

# T News and Views on the Pacific Islands TOKBLONG PASIFIK

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info@pacificpeoplespartnership.org

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## **GENES FOR SALE** Bio-Research and Patenting of Genes in Pacific by International Companies

Christian Nordqvist is Editor and CEO of *Medical News Today*, www.medicalnewstoday.com, in which this article appeared March 23, 2007. christian@medicalnewstoday.com.

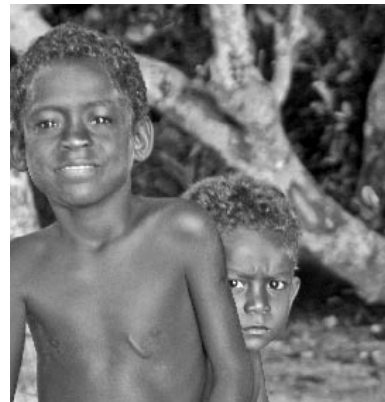
The Pacific region has experienced some of the world's worst examples of unethical bio-research and patenting of genes by international companies, according to a new book launched by co-publishers Call of the Earth Llamado de la Tierra, and the United Nations University.

retains its life spirit after it has been collected for medical research or synthesized and specific DNA qualities isolated," says A.H. Zakri, Director of the United Nations University's Yokohama-based Institute of Advanced Studies. "The authors chronicle many actions over the years by the scientific and private sector communities that offend these deeply-held values. We hope this book helps advance international understanding."

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The unique flora, fauna and peoples of the small island nations scattered across the South Pacific have attracted legions of tourists but also hoards of genetic and biomedical researchers. Pacific Islander's DNA and plants relied upon for millennia have been patented without permission. Bizarre human-animal hybrid transgenic experiments have been conducted and one biomedical experiment nearly turned the tiny Cook Islands into a "rogue state" in the eyes of the US government, according to the book.



*Solomon Islands children abused by foreign patents.*

According to contributor Te Tika Mataiapo - Dorice Reid, a traditional Chief from the Cook Islands: "Genes are a key resource of the new world bio-economy and our isolation and diversity make the Pacific Islands particularly attractive." The modern bio-economy crashes head on with traditional cultural and spiritual values in the South Pacific, she adds.

"Plants and animals are not seen as mere physical or

biological entities but also as embodiment of ancestral spirits," says co-editor Steven Ratuva of Fiji, a senior fellow at the University of the South Pacific.

#### TRIBAL GENES FOR SALE: \$216

One of the earliest offences involved the US government, which filed patents on DNA cells taken from the Hagahai tribe in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands in the early 1990's. Neither the individuals, their communities nor governments were informed; the US government rejected their later objections as inconsequential. Hagahai T cells can be purchased today from American Type Culture Collection for \$216.

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Pacific Peoples' Partnership  
407-620 View Street  
Victoria BC, Canada, V8W 1J6  
Phone 250 · 381 · 4131  
www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org

"Researchers are harvesting and patenting the Pacific region's genetic resources by simply gathering and taking ownership over almost everything in their path," says Aroha Mead, Senior Lecturer at Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, and co-editor of the book, *Pacific Genes and Life Patents*, launched at the university March 20, 2007.

An absence of regulation and widespread naiveté regarding the latest genetic technologies and intellectual patent law has made the region a major target for commercial 'gene' hunters or bio-prospectors, she says, likening gene pirates to the oceans' bottom feeders.

"In South Pacific cultures a plant is a living ancestor - and even a drop of human blood

### WHO WE ARE

Established in 1975, Pacific Peoples' Partnership is a unique non-governmental, non-profit organization working with communities and organizations in the South and North Pacific to support shared aspirations for peace, cultural integrity, social justice, human dignity, and environmental sustainability by:

- Promoting increased understanding among Canadians on issues of importance to the people of the Pacific islands.
- Advocating for social, political, and economic policy change at all levels.
- Fostering the development of sustainable communities in the Pacific.
- Facilitating links between indigenous peoples of the Pacific islands and Aboriginal peoples of Canada.
- Strengthening relations between Canadian and Pacific island communities and civil society organizations.

