

NEWS AND VIEWS ON THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

# TOK BLONG PASIFIK

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1





## Pacific Peoples' Partnership

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.

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### **ABOUT THE COVER:**

Papuan women have been earning much needed income selling vegetables, fruit, fish, and spices in the heart of Jayapura since 1971. Government policy has favoured non-Papuan migrant vendors while Indigenous Papuan women are forced to sit on the roadside without proper market facilities. Due to recent efforts to clean up city streets, Indigenous traders are repeatedly evicted from their traditional marketplace. Papuan vendors are still waiting for a designated market located within their traditional land, as promised by the local government. This photo was taken at the Manokwari Market where similar discrimination persists.

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# PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE VS. BARRICK GOLD

You're sitting on a gold mine is supposed to mean you have a great opportunity to become really wealthy.

The Indigenous Ipili people of the highland Enga Province of Papua New Guinea have literally been sitting on a gold mine for millennia. But instead of bringing wealth, the mine in the Porgera River region has been a curse.

Jethro Tulin, a leading Papua New Guinea trade unionist and Indigenous leader, says the gold mine sucking that mineral wealth out of Porgera has destroyed his people's ancient subsistence farming community and brought nothing worthwhile in return. Tulin was in New York this May attending a United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. He spoke for the Akali Tange Association, which represents around 10,000 Indigenous landowners in the mine area.

Two decades ago, Tulin became the first secretary general of the Mine and Allied Workers Union, which at that time represented as many as 3,000 miners and construction workers at the Porgera mine.

Despite Porgera's remote location, its story is familiar. From Dakota's Black Hills to the Western Shoshone to the Pascua-Lama project on the Chile-Argentina border, brutal exploitation of Indigenous



*IN PHOTO: Anga Atalu (Porgera Landowners Association (PLOA), PNG), Sergio Campusano (Diaguita Huascoalinos, Chile), Neville "Chappy" Williams (Wiradjuri, Australia), Mark Ekepa (Chairman, PLOA), and Jethro Tulin (ATA, PNG). photo: Allan Cedillo Lissner*

peoples and their lands by transnational corporations is notorious.

Papua New Guinea consists of the eastern half of New Guinea, the second-largest island in the world, plus some smaller islands. The western half is part of Indonesia. Papua New Guinea's 6.4 million people live on a territory larger than California. With about 1,000 ethnic groups and more than 800 languages, few lands are more diverse.

Dutch, German and British imperialism have had their presence on the island. After World War I Papua New Guinea became an Australian protectorate and remained so until it became nominally independent in 1975.

“We have had contact with the rest of the world for only the last 70 years”, Tulin told Workers World. “The first Europeans reached the Porgera valley in the 1930s. That’s when we learned to pan for gold in the Porgera River to supplement income beyond subsistence farming and pig-raising.”

“We are organized by family, clan, tribe, etc., with land property passed down to the children. Papua New Guinea law officially recognizes these land holdings although there are no written titles. But the government put in some small print in that law: the people own only the first six feet below the surface of the land. That means the government can lease mining rights for below six feet to transnational companies.”

The Porgera mine was leased first to the Placer Dome Corp., which was in turn taken over by Barrick, also a Canada-based mining corporation that is the largest miner of gold in the world. There are a number of ancestral villages within the mine area, which covers some nine square miles of land.

### **“Barrick shoots people for stealing gold...”**

“Our organization is demanding a fair relocation process for the residents. We want Barrick to repair the damage to the environment. We want reparations to compensate for those who have been killed or injured by the mines security force.”

According to the agreement and by international law, the mining company is responsible for the costs of voluntarily resettling the people. Instead, the mine management allowed the people to stay on the land in the open-pit mine area. The waste tailings from the gold mine, dumped directly into the water from the mill, have ruined the farming in the area and made much of the population unable to survive on farming alone.

