

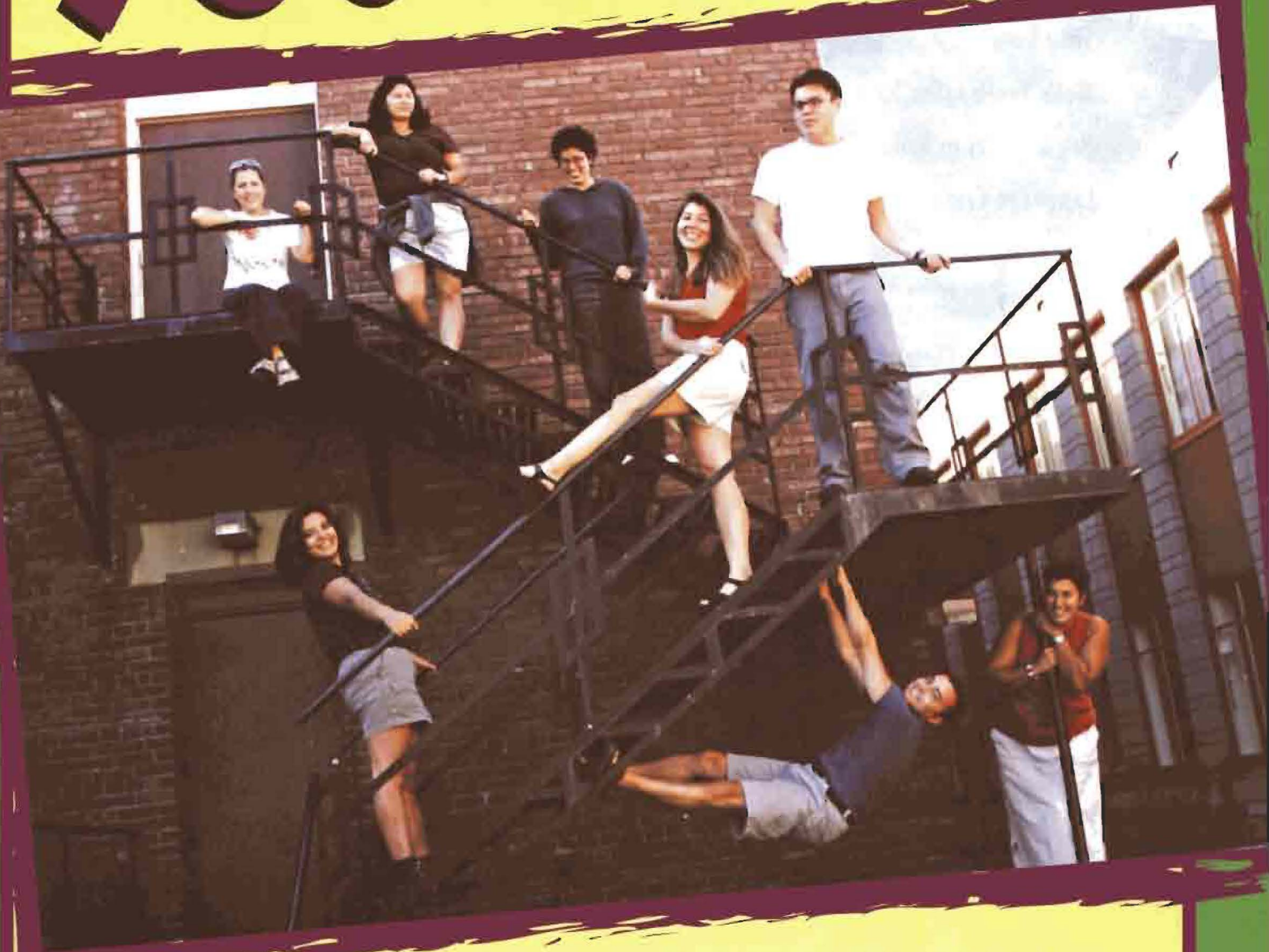


News and Views on the Pacific Islands

published by Pacific Peoples' Partnership

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March 2001

YOUTH TOK!



Tok Blong Pasifik

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Front Cover Photo by Troy Hunter



Recycled and chlorine free papers are used in the production of *Tok Blong Pasifik*

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

Tok Blong Pasifik is a phrase in Pidgin, a language used in parts of the Pacific. A rough equivalent would be "News from the Pacific". **Tok Blong Pasifik** (ISSN: 1196-8206) is published by the Pacific Peoples' Partnership (PPP). Our aim is to promote awareness of development, social justice, environment and other issues of importance to Pacific Islanders. Through the magazine, we hope to provide readers with a window on the Pacific that will foster understanding and promote support for Pacific Island peoples. PPP gratefully acknowledges support for this publication from the Canadian International Development Agency and the B.C. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

We welcome contributions to **Tok Blong Pasifik** and readers' comments. A priority is placed upon contributions from Pacific Islanders and others living in the Islands. As an issues focused magazine, **Tok Blong Pasifik** often includes material that is contentious. Views expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of PPP or financial supporters of the magazine. We reserve the right to edit material.

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YOUTH VOICES Tok!

Tok

As I write this editorial, several of my fellow interns are in the final stages of their overseas placements in New Zealand and Vanuatu.

Placements that saw youth from First Nations and Métis communities across Canada working with Indigenous organizations in the Pacific for the second year in a row.

The goal of PPP's Youth

International Internship Program is to build partnerships with Indigenous organizations and increase the employability skills of the intern, while at the same time giving them an experience to remember for the rest of their lives! I have no doubt these internships have broadened our international horizons and will open up more career possibilities, but I can only hope my fellow interns have found their work to be as rewarding as I found mine to be over these past few months.

My internship originally began in the exotic Cook Islands where I was to work with two local newspapers. Unfortunately, due to an unforeseen medical circumstance I returned to Canada after just two months. I later found myself in the PPP office, guest editing this edition of *Tok Blong Pasifik*, "Youth Tok!".

This is not the first time *Tok Blong Pasifik* has given youth an outlet to have their voices heard. Two past issues, Vol. 41 "Youth Talk" and Vol. 50 #2 "Through the Eyes of Youth", were devoted to issues affecting Pacific Island youth. "Youth Tok!" does mark a milestone in the history of the magazine, however. For the first time, the voices of youth of the Pacific Islands and Canada



are brought together in one issue, an initiative inspired by PPP's upcoming youth seminars.

"Hands Across the Waters, Hands Across the Generations: Indigenous Youth Perspectives on Culture and Tradition" aims to bring together Indigenous peoples from the South Pacific and Pacific Northwest to share their views on sustaining culture and tradition. The project provides an opportunity for Indigenous youth to come together in seminars and community gatherings to give voice to their mutual concerns and offer their insights into innovative solutions.

By allowing youth to put pen to paper, I hope this issue of "Youth Tok!" has fulfilled that same objective.

In the following pages you will find a series of articles by the 2000-2001 Youth International Internship Program interns. Many have chosen to write about their overseas experience and other topics that are close to their hearts. The interns make up just a portion of the contributing writers however; Indigenous youth from New Zealand, Vanuatu, Fiji, Australia, the Cook Islands and Canada make up the rest.

In the next 30 pages you will read about youth and empowerment, renewal of language, cross-cultural experiences, breaking down of stereotypes, youth justice, Indigenous incarceration, suicide, the effects of tourism on island culture and spirituality, just to highlight a few. Highly reflective of the society we live in today, the authors offer their unique insights and thoughts on the issue of cultural sustainability.

Whether indigenous to Canada or to the islands in the Pacific, all writings appearing in this magazine offer a glimpse into the lives of youth today. As guest editor of this special edition and an Indigenous youth myself, I have found the articles in this issue to be both powerful and enlightening. I am grateful to have been a part of this exciting initiative.

Read on and enjoy.



Hands Across the Waters, Hands Across the Generations:

Indigenous Youth Perspectives on Culture and Tradition

Greetings! My name is Vanessa Nevin, Project Coordinator for the Pacific Peoples' Partnership's "Hands Across the Waters, Hands Across the Generations: Indigenous Youth Perspectives on Culture and Traditions" project. As a Mik'maq youth from Nova Scotia living in Victoria, BC for the past eight years, I am delighted to have the opportunity to bring together Indigenous youth from the South Pacific and Pacific Northwest to share their views on sustaining culture and tradition. Today's youth have an historically vital role to fulfill in this era of transition and re-evaluation. As tomorrow's Elders, it is crucial that we consider what sustaining our cultures and traditions means to the future of our communi-

ties. PPP facilitates this expression of ideas by hosting seminars, organizing community gatherings, and dedicating this special youth edition of *Tok Blong Pasifik*. PPP acknowledges and raises our hands to thank the Canadian International Development Agency for their sponsorship of this exciting project.

Indigenous youth from New Zealand, Australia, Vanuatu, and Fiji are preparing for an amazing cross-cultural experience with local Indigenous youth in British Columbia, from June 9-28, 2001. Pacific Peoples' Partnership extends a warm welcome to Clay Hawke, Lice Movono, Sam Obed and Tururangi Tarapu. Maori youth from New Zealand, Clay Hawke, journeys to British Columbia to share his insights on the benefits and effects of tourism on Indigenous peoples. Lice, a journalist from Fiji who through enduring political upheaval in her country, illustrates the importance of grassroots youth movements as demonstrated through her work with *Young Adults with Concern*. Sam, a Ni-Vanuatu man, works with Vanuatu Young Peoples' Project at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. Tururangi is very strong in his culture and will be PPP's, Cook Islands representative.

Traveling with our Pacific youth delegates is an Australian Women's group of four youth and two Elders. The Kapululangu Women's Law and Cultural Centre received an arts grant to journey to Canada to participate in the PPP tour and seminars. Kapululangu women are custodians of some of Australia's strongest Law, and wish to share their knowledge with other Indigenous peoples.

Upon their arrival, our Pacific visitors will be touring Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland and the Okanagan region. The PPP tour includes visits

to First Nations communities, urban Aboriginal communities, local Pacific Islander communities, and other community events. This tour promises to be an excellent cross-cultural and international networking experience. PPP welcomes invitations from local communities to host our Pacific visitors.

Two international youth seminars are scheduled during the cross-cultural tour. To allow for maximum participation throughout British Columbia, PPP is holding a seminar in the Okanagan region and on Vancouver Island. These seminars will bring together Indigenous youth of the South Pacific and First Nations to share their experiences. Highlights of the seminars include an Indigenous youth panel discussion (several PPP interns will be panelists), an Australian sand-drawing workshop, a tourism workshop, and much more! After a full day of workshop experiences, enjoy our evening extravaganza "Celebrating our Cultures," beginning with a traditional West Coast feast and a cultural sharing evening highlighting a presentation by our Australian Aboriginal guests. We invite all our youth delegates to bring their regalia, drums, songs and stories for a night of cross-cultural sharing with our Pacific visitors!



see agenda page 8

O! Y! C! Coooeeeeeee! Sweeeeee
Mate! resounded the Aussie chant
at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Youth
Camp in Australia. The most
incredible experience of my life!

I had left my tiny Island, Atiu, in the South Pacific with some apprehension, wondering what it would feel like to be amongst 400 other young people from different nationalities, languages and backgrounds. Atiu is one of 15 islands in the Cook Islands and has a population of 600 people, not much more than the Youth Camp itself. On Atiu the people live in villages and family, community, church and helping one another are important values. Our languages are Cook Island Maori and English.

The Olympic Youth Camp is a program designed to educate youth through sport, to promote cultural exchange and foster international cooperation, all under the Olympic banner. I was fortunate and proud to be chosen to represent the Cook Islands.

Within 24 hours youth had arrived from all around the world. All were excited, yet wondering what was in store for them, like me. With our common purpose and need it was easy to make friends. Placed in teams under group leaders we found ourselves sharing our lives, 24 hours a day, with team mates of different nationalities.

Throughout our month long stay we experienced the impressive and "uniquely Australian" Olympic Opening Ceremony, lectures on the Olympic history and movement, hiking in the Blue Mountains, shopping in downtown Sydney and attending some Olympic events. An afternoon of mini Olympics games was held at the camp for all participants, as well as cultural nights and various electives such as dance, drama, art, band, computers, newsletter and an environmental group. We also spent two days with host Australian families, experiencing family life in Australia. The last part of the program was based in Cairns, Northern Queensland where we spent our time snorkeling the Great Barrier Reef, visiting a wildlife park, the Daintree Forest and an Aboriginal community learning ancient traditional skills of the Indigenous people.

The Cultural Exchange evenings completely superseded all of my expectations. Everyone was so talented! The true colours of each country were revealed. There were dancers, singers, actors and even a gymnast, all dressed in beautiful costumes creating a fantastic atmosphere. To display my Cook Islands heritage I performed a traditional Cook Island hula dance in full costume. The crowd was stunned! I believe that everyone came out of the room culturally enriched and with a big smile on their faces.

On a hot Aussie day, with the sun beaming at our backs we set upon a project to display our artistic talents. Each country set to portray its own little piece of mother earth by creatively placing paint to canvas. As the day progressed and music blared our masterpieces evolved to completion. Each country had captured something unique to their land helping us appreciate not only our homeland but other nations.



AN OLYMPIC Cultural Exchange

by Averil Humphreys

was held for all participants in which we discussed what impact young people can have in their local community. We shared ideas and issues that our generation must come to grips with. The majority of speakers during the forum focused on the importance of heightening our awareness of world environmental problems. As different areas of the world were experiencing their own types of difficulties, this forum was an ideal opportunity to air these concerns. The disposal of nuclear waste, the "green-house" effect, depletion of the ozone layer, and the handling of the world's domestic waste, all were examined during the discussions. The effect on the young delegates was amazing as we became aware of the potential problem areas far away from our own spheres of life.

Sadly, all good things must come to an end. The closing of the Olympic Youth Camp was an emotional evening as emails and addresses were swapped, promises made and final mementos exchanged. We met as strangers, yet in the space of a short period of time, we closed the gap. We left having made friends for life, having learnt to appreciate our differences and focus on what we have in common. As youth of the world from many different cultural backgrounds, we were able to transcend the usual difficulties of race, culture and language to simply have fun together as young people should be able.

Kia Orana. Arohanui, Kia Manuia.
Greetings, peace be with you, with love.

Averil Humphreys, 17, is half English and half Cook Islands Maori. She is currently in her last year of high school and one day hopes to be a pilot and fly for the local airline, Air Rarotonga. In 1999 she was a member of the champion Cook Island dance team that toured China, Australia and New Zealand for five weeks.

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The main theme for the camp was the environment. A global forum

Youth Camp delegates pose in front of the Harbour Bridge in Sydney. Averil is third from right.

EM-POW WOW-ERMENT!

by Nicolas D. Leech-Crier

When I was a child, maybe five or six years old, my father made a teepee for our family. It was big and it was made of yellow water-proof nylon. It had a red nylon floor and a door that zippered up, and my favorite part, a huge rainbow across the back. It fit all five of us quite comfortably, my mom, pop, my little sister, little brother and myself. We would take it camping; tie the poles to the roof of our pick-up truck and head out to the Rocky Mountains, every weekend of every summer.

I recall being gawked at, on a number of occasions, by other campground residents. Which is a perfectly reasonable thing to happen, I suppose. I mean, here are these two seemingly average white folk, pulling into a public campground in rural Alberta and setting up a giant yellow teepee, while their three adopted First Nations children look on in adulation and pride.

Yes, when I was a child, being an "Indian" was just the coolest thing.

Nowadays, I see or hear the word "Indian" and I wonder: are real Indians, people actually from India, irked in any way by such blatant misuse of their namesake? So some Spanish Catholic fanatic wearing leotards in 1492 got lost in his patriotic quest for material goods. Cut him some slack. Anyone could have made the same mistake. Look at the technology he had to work with.