## AID STILL NEEDED IN THE AFTERMATH OF SOLOMON ISLAND TSUNAMI

The Western Solomon Islands are still in need of aid two months after a deadly tsunami struck Choiseul and Western Provinces on April 1st. Remote islands were particularly hard hit and the last to receive assistance. Thirty-nine people were killed and nearly 6,000 made homeless on Remote Simbo Island, while Rannoga rose three metres following the earthquake measuring 8.1.

Alex Lokopio, premier of Western Province, reports that many people whose homes were destroyed remain camped on hills. Beyond the immediate need for food, water, medical care and emergency shelter, an enormous amount of repair and rehabilitation work is required over the coming months as communities rebuild. Damaged infrastructure is devastating for the region's tourist industry. The disaster is exacerbating poverty and rendering communities increasingly vulnerable to climate change.

A number of international and local NGOs are providing relief on the ground. The Canadian Red Cross has pledged \$100,000. The United Church of Canada and The Primates World Relief and Development Fund of the Anglican Church of Canada both made emergency grants of \$10,000 through Action by Churches Together (ACT) International. The Canadian Government through the Canadian International Development Agency has pledged \$100,000 and intends to make more funding available through the Canada Fund administered by the High Commission in Canberra. This small grants fund supports community development projects.

Regional assistance to date includes US\$1.6 million from Australia, US\$50,000 from Brunei Darussalam, US\$400,000 from New Zealand, and US\$15,000 from Fiji despite the instability of their recent military coup. The Pacific Forum also added US\$12,000. Papua New Guinea, The Republic of Kiribati and Indonesia have also



contributed. Australian and New Zealand defense forces continue to provide logistics support and medical services.

Canada's small contribution appears generous next to the \$250,000 from the United States. The Solomon Islands ranks next to Somalia on the OECD DAC list of least developed countries yet remains a low priority in terms of the Canadian and US government's overseas development priorities.

Sources:  
[www.redcross.ca](http://www.redcross.ca), [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int), [www.pwrdf.org](http://www.pwrdf.org), [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca), [www.radioaustralia.net.au](http://www.radioaustralia.net.au), [www.islandsbusiness.com](http://www.islandsbusiness.com).

## FISH FARM AWAITS PERMIT TO GO AHEAD

March 3, 2007 A proposal for a demonstration marine farm in Titikaveka will soon come before the Rarotonga Environment Authority (REA) for final approval. The aquafarm is a joint venture project between the Titikaveka Grower's Association (TGA) and Ecoculture Ltd. The environmental impact assessment (EIA) has just been through the 30-day public scrutiny period.

Pacific oysters, prawns, milkfish and tilapia will be raised in the fish farm system that consists of two fish ponds and four oyster 'raceways'. The farm aims to have a yield of 40,000 oysters and 4000 fish per month with an estimated income of over half a million dollars per year. The ponds and raceways,

which have a total water capacity of 1100 cubic metres, were dug out and built last year in preparation for importing the stock for the farm.

The project - the dream of biologist Tap Pryor - aims to eventually assist others in setting up similar aquafarms. "This type of aquaculture project is very new to the Cooks, making it a very special case. Now that the public review period of 30 days has recently expired, National Environment Service (NES) is preparing the EIA for submission to the Rarotonga REA. If REA gives approval then a permit for the project will be issued," says environment officer Joseph Brier.

NES has not received any feedback from members of the public who are against the demonstration fish farm being approved, but have received several letters from people in support of the project.

Source: Helen Greig, Cook Islands News Online

## CALL TO ADOPT UI-TUPUNA FARMING PRACTICES

March 5, 2007 Environment services minister, Kete Ioane, says it's time to revert to biological farming as practiced by Cook Islands Maori 'ui-tupuna'. He is concerned about the environment being spoiled or damaged by too much use of chemicals or artificial fertilisers.

The minister recently returned from an environment and soil balances conference in Napier, New Zealand. The two-day forum focused on soil damage around the globe by conventional farming methods which rid the ground of minerals, organic matter and moisture. Another major concern is that farmers' and other people's health sometime suffer the consequences of chemical use in farming.

The minister said that there is no magic product, no real miracle fertiliser, but the secret is in biological farming which is working with nature, feeding soil life, balancing the soil minerals and tilling the

# ND VIEWS

soil with a purpose. It has been noted that some insect and weed pests develop a strong resistance to chemical sprays and more and more chemicals are required. That in turn increases the damage and poisoning to beneficial soil make up.