“Adding to the impoverishment,” Tulin continued, “Barrick uses force to stop the local people from finding small amounts of gold, as they did before the mine was built. Barrick’s security force, recruited from outside the district, has shot and killed people who, the cops say, are stealing Barrick’s gold when they scoop up the ore on the edges of the pits its no longer possible to pan the polluted river.”

The company says that its lease means the locals are trespassing and the mine owns the gold. The security force, besides killing five people in the past year alone, has raped women in the area.

Amnesty International, in a report criticizing Barrick, points out that in 2008 Barrick mined 627,000 ounces of gold at Porgera, which that year was worth more than half a billion dollars. Since limestone, water and gas for electricity are all nearby, production costs are low at the mine, and the profits leave more than enough to buy influence in any country.

To show the relationship between the transnational mining corporation and the Papua New Guinea and regional governments, consider this: mine security will bring the person they shot to the nearby hospital, but mine management will prevent the local and Papua New Guinea police homicide squad from investigating on mine land, Tulin said.

Besides the U.N. meeting, Tulin was also in North America to attend and shake up the shareholders meeting of Barrick in Toronto at the end of April. There, holding a proxy that gave him a voice, for the second year in a row he read a series of demands on this giant gold-mining corporation, which owns 27

mines and development projects in Canada, the U.S., Chile, South Africa, Australia, Peru and Russia.

Tulin told Barrick's management at the April 29 meeting: "The toxic waste you continue to dump into our 800-kilometer-long river system, which would be illegal in Canada has caused the Norwegian government to divest its pension fund from more than 230 million Canadian dollars worth of shares in Barrick Gold and to report that its decision was based on its assessment that investing in the company entails an unacceptable risk of the Fund contributing to serious environmental damage."

While Tulin was in Canada, the Papua New Guinea government launched an assault on his people in Porgera under the name of Operation Ipili 2009. Using the pretext of eliminating illegal miners, that is, people who scavenge gold particles, Papua New Guinea police burned over 200 homes in the village of Ungima alone.

"Now, under the influence of your company," Tulin continued, "the Papua New Guinea government has imposed a virtual State of Emergency in Porgera. When I came to Canada last week I received reports from Porgera that landowners who have spoken out against your mine are now being targeted. This week, and while I am standing here before you, their houses are being burnt down and they are fleeing for fear of their life," he told the company officials. (protestbarrick.net)

"The government's priority," Tulin said to WW, "should be to protect the interest of the people, but instead it is protecting the interest of those who come in with money and who are destroying the traditional way of life. We are getting no benefit from development."

Tulin is also exploring the possibility of bringing a civil suit within U.S. courts against Barrick, which has an office in New York and a mine in Nevada. The latter is being protested by the Great Basin Resource Watch and the Western Shoshone people. U.S. laws allow such a suit, while Canadian laws don't. His group has support from environmental and Indigenous organizations in the U.S. and Canada.



*Porgera Mine Tailings Papua New Guinea  
Source: Porgera Environmental Advisory Komiti*

Sergio Campusano, president of the Diaguita Huascoaltinos Indigenous people in Chile, was also at Barrick Gold's annual meeting in Toronto protesting the damage to the environment the Pascua Lama mine is causing in that region, including the removal of most of three glaciers that feed fresh-water rivers.

## Struggle in Bougainville

A struggle by the people of Bougainville Island, part of Papua New Guinea but now with an autonomous government, against the Rio Tinto mining company led to a decade-long independence war and 15,000 deaths. The struggle ended in a defeat for Rio Tinto, the Papua New Guinea central government and the Australian overlords. Rio Tinto was driven out of Bougainville, but the mining company never paid the reparations the people deserved. Claims against Rio Tinto are still in U.S. federal court, after the company's legal maneuvers delayed the original suit.

Tulin has said he would like to win the people's just demands without the same heavy casualty rate and with Barrick staying long enough to pay its debt to the Ipili and other peoples. The recent aggression by the central government and police against the population of Porgera has begun to awaken worldwide solidarity with the Ipili and other people of Papua New Guinea's Enga province, whose struggle to survive is part of the overall battle against world imperialism and its threats against peace, environment and the world itself.