Yet, here I am 500 years later with this strange laminated card in my pocket that gives me "special status" and "privileges", as something I'm not - an Indian.

Then again, I also have this other document that says I'm a Canadian Citizen, a title excluding Aboriginal people until 1960. My own bloodlines of Woodlands Cree origin go back about 5000 years before Confederation, (the actual governmental statement of "sovereign nationhood" in this land).

The majority of today's public opinion however, seems to believe that I should forget this past. It believes I should live in the present and contribute to the society I live in, a society that up until 40 years ago did not believe that "Indians"

were worthy of even being considered persons under the constitutional acts, which ironically, were designed to protect them. Of course, we are not immigrants either, we are the original inhabitants of this land, which has left Canada's leaders no choice but to accept our presence - as "savage" and "primitive" a people as we are.

Now, I am all for co-existence. I believe in it wholeheartedly. Except when it comes to neglecting my roots, or the tremendously essential lessons they hold to such splendid concepts as democracy. I can appreciate the importance of self-sufficiency in this knowledge-based economy and culture; I was adopted and raised by a non-aboriginal family, all vast scholars, who did their very best to see that I understood my own potential and opportunities.

However, all this does not expunge the 250 years of history I live with every day. It does not amend the stereotypes or the presumptions I encounter within mainstream Canadian society all the time. It does not diminish my own fear and loathing towards the atavistic mentality of a nation built on the bloodshed, the tears and the fraudulent mistreatment of my people, or their enduring struggle towards reconciliation.

So for these answers, I must look inwards. What is it about this history that hurts so bad? This shame and sense of restlessness and dislocation I awaken to on even the best of days? Where does it come from and, more importantly, where will it lead?

The thing that vexes me the most, I think, is the immensely poor quality of public education in this country, in particular with regard to its own past. I myself attended many public schools, for ten of the most developmental years of my life. Yet, I really do not recollect being taught anything that one might hope would instill at least a basic understanding of the complex historical skeletons lurking in political, social and environmental closets all across the country.

Skeletons such as the residential school system, operated in partnership with numerous religious sects by the federal government of Canada beginning in 1874. The last school, in Saskatchewan, closed in 1996, five years ago. I was 18 and had basically no knowledge of this terrible chapter in the history of Turtle Island, this epic saga of apartheid, which South Africa used as a model for its own regime of repression. Most of these schools are the stuff of horrifically disturbing nightmares and memories for thousands of people who had their innocence and cultural identities stripped from them, their spirits broken and confined by the cold, impenetrable ramparts of a Canadian-made hell. The objective, inspired no doubt by the self-righteous idealism of the institution itself, was fairly simple: educate and civilize the local "heathens" through assimilation tactics specifically designed for the exorcism of "Indian" way; in the name of God and the British Empire.

Indeed. Sounds lovely!

Then we have land claims. Land claims negotiated in spirit by some and ethnic malice by others. How can anyone claim the land? She does not belong to us. We belong to her. If every human on earth vanished tomorrow, would she miss us? Yet here we are wasting ludicrous amounts of money in litigation to affirm rights we haven't even truly defined yet. "Aboriginal Title", a term existing by affirmation of numerous acts of federal legislation, helps us delineate and identify the many complex interpretations of the rights and responsibilities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. But I still see oil wells and casinos going up all over the country. I still see those entirely

unrenewable resources being mismanaged by greed (human greed, not just "Indian" or "White" greed). And yes, I'm even seeing children as young as ten on the TV news, addicted to inhaling gasoline; so lost in the cycles of poverty, abuse and neglect, they can think of no other way to escape the horrors of every day life in their own home, on unceded land, protected by no Indian Act, in the most desolate regions of Canada.

Anyway, I've rambled on for 1,037 words here and not even scratched the surface of my troubles. Many of these troubles present themselves in the form of work, which is good because I can afford to eat while resolving them. I am currently doing research for a magazine called *aboriginaltimes*, a national monthly based here in Calgary. I am constantly learning new and shocking truths about the history of the country I've grown up in, the country I've trusted with my life. I've come to realize that now is the time for our youth to recognize that things will not change, unless we step forward, in unity, and accept the challenge to make change. Out of respect for the past and out of hope for the future.

Meegwetch,
In peace and pride,

Nicolas D. Leech - Crier is a 23-year old Cree and a member of Saddle Lake First Nation. He works as a researcher and freelance writer for aboriginaltimes magazine. He also sits on the Board of Directors as Secretary for the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth. He lives in Calgary, Alberta.

A powwow is defined as a meeting for discussion, but it is also an opportunity for First Nations people to gather, feast, converse and sing and dance to their heart's content! It's a great way for Native people to get together and celebrate our culture and give thanks for all the great gifts the Creator has given us.

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A Maori PERSPECTIVE of Canada

by Wiremu Te Kiri

The first time I visited Canada was in November 1998 to visit family who were living at Frog Lake First Nation reserve near Edmonton, Alberta. My aunt moved to Frog Lake reserve with her husband and four children to establish a program designed to promote and encourage the children of Frog Lake to speak Cree.

I remember thinking what it would be like to meet real 'Indians' in the flesh? Would they be similar to Maori people? Would they look like the stereotype I have grown up to watch on television? My perception of an Indian was someone who was spiritual, tall, attractive, had long hair and wore neck chokers and moccasins. I imagined they lived a traditional lifestyle in tepees and hunted wild animals for their dinner.

For the first week of my trip I stayed in downtown Edmonton. As I walked towards a shopping centre three Indians stopped me. They were drunk and asked me if I had any money. I replied that I had no money to give them, so they began swearing at me. This was my very first contact with Indians. For the rest of the week, I noticed very few Indians around town. To me they seemed like the invisible population.

During the second week of my holiday, I stayed with my family on the reserve. I remember being surprised when I arrived on the rez. Everyone lived in houses and wore clothing like me. They ate food like me and their lives were anything but primitive. The people even looked like some of my relatives back home. I was really taken back with the *Manaakitanga* (hospitality) of the people. They were very welcoming and they really made me feel as though I had never left home.

While I was there, I had the opportunity to speak with some of the young people of Frog Lake. They were as curious about my country as I was about theirs. I guess they too wondered what Maori people were really like and how we live. Many of them had questions about the well known New Zealand film 'Once Were Warriors'. Some could relate to the themes of the film which deal with abuse and violence in a Maori family living in urban New Zealand. The most common question was "Do you really live like that"? My answer was, "Yes, some of us do".

Many of the young people I spoke to were shy. I remember talking to some who couldn't imagine life beyond the rez. In fact, only two young people were planning to leave Frog Lake to study at university.



I remember speaking Maori to my aunt at Frog Lake and a young woman being surprised that I was speaking my native tongue. She commented that for her language to be revived and retained, it needed to be spoken more by the younger generation. I noticed that most of the young people didn't

speak their language fluently, although they knew a few words and phrases.

Many of the young people I spoke to were shy. I remember talking to some who couldn't imagine life beyond the rez. In fact, only two young people were planning to leave Frog Lake to study at university.

The following year, I returned to Canada. I hooked up with a good friend who is Métis and works at Nechi Institute in Edmonton. Nechi is a centre that trains people to be addiction counsellors. At the centre is the Aboriginal Youth Network (AYN), a team of young Native people that maintain a website with news, views and information for aboriginal youth. I became good friends with one of the AYN communication officers who gave me insight to growing up as an urban Non-treaty Indian.

I guess if I had to compare the differences between the Tangata Whenua (original people of the land) of Canada and Aotearoa, I should look at the many similarities.

Maori people are over represented in every negative health and social statistic you can think of. We are at the top of every negative youth statistic like teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol dependency and crime. Politically, we are fighting for control and ownership of land, resources and our own destiny. We are in full swing in promoting and reviving our language and culture. Media representation of Maori has always been poor so we have opted for creating separate media to highlight our perspectives. From my own personal observations, this too, seems to be the situation in Canada with First Nations and Métis communities.

In recent months, there has been debate about access to fishing quota being allocated to Iwi or Tribal groups. This means that to get access to the resources provided by the quota, you need to identify your tribe and live in your traditional

tribal area. This raises many questions. What if you don't have ties or live in your traditional area but still identify yourself from that tribal group? Should you still be able to have access to those resources? If you live away from your traditional tribal area, are you less Native than your rural counterpart?

Another issue relating to Maori youth is that many adopt African American culture ie, hip-hop. There are those who seem to identify more with hip hop music than with their own culture. However, a positive spin-off is that some artists use the hip-hop music and fashion to promote Maori language and culture.

I guess the main similarity between Maori and Native Canadian culture is the desire for self-determination. To govern and take control for one's community and people. There's a strong desire to keep the language and culture alive and vibrant. During my most recent visit to Canada I attended the International Toronto Pow-Wow. It's very similar to Maori cultural festivals where the aim is to pass down Native traditions from one generation to the next. It's an opportunity for all people to participate and listen and learn the language and culture.

I don't claim to represent all of Maoridom, but my views represent myself as a young Maori man living in urban Aotearoa. My perspective on Canada is purely based on my personal experiences and contacts with First Nation and Métis communities.

Wiremu Te Kiri is a 26-year-old Maori from Aotearoa (New Zealand) who has travelled to Canada over the past three years. He hails from the Tuhoë/Te Arawa tribes and works for the Maori youth TV show, 'Mai Time' and he writes for a small tribal newspaper.

Canada-South Pacific Ocean Development Program



All C-SPOD projects are designed to ensure equity and balanced benefits for all Pacific islanders

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PEARSON COLLEGE was created in 1974 as a tribute to the late Prime Minister and Nobel Laureate, Lester B. Pearson. It is one of ten United World Colleges which are located around the world. Located in Victoria, BC, Pearson College is an international school which is attended each year by 200 young people from around the world – this year 86 countries are represented. The College's mandate is to promote international cooperation and understanding and to provide its students with a challenging academic foundation in an environment where adventure, challenge, and a sense of service are fostered. Students are selected based upon their academic achievements and personal commitment to internationalism and service. All students attend Pearson College on full scholarships provided by donors who believe in the College's ideals of international education and community service.

Youth SUICIDE

Maori Youth Talks Openly about a Serious Issue

by Adil D'Sousa

I am a 16-year-old student studying for the International Baccalaureate at the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific. At this college I represent New Zealand where I grew up and learnt so much. I have lived in various parts of New Zealand; in West Auckland, Lower Hutt and Upper Hutt. The aspect that attracted me to Pearson College is the opportunity to live with other students from around the world. The late Lester Pearson's vision of international understanding also appealed to me immensely. The issue of youth suicide greatly affects my country along with others that are going through post-colonisation. It is something that affects each of us from these countries because the scars of suicide are not only felt by the victims.

Youth suicide is as big an issue in my country as it is anywhere else. As youth we are constantly bombarded with statistics as to the 'how many's' and the 'where's'. Of particular concern is the rate of Maori suicide which ranks among the highest in the world. Youth suicide is an issue that both divides and unites the country. In a strange way, it is one of the few issues in which we can find consensus. The consensus is, invariably, that something must be done. The question is what?

What is perhaps most disturbing is the fact that the Indigenous people, the people of the land are the ones who suffer the most. It is their tamariki (children) who disproportionately commit suicide and it is with these children that their future lies. It is a fate that the native people of my land share with the people of almost every other former colony. And it is surprising, therefore, that only now the trend of higher Indigenous suicide rates is being explored more closely.

In itself, the tragic loss of many children is cause for grief and consternation. Why are so many young Maori compelled to seek an early death? Why did they turn on themselves and in desperation snuff out the embers of hope but not turn to others for help? The despair of the young is a challenge to mobilise the strength of the whole community, both Maori and non-Maori, to channel that strength to support young people. Maori social structure is such that suicide not only impacts on *whanau* (family), but also *hapu* (extended family) and *iwi* (tribe). In this way, suicide not only impacts on New Zealand or the Pacific but also on the world at large.

One popular but highly objectionable myth about suicide is that once a person has decided to kill him/herself, no one can stop that person. However, suicide is most often interpreted by experts as a cry for help rather than a wish



Living with other students from around the world is what attracted 16 year old Adil to study at Pearson College

to end one's life. It can be more a sign of frustration than a sign of deliberate action. Recognition of this fact, I believe, can lead to a more informed populace that is better equipped to deal with such situations.

As young people, we are encouraged to talk about suicide itself, and to encourage others to talk about friends who have died. It is hoped that learning about the stark realities of suicide may act as a deterrent to any young person struggling with their own inner turmoil. On the other hand, some research on youth suicide indicates that this may not be the case: that 'educating' about the realities and risks leading up to suicide simply encourages individuals to believe that this is a real option; a possible way out of hard problems.

The other extreme is the blanket of denial and guilt, which much of our society has imposed for centuries upon the families of people who have committed suicide. There seems to be a reluctance to admit that there is a problem and that many of the precursors to suicide – the depression and isolation – stem from this reluctance. Neither frantic panic nor overt non-chalance are required as a response.

Indeed, somewhere between cover-up and over-exposure we need to find the most helpful way forward. We need to put measures in place that will deal with the realities and enable young people to talk about their fears, yet not unwittingly make suicide a more viable option for a depressed teenager.

But there is hope. Not a glimmer, not a spark, but I suggest it is a fledgling flame. It is the flame that burns in the name of recognition. Once a problem has been identified it is more easily solved. It is this willingness of recognition that reflects our unity in the face of adversity and reaffirms the bonds that we, as a country, share.



Adil and Meraja are both studying for their International Baccalaureate.

HANDS ACROSS THE WATERS, HANDS ACROSS THE GENERATIONS: Indigenous Youth Perspectives on Culture and Tradition

YOUTH SEMINARS

(suggested age: 18-30)

**LAU, WELNEW TRIBAL SCHOOL,
Brentwood Bay, BC - June 16th, 2001**

**KI-LOW-NA FRIENDSHIP CENTRE,
Kelowna, BC - June 23rd, 2001**

AGENDA

7:30am-9:00am	Registration & Continental Breakfast
9:00am-9:30am	Welcome Ceremony & Opening Prayer
9:30am-10:30am	Invited Keynote Speaker Nanaia Mahuta
10:30am-10:45am	Refreshment Break
10:45am-12:30pm	Indigenous Youth Panel Discussion: <i>Insights of First Nations Interns in the Pacific & Pacific Youth Realities</i>
12:30pm-1:30pm	Lunch
1:30pm-3:00pm	Workshops
3:00pm-3:15pm	Refreshment Break
3:15pm-4:45pm	Workshops
4:45pm-5:00pm	Break
5:00pm-6:30pm	Traditional Feast
6:30pm-9:30pm	"Celebrating our Cultures" Evening Extravaganza

SEMINAR REGISTRATION

Registration is limited! Contact the PPP office today to get a copy of your registration form by telephoning us at 250-381-4131, faxing the office at 250-388-5258, e-mailing Vanessa Nevin at sppf@islandnet.com, or writing to us at 1921 Fernwood Road, Victoria, BC V8T 2Y6. The early registration fee is \$30.00 and the early registration deadline for both seminars is **June 1st, 2001**. The registration fee after June 1st, 2001 will be **\$40.00**.

THE MINISTRY OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS
IS PLEASED TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF
PACIFIC PEOPLES' PARTNERSHIP
IN THE PRODUCTION OF THIS
YOUTH ISSUE OF TOK BLONG PASIFIK.

PPP's work with First Nations youth is admirable, and this latest endeavour to bring South Pacific Indigenous youth together with First Nations youth in Canada, to share their stories and concerns, will provide much food for thought for Aboriginal youth in B.C.

Congratulations to all the youth who contributed to the writing, editing and production of this magazine and best of luck with your upcoming youth seminars.

