IBL
Proposal for Marshall Islands
Proposal Revised with Additions Added

After reading about the chronology of events following the nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands I discovered several facets that intrigue me. During the ten year period of testing involving 66 nuclear tests the people of Enewatak, Rongelap, Wotho, Bikini, and Utrik were moved from their atolls to surrounding atolls some several hundreds of miles away. I know just moving from Chicago to Champaign was a cultural shift for me. I can't imagine the impact on the Marshallese culture as they were moved and re-moved among their islands nor can I imagine the impact of the influx of new people on the receiving [some tiny] islands. Several groups are still trying to regain their land and are imploring the US for money for cleanup and testing of the land.

I'm really interested in the cultural issues that the constant relocation of the islanders has had on various aspects of the atolls. Over the course of ten years there were numerous relocations among residents on the atolls. I believe that this would create several forms of population dynamics that would impact societal issues, resident relations, and educational concerns.

Now, these impacts may not be as evident today since 40 plus years has past and the island cultures may have congealed a bit more (possibly due to the constant migration).

Possible foci (and guiding questions) include but are not limited to:

- Educational impacts [Have not searched much for this info]
 - The 2 high schools are located far from one another – has this been an issue since the relocation?
 - Size of schools. Was/is this an issue? How do the physical size of schools and populations interact?
 - Communication between schools. How is this accomplished? Improved? Impacted by school populations?
- Social impacts
 - People that were on atolls that were evacuated were relocated to other populated islands. Were they viewed differently by the indigenous population?
 - Are/were there any custom and language differences and similarities? Have their traditions changed from additional cultural influences? [They have managed to retain their tribal organization throughout the islands]
- Population dynamics and physical resources
 - How did the influx of people impact resource availability on the atolls? [Housing and food became major issues as relocated Marshallese were stuffed into Shanty-towns as native Marshallese had already claimed available adequate land for housing.]

- Notably, the availability and acquisition of food. [I discovered this to be a major issue while reading about the history of the Bikinians.]
- Had the islanders that were moved visited the other atolls?
- What happened during repopulation when islanders discovered islands that may have had diminished or destroyed resources? [Information on this topic is explained by the Bikinians as well as US government documentation]
- Communication. How is communication conducted between and among islands? How has communication changed due to population shifts? [Mostly through the use of radios]
- Current emigration issues may be related to this shifting and moving of populations?
- Families split among other atolls. Is this largely due to the emigration during the time of testing? How does this affect the family dynamic compared to that which existed 50 years ago? [Displacement throughout the world is very common among Marshallese history. This is evident by a large population located in the US in Arkansas.]
- The relationship with the US is being tested due to these large migrations there are compacts being voted on very soon.

These foci may mesh with others especially in the areas of education, resource usage, and additional social issues that others may be exploring.

Resources that would be useful may include:

- Contact with islanders (especially those who remember the “relocations”)
- Contact with government officials
- Contact with educators, administrators, or other officials
- Web resources describing the relocations [I found many sites detailing these phenomena]
- Timeline of relocations [Acquired a chronology through US government Documents]

Next steps may include:

- Electronic pursuit of printed and resources [This has been undertaken in earnest]
- Searching for information on the Marshall island area and Micronesia specifically related to population issues [Mention was made on this topic in Jerry Mander’s Book “In the Absence of the Sacred: The failure of technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations.” A trip to Micronesia is given as a reason that Jerry began his efforts against “Megatechnology”]
- Communicating with people that experienced the migrations and their impact.

Progress as of October 14, 2003

After consulting several different electronic and print sources I gained more insight into the conditions and events surrounding the relocations of several groups of the

Marshallese. Most of note are the current controversies surrounding the repopulation of Bikini Atoll as well as the repopulation of Rongelap. The Bikini atoll website has an amazingly detailed description of the conditions that the Bikinians faced while being moved from island to island. I also found government documents detailing these relocations. More research is needed and I am searching especially through more printed materials.

While pursuing this information I became interested in something completely different, the geological formation of an atoll. This information gave me much better insight into how the physical resources would be provided on these islands. I also discovered too that there are many such volcanic islands throughout the Pacific that are in various stages of geologic transformation, that is they are becoming atolls (although the process is estimated as taking nearly 30,000,000 years). One such island is actually part of the Hawaiian Islands.

There are plenty of movie clips simulating atoll formation and photographs of these islands and frequent discussions about how the changing of Earth's global climate and the rapidly increasing depth of the oceans is jeopardizing several of these islands. This is largely due to the low elevation on the rims of these islands. The Marshalls have a maximum elevation of about 7-10 meters.