By John Catalinotto



*Police, acting for Barrick, set hundreds of Porgera, homes on fire on April 27.*

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# *Moruroa: The Story Isn't Over*

In Tahiti, Polynesian workers have launched an historic compensation case over their exposure to radiation during French nuclear testing in the South Pacific

Teraivetea Raymond Taha was just 16 when he started working on Moruroa Atoll, the site of France's nuclear testing centre in the South Pacific.

"I left school at 12 years of age after my father died, as I had to help out the family," he explains. "At that time, the Pacific Testing Centre needed a lot of workers. For most Polynesians like me who started work in those years, it was the first time we would have a job and money in our pocket."

In 1965, Raymond Taha started work on Moruroa as a labourer and mechanic with the company Dumez-Citra. As France relocated its nuclear testing program from the deserts of Algeria to the isolated atolls of French Polynesia, they needed local workers to build wharves, a massive airstrip, concrete blockhouses and the other infrastructure needed for the test site.

After his military service in 1970, Raymond continued working as a security guard with the Atomic Energy Commission on Moruroa Atoll. He also worked at the military staging base on Hao Atoll, which supported military operations in the region over the next thirty years. (Between 1966 and 1974, there were 46 atmospheric nuclear tests at Moruroa and Fangataufa Atolls, then a further 137 underground tests from 1975 to 1996.)

Like other Maohi (Polynesian) workers at the Pacific Testing Centre, Raymond was involved in cleanup operations. After an atmospheric test in September 1966, he joined other Maohi workers on Moruroa: "We had to pick up all the dead fish and clean up all the debris that littered the roads. The staff of the Radiological Safety Service were testing the soil with their apparatus. They were all dressed in special outfits with gloves and a mask. We Maohi workers were just following on behind them, without any special gear to protect us."



*One of four tests, codenamed "Licorne", Muruoa Atoll, July 3rd 1970.*

He recalls: "The bosses said: 'It's OK, you can go over there.' We were scared, but if we'd refused, we would have been on the next plane back to Tahiti the following day. We would have lost our job, so we went ahead cleaning up without asking any questions."

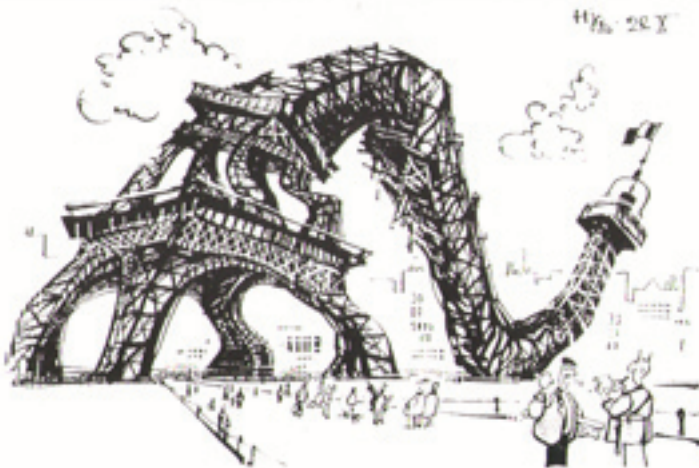
In 1980, Raymond's daughter Cinya was born, the only girl of five children. She died a year later, from complications with a malformed lung. In 1994, he was diagnosed with leukaemia and sent on a stretcher to a hospital in Paris, where he underwent two years of chemotherapy.

When *Moruroa e Tatou* (Moruroa and Us) was formed in July 2001, Teraivetea Raymond Taha was one of the first Maohi workers to join. Today, this association of former workers from the nuclear test sites has over 4200 members, and is seeking compensation for survivors of France's nuclear program.

Already, there have been successful claims in France, from French military personnel who served at the Algerian and Pacific test sites. With support from the Association of Nuclear Test Veterans seven former soldiers have won pensions through the French courts and military tribunals. There have also been eight cases where civilians were granted compensation on the basis of workplace-related illnesses.

