

Raven & Paradise:

Connecting Two Worlds



Special Edition of Tok Blong Pasifik

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IN THIS ISSUE

Featuring Youth Artwork from West Papua and Canada

Plus the Illustrations of Mark Gauti & Writing of Jen Jorgensen

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The island of New Guinea as a whole constitutes one of the largest regions of intact tropical rainforest on earth, and is the most diverse biocultural region in the world. Comprising the western half of the island, West Papua (constituted by both Indonesian provinces of Papua province and West Papua province) is a place of astounding ecological diversity, with mega-diverse ecosystems ranging from coral reefs, coastal mangroves and lowland tropical forests to mountain glaciers. It is the most resource-rich, biologically and culturally diverse area of the Indonesian archipelago, and home to over 250 distinct languages and Indigenous groups.

Yet, decades of top-down development policies and heavy-handed military presence have systematically exploited West Papua while degrading the rights and livelihoods of local peoples. 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. Each time even a small number of people are displaced, a unique cultural heritage embodying knowledge, experience and novel worldviews may be lost forever.

Over the past 26 years, Pacific Peoples' Partnership (PPP) has actively engaged in calling attention to West Papua, and working with partners around the world towards realising Papuan visions of a peaceful and prosperous society that is socially just, ecologically and culturally sustainable, and politically and economically empowered. From 2009-2012, PPP coordinated a project called "Papua Land of Peace: Strengthening civil society leadership in conflict transformation", intervening alongside local partners to address the root causes of conflict in West Papua and strengthen capacity of partner organisations and the communities with which they work. In 2010, PPP hosted in Canada partner representatives from Manokwari, West Papua, for a conference celebrating Indigenous innovation and partnerships. It was a meeting of many minds: Coast Salish Nations, Papuan partners, friends, members, academics, and Indigenous leaders from across Western Canada.

In the words of *T'Sou-ke* Elder Linda Bristol, "sharing knowledge is a gift, it is the new form of potlatch." It is this valuable concept of coming together and sharing that is carried through our work and within the tale of far-away brother-birds, Raven and the Bird of Paradise.

When Paradise learns of his distant relation, Raven, who lives across the Pacific Ocean, he makes a voyage that weaves together two lands, their people, and their visions for the future. Enriched with children's artwork from Coast Salish and West Papuan communities, the skilled work of *T'Sou-ke* Nation artist Mark Gauti, and the literary talents of Jen Jorgensen, *the story of Raven and Paradise is a journey* that invites you to participate in the meeting of two Indigenous cultures, two worlds connected by the waters of the Pacific.



Jason (West Papua), Connie (Canada), Ruth (West Papua) and Marisan (West Papua) at LÁU,WELNEW tribal school (near Victoria BC), Nov 2010.



PACIFIC PEOPLES' PARTNERSHIP



JOURNEY

Dancing along the Ocean's many shorelines, the Pacific Peace Winds learned of two brother birds that lived on the opposite reaches of the Ocean, 11,000 km apart. Raven and Paradise were message carriers for the children of their lands, and the Peace Winds decided that it was time for them to meet.

The Winds summoned Paradise from the forest for the journey.

"Paradise, your brother Raven awaits. There is much for you to learn from one another. Take artwork from the village children. They share truths about the people and land." Paradise enthusiastically agreed. He tucked the gifts of art into his *noken*, a traditional bag woven of natural fibre from tree bark or other plants, and secured it beneath his wing. For many days Paradise flew with Peace Winds until land finally appeared. Raven was waiting to greet him upon a branch of a tall cedar tree.

"Hello brother. Welcome to Coast Salish territory!" Raven greeted.

"Thank-you my brother, I feel your kind welcome. In West Papua we greet one another with *"selamat datang"*, Paradise replied.



Max. L. Werimon - Sugumei, WP



Corbin McPherson - Tsawout, CA



"THERE IS MUCH FOR YOU TO LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER."



Magdiel-H-Pihahey - Mandopi, WP



Adrel Bobi Wilfrew - Ransiki, WP



Atika Sayori - Anggori, WP



Isabelle St.Pierre & Jenna Welch - T'Sou-ke, CA

HOME

Raven and Paradise retreated to Raven's forest home.

"Raven, I have brought with me gifts of artwork made by children of my land. You can see life in West Papua through their eyes."

