

# Tok Blong Pasifik

VOL. 7, ISSUE 2

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS



*Journeys*

IN THIS ISSUE

West Papua Update

Vanuatu Reconciliation Ceremony

Hailans to Ailans Cultural Exchange



## 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:

Young Noah Marston gazes upon a Sepik style canoe with a Salish moon mask. This red cedar canoe was created by his father Master Coast Salish Carver John Marston and Papua New Guinea Master Carver Claytus Yambon. The creation of a canoe was a long time dream of Marston's, which was realized in five long days with the support of Yambon who led the way with an adz. John followed with the chainsaw. The canoe was created without any measuring device except line of sight. This extraordinary collaboration was part of the Hailans to Ailans cultural exchange.

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# TOK TOK *By April Ingham*

## Seasons greetings from the Pacific Peoples' Partnership.

Winter on the Canadian Pacific shorelines is often a cold, rainy, windy and dramatic experience. In an instant our coastal landscape can shift from brilliant sunlit beaches with calm waters to large angry white capped waves that reshape the rocky shoreline. The ebb of change is constant but within the cold spell is a retreat to reflect and prepare for a spring of promise.

2009 was a year of great accomplishments for the Pacific Peoples' Partnership (PPP). After two years of development our new initiative **Papua Land of Peace: Civil Society Leadership for Conflict Transformation** was awarded 3 years of funding from CIDA plus substantial initial contributions towards our 25 % matching funds from Development and Peace. This funding allowed us to hire long time supporter and volunteer Todd Biderman to coordinate the project. Todd speaks Bahasa Indonesia and has extensive experience working with Indigenous and Civil Society partners in Indonesia. He reports in this edition of Tok Blong Pasifik (TBP) about the project and our key partner organizations.

With great professional success in hand our previous Executive Director Glenn Raynor received news that he had been awarded a coveted Rotary World Peace Fellowship. He is now in Tokyo completing a two-year masters in conflict analysis and peace building. His dedication to PPP continues within his role of Strategic Advisor to transition and guide our organization leadership.

Late summer PPP produced the second installment of our highly successful **One Wave Festival**. Two days of programming in Victoria, BC brought together many individuals to discuss the issues of the South Pacific and celebrate the rich diversity of island cultures. This included a wide range of live music, visual art, dance, spoken word and educational presentations. Following on the heels of this great success PPP collaborated with Alcheringa Gallery to coordinate the Indigenous cultural exchanges for three visiting Papua New Guinea Artists and two Coast Salish Artists as detailed in the TBP story on Hailans to Ailans. Within the scope of this project we were able to raise funds for Samoa Tsunami Relief and team up with the Gallery for their long standing Chisel Fund which benefits carvers in PNG. Building further upon our unique model of connecting Canadian First Nations with Indigenous Peoples of the South Pacific, PPP was pleased to facilitate a tour for SAWA Global Hero Nadia Kanegai of Vanuatu to the T'Sou-ke Nation's solar



*Hailans to Ailans cultural exchange  
Photo by Dr. Pamela Rosi*

project. The final days of 2009 were spent promoting for an agreement in Copenhagen to mitigate the affects of climate change in the Pacific.

Throughout the year PPP continued to voice Pacific concerns through representation at regional, national and international solidarity meetings. In addition we continue to work for human rights, economic and ecological justice through civil society networks such as the Asia Pacific Working Group, and the West Papua Action Network.

Despite all the progress of this past year, like many other non profit organizations PPP faces challenges related to fundraising. The primary cause has been the economic downturn and the slashing of public funding to non-profits and charities by our provincial government. This has inevitably led to increased competition for limited funds leaving far too many important organizations out in the cold. Compounding this are changes at the federal level that are negatively impacting the ability of many of our longstanding partners to continue their work. This is a vulnerable time for NGOs in Canada. PPP is no exception. This is why we are counting on your support more than ever to continue our work.

In 2010 the Pacific Peoples' Partnership will celebrate our 35th Anniversary. This is a testament to the work of so many dedicated individuals over the years that we are still here, as vital and relevant as ever. In recognition of this milestone we are planning a Pacific Networking Conference and encourage your involvement. We welcome your ideas, thoughts, reflections and suggestions to mark the occasion.

In closing, we urge you to support the work of the Pacific People's Partnership through a donation this holiday season. With your contribution we will remain fully engaged and responsive to the issues and concerns of our Pacific Island friends for years to come.



# WEST PAPUA UPDATE *by Todd Biderman*

In the last issue of Tok Blong Pasifik (Vol. 7:1), I had the privilege of introducing our most recent initiative: “Papua: Land of Peace – Civil Society Leadership in Conflict Transformation”. Funded by the Canadian International Development Agency’s “Voluntary Sector Fund” (VSF), with committed support also from Development & Peace, this initial 3-year program builds on PPP’s long history of linking Canadian First Nations with counterparts in the Small Island Developing States to address issues of shared concern including: community-based resource stewardship, cultural empowerment, human rights, and gender equity.