During the forum, the minister was able to talk to soil experts including Phyllis Turchin about the possibility of running a similar conference in the Cook Islands. "Lectures of the kind held in Napier are vital for local stakeholders to start thinking about biological farming techniques," Ioane said. "The shift will be costly but our nation needs to put health and well being first."

The minister said that New Zealand and Australia are going organic while Europe has gone into biological practices as a result of the deadly mad cow disease. He said the Cook Islands are now faced with chemical run-offs into streams and lagoons.

"It's crucial that for a sustainable lifestyle and to be able to live in harmony with the environment, we need to return to the farming practices of our *ti tupuna* biological farming practices," he said.

Source: Govmedia, Cook Islands News Online

## COVER-UP OF INDONESIAN MILITARY ROLE IN MURDER OF U.S. CITIZENS AT FREEPORT

April 9, 2007 Evidence of Indonesian military involvement in the deaths of two American citizens has been suppressed, according to a report released by Joyo Indonesian News Service and Pantau Foundation. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and other senior administration officials, have been misleading Congress and the public about a 2002 assault near Freeport McMoran's gold and copper mine in the remote Indonesian province of Papua. The Bush Administration sees Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, as a key ally in the Global War on Terrorism.

"It's sad to see that U.S. terrorism policy has once again sacrificed truth and justice," said Andreas Harsono, a journalist of the Pantau media group, who co-authored the report.

FBI agents entrapped at least one innocent man, Reverend Isak Onawame, in connection with this murder. Rev. Onawame, an elderly human rights advocate, was detained by the FBI in Papua and delivered to Indonesian custody where he was strip searched, deprived of sleep, and interrogated. On November 7th, 2006, an Indonesian court found Rev. Onawame guilty of supplying attackers with food, based on a false confession extracted during interrogation. Six other men, including Antonius Wamang, who has admitted to participating in the attack, were given sentences of 18 months to life in jail during the same trial.

"By all accounts Wamang's group only had three guns," said co-author S. Eben Kirksey, a doctoral candidate at the University of California at Santa Cruz. The report authors obtained a copy of a classified Indonesian ballistics report, released to the public for the first time. Through microscopic analysis of bullet fragments, this ballistics report concluded that a total of 13 guns were fired at the crime scene.

"We're the first to publicly identify a smoking gun. In fact, we have unearthed evidence of 10 smoking guns," continued Kirksey. "There was another group of shooters wielding enormous firepower." Eyewitnesses and logs of vehicle traffic through road checkpoints place Indonesian soldiers at the scene of the crime.

The full text of the report, "Murder at Mile 63", and the Indonesian ballistics report, are available on the websites of the East Timor Action Network (<http://www.etan.org/>) and TAPOL—The Indonesian Human Rights Campaign (<http://tapol.gn.apc.org/>).

In September 2006, S. Eben Kirksey presented his research to gathered delegates at the Sixth International Solidarity Meeting for West Papua hosted by Pacific Peoples' Partnership on Vancouver Island.

## TONGAN YOUTH CALL FOR END TO ABUSE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Nuku'alofa, Tonga: March 7, 2007 Tonga's young people have spoken out passionately in support of the cause of ending violence and abuse against women and girls, and encouraging greater equity between women and men in their communities.

Students from Forms 5-7 representing a number of high schools and colleges in Tongatapu have written essays on the topic of "Ending Impunity for Violence Against Women and Girls", which is this year's theme for International Women's Day celebrated in Nuku'alofa March 8. Winners of the essay competition were announced during the International Women's Day program there.

Tu'ifua Tapakautolo, Deputy Director of Schools, a member of Tonga's IWD Planning Committee, said that entries for the essay competition were received from both boys and girls and they were of a high standard. Co-ordinator of the IWD events in Tonga, Polotu Fakafanua Paunga, the Deputy Director of Women's Affairs and Culture, said she was very pleased with the entries received for this year's essay competition. "I was surprised at the extent of the students' knowledge of women's issues and the deep thought they had put into the subject. It was quite moving to read their essays."

