

TOK BLONG PASIFIK

Pacific Peoples' Partnership: A View From Inside

Vol. 1 No. 1 Spring 2003

B e y o n d P a r a d i s e

Pacific Peoples' Partnership recently participated in a Foreign Policy Dialogue initiated by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. This is an excerpt from our formal submission to the Honourable Bill Graham, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Justice for all, freedom, respect and dignity, environmental integrity, love, accountable leadership, and tolerance – these are values neither unique to Canadians, nor to recent generations. They are long-standing, ancient, global and instinctive, values fought for and over since the beginning of civilization – indeed, they are arguably the defining characteristics of civilization. They remain the expressed hope of billions of the world's poor and oppressed in spite of the fact, or perhaps because of the fact, that in many places in the world, including in the South Pacific, everyday lived experiences are defined by the visible absence of such values, and in fact by their very opposite. Exploitation, fear, hatred, corruption, violence, discrimination, enslavement, and contempt – too many, too often, are too familiar with these traditions.

We know by historical example, that when these universally held values are buried, the seeds of insecurity grow and flourish. Militarism, tyranny, torture, persecution, malnutrition, abject poverty, mass migration, alienation – we are witness to them all, and no less profoundly in the South Pacific ... In fact, a snapshot of the Pacific today would put the following realities into sharp relief:

➤ **West Papua:** the grave markers of up to 100,000 indigenous people who have lost their lives in 40 years of struggle for independence from Indonesia

➤ **Solomon Islands:** the closed doors of most primary, secondary and post-secondary schools in the face of budget cuts, civil war, and government corruption and bankruptcy

➤ **Fiji:** thousands marching in the streets of Suva, protesting a 2.5 per cent increase in the VAT, the non-progressive tax on goods that was increased to replace revenues lost due to the elimination of import tariffs and foreign investment taxes

➤ **Tuvalu:** global climate change is life threatening and visible having accelerated coastal erosion, created more severe droughts and frequent cyclones, led to salt water intrusion into

soils and ground water, and brought about unprecedented coral bleaching

➤ **Kingdom of Tonga:** newsstands devoid of copies of the recently banned Times of Tonga, a newspaper that dared to be critical of the King

➤ **Papua New Guinea:** a country that ranks 133rd on the United Nations Development Program's Human Development index; where 35 per cent of all children under the age of five are undernourished; where 44 per cent of all women are illiterate, as are 30 per cent of men; and where life expectancy is only at 55.6 years

➤ **Pacific waters:** peaceful protests against the continued trans-Pacific shipment of plutonium-mixed uranium oxide fuel from Japan to Britain; with ships carrying enough material to make 60 nuclear bombs, fears of spillage and its devastating potential impact on Pacific sea life mounts

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PPP IN THE PACIFIC

Traditional Medicine reclaims status in Fiji: Wainimate programme concludes after five years

After four years of intense collaboration with the women of Wainimate, the Women's Association for Natural Medicinal Therapy in Fiji, PPP is excited to report that traditional medicine has reclaimed its status as a legitimate, accessible and popular form of treatment among the broader Fijian populace. There has also been a significant increase in the number of practitioners – both traditional healers and those within the modern health care system.

Among Wainimate's clearest successes over the past four years has been its ability to develop strong, mutually respectful relationships with Fiji's Ministry of Health and its hundreds of

health administrators and practitioners across the islands. Wainimate established gardens within urban hospitals and rural health centers, and trained hundreds of nurses, doctors, dentists, and health administrators in the identification, use and cultivation of plants.

And, perhaps most importantly, Wainimate has been working closely with Ministry staff to develop national legislation and a strategy platform which would officially and effectively integrate the provision of traditional medicine within the national health care strategy and delivery program. PPP has been proud to accompany Wainimate in this work over the years.

PPP puts priority on self-determination in West Papua

Jakarta's move to balkanize West Papua – a region that has been struggling for more than 40 years for political independence from Indonesia – by dividing it into three provinces, is one of the newest threats to West Papuan unity. It is also a sign that the 'window' for positive change created by East Timorese independence may be closing.

PPP is responding to requests from West Papuans to rally support for their efforts to press the United Nations to re-evaluate the outcome and circumstances of the UN 'Act of Free Choice'. Conducted in 1969 under the auspices of the UN, this flawed referendum ultimately cost West Papuans their independence. Together with Canadian solidarity organization, West Papuan Action Network, PPP is working to build a coalition of Canadian organizations committed to pursuing a human-rights and development agenda in the region.