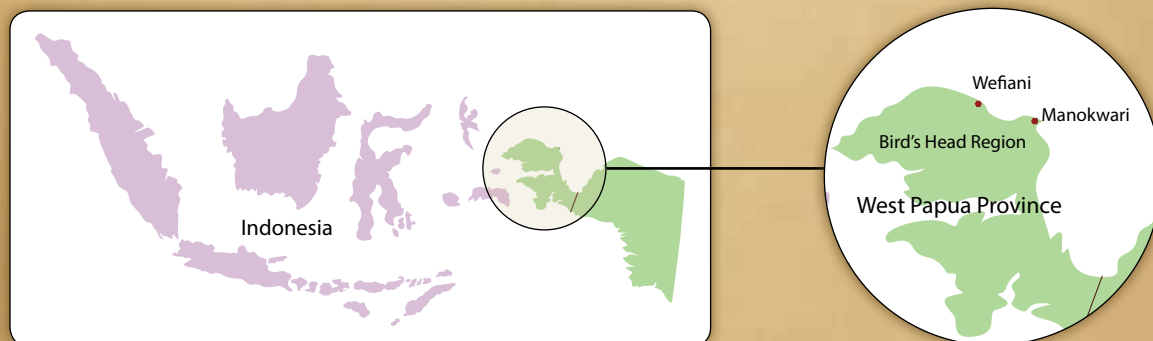
As long time readers of TBP will know, Pacific Peoples’ Partnership (PPP) has closely followed the issue of West Papua and worked hard to raise the profile and plight of civil society there. While a thorough history and examination of this story, which demands the concern of us all, is beyond the scope and space of this article, I would encourage readers to explore back issues of TBP and the links on our website to learn more. For now, I’d like to convey an essence of the situation in West Papua as it is unfolding, as a broad background for our work there, and share some of the work initiated in Manokwari through “Papua: Land of Peace”.

The title of this project derives from the “Land of Peace” movement in Papua. Born in 2003 of an interfaith initiative, it united religious, community, and other civil society leaders. Together, they called for more than a territory free of conflict, but extended the vision of a social landscape where values such as multicultural respect, unity, non-violence, and well-being nourish an alternative to the past 48 years of conflict.

Sources of conflict and challenge in Papua are myriad, and the roots tap deep. Decades of top-down development and heavy-handed military presence have systematically exploited Papua, one of the most resource-rich, biologically and culturally diverse areas of the Indonesian archipelago, while degrading the rights and livelihoods of local communities. Indigenous Papuans live amidst extreme poverty (the highest in Indonesia), and the continual push of large-scale resource extraction projects further undermines their land rights and contributes to deterioration of their cultural worlds, along with their health and economic well being. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is most acute in Indigenous Papuan communities, while access to education, health care and economic opportunities all score national lows. *Pemekaran*, the continued sub-division of regencies and provinces into smaller political units, destabilises and confuses governance processes, divides communities, enhances military presence, and accelerates access to land and resources for ‘development’. All of the above dynamics sustain the potential for both horizontal and vertical conflict.

## On the ground...

Over the past year, PPP has formalised working partnerships with 3 Papuan-led organisations towards fulfilling mutual goals inhered within our collective vision. Each of our counterparts has demonstrated expertise working skillfully at a grassroots, community level, and embodies values resonant with those of PPP and our greater community. The following paragraphs are intended to give a snapshot of these 3 partners, and highlight their current work in the project.



## **Lembaga Penelitian, Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Bantuan Hukum (LP3BH) – Institute for Research, Analysis and Development of Legal Aid**

LP3BH is a well respected human rights and legal aid organisation working in Papua's Bird's Head region. Their program focuses on:

- 1) strengthening civil society and traditional communities through research, study and advocacy,
- 2) providing education in Human Rights and access to legal support and counseling, and
- 3) developing information networks.

They work with a broad cross-section of rural and urban communities and are recognised for their work in supporting land rights for local communities at-risk from resource extraction, for monitoring human rights abuses, and facilitating resolution of both horizontal and vertical conflicts in Papua. Their executive director, Yan Christian Warinussey, was the 2005 recipient of the John Humphrey Freedom Award, and a participant in the PPP-facilitated 2006 International Solidarity Meeting on West Papua.

LP3BH has recognised the critical need to address the marginalisation of women in the Bird's Head region, especially those who are victims of gender-based violence. While both forms and root-causes of violence are myriad and complex, they nevertheless highlighted this essential gap in legal access, education, and support. In proposing a framework to mobilise local partners, the ensuing program addresses domestic and gender-based violence in a manner that will engage both women and men, and at the same time further strengthen capacity for local groups to integrate gender issues more broadly.

