

TOK BLONG PASIFIK

Pacific Peoples' Partnership: A View From Inside

Vol. 2 No. 1 Spring 2004

Peace in the Solomons

What Role For Canadians?

In July 2003, Solomon Islanders watched as close to 2,500 troops, members of an international police and military force, spilled from planes and ships into their capital city of Honiara. The intervention, entitled Operation Helpem Fren, led by Australia and supported by New Zealand and several Pacific nations, represented the first phase in what many believe will be a decade-long intervention to address the breakdown of democratic institutions and the crisis of development that has unfolded in the Solomon Islands over many years.

For many Solomon Islanders, the intervention has provided a welcome respite from years of internecine violence that has threatened their security and undermined economic gains made over the past 20 years. But for others, the military action is akin to re-colonization, to the roots, some say, of the poverty and conflict themselves. From whatever vantage point one takes, however, the vista is unforgivingly clear: Solomon Islanders are becomingly steadily poorer and prospects for future development appear nowhere in sight.

Ranking 123 out of 175 on the U.N.'s Human Development Index, and with a GDP growth rate of negative 10 per cent annually, the Solomon Islands is among the poorest nations of the world. Its population of just under half a million people live primarily in rural areas, speak collectively more than 120 indigenous languages and dialects, and are scattered over about 350 of the nation's 992 islands. Almost half the population is under the age of 15, and youth alienation and disaffection are among the most urgent challenges confronting the nation today. While the Solomons is rich in several natural resources, including timber, gold, lead and bauxite, many of these resources remain untapped, and indeed efforts to exploit them have led to protracted ethnic violence and environmental devastation. Many argue that the source of today's problems lies in the Islands' entan-

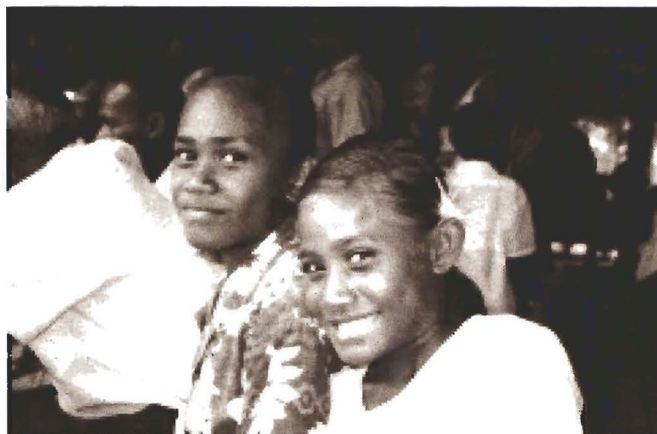
gled history of tribal conflict, colonial rule, embrace of modernism and development itself.

Indeed, few would disagree that this history is complex. Religious divisions superimposed by rival missionary groups exacerbated long-standing ethnic divisions that the archipelago's geography only seemed to heighten. These tensions deepened further under the colonial administration that encouraged migration across traditional tribal boundaries, and tended to favour one

tribal group over another. At the same time, efforts to thrust the Solomon Islands into the vast global economy - through the development of export commodities such as tuna and copra - pit this tiny island nation against a sea of savvy giants. Exposing the economy to the fierce competition and erratic forces of the global market place has only served to increase the country's economic vulnerability.

Moreover, the clash of ancient and modern traditions in both the political and economic realm, has also determined the course and speed of the nation's development. The long-standing Big-man patron-client wealth distribution system was clearly at odds with modern market principles being introduced. And centuries-old social and political traditions challenged the practices upon which the success of new democratic institutions was predicated. To make matters worse, the colonial

(Continued on page two)



Young girls of Saint Ysabel Island on a day of celebration.

A Look Inside

CIDA Withdraws from the Pacific.....	3
Beyond Sweatshops to Fair Trade	
Birthing a New Economy.....	4
On the Ground in West Papua.....	7
Leaving More Than Footprints	
Indigenous Interns in the Pacific.....	8

(Continued from page one)

administration invested little to train and develop the cadre of bureaucrats necessary to ensure the efficacy of the modern governance system. Corruption flourished, the economy stagnated, struggles over land access and title were ubiquitous. And when independence from Britain came suddenly in July 1978, Solomon Islanders found themselves ill prepared and equipped. In the end, as former Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni once said of his country, the Solomon Islands was a nation "conceived but never born".