The essayists courageously wrote about how they perceive the situation of women in Tonga today and they argue that there is an urgent need for equity between women and men. They noted how children in their communities become silent witnesses to violence, particularly domestic violence. Most of the essayists were concerned that the abuse of women too often goes unchallenged and they urged that the laws should be enforced to put an end to all forms of abuse of women and girls.

Source: Matangi Tonga [www.matangitonga.to](http://www.matangitonga.to)

In 1951 Tasman Empire Airways Limited (called Air New Zealand today) began flying MK III Solent flying boats across the South Pacific on the "Coral Route." The flights from Auckland to Fiji, the Cook Islands, and Tahiti were extended to Samoa in 1952. Rarotonga and Tahiti didn't have airports in those early days and the big aquatic aircraft landed on the lagoons of Aitutaki and Bora Bora instead.

Fifty-six years of service came to an end in April 2007 when Air New Zealand discontinued its Tahiti to Rarotonga route. The company's flights from Fiji to Rarotonga are continuing for now, but there's no service on any airline between Western Polynesia (Samoa and Tonga) and Eastern Polynesia (the Cook Islands and French Polynesia).

The South Pacific is fast becoming a one-stop shop where tourists from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the U.S. pop in for a week or two before flying directly home. Wide-ranging island-hopping trips touching several countries are becoming more difficult to book and a lot more expensive. Air Tahiti and Air Rarotonga have snapped up the Tahiti-Rarotonga run, but their new twice-weekly service is an expensive add-on at NZ\$349 each way.

The Air New Zealand cuts vindicate the decision of the government of French Polynesia to establish Air Tahiti Nui in 1996. Small island nations dependent on foreign airlines are effectively at their mercy, and when companies like Air New Zealand decide it is in their bottom line interest to drop a route, they do so without any regard for the impact their decision may have on local tourism operators who depend on regular air services to deliver customers. Air New Zealand never did participate in the Visit South Pacific Pass, which allows travellers to combine the services of nine regional carriers in a single ticket. Flying passengers to Auckland is their priority.

However, the biggest change in South Pacific tourism in recent years has been the surge of people flying Pacific Blue from Australia to Nadi, Nukualofa, and Port Vila, and from New Zealand to Nukualofa and Rarotonga. The same airline operates as Polynesian Blue from Sydney and Auckland to Apia. Both "no frills" carriers are part of Sir Richard Branson's Virgin group, and it is pretty certain that any route which ceases

sions are a leading source of greenhouse gases, and with jet fuel costs guaranteed to rise sharply over the next decade, mass consumer tourism to the islands will collapse eventually. There's nothing eco-friendly about a quick trip across the Pacific, no matter how green the lining.

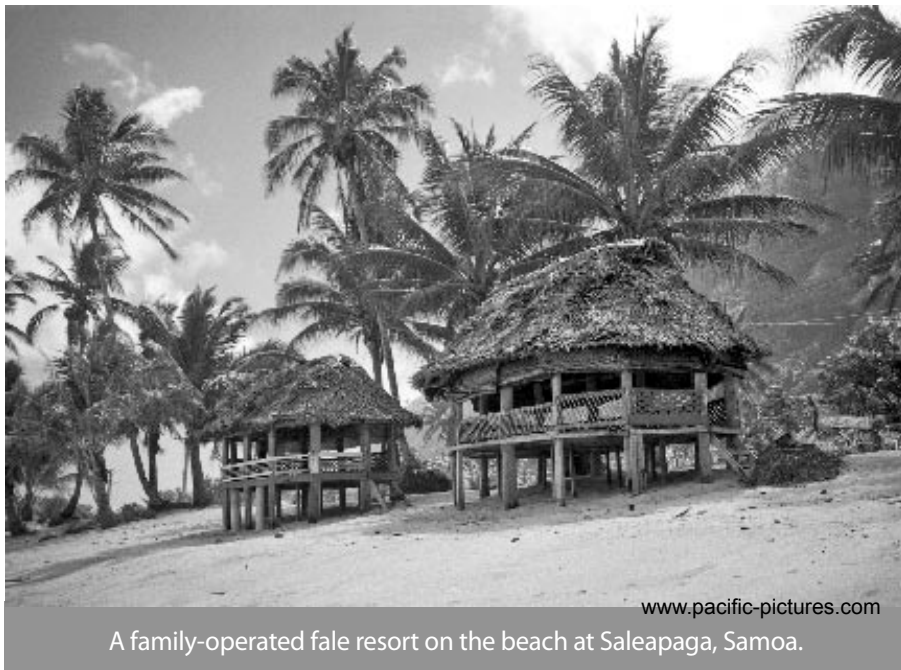
What is sustainable is the type of family- or village-operated tourism we see in the fale resorts of Samoa, the backpacker camps of Fiji, the pensions of French Polynesia, and the gites of New Caledonia. Accommodations like these are built from local materials and island produce is served whenever possible. The bulk of the profits remain in the communities rather than being siphoned off to pay foreign investors, expatriate managers, and overseas suppliers. Even after the flight schedules have shrunk, beachcombers will find a way to get to the islands and they'll stay longer than the packaged masses of today.