In this regard, LP3BH has initiated efforts to mobilise a collaborative women's network to support and serve women victims of gender-based violence. This includes consolidating partnerships and mechanisms of mutual support linking more than 20 relevant organisations, academic departments, indigenous, civil society and religious leaders, as well as branches of both regional and provincial governments. In the coming months, network-supported research and documentation will feed into legal education and organizational training for women victims of violence and participating partners. The scope of the program's vision extends beyond 3-years towards establishing a Women's Crisis Centre in Manokwari.

## **Yayasan Lingkungan Hidup Humeibou Manokwari (YALHIMO) – Manokwari Humeibou Environment Foundation**

YALHIMO is another Papuan-led organisation with deep roots in local communities. They work to strengthen leadership, participation and institutions in Indigenous communities, while weaving Indigenous values and knowledge systems into initiatives that enhance local self-reliance and sustainability. Their approach to ecological and cultural preservation emerges through a uniquely local perspective informed by priorities of their partner communities.

YALHIMO's partnership with PPP is currently focused at the coastal village of Wefani, in the Amberbaken district of Manokwari regency (see map, inset). Amidst the socio-political complexity of West Papua, the combination of *pemekaran* coupled with the ever-expanding approval of resource concessions directly affects the integrity of the local forests, watersheds, and fisheries while undermining land-rights and use-patterns of local communities. YALHIMO recognised that the community at Wefani needed support in developing strategies that would help them address the challenges brought by resource interests seeking concession in their territory.

YALHIMO's program in Wefani Village builds on past participatory mapping activities that documented community territory, tenure systems, and resource-use practices. Utilising these tools will enable the development of appropriate community-based management plans to be created, and to further support traditional land rights and practices. A key longer-term goal includes avoiding land-use conflicts by empowering the local communities to engage directly with government and other agents in proposed resource-use policies.



*Todd (PPP) with LP3BH staff: Yules, Andris, Ruth, and Yanti*

## **Persatuan Terbatas Peduli Sehat (PTPS) – Association for Community Healthcare**

PTPS is an organisation that epitomises the word “grassroots”. On the whole, they work broadly towards community health, with a particular focus on delivering HIV/AIDS education, counseling and support. They work with local communities, governments, hospitals and clinics towards increasing the quality of care, access, and participation in delivering health services, education and information to individuals and communities.

In recent years, PTPS has directly assisted hundreds of people living with HIV/AIDs, while providing outreach and educational tools for countless others. Their work engages diverse individuals from sex workers, migrant workers, street kids, to health care providers and government agencies.

PPP is collaborating with PTPS to initiate an HIV/AIDS Prevention and Support program targeting pregnant women in Manokwari. Minimising transmission from mother to child, and ensuring access to proper counsel and care were identified by PTPS as critical needs, while citing poor access to healthcare, lack of government intervention, and stigmatisation of those living with HIV/AIDS as major obstacles to their work. The program's first year encompasses 3 core activities: training to educate and assist others in prevention and living with HIV/AIDS and STDs; individual-level support and outreach for pregnant or planning-to-be pregnant women; and, establishing a mobile Voluntary Counseling and Testing Clinic (VTC). PTPS will leverage these activities to enhance knowledge of prevalence and transmission of HIV/AIDS and other STDs, feeding the data into broader frameworks for monitoring, response-planning, and outreach purposes.

## **In Closing**

As an organisation engaged in International Cooperation, PPP has developed this project in collaboration with partners in Papua and Canada to integrate capacity strengthening and education for human rights, sustainable livelihoods, gender equity, and health. Supporting organisations that possess strong community mandates we feel is fundamental to supporting the rights of Papuans and helping assert their voices into democratic decision making that directly impacts their well-being. It is also an essential pathway towards strengthening capacity and understanding in Indigenous communities to appropriately reconcile shifting social-political dynamics with their own needs while ensuring the vitality and integrity of their communities. These areas are essential to addressing the acute challenges in West Papua, and are critical to strengthening leadership and conflict transformation there.

In 2010, PPP will continue to work closely with our West Papuan partners to broaden the field of engagement and strengthen local capacities. Our agreement with CIDA requires us to raise 25% of the funds as a match to their contribution. To this end, we appeal to our Tok Blong Pasifik readers and friends for your financial support of this initiative. Let this truly become Papua, Land of Peace.