The past five years have been particularly challenging as armed militants have opposed or protected entrenched political and economic interests. When the current prime minister finally sought Australia's military assistance, there was little semblance of law and order, at least on the main island of Guadalcanal. More than 200 people had been killed during the conflict, though no official count has been conducted, and corruption in government has bankrupted the national treasury.

Today, the international troops continue to keep the peace, having decommissioned what was essentially a corrupt and ineffective police force, implemented what appears to be an effective plan for disarmament, and created an interim governing body that is trying to stabilize the budget and implement economic reforms. But what does the future hold for the majority of Solomon Islanders?

After extensive community-based consultations, the Solomon Islands Christian Association, a newly formed and increasingly influential coalition of civil

society organizations, is seeking parliamentary approval for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, modeled after those created in South Africa and East Timor, to deal with the immediate racially divisive and traumatic impacts of the conflict, and to seek ways to rebuild trust within and between communities. Other smaller, but significant efforts are being made by local women's groups, youth associations, churches and community-based organizations to rebuild schools, markets, and the bonds of community life. Aid, which continues to arrive from Australia, New Zealand, and other Pacific nations, is focused on enhancing the judiciary, strengthening the educational and health sectors and rebuilding the foundations of the nation's democratic institutions.

What role should Canada play in this challenging new era? PPP and our Canadian partners believe that small, strategically allocated contributions of technical, financial, and institutional support - support focused on our strengths in peace-building, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction - can have a significant and meaningful impact on long-term development prospects in the Solomon Islands.

Over the next year, Pacific Peoples' Partnership, along with the Anglican and United Churches of Canada, will be working with groups in the Solomon Islands to develop a uniquely collaborative programme focused on rebuilding local organizations and their capacity to reunite communities and build a national consensus towards a new development vision for the nation.

(As this issue goes to press, PPP's executive director is meeting with a host of community organizations and leaders in the Solomon Islands, implementing the first phase of a new long-term programme of development, solidarity and support between Canadian organizations and counterparts in the Solomons.)



COPPER MOON

opening the treasure box
of our stories



--- Consulting --- Design --- Video ---

www.coppermoon.ca

Victoria: 250.475.0754 --- Vancouver: 604.727.7389

**JOIN US AT PPP'S 18th
Pacific Networking Conference**

Peace and Development in the
Solomon Islands -- What Role
for Canada?

June 28-29, 2004

Victoria, B.C. Canada

- **Peace and Security**
- **Women and Peacebuilding**
- **Youth and Environmentalism**
- **Canadian Foreign Policy**

Special Guests from the
Solomon Islands & Europe

REGISTER NOW

www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org

or call 250-381-4131

for details

Canada and the Pacific: Where to from here?

Despite a sustained history of effective and innovative development assistance to the South Pacific, the Canadian International Development Agency, Canada's main vehicle for contributing to social, economic and political development in impoverished nations around the globe, is closing the doors on its bilateral development programme in the South Pacific. In a bid to "enhance aid effectiveness" by narrowing the focus of its aid dollars to just nine developing nations worldwide (six of which are in Africa, and none of which are in the South Pacific), CIDA stands to radically alter the strong and unique character of Canadian cooperation that Pacific islanders have so much appreciated over the past 30 years.

While it would be a mistake to suggest that Canada's contribution to the South Pacific has been financially significant over the years (contrast the approximately \$6 million annually to all 14 Pacific Nations combined, to the record \$616 million Canada has committed to Afghanistan alone for humanitarian and peace building from 2001-2009), one can hardly suggest that it has been trivial. Canadian aid has supported a range of dynamic programmes that have had a long-term and critical impact on communities across the Pacific. Readers of Tok Blong Pasifik will remember, for instance, the work of the women of Wainimate, the Women's Association for

In short, with very few resources, Canada has made a difference ... affecting, in a very real way, the direction of community development throughout the Pacific.