Now, for the first time, compensation cases have been lodged in Tahiti, for Maohi workers who staffed the test sites.

Raymond Taha's case is one of eight lodged before the Tribunal de Travail in Papeete — a court which can determine if his illness was caused in the course of his employment in an unsafe workplace. Of the eight cases, only three of the survivors were present on the opening day of hearings on 27 April. The other five workers had died of radiation-related illnesses and were represented in court by their widows and families.



*"The New Zealanders have exploded a harmless nuclear device in Normandy!"*

These cases are the first ever brought by the thousands of Maohi workers who staffed the nuclear test sites. But John Taroanui Doom, secretary of the *Moruroa e Tatou* association, says the eight cases are just the beginning: "So far, the association has begun to compile case files for 222 former Moruroa workers, of whom 146 have already died. Most of the case files of these cancer victims will be placed before the Tribunal de Travail."

On the opening day of the hearings, hundreds of former Moruroa workers marched to the court in a solemn procession under the banners of *Moruroa e Tatou*, joined by representatives of the Protestant Maohi Church, community organisations and even Oscar Temaru, the President of French Polynesia (Temaru himself is a member of *Moruroa e Tatou*, having worked on Moruroa as a customs officer in his youth).



A ruling by the court is not expected until late June. But the hearings come at a time when the French Government has finally begun to acknowledge its responsibility for the damage to health and environment caused by 36 years of French nuclear testing in Algeria and French Polynesia.

Last November, French Defence Minister Hervé Morin announced a significant policy shift, stating that the French Government would introduce legislation to compensate people affected by radiation at France's nuclear test sites. Veterans groups have cautiously welcomed this breakthrough but continue to lobby to strengthen the legislation: the initial pledge of 10 million Euros for compensation is nowhere near enough to deal with the many potential victims, and veterans want representation on a monitoring committee to oversee any compensation scheme.

Roland Oldham, President of *Moruroa e Tatou*, notes: "The draft law covers workers and military personnel who staffed the test sites, but not the local indigenous communities on islands near Moruroa that received radioactive fallout. As well, the law makes no provision for ongoing clean up of contamination at the test sites."

Lobbying by *Moruroa e Tatou* joins actions by nuclear veterans in other countries. British, Australian, New Zealand and Fijian veterans are awaiting a ruling by the High Court in London, to see whether a compensation case can proceed for the survivors of British nuclear testing in Australia (at Maralinga, Emu Field and the Monte Bello Islands) and in Kiribati (at Christmas Island and Malden Island).



*One of four tests, condemned "Licorne",  
Mururoa Atoll, July 3, 1970*

As French President Nicolas Sarkozy prepares to visit Australia and the South Pacific in July, Roland Oldham argues: "France must accept its responsibility for the legacies of the nuclear era."

*By Nic Maclellan*

*Nic Maclellan works as a journalist and researcher in the Pacific islands and is co-author of *La France dans le Pacifique* (Editions La Découverte) and *After Moruroa - France in the South Pacific* (Ocean Press).*

*Source: [newmatilda.com](http://newmatilda.com)*

# News and Views

## OCEAN ACIDIFICATION COULD HARM SHELLFISH TRADE

Ocean acidification is a side effect of human industrial activity. As atmospheric carbon dioxide levels rise, more carbon dioxide is dissolved in ocean surface waters, producing carbonic acid and pushing up the acidity of the water. This change in environment is bad news for a number of ocean species. In particular calcifying organisms, such as coral, many plankton and mollusks, will find it increasingly difficult to construct their shells or skeletons.

The average acidity of ocean water has increased by 30% since pre-industrial times and there are already signs that this is having an impact. A number of coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef along the east coast of Australia, have started to bleach and dissolve.

For some countries, the consequences could be even more severe. Southeast Asia, South Africa and island nations in the South Pacific are likely to be particularly hard hit this way.