*Deforested landscapes surround this village on the north coast of the Bird's Head*  
Photo: YALHIMO





# A RECONCILIATION CEREMONY ON ERROMANGO: NOT A STORY ABOUT CANNIBALISM

**Story and photos by Carol E. Mayer**

Curator (Oceania & Africa)

UBC Museum of Anthropology

*Here, in this place, by some strange alchemy  
We gather to reconcile  
To offer some understanding  
And to receive it, too  
For what was done  
Did merely an error compound  
Concealing truths immensely profound*

**- David Williams, November 18th, 2009**



*Sorry for Reverend Gordon*

This is the first verse of a poem written by David Williams on November 18th, 2009, two days before he attended a reconciliation ceremony on Erromango. His journey from Canada began four years ago when I received a phone call from Daisy Williams, wife of Michael Williams, another descendant of the reverend John Williams (1796-1839), a missionary who was killed on the shores of Erromango in 1839.<sup>1</sup> She had called because she was looking for a home for five artifacts that once belonged to John Williams: a beautiful New Caledonian bird's head club, an Austral Islands whisk, a Fijian club inlaid with ivory, a finely crafted fish hook and a well carved Maori flute. When donated they not only became some of the oldest Pacific Islands' objects to be found in a Canadian collection, which in the museum world holds some caché, but they were also objects that belonged to a time when colonial and evangelical expansion across the Pacific was beginning to ramp up. This is what interested me. John Williams was an English missionary who voyaged to the Pacific in 1817, accompanied by his wife Mary. He travelled throughout the islands and atolls of Polynesia establishing missionary posts and training converts. He wrote books about his travels and quite carefully described the cultures he encountered. He also amassed a collection of artifacts, some of which be seen in the 1838 painting "The Rev.

John Williams on board ship with native implements, in the South Sea Islands."<sup>2</sup> These native implements served as tangible evidence of the places and cultures he had visited and perhaps those he converted, as do those donated by Michael and Daisy Williams.

There is much discussion (pro and con) around the idea of whether or not objects have agency. Do they contain within them the stories associated with their history and, if we think they do, can they serve as active agents in contemporary research endeavours? I thought less about how these objects might enrich knowledge about the past but rather how they might influence the present and, by extension, the shape of the future. Their very existence and the need to document them was sufficient reason to raise interest in how the story of John Williams was perceived by his descendants and by the descendants of those responsible for his death. Would either group be interested in meeting and what form would this meeting take? I wondered whether such things happened on Vanuatu and whether it might be appropriate to think about such a thing between the descendents of the reverend John Williams and the descendents of those who killed him.

I mentioned the idea to Michael Williams and he expressed some interest and directed me to another member of the family, UK based Charles Milner Williams who had extensively studied the Williams' history and was extremely interested in the possibility of a meeting. I had also read about 'sorry' ceremonies in and around the Pacific and wondered whether they would provide the format for the meeting. They usually took the form either of colonizers apologizing for past abuse of indigenous peoples or indigenous people apologizing for killing colonizers, usually missionaries.<sup>iii</sup> Subsequent discussions with Ralph Regenvanu, a colleague of many years and currently Director of the Vanuatu National Cultural Council resulted in the proposal that members of the Williams' family express their willingness to come to Vanuatu by writing to the church leaders and council of chiefs. If agreement was reached then the family would be invited to attend a reconciliation, not 'sorry', ceremony. Regenvanu thought the ceremony was needed very much as many of the people on Erromango felt the island had been under a 'curse' that could be lifted once reconciliation was achieved. He also explained that "Saying sorry is part of it, but all reconciliation ceremonies require something from each side - there's always that element of exchange."<sup>iv</sup> He recommended that the something from the Williams family be three plaques: two for the Presbyterian churches in Erromango and Port Vila, and one for the gravesite in Erromango.<sup>v</sup>

Once the letters were received, an invitation was issued from the council of churches, along with the specification that the ceremony be held on the 170th anniversary of the death of John Williams. Members of the Williams family were located and on November 13th the first of seventeen descendants of the reverend John Williams arrived from Canada in Port Vila. They were the great great grandson David Williams and his wife Pat Swift. They were met, as were all the rest of the family, by Chief Daniel Dan of Dillon's Bay in Erromango, along with representatives of the Erromango community in Port Vila. **vi** Other Canadian members of the family plus those from Africa and England arrived during the following few days. Other arrivals included film crews from British Columbia, the BBC in England, and the UBC Museum of Anthropology. **vii** Although interest had been expressed by others to attend the event, no invitations were issued beyond the family, the people of Erromango and the communicators.<sup>viii</sup>

This is a synopsis of my story as it was recorded in my journal, and it is both descriptive and emotive. In time

I will contemplate, analyse and attempt to be truly objective about the events I was privileged to witness. All those who attended the events will serve as witnesses and bear the responsibility of telling the story so that it will not be forgotten. Their stories will be personalized, embellished, edited and will change over time – such is the way of history.

Two small planes ferried the families from Port Vila to Dillon's Bay groups of five or six were picked up by the only truck on the island and driven along the precipitous route to the village.<sup>ix</sup> Due to mishaps with the truck the timing of the event was delayed from 11.00 am to 3.00 pm. As the family arrived they were met by villagers and shown a hut that was beautifully decorated with new island cloths and flowers. On the table were jugs of fruit juice and several biscuits. It was cool so we sat down and waited for the truck to be repaired. A young girl, Anna Narvu, was assigned to make sure everybody was comfortable. The village square was decorated with fronds, flowers and balloons, and a stage was set up at one end complete with a sound system. We were shown our sleeping quarters in the church. About 14 mattresses were lined up on either side; covered with coloured cloths and decorated with fragionpanis. The floor was covered in large woven mats. All these furnishings were gathered from families all over the island. Family elders were housed with village families.