Natural Medicinal Therapy in Fiji. With support from CIDA, PPP worked with Wainimate to promote the legitimacy of, and access to, traditional medicine among both health practitioners, and the general public. Wainimate established hundreds of herbal medicinal gardens within urban hospitals and rural health centres, trained nurses, doctors, and dentists in their use, and developed national legislation that effectively integrated the provision of traditional medicine within the national health care strategy and delivery programme of Fiji.

Similarly, the Canada-South Pacific Oceans Development programme, which received \$28 million over the past 14 years, leveraged Canadian expertise to strengthen the management of ocean resources and thus the sustainability of community-based fisheries in the Pacific. And the Anglican Church of Canada, CUSO, the United Church of Canada, and many other Canadian-based organizations have, with CIDA's support, developed deep and reciprocal relationships with community-based organizations, supporting unique and creative processes for women's empowerment, democratic development, peace, and environmental stewardship.

In short, with very few resources, Canada has made a difference, building good will, supporting local governance, improving the lives of women, and affecting, in a very real way, the direction of community development throughout the Pacific.

CIDA has suggested that Canada will maintain a presence through offices in Canberra and Wellington, to which community-based organizations in the Pacific can apply annually for funding. Worth \$2.5 million in 2002-2003, and available only to Pacific-based organizations, this money was allocated to 131 local groups for varied

Beyond the critical need for financial resources, Pacific islanders demand a measure of solidarity and trust...

initiatives in areas like health care, agriculture, infrastructure and education. Yet 29 years of development cooperation with organizations in the South Pacific tells us that this offer of assistance represents a radical shift away from the prolonged, long-term support to innovative processes that has typified Canadian international cooperation. Beyond the need for financial resources, Pacific islanders demand a measure of solidarity and trust, and a long-term investment in their struggles for fundamental change.

And indeed, Canadian development organizations have long worked in common cause with their Pacific counterparts, amplifying their calls for justice in the face of dismal human rights abuses (West Papua), strengthening their demands for peace through support to broad-based peoples movements (Bougainville, East Timor), enhancing women's access to decision-making processes and their position in the realm of science and technology (Fiji), and investing in long-term environmental education and leadership programmes (Solomon Islands). Rooted in strong, trusting, long-term partnership principals, these (often CIDA-funded) initiatives have been successful precisely because they transcend the relationship of donor/recipient, recognizing the interconnectedness of peoples lives around the globe, and our role in Canada as global citizens.

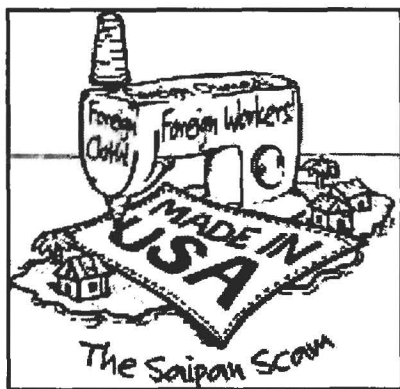
If CIDA fails to recognize this reality of development in the South Pacific, their Canadian partners, and our broad constituencies, surely do recognize this reality. Through consistent financial and moral support, Canadians continue to demonstrate to us that they care about the South Pacific, and that they are willing to invest, as global citizens, in the long-term, protracted struggles of peoples and communities in this part of the world. With their support, PPP and our varied partners in Canada, will explore new ways and new resources to continue to sustain development efforts in the Pacific. It is this passionate commitment to Pacific peoples that has characterized Canadian relationships with Pacific islanders for close to three decades. PPP will continue to honour that commitment, creatively and resourcefully, in the years to come.

Made in the USA . . . 3900 Miles Away?

By Jessica Boquist

A US\$1 billion garment industry has been thriving on the Northern Mariana Island of Saipan for more than two decades. Enticed by dreams of good American jobs, Chinese, Thai, Bangladeshi and Filipino people pay thousands of dollars to recruiters, leave their homes and families and find themselves working 70 to 80 hours a week without overtime pay for US\$3.05 an hour or less. Although Saipan is more than 4,500 miles west of the continental U.S., the labels these workers sew on clothing read "Made in the U.S.A.". Curious?