The effects will be seen worldwide, threatening food security, reducing coastal protection and damaging the local economies that may be least able to tolerate it.

*Source: environmentalresearchweb June 1, 2009*

*Image Source: www.surftherenow.com*



*A recently discovered consequence of global warming is the gradual acidification of the oceans, which destroys coral.*

## CONCERN IN BOUGAINVILLE OVER MISSING MONEY FOR ISLANDS DISPLACED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

The deputy speaker of the House of Representatives in Papua New Guinea's autonomous province of Bougainville says she's appalled that millions of kina earmarked for the relocation of Carteret Islanders to the main island has gone missing.

Francesca Semoso says 746 thousand US dollars was allocated by the government to help with the relocation but that it appears to have never been paid out.

The islanders have fought for more than twenty years against the rising ocean, building sea walls and

planting mangroves. However, storm surges and high tides continue to wash away homes, destroy vegetable gardens, and contaminate fresh water supplies. It has also been estimated that by 2015, the Carteret Islands could be largely submerged and entirely uninhabitable. Carteret Islanders are on the frontline of climate change.

*Source: Radio New Zealand - May 13, 2009*

## PALAU TO TAKE GUANTANAMO UIGHURS

The Pacific nation of Palau says it has agreed to a US request to temporarily resettle up to 17 Chinese Muslims. The 17 men are ethnic Uighurs and are currently being held at the Guantanamo Bay detention centre on Cuba.

Guantanamo Bay officials have been attempting to fulfill US President Barack Obama's order to close the detention facility by early next year.

US officials asked Palau President Johnson Toribiong on 4 June to accept some or all of the 17 Uighur detainees due to strong US congressional opposition to releasing them on US soil.

The US will not send the Uighurs back to China for fear they will be tortured or executed. Beijing says Uighur insurgents are leading an Islamic separatist movement in China's far west and wants those held at Guantanamo to be returned to China.

Mr. Toribiong said his government had "agreed to accommodate the United States of America's request to temporarily resettle in Palau up to 17 ethnic Uighur detainees ... subject to periodic review."

In a statement, he said his tiny country is "honored and proud" to resettle the detainees, who have been found not to be "enemy combatants."

He said the agreement was a "humanitarian gesture" which has nothing to do with the upcoming review of the Compact of Free Association under which the US gives large sums to Palau.

Palau has retained close ties with the United States since independence in 1994 when it signed a Compact of Free Association with the US. It relies heavily on the US for aid and defence.



*Source: BBC news*

*Image Source: World News*

*Image: Guantanamo Uighurs waiting to be resettled.*

# Papua: Land of Peace

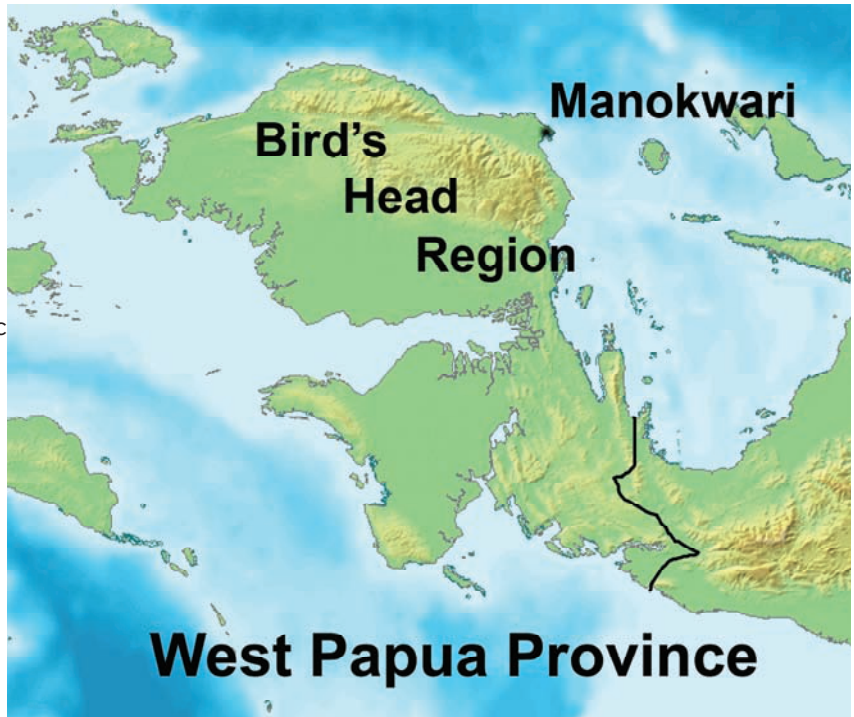
## *Civil Society Leadership in Conflict Transformation*