WESTERNIZATION in the Fiji Islands: **MY VIEW**

As a 19-year-old living far away from home and studying in this multicultural and multiracial institution I have come to realize how unique we all are. Thus arose the desire to present that uniqueness to my fellow schoolmates and with it, the realization that back home this uniqueness is slowly disappearing. I am from the province of Tailevu in the Fiji Islands but I live in Suva. I am in Victoria studying for the International Baccalaureate on scholarship. Leaving home was hard, but to attain the best of things one must sacrifice. In my pursuit for a higher level of education I have found much more and yet I still have another year to go!

Set in the Pacific Ocean, the Fiji Islands are known as an exotic destination for tourists. Every year hundreds of foreigners pour in to honeymoon, get married, travel and explore, or just to have a relaxing break. While tourists bring in a lot of income for the economy by providing employment and foreign exchange, tourism has had many more effects, both positive and negative, on my tiny island country over the years.

The landscape around the towns and cities, especially around the capital Suva, has undergone dramatic reconstruction. More modern buildings have shot up as the city has expanded and roads have been vastly improved. The roads connecting Suva to Nausori (where the airport is located), now have parts where they are no longer just a one lane road leading in one direction. Instead two and three lane roads can be seen in some parts of the island; a thing still unheard of in the small islands of the South Pacific. Suva is now greatly characterized by the many traffic lights that can be seen around town. While the locals may complain that it all just slows down the traffic, one benefit is that they have brought a sense of order to the traffic around the capital.

On the cultural front, it is my feeling that tourism has left a stain that cannot be removed no matter how much scrubbing we may do. This stain is that the average Fijian has abandoned their culture, customs and traditions for the ways of the western countries. While some dancing and craft making skills are being conserved through tourism, the impact tourism has had on the people's lives (especially the youth), has devastated me. The way we dress, look, talk, act and react to certain situations has been greatly influenced by tourism.

For example, walking through Suva one might think that a local Fijian girl is a tourist. With a pair of pedal-pushers, a mid crop top and sunnies on top of her long hair talking in English, she may only be thought of as a local because of her dark brown skin. Traditionally, an excessive show of skin was a big no-no in the Fijian culture. Women and young girls were required to wear skirts and dresses that were at least below the knees. Now the "jaba" (semi traditional dress) is only worn in traditional ceremonies and in village settings. Many girls now have long hair and the traditional "buiniga" is rarely seen. Literally buiniga means the tail of a duck and it was the frizzy crown of a proud Fijian woman. Now we add chemicals to our hair to have it swaying behind our backs.

However tourism alone cannot be blamed for the westernization taking place. There are so many other factors contributing to this like the movies and television. A six-cinema complex has just been built in Suva and a four-cinema complex in Lautoka (located on the western side of the main island). Movies can be entertaining and I personally love to watch any good movie but when they are emulated in life it is no longer so entertaining. It may be the way Julia Roberts dressed in "Erin Brokovich" with her tight, low cut tops and mini skirts, that has influenced the dress of young women.

Intermarriages have also contributed to some of the loss of culture. A child brought up in a household with two different cultures and languages often end up with neither of the two. The easiest alternative is often to talk to the child in English. As a result of this, the child does not learn the Fijian language and in most cases does not go to their village. I have Fijian friends who do not know how to speak nor read in their mother tongue. Upon arriving here in Pearson College where I am currently studying, many of the students assumed that I spoke no other language except for English. The fact that my fellow Fijian schoolmate could not speak fluent Fijian did not help either. Such is the extent to which the youths of Fiji have become westernized. Of course, there are also some cases where the child not only learns and practices their Fijian culture, they are also able to learn another culture from the other parent.

The village is where a Fijian's roots are: it is where one belongs. It is where there is land that belongs to you and your clan and it is where your ancestors lived and hopefully where your descendants will live. Unfortunately villages are becoming emptier and clan sites unattended as more Fijians move to the flickering lights of the cities. Westernization has drawn the Fijian from his land in pursuit of wealth. Most of them do not return to visit which is what I find most heartbreaking.

The Fiji Islands are said to be the cross-roads of the South Pacific. While we are flourishing more than our neighbouring islands we are also reaping the results of westernization. The Fiji Islands in its breathtaking beauty will always remain a tourist destination and westernization will continue to take place. It is up to us, the youth of today and Fijians of tomorrow to maintain our culture and customs and keep our identity alive.

by Meraja Racule



19 year old Meraja is concerned that the uniqueness of her homeland, Fiji, is slowly disappearing.

Sissy Girl

by Melissa Lucashenko

The best thing that's happened to me lately is how I feel sorry for whitefellas. You probably think that's pretty funny, eh. Seeing's as I'm the one what's locked up, and youse...well, I dunno where youse are. School, maybe. Home. Whatever. Not jail, that's for sure. They don't call it jail. They call it juvenile detention, but you believe that ya wanna look at that window la. See that steel mesh welded on? It's jail, orright.

They're coming to get me soon. Let me out, cos I've done me crime and done me time and now it's time to go home. Bloody glad, too. This place sucks bigtime. Only I'm not getting me hopes up, see, cos that's what they want ya to do - get all excited about going home and seeing - Mum, Dad, Nanna, Auntie Beryl, Sister Cheryl, Auntie Sally, Cousin Sarah, Cousin Riley, Uncle Eric, Uncle Bert, Uncle John, Uncle Herb, Uncle Shannon, Cousin Louise, Cousin Brannon - well, I won't go on. Take all bloody night, my mob. But like I said, I'm not gettin too excited. The screws that run this poxy joint, they like to take the mickey. Talk it, too. Tell ya your date for Court's coming up when it ain't. Tell ya there's mail, and there's nuthin. Visitors, and when ya find out its bullshit 'n there's no-one there ya can't say nuthin, ya just gotta laugh and then go back to your cell and cry there. Cos they love that, eh - to see ya weak. It makes em feel strong, eh. Like they've gotta make you small so that they can be big, the white dogs. Shows how pissweak they are, ya arks me.

But what I was starting out to say was about whitefellas and that. I hope youse are girls what's reading this. Reckon I'll pretend yez are, eh. I'm fourteen, see. Turned fourteen inside, all cos of this one time me brother and his mate (oh I had the hots for him something shockin eh), they reckon oh come out for a ride, tidda, and I jump in and guess what? End up in the middle of an armed rob I didn't know nuthin about, and its either say nuthin and do twelve months or spill me guts to the gunjies and get flogged up something severe back home.

Sometimes in here like that time I tried slashin up I reckon I woulda been better off being a dog, but once a dog always a dog, eh. Like this way, I've done me eight months and got good behaviour cept for trying ta suicide, that cost me another six weeks, and when I walk out that gate it'll be finished. But if I'd dogged on Michael and Jared I'd never live it down, flogging or no floggin. Anyway, that's how I ended up havin me birthday inside here, just cos of a stupid mistake I never even knew I was making.

I thought it was gonna be real shithouse, havin me birthday inside, eh, but on the day it turned out it was kinda orright. Cos of this old girl come from out the bush, Myrtle. She's nothing much to look at, just this old black aunty with hair going white at the sides, takes the art class, painting and that. She takes me to one side about a week before me birthday, only she don't know nothing about that or nothing, and she goes, so where's ya mob from, sis? So I tell her what I know, which ain't much cos me mum was took away, and we dunno our proper mob really, just a few last names and that.

And Myrtle goes o yeah, I think I know some of them names, and we get to talking and I tell her its me birthday the next week. She says well happy birthday for next week bub and I go yeah, right, not. She asked me how old I'd be and I just go fourteen, and think nothing of it. Only she reckons well I'll come see ya then, and I go yeah okay but not holding me breath or nothing. I sort of forgot about it actually, cos it was that night I tried to knock meself eh.

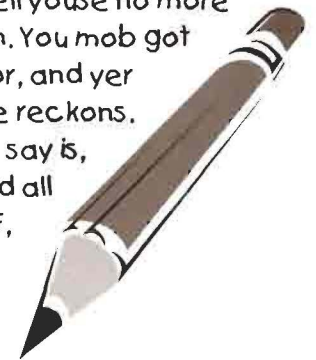
I dunno why exactly. Just one of them stupid things ya do. Got real down thinking about home, and missing me little baby brother, and just....o just so lonely I spose. I had this blade someone swapped me for a tape, and I got it out and I was just looking at it, eh, thinking about how I'd do it if I was gonna. I remember holding it on me arm, not doing it, just sorta wondering. Next thing, there was blood all over the cell, and someone hitting the button going get the screws, get the f#\$! screws! They never come for about ten minutes but, and I just felt all weird. It didn't hurt till later. They had to take me up the hospital, so that was one good thing, anyway, got me outta Melrose Place for the night.

It was funny, but, next time I seen Myrtle, she seen the bandages and she was real cut eh. Went crook on me, saying I told you I was coming to see you girl, watchoo wanna go doing that for? Almost shamed me out, but kind of not in a real bad way, ya know? Anyway after she done that was when she took me away to the art room by meself, just her and me. That's when she started me on my business. Woman business. That's how Myrtle started off to teach me, eh, sitting in the art room in Boggo Road. The jail's not far from town, and where she sat me down we heard all the traffic, and ya can see some

of them skyscrapers, too. Hey, lookout, I can hear em up there in the corridor now coming to get me. I just finish telling ya quick now.

I can't tell youse about it, cos I don't know youse and cos you're probably gubbas too, and specially cos you might even be boys. Its forbidden under Aboriginal Law, see. That's a laugh, eh. Locked up cos of whiteman law, and that's where I find me own. Funny place for it, eh, a jail, but see it don't really matter where ya are. I remember Auntie Myrtle looked over, the second Tuesday after she told me some stuff, and she reckons, see them buildings in the city la... That's whiteman dreaming over there. But we got our dreaming still, inside. Inside our bodies, still in our blood. Inside our brains. Inside our hearts. That's where she showed me the start of my Murri dreaming, and where I found out I was gonna be alright. Sitting there in jail, eh, f#\$! up and far from home, bandaged up, lost me mob, but coming back, see.

Myrtle says she's gonna take me out bush once I get out, Ceremony Time. Deadly, eh. And that's why I feel sorry for you mob. You all wosname, atheists, eh. I be gettin ta be a woman dreckly, only fourteen but I'm learning my song, my dance. I'm gonna find my dreaming, meet my mob, get me a proper name. Eh, them screws ere now, I gotta go. Hear them keys? Look, I'm sorry I can't tell youse no more about it. That's just how it is, eh. You mob got your own Dreamings to look for, and yer own elders somewhere, Myrtle reckons. But the main thing I wanted to say is, fore I got in here I useta spend all me time feelin sorry for meself, and its funny, but now I feel sorry for whitefellas instead.



Melissa Lukashenko is a Murri (Aboriginal) woman of mixed European and Yugambah descent. She was born in Brisbane and now live in Bundjalung country on the east coast of New South Wales with her partner and two children. Melissa attended Griffith University in Brisbane, and has worked in the field of Aboriginal health and also as a prison activist in Brisbane. She was inspired to write "Sissy Girl" because of the large number of Murri girls she has met in her work with prisoners.

Aboriginal people are imprisoned at rates far higher than other Australians. Our traditional laws are not recognised, nor, generally, is the role of Elders and Aboriginal Law Men and Aboriginal Law Women. Some Australian prisons contain 80-90 % Aboriginal prisoners, although we are only 3% of the general population. In 1990 there was a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, but most of its hundreds of recommendations have not been fully implemented by Australian governments.

Many Aboriginal prisoners are inside for crimes of poverty, or as a result of racist policing and racist policies. However, there is also much violence against women and children in our communities, and some prisoners are rightly imprisoned for these crimes against their own people. Often Aboriginal women and girls get forgotten because men are the majority of prisoners. Most women and girls are in prison for crimes to do with drug use or prostitution (ie victimless crimes).

Métis Youth Takes Sports to a New Level

by Sasha Serre



In the summer of 2000 I began volunteering for the Feather of Hope Aboriginal AIDS Prevention Society and was eventually offered a job working with youth as the Sports Co-ordinator. Feather of Hope is a coalition of Aboriginal people province-wide who commit to facilitate a strategy and program to assist the Aboriginal community to enhance the quality of life for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and use an Aboriginal process as guided by our elders.

Throughout my time at Feather of Hope I have experienced many challenges in the work I do. These challenges range from helping people living with HIV/AIDS to playing sports against inmates in jail.

The Rising Spirits: A Young Warriors Path is a community-based program designed to provide our youth with a fun and exciting way of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Some of its programs include picking medicines, learning round dances, attending sweats and sports teams such as basketball and volleyball.

Our volleyball team has accepted and given out many challenges to organizations in the Edmonton area. These have included Friendship Centres, High Schools and more recently, Healing Centres and prisons. Many of these games have been very difficult, and playing in these prisons can often be very intimidating.

After receiving clearance for all of our players, we made our way to Edmonton Maximum Security Institution. When we arrived at the prison we were required to empty our pockets and lock up our belongings. We were then escorted through what seemed like hundreds of very heavily guarded doors into the gymnasium.

When I first came in contact with the inmates I was overcome with mixed emotions. I wasn't sure if I should try and look as big as I could, or to just be myself. I soon found out that I didn't have to put on a show. A lot of the inmates just wanted to have fun and were a lot like you and I, they had just made some bad decisions in the past.

"HIV/AIDS is quickly becoming an epidemic in the Aboriginal community. Aboriginal people make up 5% of Alberta's population and they are responsible for 26% of all new cases of HIV/AIDS. As an Aboriginal person is it my responsibility to support my community. I am happy to play any role I can in the reduction of this disease and work towards helping my culture continue to grow and be healthy and strong."

The inmates were excited to have visitors and seemed to be very enthused that we would be playing them. When we began playing it was evident that having fun was a higher priority than winning. After that game we played the inmates from protective custody. After playing three more games we called it a night, handing out T-shirts and water bottles to the inmates. One inmate even offered to volunteer for us after he had served his 12 year sentence.

A number of the inmates have been brought up from broken homes or families with histories of addiction and figured that the only way out of their grief is to become involved in street gangs. This was apparent to me, witness-

ing the divided groups of inmates and the tattoos on their bodies.

I enjoy working with the inmates because it gives me the opportunity to show them there are other ways of dealing with that grief, like playing sports. Even though I am but one person I'd like to think I have made huge waves.

Sasha Serre is an 18 year old Métis living in Edmonton, Alberta. He is the Sports Coordinator for the Feather of Hope Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Prevention Society and a member of the "Rising Spirits: A Young Warrior's Path" Youth Council.

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Youth Voices in Action

Leading the Way to the World Summit on Sustainable Development

by Kasitsaronkwas Lynn Jacobs

A group of diverse young people from across the country have taken the lead in Canada's preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The WSSD, a ten-year follow-up to the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, is scheduled to take place in September 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Federal Government's preparations have been slow, but the Youth Summit Team's head start will hopefully be an inspiring model to shape Canadian government approaches to the WSSD.

From March 8-11, 2001, the Youth Summit Team (YST) composed of 21 young people from across Canada between the ages of 16 to 29, met to solidify their objectives and to create an action plan that includes multiple approaches to effect change. Through the support and coordination of the United Nations Association (UNA) of Canada, the YST will develop and maintain a national communication network of youth to share interests and concerns on the environment, sustainable development, human rights, and social and economic change. The YST is committed to empower all youth with the knowledge and tools for meaningful participation in the national and international preparatory process for the WSSD.

Over the next year and a half, the YST will be developing outreach tools and materials, participating in national and international conferences, engaging in discussions with partners and government agencies, developing Agenda 21 position papers, and facilitating exchanges in the national and international youth community. Beyond the WSSD, the ultimate goal is to eventually translate these efforts into actions towards a sustainable society.