Saipan became part of the U.S. Commonwealth after WW II when the U.S. gained control of the Northern Mariana Islands from Japan. To promote industry, the U.S. took control of minimum wage and immigration laws, made way for duty free imports into the U.S. and eliminated quota restrictions, making Saipan a virtual free trade zone. In the year 2000 alone, the federal government estimates that U.S. retailers saved in excess of \$200 million in duties on \$1 billion worth of garments imported to the U.S.. Exploiting these benefits, Asian-based garment manufacturers traveled to Saipan in droves, bringing reams of cheap cloth and tens of thousands of foreign indentured workers (meaning that a contract binds these workers to an industry recruiter).



Justice for Saipan's Garment Workers!

The tens of thousands of workers who have toiled and sweated over Saipan's sewing machines since the 1980's are finally receiving compensation for the appalling conditions they endured. In 2003, a \$20 million settlement over alleged sweatshop violations brought an end to a legal battle implicating more than twenty of America's favourite clothing retailers. In 1999, a coalition of advocacy groups including, Global Exchange, Sweatshop Watch, the Asian Law Caucus, and UNITE (garment workers union) filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of the sweatshop workers in Saipan.

According to Sweatshop Watch, the 2003 settle-

ment is the largest and most significant sweatshop settlement in history. (See www.sweatshopwatch.org). It is groundbreaking not only for its economic remuneration, but also for bringing justice and improved conditions to the workers of Saipan. The settlement includes:

- **Compensation...** More than 30,000 factory workers will be issued cheques for back pay and damages (US\$6.4 million in compensation).
- **Independent Monitoring...** Will be conducted unannounced by the International Labor Organization including investigation of worker's complaints.
- **A Code of Conduct...** To ensure that companies uphold workers' rights, including overtime pay, access to clean water and a safe working environment.
- **Repatriation...** Workers from foreign countries (mainly China, Thailand, Bangladesh and Philippines), who wish to return home, are eligible for up to \$3,000 in travel costs.

The Saipan settlement comprises 27 garment manufacturers and retailers, among them Gap Inc., Sears, Nordstrom, Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Target, Abercrombie & Fitch and Polo Ralph Lauren. Despite the settlement, the retailers continue to deny allegations, insisting there has been no wrongdoing. For a complete list of retailers, visit www.sweatshopwatch.org/swatch/marianas/help.html.

Levi Strauss & Co. was the only defendant to oppose the settlement, and in December 2003, they won official dismissal from the lawsuit at a hearing in Saipan. In an effort to uphold a public image of social responsibility, Levi Strauss & Co. argued that their own monitoring program exceeded the protections defined by the settlement and on these grounds refused to settle. However, Levi's present lack of accountability for creating 14 years of sweatshop conditions in Saipan opposes its public claims of benevolence and conscientiousness even though it no longer buys from Saipan.

Lawyers for the workers of Saipan are hopeful that the settlement with the other 26 manufacturers will make labour and human rights abuses a thing of the past. Supporters of the settlement suggest that it will apply much needed pressure upon factories and retailers that supply U.S. stores with low-cost clothing to uphold workers' rights. Whether these improvements will be effectively implemented remains to be seen, but in the meantime, there is anticipation that this groundbreaking settlement will set a strong precedent for the garment industry across the globe.

Excerpted from the Victoria International Development Education Association Newsletter, Winter/Spring 2004.

Beyond Sweatshops:

Fair Trade, Co-op Development and the Birth of a New Economy

What is a cup of fairly-traded coffee worth to you? Do you care if your cocoa is produced at a worker-owned cooperative? What would our economy look like if sweatshop labour were eliminated? What would we give up as consumers? What would we gain? And what does any of this have to do with South Pacific peoples?

These questions are at the core of PPP's newest initiative aimed at exploring what is at stake for British Columbians in our increasingly globalized economy, and just how far we are willing to go to bring about change. It's a project that will bring activists from Fiji and Honduras to Canada to engage citizens in 15 communities in discussions about the global trading system, consumer power, fair trade, and cooperative development, and more importantly, about the values at play in broad-based movements for change.