To kick off the campaign, PPP invited *Octavianus Mote*, a Papuan journalist, activist and scholar living in exile in the US, to Victoria for a series of talks. PPP extends special thanks to the

Victoria chapter of the ecumenical organization, Kairos, for helping to co-organize Octo's activities.

We welcome your ideas, advocacy skills and financial support. For more information, contact: Jennifer Talbot at officer@pacificpeoplespartnership.org.



Octo Mote was in Victoria for a few days, where he had the chance to speak to activists, students and concerned citizens about the plight of the west Papuan people over the past 40 years.

Aboriginal journalists bring Pacific island news to Canada

Concerned about the Canadian media's continued avoidance of any in-depth coverage of the South Pacific, and with their tendency for sensationalist coverage of Aboriginal peoples and issues right here in Canada, PPP initiated *Speaking Out! Aboriginal Media Talk Development*. It is an ambitious project aimed at enhancing the understanding of Canadians and Canadian media about indigenous peoples in the South Pacific and Canada, and the common and interrelated issues of globalization, poverty, and underdevelopment they experience.

For two weeks, three professional journalists from Canada

toured Vanuatu and Fiji with PPP Programme Officer Jennifer Talbot.

PPP was delighted that **Tania Willard**, editor of the Aboriginal youth magazine, *Redwire*, and a member of the Secwepemc Nation in B.C., **Nelson Bird**, award-winning documentary film-maker, host of CTV's Indigenous Circle,

and a Cree member of the Peepeekisis Nation in Saskatchewan, and **Paul Barnsley**, a highly respected and well-known senior writer for *Windspeaker*, Canada's only national Aboriginal newspaper, agreed to participate in the project.

Together they travelled to fishing villages where communities have been working to protect threatened fish stocks, to a remote island where a youth group is involving the entire community in addressing problems of inequality, cultural loss, addiction and tourism, and to a

gold mine where workers have been striking for more than 10 years. The journalists also visited women's groups, and met with local media to enhance their skills at international reporting. Now back in Canada, they are producing articles for local and national indigenous and mainstream papers, a half-hour documentary (to air on CTV in September), a CBC radio commentary, and an issue of PPP's quarterly magazine, *Tok Blong Pasifik*.

They will also embark on a five-city Canadian tour engaging journalists, youth activists, decision-makers, solidarity groups and the

general public in discussions about the commonalities of experiences encountered by indigenous peoples of the North and South Pacific, and about the strengths and weaknesses of Canadian coverage of global indigenous issues.

Look to our

website for details on the tour – it might be coming to a community near you!

PPP remains grateful to the Canadian International Development Agency, the key funder of this initiative, and extends a special thank you to the Anglican Church of Canada's Primates World Relief & Development Fund for kicking off our fundraising with a grant of \$7,000.

PPP has still to raise \$10,000 for this initiative. All donations are most welcome!



Here, at one of the only white sand beaches our journalists got to experience, Paul, Jennifer, Tania and Nelson enjoy the sunset off the coast of Viti Levu.



PPP interns return from Pacific with skills and jobs

PPP interns are proving they can perform and that they can land jobs. Within three months of completing their six-month Pacific work placements, more than half of the interns had jobs in Canada. The 12 youth interns are from First Nation and Metis communities across Canada. All were participants in PPP's Youth International Internship Programme funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.



Interns Stephanie Peter (right centre) and Renee Hetu share a treasured gift from the Cowichan Nation in British Columbia with their Cook Island hosts, Te Tika Dorice Reid (left centre) and Koutu Niu Elder.

Our host organizations in the Pacific offered them assignments designed to give them a taste of Pacific culture, a sense of the most relevant community development issues, and an opportunity to develop solid international employment experience and skills that would make them more employable in Canada.

PPP congratulates the nine women and three men who were the 2002 interns.