Through surveys and other forms of outreach, the YST will gather the voices of youth to gain a representative reflection of the diversity of Canada. I am committed to ensuring a meaningful First Nation voice in this process. Through our schools and youth organisations, I hope to engage the youth from my community and other First Nation communities. I also hope to work with the Pacific Peoples' Partnership (PPP) via the upcoming Indigenous Youth Seminars in June, to start gathering a representative First Nation youth voice on issues of concern to bring to the

WSSD table. The potential to network with our Indigenous brothers and sisters of the Pacific adds meaning and depth to this youth voice, and the exciting dimension of a united front between Indigenous youth from two very distinct parts of the world.

The Youth Agenda 2002 process is owned by all youth. If you are interested in this initiative please visit the website at www.youth2002jeunesse.unac.org and join our electronic discussion group by sending an email to youthagenda2002@wgroups.com. It is hoped that this discussion group, which currently has more than 180 members, will serve as a means for youth to share their expertise, ideas, concerns, solutions, and contacts, and to develop friendships with other youth from across the country and beyond. A First Nation youth discussion group will potentially be initiated by the YST in the near future.

Kasitsaronkwas Lynn Jacobs is a young Mohawk woman from the community of Kahnawake. She is a PPP member and was a 1999-2000 PPP intern to Fiji where she worked with Ecowoman on Participatory Learning and Action and on various Women in Science and Technology initiatives. Katsitsa works in her home community with the Kahnawake Environment Office on sustainable housing and environmental health issues. She is a member of the Youth Summit Team and is also currently working on her Masters Degree in Environment and Management. You can contact Katsitsa at katsitsa@yahoo.ca

Maori Response to the Language Crisis

by Deana Machin

In the time since colonization, Indigenous people across the world have lost cultural practices, oral histories and native languages at an alarming rate; a cultural genocide sustained by societal pressures and government policies. In the latter half of the twentieth century, Indigenous people have fought to establish and preserve their cultural identities. One of the areas where New Zealand's Maori communities have been successful is in the resurgence of Te Reo o Maori, the Maori language.

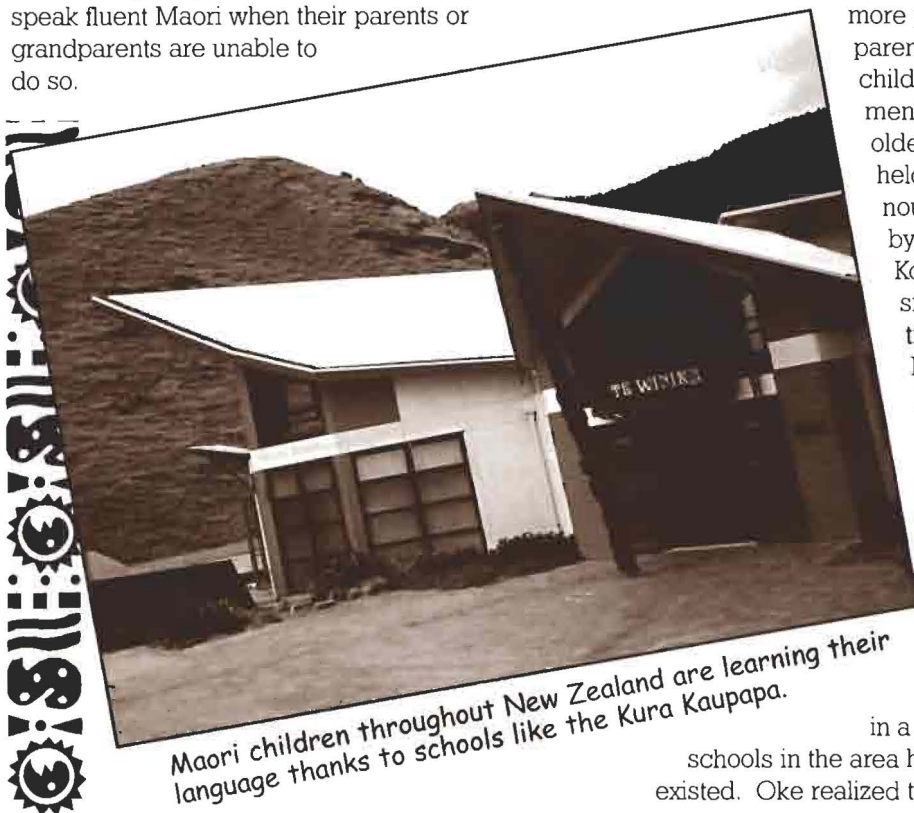
In 1982, in response to the language crisis, many of the first Te Kohanga Reo were established, mainly on Maraes across the country. Te Kohanga Reo, literally meaning the language nest, are essentially preschools that focus entirely on Maori language and culture. Here, many children first begin to learn Maori. It is now a time when young children are often able to speak fluent Maori when their parents or grandparents are unable to do so.

Rereokeroa (Oke) Shaw, a Waikato-Tainui woman, began volunteering her time at the Kohanga in her community when her eldest mokopuna (grandchild) started attending. Prior to 1992, Shaw knew only very simple phrases in Maori but in February 1994 she opened a Kura Kaupapa Maori and became its first teacher. Te Kura Kaupapa Maori (literally, school in the style of Maori) is a total Maori immersion school for children aged five to twelve. Seven school subjects are taught in Maori and the curriculum focuses on the values and principles of Maori culture. In two short years, learning the language with her grandson at the Kohanga and at intensive language classes at her Marae, Oke became fluent in Te Reo o Maori.

It was common that many people of her generation did not speak the language either. Oke says that "many of the old people got strapped at school when the spoke in Maori" and this led to more and more people learning English as a first language. Her parents made a conscious decision not to teach their children Maori, thinking that it might somehow be detrimental to them as they grew older. As she became older, Oke had a desire to learn the language but was held back by fear; she was afraid that she would pronounce words incorrectly or be ridiculed or corrected by those people that could speak fluently. At the Kohanga, Oke began to pick up the language alongside the children and she began to lose her inhibitions and the embarrassment she felt if she stumbled over the words, becoming more confident in her abilities. She says, "it is easy to learn with the children because they are sponges that soak everything up" and they don't have any preconceived inhibitions or barriers to learning. Days spent at the Kohanga led Oke to taking intensive Te Reo Maori language classes at her Marae.

In 1993, at a community barbecue, one of the mothers pointed out that when the kids finished at the Kohanga, they had no place to attend primary school where they could continue classes in a Maori immersion program. At that time, the public schools in the area had Maori classes, but no immersion programs existed. Oke realized that in three years' time she would be facing the

It is now a time when young children are often able to speak fluent Maori when their parents or grandparents are unable to do so.



Maori children throughout New Zealand are learning their language thanks to schools like the Kura Kaupapa.

same problem with her grandson when he finished at the Kohanga. Shortly after, she received information from the Maori

Department at the Auckland College of Teacher Training on how to set up a Kura Kaupapa. There were three basic requirements: the school needed at least 21 students that were interested in attending, a location for the school to run, preferably in association with a Marae, and an instructor fluent in Te Reo Maori. At a community meeting on December 16th, 1993, she compiled a list of parents that would consider sending their children to a Kura Kaupapa

and Oraeroa Marae at Port Waikato agreed to let the school operate in an unused building on their Marae. It was decided that Oke was fluent enough to teach the children, that the school would be named Te Puaha o Waikato and that classes would commence in two months' time when all public schools returned from summer holidays. They applied for and received a provisional private school license to operate the school.

On February 2nd, 1994 Te Puaha o Waikato was opened and had an enrollment of thirteen students, most of whom were classified as slow learners or at-risk children who could not handle the mainstream school system. Within a short time, Oke was able to recognize the barriers to learning that the children had acquired over the years and began to "open the ability to learn". Many of the students had come from low income families and often needed to be fed or to sleep after late nights at home, so Oke began a lunch program and let the children sleep when they needed to and taught them when they wanted to be taught. As they became accustomed to the school program, the children began to learn the value of their language and took pride in their culture.

One of the problems the school had to overcome was a lack of Maori instructional resources, so all of the teaching materials had to be handmade. It was very time consuming to translate English teaching manuals in Te Reo o Maori for teaching purposes and there were no books or computers for the students to use. The school operated under a private school license for one year receiving only twenty percent of the funding required to manage the school. In 1995, the school became a satellite classroom for a Kura Kaupapa located in an Auckland suburb. With the support of their parent Kura Kaupapa, Te Puaha o Waikato received books and journals written in Maori and assistance with policy and charter development.

In 1998, Te Puaha o Waikato received status from the Ministry of Education under section 155 of its Act, and was licensed as Te Kura Kaupapa o Maori in its own right. The school was given \$225,000 to purchase equipment and resources and the Ministry committed to building a \$1.8 million school. Architects met with the community to

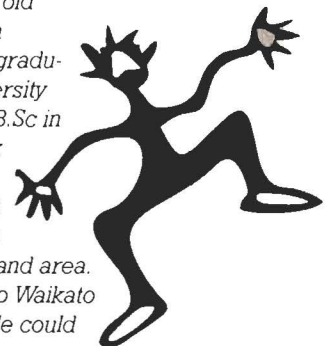
Maori children throughout New Zealand are learning their language thanks to schools like the Kura Kaupapa. REREOKEROA (Oke) Shaw, founder of Te Puaha o Waikato, surrounded by some of her students.



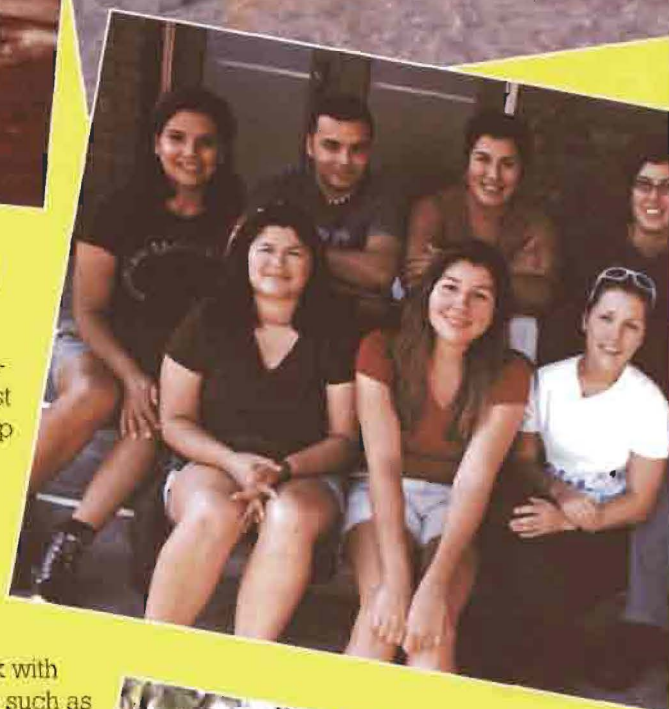
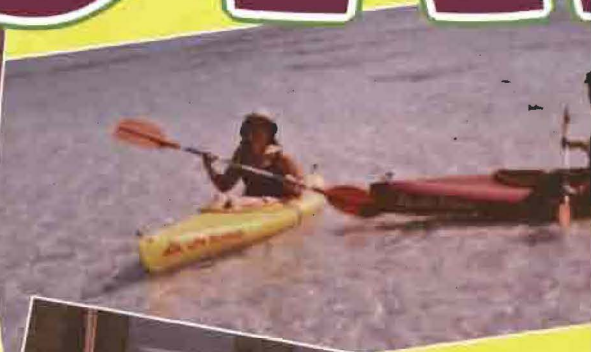
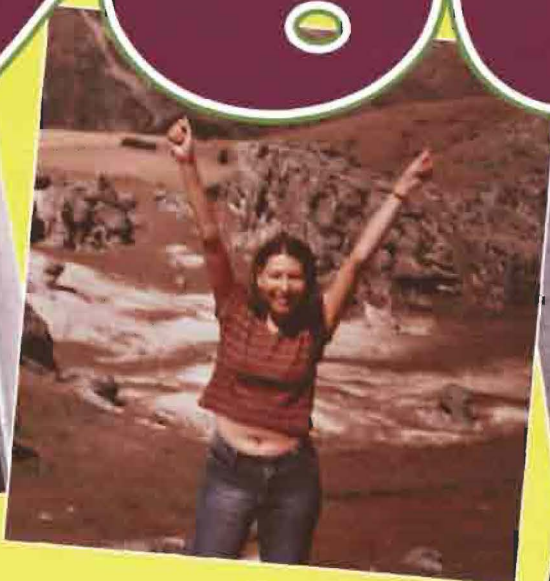
get ideas for the design of the building. Students wanted to see three things incorporated into the design: the meeting of the Waikato River with the Tasman Sea (which occurs at the school's location), an albatross and a waka (traditional Maori canoe). The new building was opened April 7, 2000 with 13 students and has since grown to 37 students aged five to twelve. The school has shifted its focus from taking disadvantaged children, to taking children directly from the Kohanga or those that already possess some Maori language skills.

The success of the Kura Kaupapa is dependent upon the tireless determination and effort of Rereokeroa Shaw as well as from the Marae communities in the area that recognized the need for a Kura Kaupapa and the benefit it would have for their children and grandchildren. Thanks to schools such as the Kohanga and the Kura Kaupapa and many Marae based language programs, people young and old are fluent speakers of Te Reo o Maori.

Deana Machin is a 25 year old woman from the Okanagan Nation in Vernon, BC. She graduated in 1999 from the University of British Columbia with a B.Sc in Biology. She accepted a six month internship to work with Huakina Development Trust, a Maori organization in the Greater South Auckland area. After visiting the Te Puaha o Waikato Deana thought many people could benefit from Oke's story.



YOUTH



PPP Interns in Action

One of the ways the Pacific Peoples' Partnership fosters relationships between indigenous people of the South Pacific and First Nations in Canada is through our Youth International Internship Program.

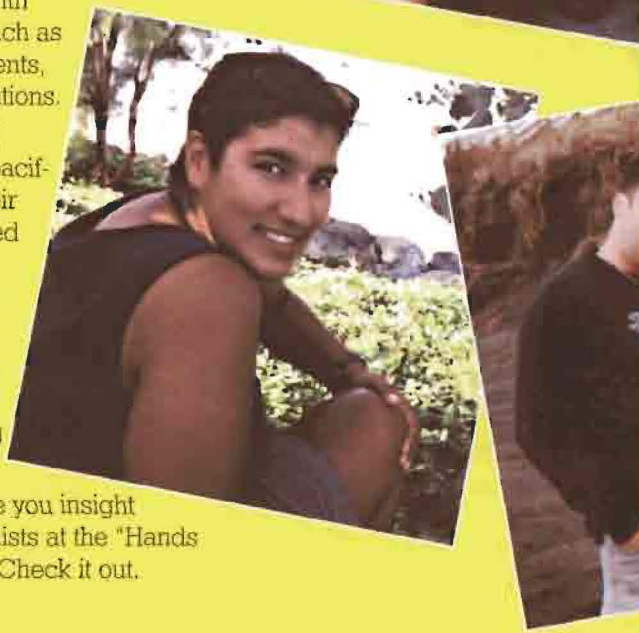
This program is unique because it matches aboriginal youth in Canada (First Nations, Métis or Inuit) with indigenous organizations in the South Pacific. We are now in the third year of this program, which began in 1999 with a pilot program that matched five interns with organizations in Fiji, Indonesia and Vanuatu.

Last year our funding doubled, enabling us to send ten interns to work with organizations in Vanuatu, New Zealand and the Cook Islands on projects such as juvenile justice, resource management, youth projects, journalism assignments, conference organizing, access to education and research for tribal organizations.