There's no denying that there is a growing momentum among those in developed nations towards acting as informed global citizens intent on creating positive social and economic change in their own countries and in the world. Indeed, this effort, a joint initiative of Pacific Peoples' Partnership and the Victoria International Development Education Association, recognizes the growing interest of Canadians in fair trade and cooperative development, and the heightened sensitivity to our international obligations as a nation.

But what are we willing to give up, trade off, or change, if anything, to bring about meaningful change in the world? PPP believes that by understanding the attitudes of a diverse group of citizens, we can better succeed at our various efforts to encourage just and sustainable economic alternatives to the inherently exploitative model that prevails today.

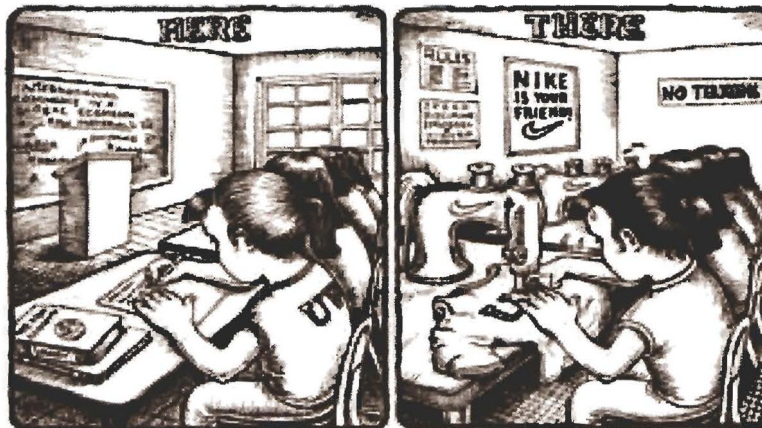
Over the next six months, PPP will pull together groups of students, business people, activists, municipal councillors, artists, home-school teachers, journalists and more to talk about viable alternatives to the current global trading model. Together, they will explore economic approaches premised on principles of fair pricing, decent working conditions, pooled resources and a living wage - whether in the agricultural or industrial sectors. Using the methodology of public deliberation, an approach to

dialogue aimed at unearthing what values might be shared among diverse groups of individuals, these discussions will challenge participants to test both the limits and viability of their own belief systems.

PPP and VIDEA will carefully document participants' input along with the policy recommendations that emerge from the dialogues. These will be shared among the many players in the fair trade, cooperative development and ethical sourcing movement, in an effort to strengthen our respective missions to engage Canadians in these approaches. For instance, we believe that it will feed into a growing national campaign to ensure not only that fairly-traded coffee and souvenirs are available for sale at the 2010 Olympics to be held around Vancouver, but also that there is a group of well-informed and caring citizens demanding that these products be available and in abundant supply. Similarly, the dialogues will inform those involved in the global cooperative movement, strengthening their "buy cooperative, build cooperative"

efforts among potential consumers and producers.

Equally important, out of the deliberations, half of which will focus on youth, will emerge a "Fair Trade Tool Kit", a tool that young leaders can use to inform and mobilize their peers. PPP's schools-based pro-



MICHAEL PARRY

gramme will then take us out into high schools and youth centres to distribute the kit among students and animate discussion.

Finally, this initiative offers clear opportunities for our South Pacific partners. In Fiji, for instance, the Pacific Network Against Globalization has been working to document the impacts of newly signed regional trade agreements on local economies, livelihoods, the environment and community health. With training in the methodology of public deliberation around which this initiative revolves, and a more informed analysis of the alternatives of fair trade and cooperative development, PANG's representative will be better equipped to engage a broad base of Fijian citizens in an exploration of viable alternatives to the prevailing economic model.

This initiative will serve as one encouraging step in a much broader, globally dispersed movement aimed at envisioning and realizing a new global economic order rooted in principles of justice and equity.

Pacific Peoples' Partnership is grateful to the Canadian International Development Agency for providing funding for this initiative.

Land of the Morning Star

Review by Tom Benedetti



Land of the Morning Star has been described as the "life's work" of journalist and film-maker Mark Worth who died in West Papua last January, just two days after the announcement that his new documentary film would premiere on Australian television.