These are exciting times at Pacific Peoples' Partnership. We're proud to announce the launch of "Papua: Land of Peace – Civil Society Leadership in Conflict Transformation." Funded by the Canadian International Development Agency's Voluntary Sector Fund, this 3-year initiative will support the capacity development of Papuan partners in Manokwari, West Papua, Indonesia, working in communities throughout the Bird's Head Region of western New Guinea. Through this collaboration PPP aims to catalyse positive change respectful of the unique cultural and ecological contexts of West Papua.

Partners include: a women's network dedicated to addressing violence against women and enabling Papuan women to take the lead in development that is locally appropriate and responsive to the real needs of their communities, a legal defense network using the laws of Indonesia to ensure Papuan rights are respected, a locally led conservation network that works with communities to protect Papua's rich biodiversity while promoting economic models that respect local cultures and the environment, an Indigenous led HIV/AIDS group addressing a rate of infection estimated at ten times the national average.

Partners bring experience and strong commitments to working at a grassroots level in some of the most marginalised and culturally-threatened Indigenous communities in Melanesia. Decades of top-down development and disproportionate military presence have systematically exploited Papua's rich biodiversity while violating Papuans' rights to a say over development that negatively impacts their livelihoods.

Building upon PPP's long history of linking Canadian First Nations with Indigenous communities in the Pacific Islands, "Papua: Land of Peace" will enable sharing knowledge and best practices of community-based resource stewardship, cultural strengthening, human rights, and gender equity. We've repeatedly been moved by the ways of our Aboriginal partners, which rest upon the indivisibility of people and place, and the innate wisdom that healthy communities and vibrant cultures are essential in realising just and sustainable solutions to poverty and conflict.



Papua: Land of Peace will not only foster cooperation between Papuans and counterparts across the Pacific and Indonesia but also create opportunities for enhancing PPP's knowledge of how best to support the aspirations of our partners and the communities they serve.

As part of our cost sharing agreement with CIDA, PPP is obligated to raise \$140,000 over the next 3 years. This is where our friends and Tok Blong Pasifik readership come in. By donating to this important project you can play a critical role in building the leadership capacity of vulnerable Indigenous communities throughout Papua and Canada. Your generous support has sustained the work of PPP for nearly 35 years, and we're proud to continue to include you. As always donations to PPP are tax deductible.

Please feel free to get in touch with us if you would like to learn more about Papua: Land of Peace or other PPP initiatives.

By Todd Biderman - Papua Project Coordinator,  
Pacific Peoples' Partnership

## *Hailans to Ailans* International Exhibition

Hailans to Ailans is an international exhibition that will be showcasing contemporary Indigenous artists from Papua New Guinea and British Columbia, Canada. Hailans to Ailans, means Highlands to Lowlands in native Pidgin. The exhibition first opens at the Rebecca Hossack Gallery in London, UK, on 16 September 2009; then opens at Alcheringa Gallery in Victoria, BC, Canada, on 5 November 2009. Both galleries have a distinguished history of involvement with Aboriginal people on both sides of the Pacific.