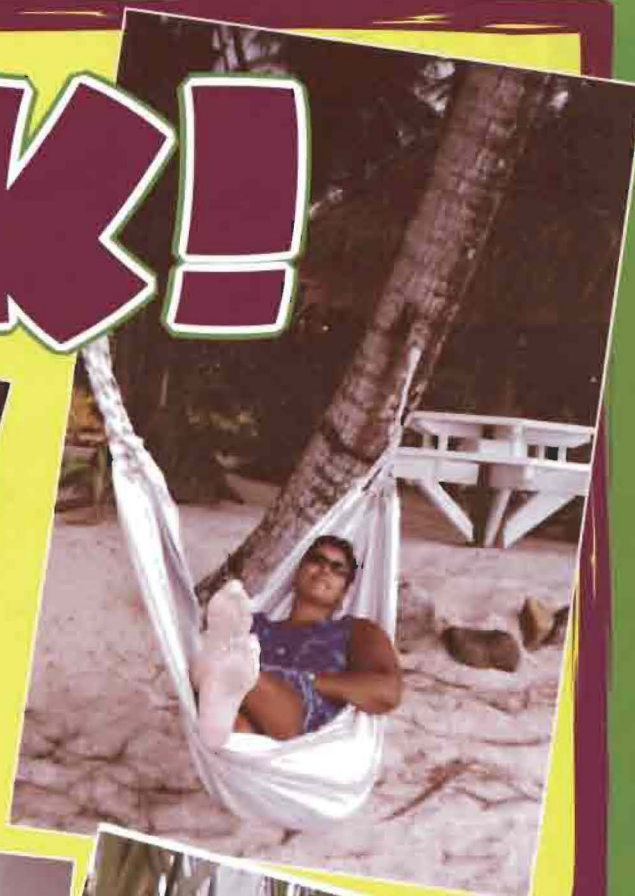
Thanks to continued funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade we will soon be sending another ten interns to various Pacific countries and organizations. These interns will be leaving Canada for their placements in late August or early September, and resumes will be accepted until June 15th.

To be eligible you need to be between the ages of 19 to 30, have not worked previously overseas or on a Youth Employment Strategy program through Human Resources Development Canada. If you think you might be interested in this unique opportunity to work with an Indigenous organization overseas, check our website at <http://www.sppf.org> or contact us, using the contact information found in the beginning of this magazine.

This collage of pictures and the stories over the following pages will give you insight on what it is like to be a PPP intern. Most of the interns will be panelists at the "Hands Across the Waters, Hands Across the Generations" youth seminars in June. Check it out.



...TOK!



Horse Gentling Program for At Risk Maori Youth

Together, people and horses have traveled countless miles, ploughed fields, fought in wars, entertained crowds and more recently, been engaged in various therapeutic and rehabilitation programs for children and adults alike. Iwi Social Services, based south of Auckland in Pukekohe, Aotearoa/New Zealand has embraced such a therapeutic and rehabilitation program for at-risk Maori youth. The Awhitu Outdoor Adventure Club Horse Gentling program instructed by Maori women, Waatara Black and Wharepi Kahotea has proven to be physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually beneficial for all Maori youth who partake.

The Iwi Social Services (I.S.S.) Youth program started as an alternative education program for Maori youth with a purpose to provide correspondence education, recreation and other mental and physical challenges. Today, I.S.S. has two residential homes in Waikato Tainui territory with full-time caregivers and room for three boys and three girls who come from all over the North Island. All the youth in these homes no longer attend mainstream school and have been in trouble with the law to various degrees. Once in the care of I.S.S., the youth partake in various traditional educational activities such as carving or weaving, correspondence schoolwork and now, a horse gentling program. Initially, I.S.S. Manager Wanda Kiel-Rapana, intended the horse trek program to be just another recreational activity for the youth, where at most they would learn some responsibility and enjoy the opportunity. Thanks to Waatara, Wharepi and a team of Awhitu Outdoor Adventure Club horses, the horse gentling program has turned into so much more.

by Jenny Stirling



Waatara Black of Ngaati Te-Ata, Waikato Tainui has over twenty years' experience working with Maori youth and says that, "horses break every barrier" and therefore, serve as an excellent environment to help youth learn and have fun. Waatara is currently in level three of the International School of well-known 'Horse Whisperer' Monty Roberts, training under one of Roberts' four international instructors, Leigh Wills. This training and experience has led to her success in teaching the youth to engage in a mutual, respectful and working relationship with horses. One of the keys to this success has been learning what Monty Roberts recognized as "equus", the language of horse. Through communicating in a language that the horses can understand, a trusting partnership can be quickly established. The youth have also been given the opportunity to learn basic equus, as well as basic horse psychology, care and maintenance. Most importantly however, is that the relationship the youth have built up with these horses has all been entirely done in a non-violent manner.

The idea of working in a non-violent relationship has been an essential component for the youth to learn. Both the young men and women have histories of violent behaviour towards others. Three youth are second generation gang members, while others have committed aggravated robbery, home invasions and assault, among other crimes. It became imperative for them to see that they could reach a goal without resorting to violence or abuse. Waatara says she uses "horses as a medium to reach out to youth

and teach them to get rid of aggression." Subsequently, the youth have begun to apply these non-violent techniques to building and continuing relationships with fellow humans. Although the youth have only been attending the program once a week for the past four



Jenny (standing far left) with Waatara, and horse gentling participants.

months, Youth Justice Supervisor Rob Hita has noticed a difference. "The boys used to be loud, boisterous and rough with each other even on the hour drive out here, [the horse riding arena], but now they are more settled, quieter and treat each other with more respect," said Hita.

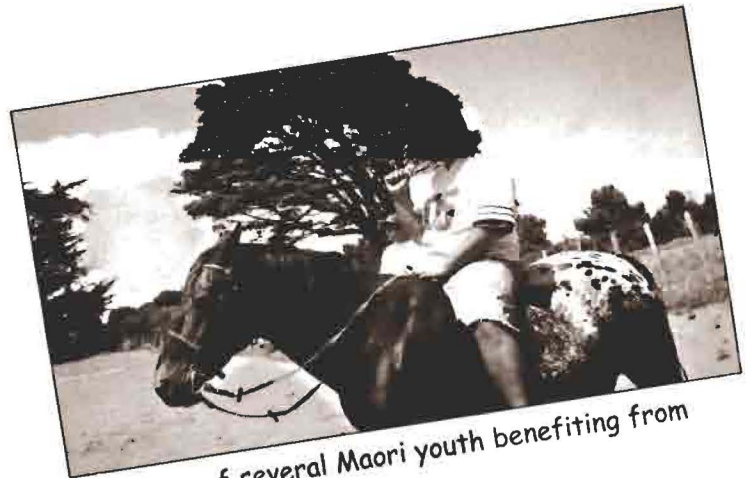
Kiel-Rapana attributes the positive changes in the youths all to Waatara and what she teaches. "Waatara is so strong in terms of our culture and development of our people which lies with the rangatahi, our children. She is the caliber of teacher that we need to teach our children." The youth agree, looking up to her as a teacher and role model. "She's cool and she's Maori," said 13 year old Kaha. Building on her positive relationship with the youth, Waatara has also begun to incorporate Maoridom in her riding lessons. She speaks Maori to the youth and teaches them how to say words in Maori that relate to horses or their riding lessons. She also teaches them Maori spirituality, history and tradition when she sees fit, even if it is in the middle of the riding arena.

Riding lessons and lessons on life have proven to be a perfect combination for the Maori youth in the I.S.S. program. Their enthusiasm towards the horse gentling program has not been matched by any other opportunity presented to them. Not only have they learned new skills and possible employment opportunities, they have learned how to build and maintain trust-based and non-violent relationships with horses and show progress in doing the same with the people around them.

Jenny Stirling, 23, born and raised in Merritt, British Columbia belongs to the Niaka'pamux (Thompson) Nations of southern interior British Columbia and more specifically, the Lower Nicola Band. Jenny recently completed a Bachelor of Arts Degree in both First Nations Studies and History as well as a certificate in First Nations Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia.



Waatara Black, horse gentling instructor, demonstrates how to properly halter a horse.



Lane, one of several Maori youth benefiting from the program.

Alisa Toki!

Alisa Kelly belongs to the Vuntut Gwit'chin of Old Crow, Yukon. Raised in Campbell River, Alisa went as a PPP intern to Port Vila, Vanuatu to work with the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (PIANGO). PIANGO is a pan-Pacific umbrella body for NGO's focused on community development, globalisation, nuclearisation, and indigenous issues. Although based in Vanuatu, PIANGO works regionally on networking, information dissemination and participates in regional and international forums on issues such as globalisation and gender equality.

Alisa, who is 24 years old, recently graduated with a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Victoria. During her six months with PIANGO, she assisted with the everyday facilitating of networks among Pacific island NGO's. She counts among her many successes learning basic Bislama, learning basic website design, database skills and improved writing skills due to writing press releases and PIANGO's monthly newsletter. She also assisted in preparing two PIANGO conferences at the beginning of her internship.

According to Alisa, the most rewarding aspect of her placement has been learning about the work PIANGO does with other NGO's in dealing with issues that affect the civil sector of society. In the Pacific, those include the increasing participation of Pacific nations and Pacific governments in the global economy and the continued threat of nuclearisation as well as basic human rights concerns such as gender equality and youth issues.

"I now have a better understanding of the international development field: how it functions, its purpose, as well as problems within this notion of development. It has been a great opportunity to achieve a greater understanding of a field that is of interest to me."

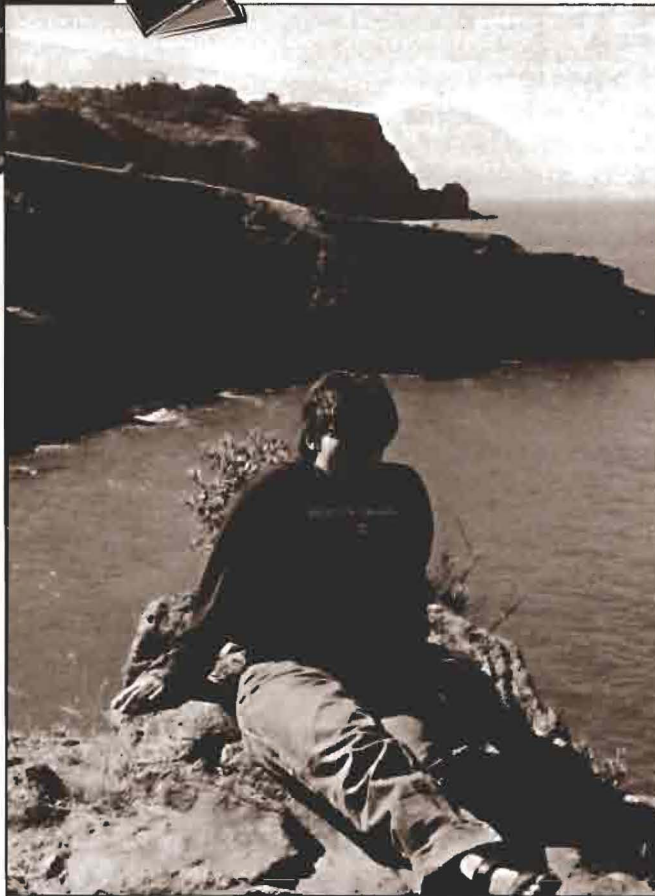
Cara Goes to Christchurch!



by Cara Jeffrey

As an intern for the Pacific Peoples' Partnership, I was very excited about my placement in New Zealand. I've always wanted to experience life on the other side of the globe. Six months was a long time to be leaving everything that was familiar to me (all alone, out in the world!), but I was brave and looking for adventure. Besides, I had the promise of my family coming to visit me at Christmas. It was just the excuse they needed for their first chance to go overseas.

I had a great time while I was in Christchurch. I met many interesting people and I had the opportunity to see that even on the other side of the world there a lot of similarities between First Nations and Maori philosophies. We both have a great respect for the earth and believe in taking only what is needed for life rather than taking for profit and greed. There are a lot of parallels between their stories and ideas and our stories and ideas. For example they have many of the same characters as we do in our stories; I found Maui to be very similar to Txamsen, the raven character in Tsimshian stories. The Maori are also dealing with much of the same social problems as we are. We are struggling through the



PPP Intern Cara Jeffrey

same effects of colonization while alcoholism, domestic violence, poverty and disease plague both our populations.

My host organization was Ngai Tahu, an iwi (tribe) who live on the South Island of New Zealand. It was both interesting and educational to work with Ngai Tahu. They are working hard to support the people and maintain their beautiful country. I was able to work in the head office at Ngai Tahu. It is ruled by 18 representatives from each of the 18 Rununga (bands) located around Te Waipounamou (the South Island). It is important to note that with this system the people were able to have their voices heard at Te Rununga O Ngai Tahu (TRONT) as there was no one chosen leader and therefore no chain of command to go through. (Loosely translated, Te Rununga O Ngai Tahu/TRONT mean the Bands of Ngai Tahu).

I worked with the Kaupapa Taiao unit of TRONT, which deals with environmental aspects such as resource management, customary fisheries and pounamou (New Zealand Jade). They also work together with the Department of Conservation to protect resources that are important to them. As a research assistant for the Kaupapa Taiao my job was to find policies on customary use within national parks around the world. Sometimes it was like looking for a needle in a haystack, especially since I was a beginner in the world of Internet researching! It seemed that whole days would go by and I wouldn't find any relevant information. However I managed to get through it and it was very rewarding in the end when I had a job well done. With the new found information, Kaupapa Taiao is hoping to reach an agreement with their government so they can access the resources within their national parks. They have promised to let me know of the outcome.



I also had the opportunity to do some traveling! Since I only had a short stay in Te Waipounamou, my hosts wanted me to see as much of it as possible. When any of my co-workers were making a trip I got to accompany them and share some of my ideas. I was fortunate enough to travel to Dunedin to see how a meeting with the local Rununga disclosed their concerns to TRONT. While I was there, I was able to go to the albatross colony and see some of the beautiful countryside. I went over to Ripapa Island and learned about its rich cultural heritage to both Ngai Tahu and the European settlers. Ripapa Island is a small island located in the Lyttleton harbour. It was once a Pa (village) site, then it became a quarantine station and finally it was turned into a fortress. I had an amazing trip down to Queenstown where I went up the Caples Valley and the Greenstone Valley in a helicopter to check out the site for a proposed gondola. I was part of the team that decided if it was culturally appropriate to have a gondola go up such a pristine valley. It was such a huge task that we weren't able to decide at the time, but the trip gave us a good idea of what the land was like and how important it is to preserve it.

At times it was very tough being there. People were very involved in their own lives and I found it hard to get out and meet people. There was no real support network for me. Coming from a big family, I found this to be a real challenge, it taught me a lot about myself. I had the chance to step back and have a good hard look at my life. I discovered that I am content; I have everything that I could ever want. I have love and understanding, compassion and support. I still want to travel and see the world, but next time I will go with a loved one and we will discover new things together. I look back on my experience in New Zealand and I smile. It was tough at times with homesickness and loneliness, but overall it was a very positive experience for me. Given the chance I would do it all over again. I learned a lot about myself, and what is really important in my life. It was my first time overseas, away from my family and everything that is familiar to me. I now love my homeland more than ever and I am ready to settle down and be happy with the many gifts that life has given me.

Cara Jeffrey is a 22 year old Tsimshian woman. She has completed the Arts One First Nations Studies, as well as the Horticulture Technician's Program at Malaspina University College. She now lives in Qualicum Beach.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: Culture and Education Working Together

by Melanie Healy

*Ok! Napi, Kia Ora
and Greetings!*



Melanie at the Te Matauranga Maori Studies Department of Christchurch Polytechnic, working on a paper of Maori youth in the tertiary education system.