When everybody had arrived we were taken into the local guest house to change into island clothes = green flowered dresses and shirts, made by women in the village, of identical material that identified us as visitors. People were slowly gathering, sitting around the edge, music played




*Michael Williams talking with Pastor*



on the loudspeaker, pews were brought from the church and positioned to the right of the stage, and benches for various dignitaries were placed at the front edge.<sup>x</sup> People were wearing their 'go to church' clothes and dignitaries were wearing white shirts and black pants. A printed program was handed out which outlined the events. Pastor Obed Moses and Pastor Allan Nafuki started with prayers and then there was a hymn sung - specially written for the occasion. By this time there were a couple of hundred people sitting around the square. The family was seated on pews brought from the church and dignitaries were seated on long benches.<sup>xi</sup> After the opening prayer women walked across the square with leaf garlands which they placed on each member of the Williams family and on all other dignitaries. Prayers, a sermon in Bislama and the singing of hymns followed. Speeches were given by Ralph Regenvanu, Chief William Mete, and members of the Williams family. The first was delivered by John David Williams (head of the family) who greeted everybody in Botswana language and talked about respect between peoples. David Williams recited a poem he had written two days before (partially cited at the beginning and end of this paper), Michael Williams presented a plaque for the church, Charles Milner Williams spoke eloquently and retold the story of his ancestor's arrival on Erromango, and Dorie Williams presented a bible signed by all the family for the church. Once the speeches were over Pastor Allan Nafuki announced that, to mark this important event, Dillon's Bay would now be known as Williams' Bay. During the final speech it was announced that we were also recognizing the death of the reverend George Gordon who was killed, along with his family, on Erromango in 1861. Art Holbrook, one of the BC film crew, acted as the family representative.

At this point there followed a theatrical event. Everybody moved from the square down to the shore where we saw some men get into a boat out in the bay opposite the village where the ferry was moored. Two men clearly dressed to represent John Williams and James Harris came ashore and walked to the village where they were received aggressively by warriors. Unfortunately for John Williams he didn't know that shortly before his arrival some European traders had come ashore and attacked and killed five natives. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. As the story unfolded the warriors became more aggressive and John Williams moved closer holding his bible up high. He stepped over a line drawn in the sand, interpreted as an aggressive act that enraged the warriors and they charged at him and clubbed him, but he ran towards the sea where he was caught and axed to death, as was James Harris.<sup>xii</sup>



The warriors then carried the bodies up to the village square where they laid them out – covered in 'blood.' This was all very dramatic and, as both missionaries lay motionless on the ground, villagers gathered around the bodies and sang the John Williams hymn while a narrator continued the story. Some of the singers were clearly moved by the event, some were even crying.

Three groups then gathered and this was the time for reconciliation. Three warriors re-enacted the story of the 1861 killing of the Canadian missionary Reverend George Gordon and his family. After the murder the three warriors sank to their knees and cried for forgiveness. The Williams family was nonplussed and clearly did not know how to react. Then three members stepped forward and pulled the warriors to their feet and hugged them – it seemed the appropriate thing to do. There was a silence and then people began to clap. The first and second group then moved forward and quietly shook the hands of every Williams family member. Finally it was the turn of the descendants of the killers of John Williams. This time two warriors stepped forward and started to wail and cry and throw themselves at the feet of the Williams family. Then the entire group moved forward, dropped to their knees and began crying and sobbing and saying 'sorry' – seemingly inconsolable (photo above). Tears began flowing everywhere. Then Charles Williams stepped forward and said "please, please stop...on behalf of the Williams family, I forgive you". All the family spontaneously stepped forward and walked into the group, pulled people to their feet, hugging them and asking them to stop crying. I turned to Ralph and he said "that was the right thing to do."

The final gesture of this very long day occurred when a family stepped forward and according to old custom they gave their seven year old daughter to the Williams – a life for a life. Her name was Uarai Natungo; she was dressed in white with garlands around her head and she was clearly scared. Michael and Charles, who had been forewarned, stepped forward to accept the responsibility for her but also to hand her back to her family for safekeeping.<sup>xiii</sup> Now the Williams family has a very tangible reason to continue their relationship with the village and a duty to ensure the girl is given all the opportunities that will help her grow into a ‘big woman.’ Overall the day’s events were emotionally exhausting, and well summed up by the words of Charles Milner Williams “I thought I would be dispassionate after 170 years but the raw emotion, the genuine contrition, the heart-rending sorrow has been hugely moving.”