Island governments are beginning to recognize these facts. The Fiji Islands Visitors Bureau promotes small resorts on native land and provides the village operators with training so reasonable standards of service can be maintained. In French Polynesia, Tahiti Tourisme has been advertising the territory's pensions for many years, an important factor in their success. The Samoa Tourism Authority also supports the family-run fale resorts on Samoa's beaches, and the South Pacific Tourism Organization does a good job of coordinating it all.

"Think globally, act locally" works just fine when applied to island tourism.

David Stanley is the author of Moon Handbooks South Pacific, the original travel guidebook to the region. New editions of Moon Handbooks Fiji and Moon Handbooks Tahiti are due out in the fall of 2007. Stanley and his wife, M.E. de Vos, live in Nanaimo, British Columbia. Their website is [www.southpacific.org](http://www.southpacific.org).

# Single-Destination TOURISM



## in the Pacific

to be profitable will be dropped like a slippery mango. Resort owners who have invested heavily to accommodate Sir Richard's bargain-hunters will be left holding the bag.

Looking one or two decades ahead, it is clear that sustainable, low-impact tourism is the only choice for the South Pacific. The mosquito bite tourism promoted by Branson and related tour companies is clearly unsustainable. Aircraft emis-

# Windward Ahupua`a Alliance

## A FORCE FOR CHANGE IN THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

By Alison Gardner

The Windward Ahupua`a Alliance, is a non-profit corporation, originally established in July 2002 to create the Ko`olau Greenbelt & Heritage Trails System. The mission was to restore, protect and provide public access to the mauka (mountain) lands on the Windward side of O`ahu as well as to support locally-owned sustainable economic activities in more developed areas. Over its very brief life, however, the mandate has expanded well beyond these important regional issues.

WAA has built partnerships with over two dozen organizations, coordinated field trips to meet with people who are engaged in sustainable economic activities in agriculture, tourism and high technology, and co-sponsored or played an active role in seminars, workshops & conferences on a wide range of public policy issues including health, education, social justice, sustainable economic development, homelessness, and workforce housing. WAA has also played a major role in strengthening the state statutes, county ordinances and administrative rules dealing with solid waste management, long-term land use planning, and renewable energy.

Windward Ahupua`a Alliance activities are open to individuals, businesses, other non-profits, and government agencies who share its values without respect to residency or location. Most participants are middle school, high school and college students, church groups, service clubs, volunteer teams from local businesses & government agencies, and military families who want to learn more about the culture and environment. Depending upon where and what the event is [for example, roadside cleanup, removing graffiti, rehabilitating public housing], or what type of educational or cultural activity is planned, WAA may have anywhere from five to 3000+ people show up to work, learn and have fun.

WAA now works to educate and inform residents, visitors, businesses, policymakers, and the media all across the state of Hawai`i about using Smart Growth sustainable planning principles. These include:

- designing long-term waste management systems;
- tightening and improving illegal dumping/derelict vehicle legislation and enforcement;
- developing and implementing comprehensive curbside recycling programs;



**BUST-A-DUMPER**  
[www.bust-a-dumper.com](http://www.bust-a-dumper.com)

- establishing both state and county-level "legacy lands" funds to support affordable workforce housing initiatives and critical land purchases to protect against inappropriate development;
- creating alternative energy systems to reduce the state's dependency on fossil fuels and to mitigate the impacts of global warming;
- and setting long-term watershed protection policies based upon ahupua`a concepts and principles.