I first became interested in the Pacific Peoples' Partnership (PPP) upon hearing about their tremendous work and efforts to promote awareness of environmental, cultural, educational and justice issues in the South Pacific. In addition to their advocacy work for Pacific peoples, the PPP recently initiated a Youth International Internship Program, funded through the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. For the second year running, First Nations youth applicants are selected to represent the PPP to gain valuable cultural experience and help build relationships between people of the South Pacific and Canada.

I was selected by PPP in October 2000 to embark on a six month overseas internship experience in Christchurch, New Zealand. My main assignment here in Christchurch is studying to identify the factors influencing Maori youth to enroll in post secondary studies, and to further look into how they are encouraged. Statistics in Canada and New Zealand both show that enrollment figures in post secondary have low indigenous participation. How can youth reclaim their right to education and confidently participate in society if they aren't aware of the resources available to them or don't have access to the support they need?

With my new found experience, it is important for me to spread the message that youth have a right to higher education whether it be through institutions, obtaining cultural knowledge or through traveling.

My message to youth is accept your "Right" as an indigenous person in society and continue to represent your nation in the most outstanding way you can. Recognize the value and richness of your culture and how this shines through as your identity.

I look forward to sharing my overseas experience and speaking on the messages mentioned above at the Youth to Youth Workshops being held in British Columbia in June 2001.

Melanie Healy, 28, is a member of the Blood Tribe (Blackfoot Nation) of Southern Alberta. Prior to her overseas internship she worked for the B.C. Treaty Commission. Upon her return Melanie will be completing the Cross Cultural Counseling program through the University of British Columbia and plans to pursue careers in education and public relations/journalism.

Religion *the* INDIGENOUS WAY

From Canada to the Cook Islands

by Suzanne Bate

I live in Montreal, Canada, a major city that is home to over 40,000 urban aboriginal people. Some of us come from a reserve, while others were born and raised in the city. Either way, we all have one thing in common – we're working hard to preserve our history, our traditions, and to not lose sight of who we are and where we have come from. I believe that this is something that all Indigenous peoples of the world share, we are all trying to maintain our traditions, our cultures and still find a way to prosper in the contemporary world.

Many Indigenous peoples have been subject to colonization, assimilation and other forms of cultural genocide. In response to this, there has been a movement in North America to grasp tightly those traditions which are uniquely our own – our spiritual and religious traditions. While there are still many Christian and Jewish Native peoples in North America, there are many traditional spiritualists as well.



Cook Islanders of all ages prepare for the Nuku, a holiday celebrating the arrival of the gospel in the Cook Islands. These locals are putting the final touches on a prop for the bible drama they will be performing.

My personal ideology lies in the domain of returning to my roots. I was not raised Christian and I do not follow Christianity for my personal spiritual needs. I have chosen to follow my traditional cultural practices; practices which work with the environment, work with the cycle of the Earth and her changing seasons. In my limited worldview, it hadn't occurred to me that other Indigenous peoples in the world would have a dramatically different take on the subject. As no one tradition is right for any one people and each individual is unique, so are beliefs and belief systems.

It seems I temporarily forgot this when I first arrived in the Cook Islands last October. Yes, the Cook Islands! I lived for four months on Rarotonga (a veritable tropical island paradise) and I was a wee bit surprised to find that Cook Islanders are quite devout Christians. One might think that someone with a degree in anthropology and religion ought to know better than to assume things, but I arrived there with visions of Pacific Island ceremonies dancing in my head. I was so very wrong. The Cook Islanders are proud of their conversion to Christianity, and thankful for all that it has brought them. They have managed to find a way to keep a strong hold on many of their traditions, all the while integrating Christian practices into daily life. They have many churches on their islands, serving many different denominations. They have merged and melded their culture to suit their needs, to allow them to continue on in their own way, the path of progress which all of humanity is undertaking in some form or another.

One of the ways that the Cook Islanders celebrate their conversion is with the "Nuku". It was on October 26, 1823 that Father John Williams arrived in the Cook Islands with a Raiatean missionary named Papeiha, to spread the Christian word. Since then, October 26th is Gospel Day, and now a national holiday. The day is typically filled with prayers, speeches, parades, bible dramas and of course, feasting. This all contributes to the colourful festivities that are looked forward to all year long as the Nuku is an important event for Cook Islanders.

What does this say about Indigenous peoples of the world? It says that while we are all alike in many ways, we are also different and diverse in many ways. While we share many similarities in our histories and our present realities, our differences make our cultures as far apart as any two nations compared on earth. As my mother always said, wouldn't the world be a boring place if we were all the same?

Suzanne Bate, a 29 year old Métis from Alberta, Canada, has a degree in anthropology from Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. She has just completed an internship with Pacific Peoples' Partnership where she researched traditional culture in the Cook Islands. She previously completed an internship with Jeunesse du Monde where she worked with a Women's Collective in Senegal, Africa. Suzanne hopes to one day teach Native Studies at the university level in her favourite city, Montreal.

2 MONTHS in the Sun



by Reaghan Tarbell

My Experience Overseas

Leaving home for the first time is always hard, especially when one is going so far away.

On the eve of graduating from university and with some wanderlust flowing through my veins, I applied for PPP's Youth International Internship Program: a program which would see me living overseas for six months.

The decision to apply was easy. The decision to accept was...a bit harder.

You see, apart from vacations and Girl Guide camp, I've never been away from my family and home for more than a week. This was a very big decision for me indeed.

Home for me is Kahnawake, a Mohawk reserve located just ten minutes from Montreal, Quebec. With a population of roughly 8,000 people, Kahnawake is the third largest reserve in Canada. Its tight knit community meant I was never far from my family and friends. Its close proximity to a major metropolitan city meant I was able to live at home while continuing my post-secondary education. I was always "at home" in Kahnawake, everything I needed was within a stone's throw. After 25 years of living there it was hard to imagine life beyond the reserve. So why was I even contemplating leaving for half a year? 180 days? 4,320 hours?

Ya got a minute?

There were many reasons why I applied for the internship program. The most obvious one to me is that although I had completed university, I wanted to further my education through travel. I was also lured by the opportunity to visit a part of the world I might never get to see and

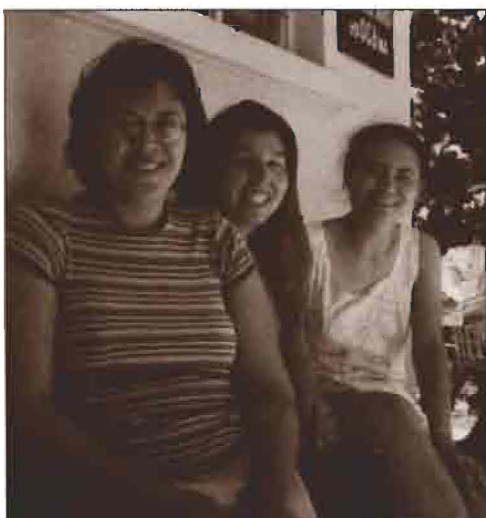
excited by the chance to experience another indigenous culture. I realized the benefits gained from this type of experience would be endless.

The main reason I accepted the internship position is because I had to follow my heart. As well, I hoped to inspire my younger cousins and friends so that they too would follow their dreams even if they lead them to the other side of the world.

A few months later found me boarding a plane for the Cook Islands. Rarotonga, the largest and most populated of the 15 islands was to be my home for the next six months.

My placement was at the Cook Island Herald, one of two local newspapers. My time was to be spent writing news and features, training the staff (made up of Cook Islands Maori) on the basics of news-writing and doing some computer lay-out. The Cook Island Herald newspaper is housed under the same roof as a film production company, a radio station and a television station. All are owned by mini-media mogul Elijah Communications. I was amazed by the fact that approximately 3/4 of the staff are under 30 and the majority have no prior schooling in the jobs they are performing.

From the moment I arrived at work I felt that the words "journalism degree" placed me on a pedestal, a foot or two higher than my new colleagues. It was an uncomfortable feeling as I am



Reaghan (centre) with staff of Elijah Communications. Elijah Communications houses a radio and television station, a weekly newspaper and a film production company under one small roof.



afraid of heights. Yes, I was here to help to teach reporting skills and yes, I did have a degree but when I glanced around me and saw hard working, capable people (most without degrees) excelling at their job, I knew that we could all learn from each other.

As the days stretched into weeks I would often find myself standing on the beach at sunset, marveling at the simple fact that I was here. I was proud of myself and wasn't afraid to admit it. I've always wanted to travel and here I was on this tropical island paradise. I was also learning more about the person I was and who I wanted to be. For example, witnessing first hand the Cook Islanders' devotion to Christianity made me want to embrace and learn all I could about my Mohawk heritage, including learning my language.

But it was very hard at times. It was not all snorkeling and tanning in the hot sun. Not long after I left, my father underwent major surgery and I learned my grandmother might have a tumor. Fortunately for everyone, things turned out fine. Ironically, my own health was to be a cause for concern.

On the morning of November 25th I experienced what was believed to be a grand mal seizure, my first. Everyone thought it best if I returned to Canada for tests. My feelings on this were mixed to say the least. I felt my stay had been too short but I was also very scared to stay at the same time.

On the morning of December 7th I boarded a plane for home. At a few minutes before dawn it was the worst possible time of day to be leaving. As I walked out across the tarmac I noticed just a hint of the sun coming over the mountains. The effect was breathtaking and the result was a purplish-blue sky slowly being taken over by that hint of sun. There was a

warm breeze in the air and though I did not hear them I knew the roosters had been crowing for some time. Their early morning crowing used to be the bane of my existence but now I yearned to hear them one last time.

Taking my seat in the plane I blinked back tears, thankful that I had gotten to see one last sunrise in my time here.

Having to leave almost four months early might make one think about all that is left undone but I refused to get into that mindset. For two months I was on my own. For two months I was an integral part of a local news gathering team, being the teacher and the student. For two months my fellow intern, Suzanne and I survived giant cockroaches, even bigger spiders and paralyzing heat. I had numerous accomplishments (from introducing the term "Inuit" to the staff and tossing "Eskimo," and having my by-line on the front page of the newspaper!)

Was my time overseas a success?

I think so.

Was it too short?

Well, isn't our stay "anywhere" too short? If anything, my two months in the sun made me realize that I should make the best out of my time all the time, whether at home or thousands of miles away. I'll always be thankful for the experience.

Reaghan Tarbell is a 26 year old Mohawk woman. She graduated in 2000 with a degree in journalism from Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. Tests done upon her return ruled out epilepsy but she still has no idea what caused her seizure. She completed her internship in Victoria, BC by guest editing this issue of Tok Blong Pasifik.

A recent graduate from the University of Toronto's faculty of law, Katherine Sam spent her internship overseas in Port Vila, Vanuatu working with the Vanuatu Cultural Centre on the Juvenile Justice Project (JJP). A central objective of the JJP is to develop a plan of action to more effectively address the needs and rights of young Indigenous offenders.

A Ktunaxa from the B.C. Interior, Katherine was an integral member of the JJP. She conducted research on the use of customary approaches to deal with the juvenile offenders of Vanuatu. She also developed a questionnaire that was used to interview members of the legal profession about the issues involving children in conflict with the law in Vanuatu. A final report will address the needs of the juvenile offenders. The report will be presented at a National Summit Meeting hosted by the Juvenile Justice Project.

Katherine felt fortunate to work at the Cultural Centre as the staff is often invited to ceremonies. She attended a pig killing ceremony to honor the recently elected President of the Council of Chiefs and a ceremony to honor the repatriation of some artifacts returned by the government of France after more than 150 years.

"My internship position with the Kaljoral Senta has surpassed all my expectations. The work was exceptionally rewarding and challenging. I feel very fortunate to have been involved with such a worthwhile project."

Katherine

TOK

PROJECT JONAH

Whale Saving Mission

by Jay Lambert

October 14, 2000

8:00am: It's bright and early Saturday morning. I haven't quite settled into my new home for the next six months, Whangarei, New Zealand. My fellow intern, Aaron, and I are still recovering from jet lag (in remission partly due to our night on the town the previous evening). Okay, maybe it wasn't jet lag but it felt pretty much the same.

Coffee? Definitely! I need a strong hit of that personality in a cup for what lay ahead of us and as long as it didn't have anything to do with backed up toilets, I was game.

It was only our first full week in our new surroundings but already we had a unique challenge in front of us. Our mission briefing was for 9 a.m. As we were soon to learn, whale strandings rarely happen at such a civilized hour (if you can call 9 a.m. civilized). I was already apprehensive about the mission because I didn't have a chance to secure myself a wet suit. From recent experience, I knew that the water was going to be far from pleasant, a thought that I worked hard to push out of my head. This was a worthy cause after all.

Wasn't it? I think I needed more coffee.

9:05am: We are the last to arrive, the rest of the team is in good spirits and most have had at least some experience with our subject. We quickly learn that it is amusing to pick on the new recruits. Introductions are made all around.

9:15am: We are briefed on our mission. It is important to have a firm understanding of what is expected of us, otherwise the mission could end up causing more damage than it prevents. We review case studies of past rescues and are told that we have to be able to think on our feet. Each situation comes with unique challenges and apparently this one will be no different.



The delicate task of rolling the "whale" onto the flotation device

It is made abundantly clear that as long as our subject is alive the designated leaders have full authority on what happens on the mission. This causes a slight bone of contention with some of our crew, which (besides Aaron and myself) is made up of our Ngatiwai hosts. They have certain rights which involve the subjects when they are alive and dead and this is grounds for potential conflict. Everyone wants to save the subject but at the same time our crew is ready to respond in an entirely different capacity if the subject does not survive. A minor clash

of cultural rights versus popular culture.

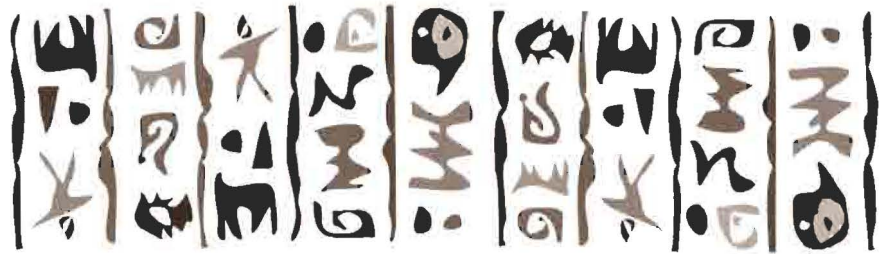
"The Ngatiwai hold a kinship with the whale, it was a gift from the god of the land to the god of the sea. Alive, such in the case of the strandings, they feel a responsibility to their relation to help it find its way back to the sea. Dead (such as when a whale washes up on Ngatiwai territory), the whale is seen as a gift to the people to be used in a respectful manner. The most common use would be for tools and artwork. Traditionally all parts of the whale that could be used would be used – meat would be used for food, blubber used for oil, etc."

10:07am: Ready for action, we organize the vehicles and gear and make our way to the site of the stranding.

10:18am: We get to the water and begin setting up our gear, and get some quick hands-on training with the equipment. The subject, at 15 feet long and 2000 lbs., can easily be stressed. We want to get this right the first time.

10:24am: Our whale is difficult to identify. It has some of the markings of an Orca but the shape and other distinguishing marks say something else entirely. Of course we aren't prejudiced against different species so we make the appropriate notations in our mission log and get to work. We must get this whale floated out to deeper water before the tide goes out. The sooner we can get this whale saved the better chance that it has for survival. We are fortunate; this whale doesn't have any noticeable injuries that would jeopardize its chances of survival. There is however something strange about this whale but I haven't been able to put my finger on it.