What struck me about the 55-minute documentary was its balance. In contrast to the emotive, provocative style of film-maker John Pilger, Worth presents a remarkably cool, even-handed portrayal of events. He even gives air-time to a pro-integration representative of an Indonesian political party.

Narrated by actor Rachel Griffiths, *Land of the Morning Star* offers a rare glimpse into the complex global politics that have shaped West Papua's fate. It chronicles varying degrees of colonization from the Malaccans to the Dutch, Japanese, Americans, Dutch again, and finally Indonesians, explaining how each regime affected the next, and Australia's increasing complicity. The film also provides a valuable update on the effects of changing governments in Jakarta and how Papuans responded.

Worth presents a rational explanation of Indonesia's claim to the region. At the same time, he is clear about the dual injustice of the Cold-War-inspired New York Agreement in 1962 and the so-called "Act of Free Choice" in 1969, when only 1,025 out of a million Papuans were selected to vote for independence openly and under Indonesian supervision. But he takes pains to avoid being one-sided, such as when he points out Papuan mistreatment of the Indonesian soldiers who parachuted into Papua in 1962, expecting to be welcomed as liberators from the Dutch.

Documenting the ignorance and misguided intentions that led to the current state of injustice, he seems to be saying - it's okay, we understand; we just want it put right. As such, the film may be more palatable to a wider range of viewers.

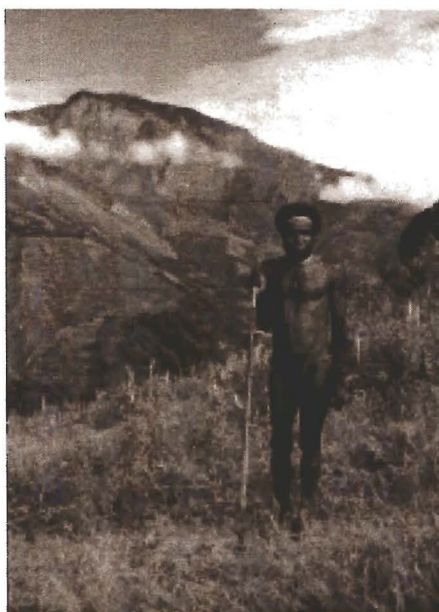
Worth spares us the gruesome images of torture and mutilated bodies that often appear in films about the Indonesian "provinces" such as East Timor. Instead, eye-witnesses describe the violence in calm interviews. With mostly oblique references to oppression and no mention of

large-scale atrocities such as the Biak massacre, the film in my opinion downplays the severity of the situation and the brutality of the occupying forces. While this was likely intentional, my fear is that an uninformed viewer might walk away with the impression that the Indonesian invasion and occupation were unjust but relatively benign.

Worth also skips over the anthropological and ecological richness of "the last unknown," other than to say that Papua contains 250 separate languages. This is no criticism - just an observation that the film's focus is entirely different from the award-winning documentary by Vancouver-based Ian Mackenzie about the Moi people. For public screenings, the two films would be complementary, even though Mackenzie's film, *Cry of the Forgotten Land* is a decade old. One is an excellent historical treatment; the other an intimate depiction of the impact on the ground.

What impressed me most about *Land of the Morning Star* was its portrayal of the Papuans as gracious, nationalistic and politically savvy people. Worth presents them as diverse in views and customs, yet sharing a common cause and intuitive understanding of the politics impacting their world. In this sense, he offers a hopeful vision of what might be, and at the same time acknowledges the stubborn forces that continue to thwart self-determination.

Mark Worth's film leads us to ask questions about what can now be done to move toward a peaceful solution that respects the Papuans' ultimate quest for full autonomy. It suggests no answers. Surprisingly, this is one of its strengths, a fitting legacy for a man committed to a conciliatory and peaceful resolution of the tragedy that continues in West Papua.



Travelling light, tribes-people around Wamena can quickly traverse the high mountain paths between villages.

Land of the Morning Star by Mark

Worth, 55 minutes, 2004. Produced by Film Australia, with assistance from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and available for rent from PPP.