Solomon Islands In Crisis

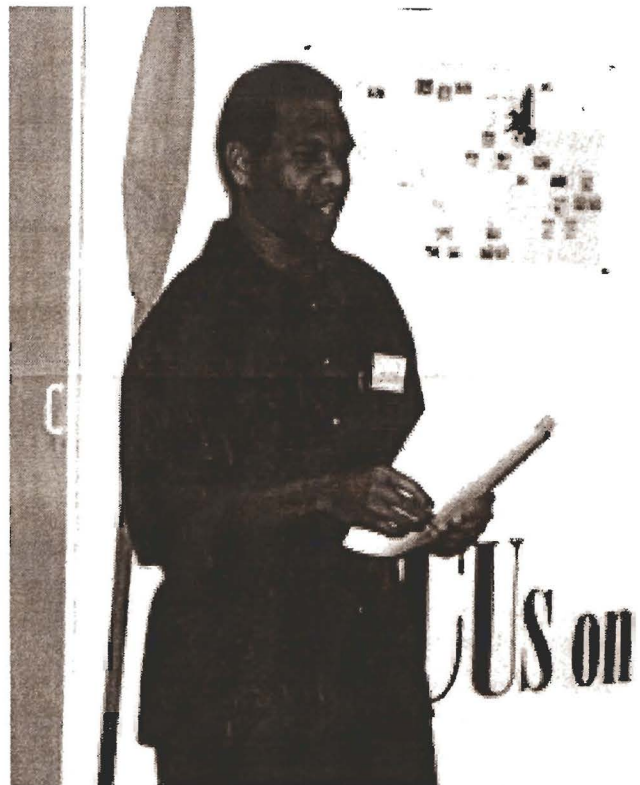
"Killing of innocent people, torture, rape, conscription of child soldiers, destruction of people's own lives, destruction of marriages, the loss of the rule of law, theft and wanton destruction of property." This is how Canadian, **Rt. Rev. Terry**

Brown, describes the legacy of conflict that afflicted the Solomon Islands from 1999-2000.

Terry Brown has lived in the Solomon Islands for many years and is one of the country's most vocal catalysts for change through the Church of Melanesia.

There is a proliferation of self-appointed and illegal armed groups that are extorting money, he said. "The general public is fed up with seeing common criminals elevated to the level of Special Constables or security forces and receiving money from the government, especially while teachers and health workers remain unpaid."

Solomon Islander and Victoria-based artist **Ake Lianga** has also been speaking out on the crisis in the islands. Speaking at Victoria's Alcheringa Gallery, Ake shared his personal analysis of the roots of the crisis with PPP supporters. One of Ake's major concerns is that negative forces have such a grip on the country that it is difficult to get aid to the people in need.



Victoria-based artist, Ake Lianga, offers his insights into the recent conflict in the Solomon Islands and on what role international aid and solidarity can play in resolving it.

PPP participates in policy think tank on public engagement

Why should Canadians be concerned about what happens in the world? How are we connected to the economies, communities and peoples in developing countries? And, as global citizens, what are our roles and obligations in bringing about change both in impoverished countries abroad and right here in Canada?

These are some of the questions that organizations like Pacific Peoples' Partnership, and a host of other non-governmental groups across the country, have been trying to address for decades in their efforts to educate Canadians about development issues internationally. Whether through slide shows in church halls, panels and debates in high schools, international exchange programmes, newsletters, videos or conferences, these civil society organizations have consistently sought to heighten awareness in Canada about the systemic causes of global poverty and injustice, and to offer ideas and tools for Canadians to take action.



Canadian Council for
International Co-operation
Conseil canadien pour la
coopération internationale

Engaging Canadians as global actors and citizens is not new. But in an effort to build on and pool the knowledge, resources and experiences of these groups, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation has pulled together for the first time a reference group on public engagement. PPP is one of 10 members of this policy forum whose primary goals include exploring ways the community can work together to strengthen our educational work, articulate a common vision for engaging Canadians in development issues internationally, and determine how best to measure and build on the results of previous efforts.

PPP Executive Director, Rita Parikh, is a member of the Public Engagement Reference Group whose work most recently has been focused on influencing the strategy and policy of the Canadian International Development Agency in its approach to educating Canadians. Policy papers from PERG will be placed on

PPP's website in the fall. And PPP's Programme Officer, Jennifer Talbot, recently travelled to a PERG workshop in Ottawa where participants used PPP's Speaking Out! Aboriginal Media Talk Development project to explore how to broaden and better measure the impact of community outreach work. PPP is now integrating some of the suggestions made at the workshop to strengthen the journalism project.