10:26am: Almost immediately most of our crew is in the water with the whale (a huge thank you for the borrowed wet suit). We need to keep the whale as comfortable as possible, while preparing to float him out to deeper water. We designate one person to stay near the head and talk with the whale; these highly intelligent mammals find human contact soothing especially if they feel that we are there to help. The rest of us work to keep the whale's sensitive skin wet. In direct sunlight, it takes no time at all for the dark skin to dry out. The remainder of our crew begin setting up the floatation device that will be used to float the whale to deeper water.



10:34am: Everything is in place for the delicate task of rolling the whale onto the sling. This is a critical moment, if the whale panics we could find ourselves flying in all directions, never mind that our victim might hurt himself. We are warned to be especially careful around the tail, as this is the most dangerous area – common sense for someone who was raised around horses. Our victim is unbelievably complacent and things go amazingly smooth. Our new friend is still amazingly quiet and I begin to wonder if maybe he's dead. Hmm...there's something really strange about this whale.

10:52am: Success! The whale has been successfully floated and we have begun to rock him back and forth to help his inner ear achieve equilibrium balance. If this isn't done the whale's lack of balance and direction may cause him to re-strand and all our work will have to be repeated. It's best to get it right the first time. It looks like we saved this one!

11:01am: As we begin to move to deeper water we notice that our whale isn't responsive, we check for vital signs, nothing. Some more checks and we realize that our whale isn't fit to be released into the wild. It turns out our whale is made of rubber! He'd never make it if we let him go, but he is still a great tool for yet another training session put on by Project Jonah.

11:21am: After deflating Willie we get a quick mission debriefing. We have all done well and are reminded again that each stranding is unique and poses all sorts of challenges. We pack up our gear and go home, time for a much-needed shower and nap.

Jay Lambert is a 28 year old Métis, born in Edmonton, Alberta. He has a degree in Geography with a specialization in Community Economic Development from Simon Fraser University and a Diploma in Geographic Information Systems from York College of Information Technologies in Toronto. Jay worked with the Ngatiwai Trust Board in Whangarei, New Zealand as a technical consultant in the development of a GIS for their Resource Management Unit as part of his internship.



PPP interns Jay and Aaron and their Ngai Tahu hosts, inflate pontoons that enable them to float a beached whale out to deeper water.

A WHALE

by Aaron MacMillan

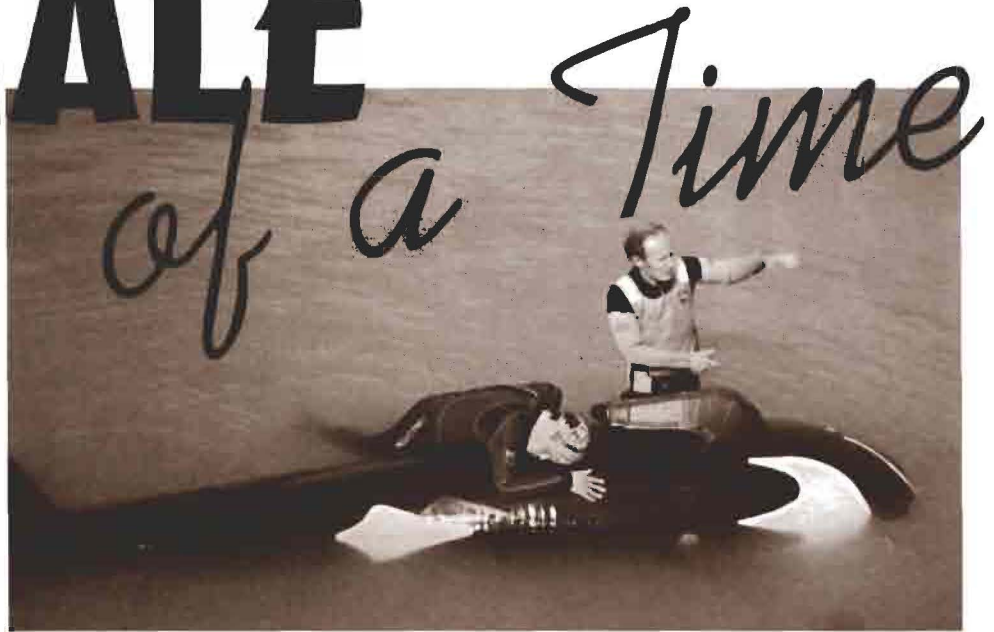
Have you ever watched news footage of a beached whale being rescued and wondered who those people are dumping water on the whale and covering it with sheets? Would it surprise you to learn that the majority of them are probably volunteers? Based in New Zealand, Project Jonah is an organization that offers training on how to rescue stranded whales and dolphins. Its two day Marine Mammal Certification Course involves a classroom session and a practical simulated outdoor rescue. During our internship, myself and another fellow Canadian were able to take part in this valuable training experience.

The classroom session was short and to the point. We learned basic procedures, such as: upon arrival at a stranding scene it is important to note the number of beached whales, their species and then phone this information to the Project Jonah 24 hour phone line. Needless to say we were all looking forward to the actual "rescue".

Project Jonah has noted that animals will react positively to soothing, calming voices, and will become quite attached to one person. On the day of the "rescue" I took it upon myself to practice comforting a whale as I lay on our training model and patted its back. An easy thing to do on a large piece of rubber, but probably a bit harder on a live whale.

As a whale's skin can dry very quickly in the sun it is important to keep it wet. Even with the volunteers regularly splashing water on it, our training model was drying quite quickly. To monitor whether or not a live whale is cool enough, you can feel underneath the fin, or armpit, to see how warm it is. The warmer the armpit, the more water you need to pour on it.

It is important to note that there are different types of strandings. A single strand-



Aaron takes it upon himself to "soothe" the training model. Project Jonah has noted that whales react positively to soothing, calming voices.

ing normally involves just one mammal, or sometimes a mother and her calf. Most likely the mother is in pain due to sickness or injury and beaches herself in desperation. Naturally the calf will follow its mother and beach itself. Old age, severe injuries, and navigation mistakes are other causes of strandings. A mass stranding involves three or more mammals, and is mainly due to the strong social bonding of the animals. For example, one of the whales may come ashore due to sickness or disorientation, or may have just made a wrong turn. The entire group will remain with this whale, or "key" whale, and therefore be stranded as a group. This social bonding is so strong that the whales must be returned to sea together for a successful rescue.

Project Jonah has floatation devices that were specifically designed for saving stranded whales. These devices have been attributed to saving over 2,000 mammals and can float whales weighing up to four tons! The deflated device is placed beside the animal, and with a lot of help, the whale is rolled on to one side, and the mat is placed underneath. It is then rolled on to the opposite side and the mat is pulled through. The deflated pontoons are now on each side and are ready to be inflated. They are carefully inflated one at a time so as not to cause the animal to roll right over. With both pontoons inflated, the whale can then be easily floated back out to sea. We were able to perform this procedure on our training model with success.

New Zealand has the highest rate of whale stranding incidences in the world, but also the highest success rate, at approximately 95%. Most likely it's the volunteers (people like you and me) who have helped in achieving such a high success rate.

I am now certified by Project Jonah (NZ) Inc., as a "Marine Mammal Medic", and part of a list of volunteers. I enjoyed taking this course and learned a lot from it. It has been one of many rewarding experiences for me while on my internship. I know that I can walk into a whale stranding with confidence but I honestly hope it doesn't happen too soon. I hope these beautiful creatures stay at home, out to sea, where they belong.

Aaron MacMillan, 22, is a Plains Cree Indian, born in Prince George, BC. Prior to his internship Aaron worked for the BC Government. He plans to pursue a degree in Social Work in the near future.

'Buildim Blok Blong Mekem Helti Fuja'



BUILDING BLOCKS

for a HEALTHY FUTURE

by Winch Garae and
Tom Spangler



Vanuatu is, in many ways, a very young nation. Having gained independence in 1980, this diverse group of islands in the southwestern Pacific supports a population whose average age is just over 17 years old. While ni-Vanuatu of all ages enjoy a lifestyle that many in the outside world might envy - rich cultural traditions, quiet villages nestled in tropical forests, and crystal coral seas - the young generations have reason to be concerned about their prospects for a healthy future.

A major factor in the development of youth is the rapidly changing social environment in Vanuatu. It has become common for young people to seek alternatives to life in rural villages, leaving behind a more self-sufficient lifestyle and family support structures in the hope of making a new life in Port Vila or Luganville. In "Young People Speak", a publication of the Vanuatu Young People's project, youth offer their perspective on the difficult situation they face. Reuben, a class 10 'drop-out' explains, "I came

to Vila because my family is large and there is no money for school fees. My father sent me to Vila to find a job so that I can help with the school fees for my brothers and sisters who are on the island." In response to severely limited access to education many young people migrate to one of the two urban centers seeking employment that is often only temporary or ill paid, and does little to improve one's quality of life. As in many other developing nations, youth living in Vanuatu are finding themselves at greater risk of teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, spread of sexually transmitted infections, unemployment and rising crime.

In an effort to assist the young people of Vanuatu in creating healthy productive lives for themselves and their families in rural communities, UNICEF Pacific has undertaken the development of a Pacific Lifeskills Curriculum Program. The project aims to provide young people throughout the region with coping strategies they will need to negotiate their rapidly changing world. Scheduled for implementation in five Pacific island nations - Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Fiji - the initial program will seek to build on diverse cultural traditions in addressing the specific needs of young people in each country.

Before creating an effective curriculum however, UNICEF recognized the need for reliable baseline information on the key issues surrounding the quality of life of young people in each of the selected countries. Echoing the need for such information, youth agencies and government ministries throughout the region joined the call for population-based data on the health and lifestyle status of youth for program planning and policy development. This shared need for credible information on the lives of young people in the Pacific region led to the development of the Health Behaviour and Lifestyle of Pacific Youth Survey.

Key to the ultimate success of HBPY Vanuatu Survey was the creation of a competent and committed survey team. An



Survey team members inputting data at the UNICEF office in Port Vila, Vanuatu.



Some survey team members take a break during a data analysis workshop. Standing on the wall, at left, is Winch Garae. Sitting, second from left, is Tom Spangler.

important step was taken in that direction with the creation of the Vanuatu Youth Development Workshop held in the capital of Port Vila in August 2000. Organized in collaboration with Peace Corps Vanuatu, this event brought together working groups comprised of eight Peace Corps Volunteers and 22 youth leaders from ten islands in an effort to create new opportunities for youth development, especially in rural areas. Seen as an opportunity to enhance the skills of young people in the country, while directly involving youth in an intervention strategy to assist their peers, UNICEF enlisted the participants as HBPY Survey field staff. As part of the workshop, all survey team members underwent additional training covering the origin and methods of the survey, as well as critical issues addressing privacy and confidentiality as covered in the survey protocol.

Nearly 80 percent of the citizens of Vanuatu proceed no further than class 6, the final year of the primary education system. It is generally agreed that statistics such as these have had, and will continue to have a considerable affect on the health and overall quality of life of this young nation. Given these considerations, the HBPY Vanuatu Survey was developed into both an in-school and out-of-school version in the hope that information could be gained on the more immediate health and lifestyle affects of limited access to education on the young people of Vanuatu.

The in-school version of the survey was conducted in 31 Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary schools in five different provinces. Implementation of this portion of the survey was straightforward given the prior approval from the Ministry of Education and all participating headmasters. Likewise, the relatively high literacy among secondary school students allowed for self-administration of the survey, which had previously been translated by the survey team into Bislama, the common language of Vanuatu.

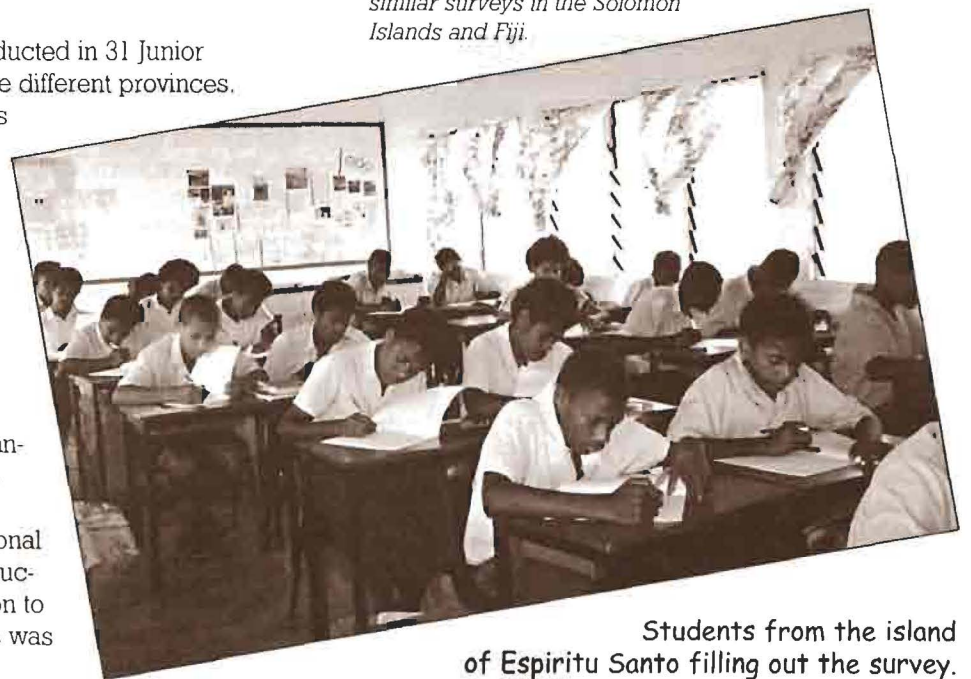
In comparison, the out-of-school surveys required a greater degree of planning and organization on the part of the survey team as well as the rural communities that were asked to take part. In each of the 17 villages surveyed, traditional chiefs and church leaders were given an introduction to the project and asked for their permission to conduct the survey in the community. Once this was

granted, survey team members were required to work with the community in determining an appropriate time and place to gather with local out-of-school youth. As the vast majority of this population have very limited Bislama reading skills, survey team members were required to work with small same-sex groups, reading aloud each question and possible response to participants.

Although the final results of the survey have not yet been published, young ni-Vanuatu members of the survey team believe that through this process, they have made an important contribution to the future of their peers throughout the country. Yvette Sam, however, expressed her belief that young people should not face the future alone. As headmistress of one of the largest secondary schools surveyed, Ms. Sam observed that "the health behaviour and activities of young people is a result of their communities and the society in which they grow. It is unfair to place sole responsibility for current health issues on the young people of our country". Judging from the warm response from secondary schools and communities who took part in the survey, young people are supported in their effort to take this first critical step in the development of Vanuatu's future.

Winch Garae is 23-years-old and is originally from the island of Maewo in Vanuatu. He is attending agriculture practicum courses at the University of the South Pacific, and will soon be engaged in an agricultural survey for the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific.

Tom Spangler is 30 years old, originally from Flagstaff, Arizona and is now living in Vanuatu working with UNICEF Pacific. Originally he came to Vanuatu as a Peace Corps volunteer. He became involved in youth development in Vanuatu when he attended the "Fiji Youth Leadership Development Workshop". Tom is directing similar surveys in the Solomon Islands and Fiji.



Students from the island of Espiritu Santo filling out the survey.

FRUSTRATED

and Doing Something About It:

Youth in Fiji

Strive for Peace

by Lice Movono

Many theories exist as to the cause of last year's political problems in Fiji, but most of the country's young people simply want to move on with life.

In July of last year, two months after the democratically elected government in Suva was overthrown at gun point, Young Adults with Concern (YAWC) was born out of youth frustration at the way our communities were disintegrating before our eyes.

After weeks of wanton violence and widespread lawlessness, the future seemed pretty bleak.

For us, the younger generation of a country once dubbed "the way the world should be", who was behind the coup was not of much importance; we just wanted to get on with our lives and live in harmony. Our main concern in YAWC was the number of people who were turning against their own neighbors. We feared that future leaders might make the same mistakes as the leaders of today, and we wanted to try as much as possible to change that.