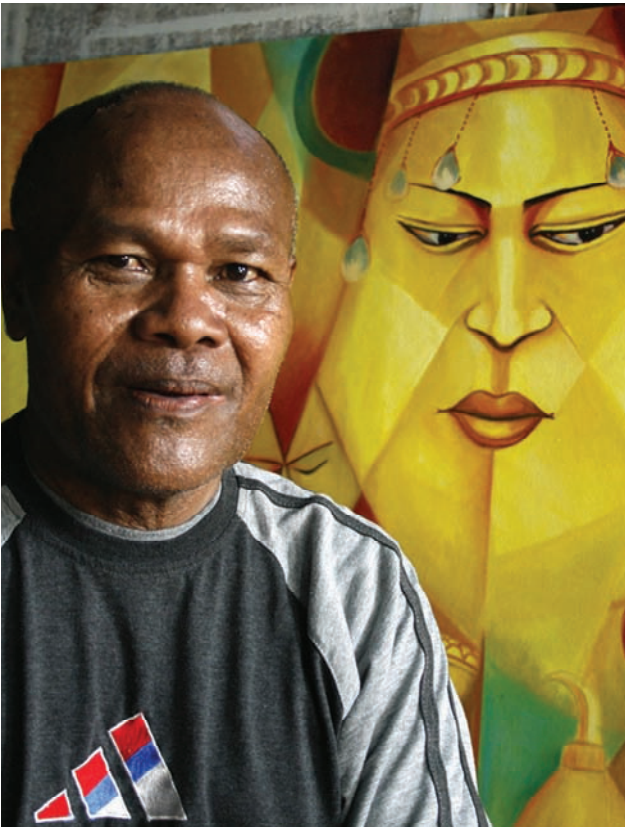
The Papua New Guinean artists work in a variety of media, including sculpture in wood and metal, performance and fiber art, and painting. Collectively, their artwork speaks to the creative energy and vibrant cultural interplay melding the old and new, which has been occurring in Papua New Guinea since independence from Australia in 1975. This period of rapid change has been described as moving from the stone age to the space age in a lifetime. For contemporary Papua New Guinean artists, it has meant struggling to retain their Indigenous cultural heritage while being challenged by the forces of modernization and colonial rule and confronting stereotypes of their cultures and knowledge



*Tom Deko working in his studio*

as primitive and timeless. With a painful history of domination by European settlers, the Coast Salish artists also engage a history of political and cultural suppression. Responding to Western stereotypes of Papua New Guinea and Native North American people as exotic, primitive “others”, Hailans to Ailans seeks a nuanced understanding of the meanings, values, and diversity of the artwork presented. Their art speaks to this experience, but also represents confidence in their Indigenous identity, working from a rich heritage of aesthetic forms to embrace modern innovations in media, materials, and style.

To enhance opportunities for cross-cultural understanding and learning through shared histories, a program of gallery events and outreach visits to the community will take place at both locations. Pacific Peoples' Partnership is involved in coordinating the artist's visits to Vancouver Island First Nation Communities. The visit will facilitate links between these two communities in an effort to stimulate an exchange of knowledge, ideas, experiences, and strategies that strengthen mutual efforts for change. An understanding of an Indigenous way of life and art begins to form bridgework toward a sustainable future for Indigenous groups while exploring their common concerns and engaging in meaningful international development initiatives.



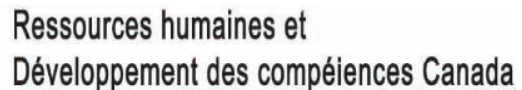
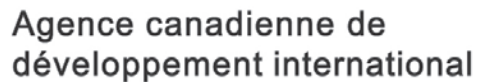
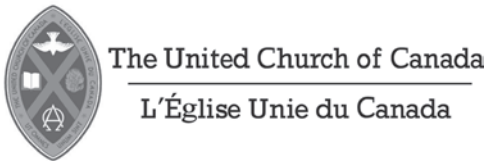
*Left: Martin Morububuna with his painting  
Right: Claytus Yambon - Origin of Enmity*



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