NFIP gears up for next three years

Calling for support for West Papuan self-determination, frameworks for protecting indigenous knowledge systems, stronger national laws to ban violence against women, and global compliance with the Waigani Convention ban on dumping of hazardous and toxic substances, more than 80 members of the **Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific** movement met in the Kingdom of Tonga in January to develop a platform for action around a range of peace, environmental, and globalization issues.



PPP's Executive Director, Rita Parikh, joined conference goers in discussions on ending Indonesia's trans-migration and illegal settlements in Maluku and West Papua, on the expected devastating impacts of recently-signed regional trading agreements, and on the US-Micronesia Compact of Free Association which allows importing of nuclear materials and harbouring of nuclear-powered ships and vessels within Micronesia. Now in its 30th year, the NFIP has grown from a forum focusing on nuclear issues to a powerful network that addresses a wide range of regional sovereignty and sustainability issues.

You can request an e-copy of the Tonga Communiqué by e-mailing: general@pacificpeoplespartnership.org.

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In short, the small island nations of the South Pacific continue to be among the poorest, most highly militarized, least economically and democratically secure in the world.

Towards a More Profound Engagement

Canada has the opportunity to chart a unique course for international cooperation with the region . . . In pursuing a more profound engagement, however, Canada must assume an approach rooted in the universal values mentioned above, not only because it is intrinsically right to do so, but also because it is the only hope for establishing the peace, security and justice out of which economic prosperity and sustainability can flow. In short, Canada must recognize and come to terms with the fact that its commitment to “the continued expansion of a stable, rules-based global trading system” may run counter to, and in some cases undermine, Canada’s capacity to bring about the change it desires in the world.

Throughout the Pacific, for instance, civil society organizations are expressing their increasing concern in reaction to the recent signing of three trade agreements that they feel will undermine national sovereignty and the capacity of governments to remain accountable to their people, and compromise “regional unity . . . around shared resources like fisheries”. The Pacific Islands Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) and the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER), combined with the Cotonou agreement which sets out the limitations of trade between the European Union and the Pacific, are seen as stepping stones towards ensuring the region’s full and eventual compliance with the trade regulatory regime established by the World Trade Organization . . .

We believe that there is neither evidence for, nor hope that, the neo-liberal economics of free-trade . . . will bring about any improvement in the lives of Pacific islanders. Indeed, there is already mounting evidence to the contrary. However, to the extent that Canadian commer-

cial interests can support and accompany economic development within the region, and help local communities and industry take advantage of the opportunities offered through globalization, Canada can and should strengthen its commercial ties and relations . . . Our actions both at the bilateral and multilateral level, in other words, must be guided by our shared desires for peace, democracy, human freedom and dignity, over freedom of commercial expansion and international trade. Some of these actions might then include:

➤ allocating greater human resources within DFAIT for pursuing stronger, more-informed relations with small island nations of the South Pacific . . .

➤ supporting a South Pacific-oriented research agenda in Canada that would better inform and enhance our capacity to act appropriately and proactively in the region.

➤ strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations in the Pacific to engage in applied research and to inform the public, government and international institutions on issues of international and domestic policy.

➤ advocating for transformation of the Bretton Woods institutions to ensure that they work for developing nations, and for their most vulnerable citizens.

➤ seeking a multilateral solution to the crisis in West Papua.

➤ recognizing the ongoing violations of human rights and freedoms in West Papua, the Solomon Islands, and the Kingdom of Tonga, and working within multilateral institutions to call for an immediate end to military-inflicted terror.

➤ sharing Canada’s experience in fisheries conservation, sustainability and development through the provision of technical, research, financial and institutional support to Pan-Pacific fisheries bodies and community-based fisheries.

FACES OF PACIFIC PEOPLES' PARTNERSHIP



Margaret Argue experienced colonialism in action when she lived in the French protectorate of New Caledonia, from 1979 to 1983. She has been a friend to Pacific islanders, a hands-on activist and a considerable force within the local and national NGO community ever since.

Currently serving as the Chair of PPP's board of directors, Margaret has made an outstanding contribution to PPP and its predecessor, the South Pacific Peoples' Foundation as staff, director, volunteer, contractor and donor. She also played a crucial role in ensuring its survival after the cutbacks of 1995.

Margaret lives in Victoria, Canada. She provides a range of NGO support and event organizing services as a private consultant.