Made up of some 200 active members and a handful on the working committee, YAWC currently works with the hope that those younger than us will not find anything wrong with a different skin color or accent. As much as possible, we wanted to be a positive influence among the negative vibes watering down our once close-knit communities. Multi-racial and non-political, YAWC's activities have focused on one very simple, youthful statement: "I am okay, and you are okay!" Our aim was to convince as many members of the community as possible that many races could live together equally in peace.

But our task has not proven easy.

The planning of activities that would call attention to our message without inciting more violence became quite challenging. For weeks, we just hung out. With food, music and lots of new faces, the setting provided a good foundation for our cause.

Members of the NGOs and human right groups in the capital would join us to share their methods of promoting multi-racialism. Helping us to examine our own racist tendencies and look at potential solutions proved to be a good start.

In August, we sent out materials to primary and secondary schools around the capital city area. We

asked students to send artwork depicting their hopes for the future, and within weeks we had enough materials to begin a campaign of peace, hope and reconciliation. Early in the morning on the 18th of September, International Peace Day, almost 300 YAWC members and supporters gathered at Ratu Sukuna Park, Suva's main recreation spot. We wanted to deliver a candle to every single business house in the city, the area that was worst hit at the height of last year's violence and looting, in an effort to bring peace to the area.

By mid-morning the campaign was rated a success. Through the candles, we delivered peace messages written by young people ranging from 6 to 24 years of age to the citizens of Suva.

A week later on the 23rd of September, YAWC organized a peace rally at the same park. It was a Saturday, so a lot of people who came to the city joined us for art, music, poetry, oratory, dance and drama. That was the first public gathering allowed by the government following the nationalist march that had sparked the violence of May 19th.

A month later, we visited a halfway home for boys in the heart of Suva to socialize with the members. Chevalier Hostel, run by the Catholic Church, is home to orphans and street boys.

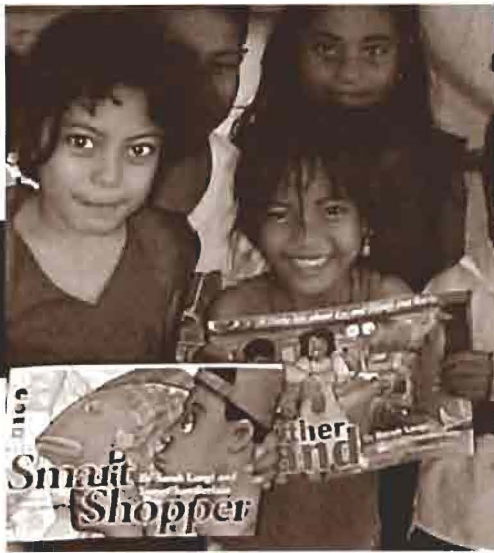
Since then, YAWC members have been moving peace banners made by students in Suva to any shelter willing to welcome our group. Staying at each location for a week, the four banners were put up at hospitals, restaurants, hotels, banks, churches, homes for the elderly and homes for the mentally disabled. Even the local McDonalds franchise played host to our artwork of peace.

The group's will for peace to succeed crossed all barriers. From all walks of life, varying occupations, an age range covering a decade, and representation from all races, we continue with our cause.

Our agenda for the year is to attract more attention, especially amongst our peers. We figure that nothing much can be done to change the past but more has to be done to shape the future. Although young people make up 20 percent of the current population, we have had precious little say at the decision-making level. The long-term goal of the group aims to change that. Not only do we want to create a generation that appreciates diversity, YAWC hopes to make better people of tomorrow's leaders. We want young people to grow up with more of a say in society. We want young people to be more responsible and to be more appreciative of each other. We want this generation to grow up a different people.

A people that loves and promotes peace.

Lice Movono is a 21 year old Fijian who wrote for a local daily until about two weeks after the May overthrow of government, when she was made redundant. Following three months of hoping that the situation would normalize, she joined a women's organization (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre www.fijiwomen.com) where she came into contact with other young people who had just helped form Young Adults with Concern. At first, she was skeptical of the group, but it changed her emotions about the political events of earlier months. Instead of just feeling frustrated, she realized that joining forces with other positive-minded people would churn more satisfying results. Lice is now writing for a Rugby magazine (www.teivovo.com).



Storybooks

TEACH CHILDREN

How to Safely Handle Fish

by Naomi Johnson

Through a series of three storybooks, elementary school children in the Pacific are learning to handle fish in a 'safe' manner.

The books, released late last year, focus on nutritional, hygienic, and consumer advice, promoting clean food handling in the journey from the fisherman's net to the family dinner table. It teaches kids how to tell a good fish from a bad fish, the nutritional value of seafood, and explains the concept of bacteria as an agent of spoilage and sickness.

The books are the brainchild of Australian Tony Chamberlain, the post-harvest fisheries lecturer at University of the South Pacific's marine studies program for the last five and a half years.

The post-harvest fisheries project is funded by the Canadian International Development Agency through the Canada-South Pacific Ocean Development (C-SPOD) Program. C-SPOD is Canada's major regional commitment to the Pacific islands, worth more than \$28-million over 14 years. C-SPOD funds several projects at the marine studies program, including graduate student scholarships and the aquaculture training program.

In addition to these storybooks, Chamberlain is developing a series of modules that he hopes will be incorporated into national science studies for the Pacific's secondary students. The ultimate goal is to improve seafood handling, hygiene, the marketability of seafood, and to reduce sickness.

Chamberlain targeted primary school children with the first messages because they are more receptive to learning good habits, and it is a great way to help them as they learn English.

"We found that older people do not change their ways readily and that workshops seem to have only short-term impacts," Chamberlain said. "By focussing on primary and secondary school children, it is hoped that the awareness-raising materials will be incorporated and used as teaching resources, and that there will be long-term impacts as the children grow and have more input in their communities."

So far the books have been distributed to primary schools in Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tokelau, and Vanuatu.

One unexpected benefit is that non-governmental organizations, fisheries workers, and public health promoters are using the books to raise awareness about these issues in rural villages. The messages are simple, the pictures are colourful, and the combination of the two really helps to reinforce the information.

"Kids and villagers love them," Chamberlain said. "We have had many responses from teachers, organizations, and villagers where the books have been tested."

Chamberlain says the next step in targeting the primary school age group will be a snakes and ladders type of game, except this one will be "moray eels and fish nets."

"You go back if you land on a 'bad' square, for example, bacteria, and you move forward if you land on a 'good' square, for example, ice," Chamberlain explained. "The first person to finish is the 'best fish handler.'"

Naomi Johnson, 23, is the Media Relations Officer for the Canada-South Pacific Ocean Development (C-SPOD) Program. Her position is made possible through the International Activities office at Saint Mary's University (Halifax, Canada) and is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) through the International Youth Internship Program. She is based at the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in Apia, Samoa.



KEEPING ^{the} CULTURE

Young Aboriginal Women are Carrying on Grandmothers' Culture

Alive

The young women of Wirrimanu Aboriginal Community in Australia's north-west are listening to and learning from their grandmothers. They are taking responsibility for holding onto their ancestral culture as they already prepare to pass on some of that knowledge to those younger than themselves. Zohl de Ishtar, coordinator of Kapululangu Women's Law and Culture Centre, reports:

Wirrimanu (aka Balgo), Australia's most remote Aboriginal community, lies on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert in the ancestral lands of the Luurnpa (Kingfisher bird). A place of great religious strength, it is home to some of Australia's strongest traditional cultures. Balgo's art is renown for its strong land-based spirituality, but the challenge to the integrity of its peoples' cultural heritage is seldom recognised.

Wirrimanu's elders were the last of Australia's Indigenous peoples to come into contact with Kartiya (non-Aboriginal) society. They lived their childhoods (and in some cases early adult lives) in their desert enjoying a culture that had been passed down generation to generation since the beginning of time (some say 60,000 years). Beyond the frontier of Kartiya society (which did not have the skill or the technology to survive in the desert) they shared and enjoyed one of the world's most integral spiritual and intellectual knowledges. The Catholic missionaries did not arrive in their homelands until the early 1940s and even then most families chose to remain in the bush until the 1960s. Indeed it was not until 1984 that the last family left their desert lifeways behind.

The impacts of colonisation have been harsh and the depth of pain that exists in Wirrimanu is

palpable. Overcrowded slum houses, poor education, no employment prospects, the highest infant mortality rates and ill-health . . . the list goes on. But these are all secondary symptoms of the destruction and weakening of traditional cultural practices and values. When the missionaries came they brought dormitories and the parents of today's youth grew up separated from their own parents and, as a result, the process of handing the knowledges down through the generations was disrupted and the cultural integrity broken.

Pressures to adapt to Kartiya ways and knowledges have increased over the years. The people are faced with the difficult task of discovering and creating ways that make the modern and the traditional compatible and relevant. Today's youth straddle both traditional and contemporary ways of being, struggling to make sense of this new reality, struggling to survive.

The women elders initiated the Kapululangu Women's Law and Culture Centre to assist them in instructing the young women and children in their traditional cultural practices and values. The elders believe that the breakdown in traditional culture has undermined the strength of their families. They perceive that a strong cultural base would engender the pride in Aboriginal-identity that is urgently needed to heal the pain that has afflicted their peoples after years of disinheritance.

The elders take groups of young women and girls into the bush (country) and lead them through ceremonies that 'grow them up' (or initiate them) in spiritual knowledge. The ceremonies consist of dancing, song, story-telling, and body-painting in ancient designs - all of which have been handed down from the Tjukurrpa or Dreaming Time when the Ancestors walked the land and created the landforms, leaving their spiritual essence in the land and shaping the Law (ways for the people to relate with each other, all species and all life).

Kapululangu's chairwoman Tjama Freda Napanangka explains:

"We really strong for the women culture. We teach im young kid. Teaching im culture long as the old people, we pass him to young kid. We try teaching. They got to keep im own culture. Soon as they grow the young girl they can keep idea might be give im to grandchildren, young daughter. We gotta teach so they can keep him. Culture really strong. Teaching. And all the way they can know. We old people know that culture. We might take him winter time and show bush tucker and teach kid for dancing every Country to look around what this Dreamtime. We can show and we can tell story. Every place. What Tjukurrpa Dream Time they bin come. Long as we got old people we can tell im culture. We got really strong one. That why we here in Tjilimi [Kapululangu Centre]. That why we keep im makarr [strong] - strong one. That why we teach im kid. They can learn. Young children they like culture. We teach im in workshop. Show em all the kid. Young children. Teach im and culture. Tell em, straighten him. What Dream Time bin come, Tjukurrpa. Make him strong.

That's why we got really strong one. This culture. We can't leave him. We gotta pass him young children, grandchildren. This Kapululangu really strong one, important one. We can't leave him."

Enticed and confused by the demands of Kartiya society some of the young people are not yet able to listen to their elders and turn instead to petrol sniffing and other self-destructive behaviours. But some young women are taking responsibility for holding on to their peoples' culture. Among them are Celeste Kingsley and Beverley Lee:

Zohl: *What is culture?*

Celeste: It is where people learn so that they can carry it on to the next generation.

Beverley: Learn dancing, painting - how they do on body. Body painting.

Zohl: *And how do you learn that culture?*

Celeste: Through elders. They learn you. Take you bush and paint your body.

Beverley: And going out hunting. And talking to us. Learning how to hunt. Learning women's way.

Zohl: *What do they tell you?*

Beverley: Stories. Stories about how the old people passed the culture to them.

Celeste: How they design the painting on your body tells the story about the people before. They tell you that story when they painting you up. And at same time singing the song.

Beverley: Yeah. Dreamtime [ancestral] stories.

Zohl: *Why do you think that it is important to hold onto it?*

Celeste: So that we can pass it on. If you are a young person and those old people going to die, who's going to take it on? So they [the elders] have to learn other people about it.

Zohl: *Why is it important?*

Celeste: It is important now because it is still alive today but if they will be gone who's going to take it on?

Zohl: *And what do you think about people that don't want to learn?*

Celeste: They ignore old people.

Beverley: They don't want to join in.

Zohl: *What about petrol sniffing?*

Beverley: They think it is fun for them.

Zohl: *Do you think that if they learn culture they might not go for petrol sniffing?*

Celeste: I don't know about them.

Beverley: You know the last time when we been go camping. The old men and women did painting on them, and they were dancing, but they didn't change. They still out there sniffing petrol.

Zohl: *Why do you think that they don't like to listen to their elders?*

Beverley: They think the old people are funny [stupid]. They don't want to go and join in. They want to go their own way. They don't want to listen.

Zohl: *What makes you want to listen? You're strong for culture. What makes you want to listen that story?*



Women elders painting up girls for dancing at Australia's First National Indigenous Youth Dance Conference.

Beverley: Because they take us out bush. Tell us stories.

Celeste: And do painting. They say, "Oh, if we gonna die who is going to hold this thing if you don't hold it?" That's why we keep trying to join in. We got all that paint on our body.

Beverley: And dancing.

Zohl: *And you want to set up a young women's group? Do you think that other young women want that?*

Celeste: I think that some of them will not listen to us. They getting shamed. They get shame for having their breast painted up. That's because they got boyfriends.

Zohl: *If you do dancing, do those people get shame for you?*

Beverley: Some times. But still we dance.

Zohl: *But what if you set up a young women's group?*

Celeste: Yeah. We can do things for ourselves. Take other young girls, more young than we are now. Take them out, these girls. Teach them.

Beverley: And help the old women to tell stories.

(These two young women are preparing to travel to Canada to attend the Pacific Peoples' Partnership Youth to Youth Forums, visiting Hawai'i on the way. They are excited about the prospects of sharing with other indigenous youth.)

Zohl: *And what about going to Canada and Hawai'i?*

Celeste: It's fun to show other young people what our culture is like.

Beverley: What we do here in Balgo.

Celeste: And we want to see how they do it there. How they do their culture. How they handle all their culture.

The grandparents are keepers of the traditional ways, but the youth are the generation that is obliged to find a balance between both the Indigenous and the Kartiya (non-Aboriginal) worlds. It is on their shoulders that the future integrity, and survival, of their peoples relies. They are the experiment of the future. They are the hope. They share this challenge with other indigenous youth around the world.

The Kapululangu visit to Canada and Hawai'i is assisted by the Australian Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body; and hosted in Canada by the Pacific Peoples' Partnership, Youth to Youth Forums; and in Ka Pae'aina (aka Hawai'i) by 'OhanaKoa. Kapululangu Women's Law and Culture Centre, PMB 308, Wirrimanu, Halls Creek, Western Australia, 6770, Australia.

Sunday, April 1, 2001

Tena koe Alec & Gloria,

Just a quick word on the girls now that the program and their stay with us is over.

In two words "AWESOME" and "THANKS".

Thanks for giving us the magic that has been Deana & Jenny, thanks for giving us the opportunity to share with kindred souls - our culture; thanks for sending to us living examples of all that is truly good and gentle and genuine in our young people, leaders of tomorrow, descended from an awesome past to be the keepers of an awesome future.

Pacific Peoples' Partnership must be applauded for this stunning initiative and can be truly proud of these two wonderful young women who carried the "kaupapa" with dignity and style - they leave behind many broken hearts, not of the romantic kind (although - I don't know about that one - our "Kaitiaki" boys may beg to differ if their wish lists could be exposed!) but broken hearts in terms of the sense that they are how every mother and father would wish their children to be, in terms of respect, in terms of courtesy, in terms of children to be proud of.

We wish we could keep them but we also know there are two sets of parents in Canada missing their girls like crazy - and we know why.

There were a lot of tears at their "poroporoaki" - mine will still be around long after they've gone - but I will never be sorry they touched my life - in terms of how I feel it's so inadequate but THANKS.

Wanda