Driving forces behind the WAA and its many diverse initiatives are Shannon Wood who describes herself as the (Very) Interim

### The Name Reflects Hawaiian Culture

Traditionally, an ahupua`a is an all-inclusive resource management system introduced by the earliest settlers from the South Pacific similar to a watershed in European-based cultures. In Hawai`i, most ahupua`a are roughly triangular-shaped, the broadest edge at the ocean with the point back in the mountains. Each one covers all flora & fauna including humans which live in, on, over, under, or beneath the water, air, and soil from the mountain peaks to the outer reefs. Generally, the other two boundaries are formed by ancient lava flows running from the mountains to the sea or by major rivers and streams. Some ahupua`a are only a mile or two at the widest point while others are much, much larger. The ahupua`a resource management concept has been built into the Hawai`i legal system, referenced both in its State Constitution and county charters.

President after nearly five years at the helm of the organization and her husband Jim Wood who works right alongside her. They have both made Hawai`i their home state since the late 1960s, and are clearly still passionate about its possibilities.

Bust-A-Dumper Campaign – a Winner!

WAA's highly successful and ongoing Bust-A-Dumper initiative grew out of roadside cleanup activities on O`ahu, focusing on illegal garbage dumping and derelict vehicles. It is now statewide, helping 70 communities and neighborhoods educate their residents and establish their own cleanup campaigns.

According to Shannon, two important yet simple steps secured Bust-A-Dumper's success. First, WAA got city trash facilities on O`ahu to extend operating hours, with no additional cost because unions and management agreed to staggered worker hours. Though it took nine months and more than 70 meetings, that one action alone reduced illegal dumping on O`ahu by half. Secondly, the O`ahu Department of Environmental Services hired a full time staff person to help island communities conduct cleanups. WAA is still working with neighboring island communities as their county governments have not yet funded similar positions.

In the future, WAA hopes to launch some Service and Learning Tours [SALTs] already developed several years ago through a small planning grant from the Hawai`i Tourism Authority. It is now only a matter of finding the right creative people to plan and run the tours. That will be another huge challenge to do effectively, but this organization seems to thrive on challenges!

Contacts:

Windward Ahupua`a Alliance

P.O. Box 6366

Kane`ohe, HI 96744, USA

Voicemail: 808/247-6366; Cell: 808/223-4481

Website: <http://www.waa-hawaii.org>

Website: <http://www.recycling4change.com>

Website: <http://www.bust-a-dumper.com>

Alison Gardner is a journalist and editor who has been involved with PPP in a number of capacities for nearly 20 years. [Alison@travelwithachallenge.com](mailto:Alison@travelwithachallenge.com).

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# PACIFIC PEOPLES' PARTNERSHIP

## SHIFTING TIDES: INDIGENOUS RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Pacific Peoples' Partnership is pleased to announce the launch of Shifting Tides: Indigenous Responses to Climate Change. This is a climate justice education and outreach initiative that gives voice to Indigenous people from vulnerable communities in the Pacific and Canada as they face the devastating effects of climate change.

Under the leadership of Stephanie Peter from the Cowichan First Nation, Shifting Tides addresses systemic imbalances that have resulted in the exclusion of Indigenous voices in global efforts to address climate change. Stephanie is a graduate of PPP's Indigenous Peoples' Abroad Programme where she worked with the Cook Islands National Environment Service. Upon returning to Canada, she worked with the Cowichan Tribes Environment and Natural Resources Department. In November 2005 Stephanie was one of 100 youth delegates attending an International Summit on Climate Change in Montreal where a declaration was developed and presented to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, Montreal 2005 (COP11 and COP/MOP1).

Shifting Tides will see a small team of First Nations Canadians along with three Pacific Islands counterparts present a series of workshops and public events from Victoria to Iqaluit. These events will be designed to promote a deeper understanding of global warming in Canada and the South Pacific in an effort to inspire and mobilize the public and government to make courageous and visionary cuts to greenhouse emissions.

Applying a human rights framework to the issue, the project lays the groundwork for sound public policy recommendations and informed decision-making around mitigation and adaptation strategies that respect culture and traditional knowledge both in Canada and the South Pacific. It will also illuminate how global warming will reverse progress toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by increasing poverty, food insecurity, conflict and a range of social problems in the small island states of the Pacific and in northern Canada.