PACIFIC COMBO AUCTION

PPP and the Fran Willis Gallery are delighted to invite you to an Evening of Music, Laughter and Fun! Enjoy music from the Pacific islands while bidding on stunning art work, wonderful entertainment packages, and more, at PPP's live-silent auction combo!

June 9, 2004, 7 - 10 p.m.
Fran Willis Gallery
200-1619 Store Street, Victoria

Letter from West Papua

By Kam Reed

June 2003

At Wamena's three-room airport a sturdy young man in military uniform whips a stick at a small crowd that has gathered, shooing them off like stray dogs. The Indonesian soldier's Javanese features set him apart from the Papuans in this remote mountain valley. His aggression and scorn contrast with the crowd's disbelief and fear as they scurry to safety.

For three years I have been visiting Papua regularly to coordinate a Canadian-funded peace building project. Upon arrival this time, I was struck by this scene and the rise in tensions it signified.

Kornelius, the assistant director of a local group working to protect the rights of the Lani tribespeople in and around Wamena, came to meet me. Shaking my hand, his eyes were fixed sideways on the soldier. "We should get to the office, better if you report to the police later." I agreed, and we were soon off on Kornelius' motorcycle.

Later, in Kornelius' office, we planned my visit. "We can't take you too far out of town because of the new military checkpoints," he pointed out. A couple of months earlier some weapons were stolen from Wamena's military headquarters, and in response the military has been raiding and burning Lani villages.

Kornelius explained how his group has been working with the police and legal aid groups to mediate the conflict, but despite their efforts the consequences



Despite Indonesian oppression, villagers in Wamena continue to engage in their traditions like preparing this feast of sweet potatoes and roast pig.

have already devastated his community. Sixteen people have died from starvation and disease after fleeing their burning homes and taking refuge in the forest.

Working with Kornelius and other community groups who attempt to mediate similar conflicts, his story has become painfully common, regularly alerting me to the tragedy stemming from increased military activity in Papua.

In 2001, soon after the fall of the Suharto government, most of my colleagues from community development and human rights groups were optimistic that a peaceful resolution to the self-determination struggle in Indonesia's western-most province was possible. But hopes have deteriorated as the government in Jakarta

adopts increasingly aggressive approaches to isolate and undermine the Papuan community. They are disturbed to witness the Indonesian government begin to seal Papua off, and initiate a military campaign to silence all voices of dissent.

On the night before I left Wamena, Kornelius and a group of friends gathered in my hotel room, saying in hushed voices that they want to talk about "poli-

tics." Over the next couple of hours they described their fears about the arrival of Islamic militias in Wamena and their attempts to stir up mistrust between Christian Papuans and Muslim migrants. "If Papua gets closed off, there will be much more freedom for the militias and the military to continue these attacks. It will be chaos here, just like in East Timor, and no one will know."

The next morning at the airport, Kornelius sent me off. The crowd in front was gone, and where before there was one soldier, now stood ten. We part saying, "until we meet again," with warm assurance. But turning our separate ways we both know that this will not be possible if the situation continues to deteriorate.

(To protect their identities all names in this article, including the author's are pseudonyms.)

TRIBUTE TO JACK LACKAVICH

PPP is deeply saddened by the passing of a dear friend and passionate activist, Jack Lackavich. Jack has been a friend of Pacific peoples for many years, living and working in the South Pacific and Asia through his work with the United Church of Canada. Jack also served on the board of Pacific Peoples' Partnership for many years. His solidarity and commitment to peace, justice and development, and to those on the front lines of the struggle around the globe, will long be remembered, and sorely missed.

PPP supports the aspirations of Pacific islanders for peace, security, cultural integrity, environmental sustainability and development.

For more information, contact us at:
407-620 View St., Victoria, B.C. Canada. V8W 1J6
250-381-4131 (ph)

www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org
PPP is grateful to Katrina Donchi and Peter Steed for the design of this newsletter.