Raven smiled, "I also have for you gifts of art from Coast Salish children. They show so clearly what they understand to be important."

The brothers smiled at seeing similarities in the children's creations.

"Both the Coast Salish People of this land and people in West Papua live in similar concrete buildings and houses," noted Raven.

"People also live in more traditional villages," said Paradise. "The Coast Salish live near the ocean and the rivers. In Papua, many villagers live in wooden houses that are built upon many stakes of wood. They are called *kaki seribu*, which means "house of one thousand feet." Some have tin roofs, others have thatched roofs of leaves or grass. Usually many generations of a family live together."

"The Coast Salish also have what they call *Long Houses* for ceremony, dance, and community gatherings." Raven explained. Paradise also shared that "West Papuan communities gather in ceremonial houses, homes, and other sacred places."



Yosua Rumaikeuw - Anggori, WP



*Cristin. Tresya.
Yulma Werimon - Anggori, WP*



*Madelyn Morris
Craigflower Elementary School, CA*



"THE BROTHERS SMILED AT SEEING SIMILARITIES IN THE CHILDREN'S CREATIONS."



Adrel Bobi Wilfrew - Ransiki, WP



Denis - Ransiki, WP



*Dylan Thomas
Craigflower Elementary School, CA*



“OVER HERE, COAST SALISH PEOPLE FISH,
PARTICULARLY SALMON.”

“IN WEST PAPUA THE TRADITIONAL STAPLE
FOOD IS CALLED Papeda.”

FEAST

“Paradise, you must be very hungry from your travels, let us feast together,” Raven said. “Over here, Coast Salish people fish, particularly salmon. Some people continue the tradition of smoking the fish in little houses full of smoke. Some people also still hunt for deer and elk. I have some salmon for us to share.”

“In West Papua, people also fish and hunt if the local ecosystem can still support it. The traditional staple food is called *papeda*. It is a porridge made with flour from the trunk of the sago palm. I’ve brought some for our feast.” Raven and Paradise enjoyed the salmon and *papeda*.

“Many Coast Salish people grow their food. Some have their own gardens and fruit trees near their homes, others grow food together in community gardens. Do families in West Papua garden?” Raven asked.

“Yes, most people have a family garden near their home. They often also raise chickens and pigs. Some have larger gardens farther away. Food and crops grown there are often sold in markets.”



Kaylee-Anne Francis - Tsawout, CA



Monasari - Sugumei, WP



Ila Yunike Nega - Sugumei, WP



Marrie Peter
Craigflower Elementary School, CA



Aprinus Towansiba - Anggigida, WP



Martinus Towansiba - Anggigida, WP

RAINFOREST

As their meal settled, Raven and Paradise toured through the forest.

“Paradise, this region receives a lot of rain, which makes the plants grow vibrant and abundantly. The trees grow very large. It is temperate rainforest, and many people are trying to protect, preserve, and restore the forests here.”

“Raven, the vegetation in West Papua is similarly very rich. We are located closer to the Equator, which makes our climate hot and humid. Our rainforest is tropical. The plants, animals, and even the insects, are different and unique. Papuans too are working to protect the forest, because it is a vital resource for their way of life.”

“Much of the nature in this region has changed with the people,” Raven shared. “Some land is now protected to conserve the habitat and the ecology that is so valued. People are also trying to bring back what was once taken away. The connection that these people have with nature can be seen in their art and heard in their old stories.”



“THE CONNECTION THAT THESE PEOPLE HAVE WITH NATURE CAN BE SEEN IN THEIR ART AND HEARD IN THEIR OLD STORIES.”



Arnol, Enos Pigo - Mandopi, WP



Ellen - Sugumei, CA



Dreyden George - T'Sou-ke, CA



Apner-Kwan - Anggori, WP



“OUR TWO LANDS HAVE MANY SIMILARITIES AND COMMON VALUES, LIKE COMMUNITY, TRADITION, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS”



Salisha Tyler - Craigflower Elementary School, CA



Kierra Planes - T'Sou-ke, CA



Caitlin George - T'Sou-ke, CA



Laura Ayomi - Sugumei, WP



Chika Soindemi - Ransiki, WP



Kyra Heberlein - T'Sou-ke, CA

PARTING WORLDS

Soon it was time for Paradise to journey home.