The Canadian International Development Agency is generously supporting this initiative. At the same time, we welcome donations to help us meet our matching funds requirements. For more information, please contact Stephanie Peter, Climate Justice Coordinator, email: [climate@pacificpeoplespartnership.org](mailto:climate@pacificpeoplespartnership.org).

Stephanie Peter with Te Tika Mataiopo of the Kotou Nui in Rarotonga. The Kotou Nui are partners in this initiative.



## 2007 EAST TIMOR ELECTIONS

Pacific Peoples' Partnership is proud to sponsor David Webster who will be joining the Solidarity Observer Mission for East Timor (SOMET) to monitor the upcoming parliamentary elections in East Timor.

David is a long time friend and supporter of PPP and founding member of WestPAN, Canada's West Papua Action Network. He's currently a Post Doctoral Fellow in the Department of History and Asian Institute at The Munk Centre For International Studies, University of Toronto.

Bob Crane, another WestPAN member and long time friend and supporter of PPP, is also in East Timor as part of the Solidarity Observer Mission for East Timor (SOMET) observing both the presidential and parliamentary elections.

## TE KORERO MAORI TOUR

Pacific Peoples' Partnership is delighted to announce an upcoming visit by the 37 member Te Korero Maori, a traditional dance group from Rarotonga. The group will be on Vancouver Island from July 28th to August 2nd 2007. In the past Te Korero Maori have visited New Zealand, Australia, Singapore and Samoa as well as Hawaii and Arizona. This will be their first time in Canada.

Te Korero Maori means, Our Culture and Our Heritage in the Polynesian language. Formed in 2001 as part of an effort to keep alive the unique culture of the Cook Islands, performers range in age from children to elders and originate from both the Northern and Southern Cook Islands.

As events are confirmed, we will announce details of performance dates and venues on our website, [www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org](http://www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org) as well as in local media. Anyone interested in billeting performers or wishing to be notified please send an email to [info@pacificpeoplespartnership.org](mailto:info@pacificpeoplespartnership.org) or call 250-381-4131.



Renowned Te Korero Maori Dance Group to Visit Vancouver Island.

# Genes For Sale Continued From Page 1

According to the book, even if individuals had consented, the genetic material donated would reflect an entire extended family's genetic makeup and their permission would be needed as well.

Patents have also been taken out on extracts from many plants that Islanders have used for thousands of years, including Kava, Taro, Canarium Nut and others.

"Patents are not a tool of humanitarian research. They are a tool of commerce and exclusive property rights and serve to give signals to others to 'stay away, they're mine. I own them,'" Mead writes. Such action violates Islanders' traditional values of "pono" and "tika" (to act appropriately), where everyone benefits from the use of a plant, including individuals, their families, and communities.

## PIG CELL GUINEA PIGS

The South Pacific's beautiful and remote Cook Islands nearly became the site for the world's first transplantation of pig cells into living humans (xenotransplantation) as a cure for diabetes in 2002. Pacific Islanders in general suffer from very high rates of Type-2 diabetes, and some researchers claimed transplanting pancreas cells from pigs into diabetics offered a potential cure.

The New Zealand government had banned such xenotransplants as too risky in 2001. Had the experiments gone forward, the US might have branded the Cook Islands and its 14,000 inhabitants a "rogue nation," writes Cook Islands' Traditional Chief Te Tika Mataiapo - Dorice Reid. Panicked US government health officials threatened to bar admission into the US of anyone from the islands as potential carriers of dangerous retroviruses from the pig cells. After initially agreeing to the xenotransplants in 2002, the Cook Islands' government reversed its decision after protests from tribal leaders like Reid and the world medical community.

The Cook Islands and Pacific Island states generally have great difficulty staying abreast of

developments in biotechnology and developing legislation to cope with social, legal, and ethical implications of the new technologies, says Reid. The proposed pig cell transplantation episode illustrates that "some companies are willing to take advantage of this lack of capacity and absence of regulation," she says.