Leaving More Than Footprints: PPP Interns Have Lasting Impact on South Pacific

By Sarah Hunt

In the fall of 2003, I travelled to the South Pacific on a monitoring trip as the coordinator of PPP's Indigenous Peoples Abroad Programme. Now in its sixth year, the programme sends young indigenous Canadians to the South Pacific for six months to enhance their employment skills, build their knowledge of global indigenous issues, and contribute to community development processes there.

On my whirlwind three-week journey, I visited ten interns in their homes and workplaces in Fiji, the Cook Islands, New Zealand and Vanuatu. With diverse backgrounds, educational and life skills, each of them had a distinct and lasting impact on the communities in which they worked, and the communities, in turn, on them. Here are three examples.

Tim Kulchyski traveled from the Cowichan Nation in BC to rural Vanuatu, working with two community education groups who are exploring the impacts of globalization on their remote island communities. Tim witnessed how the organizations have built knowledge and capacity in the community, enabling members to participate in a more informed way in discussions over the changes to communal land holding patterns and traditional economic activities that their island's incorporation into the global trading system has carried with it. But the success of Tim's placement can also be seen in the deep and trusting relationships he established with his host communities, and in the seamless contributions he made to their collective well-being. Notably, Tim fixed a generator for a rural school that had been without power for many months, fixed one of the only photocopiers on the island, and helped improve local water supply systems. By transferring skills in machine repair and maintenance, Tim has helped the community live more sustainably with these new technologies.

Naomi Gordon, a photojournalist from Calgary, worked for two Cook Islands newspapers. Naomi was not always seen as a "friend" of government officials, with her stories focussed on issues of social justice and community health, including violence against women and government corruption. Naomi's experience was particularly enriched by her cultural immersion, as she built relationships with activists, leaders of civil society

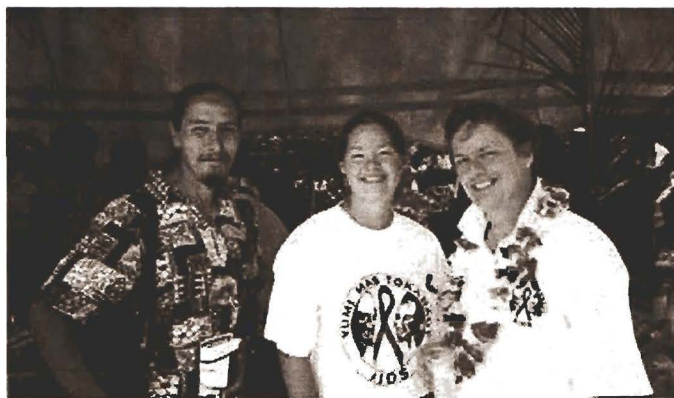
organizations and women selling fruit at the local markets. While she left behind an image of Canadians as open, friendly and generous of spirit, she also gained a stronger sense of Pacific hospitality and culture, enriching her knowledge about her own Samoan background.

Peter Waardenburg, a skilled GIS mapping technician, worked for six months with the Wellington Tenth Trust in New Zealand. Peter offered valuable skills and tools to the treaty settlement process for Maoris in the Wellington area, creating a historical land use map for upcoming court proceedings. The value of this work is evident in the three job offers he received before leaving.

Peter, Naomi, Tim and the seven others in our internship programme made vast contributions to the local communities in which they lived and worked, while gaining professional skills and valuable insights into the

development challenges confronting indigenous peoples in the Pacific. And as they returned home in March, I saw that they carried both a sense of accomplishment in the practical contributions they made, and a sense of sadness at leaving behind new-found kinships with South Pacific communities. PPP will work to

sustain these connections by continuing to build on the internship programme in future years. The Indigenous Peoples Abroad Programme will send eight interns to the South Pacific in August 2004. To learn more, visit our website at www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org



Intern Tim Kulchyski in Vanuatu

PPP Launches New Website

Features Include:

- * Expressing your Global Citizenship: Get Active!
- * Tok Blong Pasifik - News and Views from the Pacific
- * West Papua - Bearing witness
- * Indigenous Peoples Abroad Programme
- * Video Catalogue and Ordering
- * Secure on-line Donation System

Pacific Peoples' Partnership thanks
Coppermoon Productions in Victoria
for its unique web design.

www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org