“Raven, thank you so much for sharing the children’s stories and for telling me more about the land and the people of your home. I will share with people in West Papua the different ways that Coast Salish people have been working to protect their land.”

“Paradise, I am very grateful that you journeyed here to visit me. We live so far apart, yet the people of our two lands have many similarities and common values, like community, tradition, and the importance of local ecosystems. Your trip reminds me of the advice given by a respected Coast Salish Elder: “Qwam Qwum tun Shqwalawun”, which means: “Make your mind strong...use the best of both worlds.”

RAVEN AND PARADISE: CONNECTING TWO WORLDS

Broadly speaking this special edition of Tok Blong Pasifik was conceived to explore the alternate bioregions of West Papua and the Coast Salish territories of Canada. With the help of our many partners, together we gathered the creative vision and stories of youth in both places, with the goal to share their own unique world views. We were amazed with the response and wrestled with topics such as the appropriate and respectful use of the children's art, cultural protocols and pragmatic concerns such as the storyline and flow of content. Language in particular was a big factor in our creative process as over 250 Indigenous West Papuan and 32 BC First Nations tribal languages exist. Yet despite this linguistic richness, we were out of necessity forced to print this book in the two trade languages of these territories (English and Indonesian).

This simple little book with modest beginnings represents hundreds of hours of work by people both north and south. They are as follows: 202 youth from West Papua and the Coast Salish territories of Canada; our West Papua Team: Mnuikwar, LP3BH, PTPS, Yalhimo, and Adriana Sri Adhiati (Translation); our Canadian Team: Mark Gauti (Lead creative & illustrator), Jen Jorgensen (Author), Trena Sutton from Victoria School District 61, Ann Welch and Charlene George from T'Sou-ke Youth Center, and Roberta Pelkey from "Grandma's house" in TSAWOUT (all of whom helped to coordinate Coast Salish artworks), T'Sou-ke Elder Linda Bristol (for words of wisdom), Justin Biderman (Graphic design), and Fotoprint (printing). A special acknowledgment to the PPP Staff who worked on this project: Todd Biderman and April Ingham.



Mnuikwar staff with students drawing at Anggori Elementary School, Manokwari, West Papua

KEY CREATIVES: BIOS

Mark Gauti

Lead creative & Illustrator

Mark Gauti is a Coast Salish artist from the T'Sou-ke First Nation. T'Sou-ke shares art, culture, and territory with the Coast Salish and Nuu-chah-nulth tribal groups. He uses a wide range of mediums including paint, glass acid etching, drums, carvings, photography and digital art.

Mark views traditional First Nation's art and storytelling as the original environmental education. Through this understanding, he combines culture with modern environmental programming, while working with First Nations communities. In Pacific Northwest Coast stories, tricksters will take on a job that no one else will, often leading to change. Mark considers his art to be trickster art because he challenges environmental degradation and uses art as environmental and cultural education. Thank you to Trena Sutton, Ann Welch, Charlene George, and Roberta Pelkey, who supported the art collection on Vancouver Island.

www.facebook.com/arttrickster

Jen Jorgensen

Author

Connection, lore, people, and metaphor: these are the muse and the motivation of Jen Jorgensen's storytelling. As a writer, a teacher, and a traveler, Jen is enthusiastic about engaging with people of all ages and ancestries. In both her fiction and non-fiction work, Jen explores the experience of the human spirit, including the events, and the fundamental desires that both diversify and unify people. She enjoys community living, and ways of educating, inspiring, and linking individuals through the art of story-craft.

Jen lives in the Comox Valley, on Vancouver Island.

Mnuikwar Papua

Founded in 2007 by several environmental and social justice activists, Manokwari-based NGO Mnuikwar focuses on facilitating learning about community rights and citizenship through film-making and creative media. The group believes that empowering people does not need to be expensive: the Mnuikwar team has been teaching people how to use any media able to record moving images, such as a simple mobile phone, to create a film, and empowering communities to tell their own stories.

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To learn more about West Papua, our partners, or about "Raven & Paradise", please visit www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org



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For more than 36 years PPP has been working with Pacific Islanders to realize their own vision for peace, justice, environmental sustainability and development; facilitating partnerships and the exchange of knowledge north-south. We are the only NGO in Canada devoted exclusively to Oceania, which is only possible through your financial support.

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