Food and feasting followed; the village women made laplap – a mixture of bananas, pork, chicken, mango, taro all cooked on hot stones and covered in leaves. David Williams was asked to uncover the stones in the presence of the communicators who were lined up around the pit. This included Pastor Yuan Atnelo, Reverend Allan Nafuki, Ralph Regenvanu, Anna Naupa and me. Once the pit was uncovered Ralph made a gesture with his hands, as though he were washing them, and said to me “our hands are now clean of the responsibility we had carried.” It was not a noisy feast, many conversations, moving between groups of people exchanging names and relationships.

The next morning we were ferried across the bay, and walked up pathway towards the monuments dedicated to the Gordon family and John Williams. The grave site had been carefully prepared and the John Williams headstone had his name and death date scratched on top. A choir was standing around the grave and they sang the John Williams hymn and then a village elder welcomed the Williams’ family, David responded and Dorie laid the plaque on the grave. On the way to view the John Williams headstone the Reverend Bernard, of Williams’ Bay, pointed out the place where it is believed John Williams met his end and where he was buried. The grave, he said, was washed out to sea many years ago. It is generally believed that Williams was the victim of cannibalism, one of the most misunderstood of cultural practices. It was the killing, not the eating, of John Williams that was the reason for the reconciliation ceremony. Regenvanu explained: “Cannibalism, contrary to what a lot of people think, was traditionally a very ritualistic

and sacred practice.” Regardless, there remains the danger of this event being misunderstood and trivialized by the media. The UK newspaper the Daily Mail ran the headline “Sorry we ate your great-great grandpa: Island cannibals apologise for killing missionary 170 years ago.”<sup>xiv</sup> The Telegraph headline read “Tribe apologises for eating British missionary.” The event was carefully documented by three videographers and the web-based article promoting the BBC version of events was titled “Island holds reconciliation over cannibalism.”<sup>xv</sup>

For many on Erromango the reconciliation ceremony resulted in the lifting of the ‘curse,’ if there was one. The reason for any bad luck or misfortune had been dispelled. The descendants of John Williams were invited to continue their new relationship with the village.<sup>xvi</sup> They have accepted the specific responsibility for the well-being and future education of the child Uarai. Now begins a new phase in the lives of the villagers of the newly named Williams Bay. And it all began with the donation of five artifacts and continues with the final verse of David Williams poem:

*So accept our presence as our gift  
Less than that we receive from you  
For now the circle is complete  
Ole ghosts may sleep at last  
We are friends united by our history – our destiny  
No longer captives of the past.*

*-David Williams, November 18th, 2009*

*Ralph Regenvanu receives a welcome wreath*



## Footnotes from the Vanuatu Reconciliation

- I Erromango is one of the islands that comprise the Republic of Vanuatu.
- II This painting is in the collection of the Australian National Museum.
- III Sorry ceremonies were held in Australia in 2008 when the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, apologized to the “Stolen Generation” of aboriginal children and earlier, in 2001, in Fiji, when the population of Nubutautau gathered to say sorry for the 1867 death (and cannibalism) of the reverend Thomas Baker.
- IV Interview with BBC’s Briony Leyland, November, 2009.
- V The UBC Museum of Anthropology organized the bronze plaque for the gravesite and Michael Williams organized the granite and framed plaques for the churches.
- VI Lini-Napuati Lora, November 19th, 2009. “families of Reverend John Williams return after 170 years” Daily Post, Vanuatu.
- VII Film crew from B.C.: Art Holbrook and Peter Campbell; from BBC: Briony Leyland; from UBC Museum of Anthropology: Ken Mayer.
- VIII ‘Communicators’ was the word used to describe those involved with the overall task of making sure the event happened according to correct protocol. They included Ralph Regenvanu, Anna Naupa, Carol Mayer, Vanuatu council of churches.
- IX Dillon’s Bay was named after Peter Dillon, Irish Sandalwood trader, who traded in the area from 1825-1865.
- X The Prime minister paid for a boat to bring people of Erromango from Port Vila, specifically to attend this event.
- XI On the journey from the plane to the village Jennifer Williams had broken her leg in two places and fortunately John Havens, doctor, and Paul Havens, paramedic, were able to set her leg in plaster of paris located in the village’s small clinic. John Havens is the husband of Dorie, great great granddaughter of John Williams.
- XII Little is known about James Harris. On January 18th, 1840 The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser ran the following notice: Registrar of the Supreme Court, to SELL BY PUBLIC AUCTION tit the Mart, in George street, THIS DAY, the 18th Instant, at 11 o’Clock, the following Effects belonging to Intestate Estates. To the late Mr. James Harris, Missionary, a large quantity of Clothing and personal Effects, Gold Watch, and Curiosities from the South Sea Islands.
- XIII She was also given the name Mary, after John Williams’ wife.
- XIV <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1233952/Sorry-ate-great-great-grandpa-Island-cannibals-apologise-killing-missionary-170-years-ago.html#ixzz0Z9O3mzT1>
- XV [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/hampshire/8398126.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/hampshire/8398126.stm)
- XVI The family is discussing contributing to the clinic and school. Paul Havens, great, great, great grandson, and paramedic, is considering returning to work in the clinic for a few months. Other possibilities are also being discussed.