## MAORI AND HUMAN-COW HYBRIDS

Another experiment, this time in New Zealand in 2002, involved genetically engineering dairy cows with human cells. Scientists hoped to produce therapeutic proteins in the hybrid cows. The local tribal Maori, who view themselves as guardians of the land where the New Zealand government's AgResearch agency experimental facility was located, protested that this would cause a spiritual imbalance within the community. All living things have their own "whakapapa" - a genealogical descent from the gods to the present time. Mixing human and animal cells violates that natural order.

"Is it animan or manimal?" one Maori wondered.

In Fijian cosmology the genetic materials that make up plants and animals are considered part of the circle of life and are sacrosanct. Medicinal plants are considered common

property and available for everyone. Fijian culture considers "life and the sustenance of life shared responsibilities unhindered by legal or political restrictions," says Ratuva. "Fijian cultural identity, land resources and cosmology are intertwined in a continuous cycle."

Recognition of the local people's worldview, even if they appear absurd to outsiders, must be part of the process in working out any patent or bio-prospecting agreements, says Ratuva.

## THE GENOGRAPHIC PROJECT

Indigenous world views have also clashed with the US \$40-million Genographic Project. Launched in 2005 by National Geographic and IBM, it is a five-year study of genetic anthropology - mapping historical human migration by collecting 100,000 blood samples from indigenous people.

The project quickly ran into opposition from indigenous groups. "We know our creation stories and we know who our ancestors are," writes Le'a Malia Kanehe, a Native Hawaiian lawyer from Honolulu, USA, and Legal Analyst for the Indigenous Peoples Council on Biocolonialism. Moreover such scientific research may have an impact on the rights of Indigenous peoples such as land rights should the Project suggest that some native groups are "recent immigrants".

Another scientific proposal to patent and license the Hawaiian genome as the intellectual property of the Hawaiian people was also rejected even though it might be worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Roche Pharmaceuticals paid US\$200 million for the rights to the Icelandic genome.

Cultural leaders of the Kanaka Maoli (native Hawaiian people) consider their human genetic material "sacred and inalienable," writes Kanehe. "These are not research questions driven by Indigenous peoples of the Pacific."

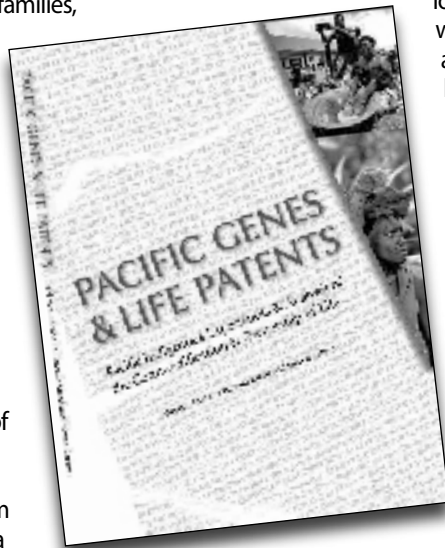
Genetics and biotechnology are not going to solve the fundamental problems facing the Pacific Region, says Mead. "Climate change, waste management, regional security, overfishing through illegal fishing and bottom trawling, continue to threaten the region's resources." However, misappropriation of Pacific cultural and natural heritage through life patents is making matters worse, she said.

## SOLUTIONS:

Among the book's recommendation is a Regional Pacific Intellectual Property Office to assess patent and trademark applications, informed by Pacific model laws and responses. Such an office could enable patent application assessments to be carried out in a more critical manner with regard to Pacific cultural heritage.

Equally important is the enactment by Pacific states of laws that eliminate or significantly reduce patents on life. While this might contravene existing international patent agreements where nearly anything is patentable, growing sectors of society around the world believe patents are out of control.

"Furthermore, it is evident, that patent bottom trawlers will not self-regulate," says Mead. "The Pacific has a greater purpose than to educate the world in bad practice in genetics and intellectual property."



Institute of Advanced Studies is part of the United Nations University's global network of research and training centres. It works to identify and address strategic issues of concern for all humankind, for governments and decision makers and, particularly, for developing countries.

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Call of the Earth Llamado de la Tierra is a global initiative on indigenous intellectual property policy hosted at UNU-IAS. The project brings together leading indigenous experts in cultural and intellectual property from around the world, among other things, to develop responses at local, national, regional and international levels to policy and legal developments that adversely impact indigenous peoples traditions of preserving their cultural heritage for future generations.