Rita Parikh is Pacific Peoples' Partnership's executive director and comes to PPP with more than a decade of experience working with Canadian NGOs on a range of issues including: women's reproductive health, agricultural sustainability and international migration.

Rita served for many years as a member and chair of the board of directors of Canada's largest retail cooperative, Mountain Equipment Co-op.

She earned a Bachelor of Journalism degree from Carleton University in Ottawa, as well as a Master of Arts in International Affairs. Her writing and editing experience spans close to 20 years and includes reporting on development issues for a variety of news media.



Jennifer Talbot is PPP's programme development officer. She has recently returned from three years in Indonesia where she was part of an advocacy and public awareness team for Yappika, an umbrella organization of NGOs active in human rights and democracy building.

Jennifer earned a degree in Pacific and Asian studies from the University of Victoria, and brings to PPP a rich experience gained while serving as coordinator of socio-cultural programmes for international students there.

With PPP, she will focus on engaging Canadians in Pacific island issues and in building a more active and cohesive Canadian network to support West Papuan action on human rights and development.

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➤ taking seriously Canada's commitment to addressing climate change factors while supporting Pacific island scientists and governments that are working to develop the capacity and creative measures to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Looking ahead and abroad, Canada has clear opportunities for affecting significant change in a region whose rapid and imminent incorporation into the global economy threatens to alter dramatically the economic, cultural and social

structures of society. Pacific Peoples' Partnership urges the Canadian government to adopt an approach to foreign relations that not only gives primacy to the values of justice, peace, respect and human rights, but more profoundly, fans and fuels the creative and determined efforts of Pacific islanders themselves to realize these values throughout the South Pacific.

For a full transcript of PPP's submission, visit us at: www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org

INSIDE PPP

PPP's Pacific collection gets an auspicious home

PPP's unique collection of Pacific island resource materials has been recognized by the academic community and will have a permanent home at the University of Victoria library.

What makes the PPP collection so valuable is thousands of grassroots newsletters, limited-circulation periodicals and issue papers that we have collected over the years. These are rarely included in the few North American mainstream collections of Pacific island materials. Where else, for example, but at PPP would you find the *Pitcairn Miscellany*, the newsletter produced by the descendents of the mutineers of the Bounty?

But PPP's financial constraints in recent years meant that we were unable to maintain our subscriptions to Pacific Island periodicals, or acquire new resources for our collection. We hope and anticipate that the university will have the money to keep the collection current, and expect that the collection will now be accessible to a greater number of people.

Anyone wanting to view the resource should contact Tadanobu (Tad) Suzuki, Information Services Librarian at:

suzukit@uvic.ca, or 250-721-8277.

Volunteers Needed

PPP needs a website wizard and artist who can help redesign and manage our website. We also need someone to help catalogue and manage the video collection.

Contact us at:

general@pacificpeoplespartnership.org

Special Thanks

This inaugural issue of PPP's Tok Blong Pasifik newsletter would not have been possible without the incredible generosity and commitment of Linda Pennells, Margaret Argue, Peter Steed, Al Bishop, Mike Nekurak and Ian Sudbeck-Reid

Come to the right place – PPP has moved

Our new address is
407 - 620 View St.,
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 1J6



Contact us
by phone:
250-381-4131

fax:
250-388-5258

or email:
general@pacificpeoplespartnership.org
Or visit us at our new website address:
www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org

Drop in to meet the staff, volunteer on our programmes, scan back issues of *Tok Blong Pasifik*, or browse our West Papua collection.

Or, come and watch one of PPP's 150+ videos on Pacific island issues. All videos can be rented for up to two weeks for \$5 each (plus postage). An annotated video catalogue will be available by year-end on the website.

Keeping Afloat: PPP's financial highlights

While it is not yet smooth sailing for the year ahead, PPP is managing to stay afloat. Fundraising remains a challenge in an environment where few foundations have an interest in the South Pacific, and where stock values have seriously compromised the capacity of individuals and foundations to donate.

With this mailing, PPP is delighted to initiate our Monthly Sustaining Donor Plan. If you would like to become a Friend Of Pacific Peoples' Partnership, fill out and sign the attached coupon. Your support is critical to our success!

The United and Anglican churches continue to be core supporters and to have a special partnership with PPP. If your faith-based group has a social justice committee, why not ask PPP to speak on what's happening in the Pacific?

Contact us at
general@pacificpeoplespartnership.org