# MIDWAY JOURNEY:

## Message from the North Pacific Gyre

In the fall of 2009 five media artists, led by photographer Chris Jordan, journeyed to Midway to witness the catastrophic effect of our disposable culture on some of the world’s most beautiful and symbolic creatures. Through photography, film, poetry, music and word the artists documented and expressed the horrors of human waste on the world’s most remote marine sanctuary. This photograph of an albatross chick was taken on Midway Atoll by Chris Jordan. The nesting baby was fed a belly full of plastic by its parents, who soar over the vast polluted ocean collecting what looks like food to bring back to their young. This shocking diet leads to the starvation, poisoning and choking of tens of thousands albatross chicks each year.



*Albatross chick, Midway Atoll*  
Chris Jordan, [www.chrisjordan.com](http://www.chrisjordan.com)

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# HAILANS TO AILANS *by Dan Lepsoe*

*The people who have gone before me live in me, but they live in those around me, too, and it's my responsibility to recognize and strengthen these connections. Building bridges is my homage to my ancestors. Maybe objects can be the windows through which our cultures can see each other and communicate.*

*Performance artist  
Michael Mel*



Michael Mel by Erin Armstrong

## **How do we define ourselves in a fast-changing world?**

How do we maintain connections with our children, our communities, our complicated histories? These are among the challenges tackled by indigenous Papua New Guinean and Canadian artists in the international exhibition Hailans to Ailans ([hailanstoailans.com](http://hailanstoailans.com)). Through metal and wood sculpture, painting, weaving, and performance, these artists examine the slippery nature of identity in places where “progress” has often meant losing control.

Papua New Guinea (PNG) has vast biocultural wealth, with more than eight hundred language groups and five percent of the planet's biodiversity. A rarity in today's world, land in PNG is still largely controlled by the people who have lived on it for millennia, developing complex relationships with its mountains and rivers, plants and animals. These strengths have met mounting opposition over the past century, however, from colonization, monetization, and globalization. Residents of the expanding urban centres are becoming isolated from their cultural inheritance as they are immersed in Western stories in which their own histories and traditions seem irrelevant.

In this context, leading PNG artists are joining with Coast Salish counterparts across the Pacific to assert the vitality, resilience, and beauty of indigenous traditions. They're doing this through offers of friendship: fresh perspectives

on love magic, living ancestors, revenge, healing, gender, language, nutrition, climate change, cannibals and missionaries, television and museums. Discarded appliances are turned into graceful sculptures of young families. Cubist paintings describe negotiations with the spirit world. Woven bags carry their bearers' histories, while masks help viewers see those who wear them. Objects speak, and are suddenly alive; artifacts move, and are recognized as art.

The audience is transformed. This fall, Hailans to Ailans artists travelled to London, San Francisco, and Victoria, where they participated in performances, panel discussions, lectures, residencies, and other events. This frenetic international tour challenged the artists as well as their audiences- sometimes for the same reasons. It was a strange kind of homecoming for the artists to visit the cultural capital of their colonizers. UK audiences generally had much less exposure to aboriginal arts than North American audiences, so extra effort was needed to make connections. But the connections made were strong enough that discussions for a follow-up show at Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery are already underway. In San Francisco, artists completed a mural and led tours of the historical Jolika Collection of New Guinea Art at the de Young Museum. They opened the second half of the exhibition at Alcheringa Gallery in Victoria, then participated in cultural exchanges and performances coordinated with the support of the Pacific Peoples' Partnership. This included visits to art studios, and community visits with Vancouver Island First Nations, as well as a multicultural performance evening. Finally, after nearly three months away, the artists flew home to PNG.

The exhibition remains online at [hailanstoailans.com](http://hailanstoailans.com), which includes interviews, essays, stories, biographies, videos, and dozens of spectacular artwork photos. For more information on the exhibition and plans for its successors, visit [www.alcheringa-gallery.com](http://www.alcheringa-gallery.com).

*Hailans to Ailans received major funding from: The Christensen Fund, with additional support from Papua New Guinea's Tourism Promotion Authority, NASFUND, and the World Wildlife Fund.*



# TRIBUTE TO MELINA *By Muavae Va'a*



Melina

Talofa Lava. This past month has the hardest ever. On September 29th I got news that my home island of Samoa was hit by a Tsunami. I was so terrified not knowing if it affected my family. I frantically tried calling all afternoon and night,

only to find out in the middle of the night that the Tsunami had claimed the life of my sister Melina, her grandchild and son-in-law. I was devastated and immediately began plans to return home to be with my family. Thanks to the love, support and generosity of our church families, and many friends in North America I was able to do so.

I left for Samoa on Oct 5th to try and get there in time for Melina's funeral. I arrived to find out that Melina and her grandson had already been buried earlier that day. I was heartbroken. I felt that I had no chance to say good bye or bring some closure to the tragedy and begin healing. Melina was like a mother to me. She was the fifth child of twelve in our family. She was a kind, caring and generous woman. After the funeral many people came to us and told us that they owed Melina money from her little store. Her surviving husband Lesa told these people "No you don't owe anything, your debts are erased. Melina is taking those with her".

Melina, the wife of the high chief of the village, was very well respected as she taught her children and others the customs of our people. As I heard many stories of how she cared for her community I came to the conclusion that my beloved sister had a big heart with room for anyone that came into her life. I will forever miss her loving, caring personality. Melina leaves behind her husband Lesa and 11 children. Rest in peace big sister, I will always love you.

While in Samoa my time was spent trying to help in any way I could. I went with my cousin who was a matai (village leader) and we went to the mountain, inland area where the people of the villages fled. They were putting up tarps, tents and makeshift shacks to live in as they were too afraid to go back down to the ocean side village. We visited each family from the village and gave them a

financial gift to help with their needs. The people were so thankful and often in tears as they found out that I came home all the way from Canada to help. In my village of Lotopue we were able to assist 50 families. We were also able to assist families of other neighboring villages.

Melina and Lesa's house and little store were completely destroyed by the Tsunami. A 30 minute drive away from the village towards the mountain, they have a small one room building at their farm land. The building was there for their sons to have a place to rest when they work the farm. Now this will be the family home for 16 people. The house is a work in progress as they add on additional rooms to accommodate everybody.

Clean up was a major task, as we spent time on the family property removing debris left behind by the tsunami. It was very hard for my nieces and nephews to work at cleaning up while they were grieving the loss of their mom.

It will be years of rebuilding of homes and lives for my people so please continue to pray for Samoa. My heart is full of sorrow for my family and my people.

*Muavae Va'a is a Samoan now living on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada. He is a respected cultural teacher and advocate for the South Pacific and the First Nation peoples of Canada. A follow up mission for rebuilding Samoa is planned for 2010. To learn more visit [ywamvictoria.com](http://ywamvictoria.com).*



*Community Farewell*  
All photos by Muavae Va'a

# TUNA TATAKI GOES ON STRIKE

## Pacific Islands at Tuna Commission call for tighter controls on fishing

Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) members are calling for tighter controls on fishing at the 6th Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) meeting which opened on December 8th, 2009.

Pacific Island countries are the owners of the last remaining healthy tuna stocks in the world and manage a marine area of 30 million square kilometres, supported with technical support and services from the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA).

Regional fisheries management in the Pacific Islands region includes several measures to control illegal fishing such as the creation of a Vessel Monitoring System to track electronically track fishing vessels, a Regional Observer Programme to put independent observers on fishing vessels to report on fishing practices and Regional Surveillance Operations to survey vast tracks of ocean by pooling surveillance equipment and capabilities of many countries.

This year Pacific Islands are presenting to the WCPFC ideas to tighten controls on illegal fishing such as:

- Change the rules to ensure prosecutions and penalties for illegal vessels are to the satisfaction of the state where the vessel committed the offences (this follows the experience of Tonga last year which argued at WCPFC that Taiwan's penalties for a vessel found fishing illegally in Tongan waters was not adequate – instead Taiwan agreed to pay the fine imposed by Tonga).
- Make provisions so countries where ships are flagged are responsible for making sure they are on the WCPFC Register.
- Amend the WCPFC Conservation and Management Measure on Swordfish including making more effective the so-called 'penalty clause' which stipulates that a country that catches over its limit one year must make up for it the following year by taking a cut in their allowable catch.

Pacific Islands have been at the forefront of developing innovative measures to manage fishing including the

establishment of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and its rules to cut fishing of bigeye tuna (subject to overfishing), put fishing observers on board fishing vessels, establish a high seas vessel monitoring system, close some high seas pockets and introduce measures on sharks, seabirds and turtles.

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) is a decision making body for management of tuna fishing in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Conservation and management measures (CMMs) of the Commission are legally binding and apply to all WCPFC members and the Western and Central Pacific Ocean which was the source of 54% of the world's tuna catch in 2007.

Members of the WCPFC are Australia, China, Canada, Cook Islands, European Community, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Japan, Kiribati, Korea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Chinese Taipei, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu. Also at the WCPFC are participating territories including American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Tokelau, Wallis and Futuna.

Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Council Brendan Pasisi from Niue said: "We come to this meeting as custodians of the tuna resource and our interest is in sustainable fishing for the benefits for Pacific Islanders. We also seek to make sure the rights and interests of small island developing states are respected by the Commission as we sit together with fishing nations and discuss the fisheries management rules for the Western and Central Pacific Ocean."...PNS (ENDS)

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