

Wantok niuspepa – no press, office ‘but tons of vision’

PAPUA NEW GUINEA’S weekly Tok Pisin newspaper *Wantok* has been described as the longest surviving vernacular publishing icon in the South Pacific since its humble beginnings in 1969.

Although not the first to be published in Tok Pisin, this newspaper has stood the test of time and is now the only pidgin paper in circulation today.

Dr Philip Cass highlighted this in a recent seminar at AUT University’s Pacific Media Centre attended by several Papua New Guinean students and the public.

Born and bred in PNG and now postgraduate programme leader of communication studies at Unitec in Auckland, Dr Cass said the newspaper was the result of tireless efforts by Fr Frank Mihalic, whose name was commonly associated with the newspaper.

Fr Mihalic started the paper with literally nothing – no printing press, no journalistic experience, no office, no funds – but “tons of vision, commitment, drive and enthusiasm,” he said.

“Without Fr Mihalic, there would be no *Wantok* newspaper in Papua New Guinea today. Although the idea of a newspaper was not his, Fr Mihalic created *Wantok*.”

His work was supported by then Vicar Apostolic of Central New Guinea, Bishop Leo Arkfeld, who was equally committed and visionary in wanting to see the newspaper come into being and serve the needs of the ordinary people – reading and writing in Tok Pisin.

Fr Mihalic’s drive

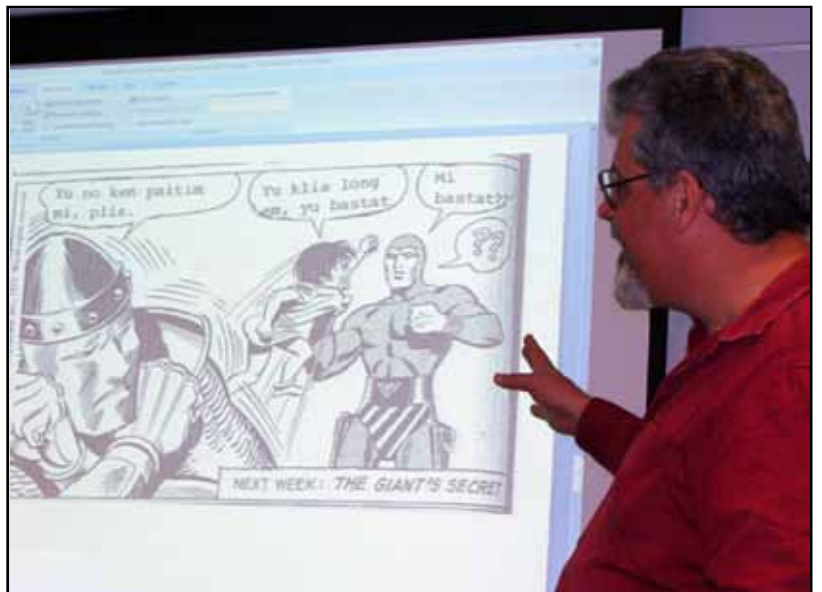
Giving an account of an interview on Kairuru Island, East Sepik province, in early 1992 with Fr Mihalic – who was almost a jack of all trades – Dr Cass said it was Mihalic’s drive coupled with his belief in what he did that kept him pushing during the early years of the paper.

Fr Mihalic believed in the purpose of the paper – to educate.

This was appreciated by Papua New Guinean students in Auckland who acknowledged how *Wantok* became a force that enabled many people to be Tok Pisin savvy by reading the paper.

The newspaper has played a significant role in the spread of a common Tok Pisin vocabulary and way of speaking the language and boosting development through common communication in a society where Tok Pisin differed greatly from region to region.

Wantok was targeted at the grassroots people and during its early years it devoted a great deal of attention explaining the changing political scene and basic concepts in a language that



Media academic Dr Philip Cass with a Tok Pisin version of the Phantom comic strip published in *Wantok* newspaper. Photo: Del Abcede/PMC

was gradually becoming common to the readership, Dr Cass said.

Fr Mihalic started work on *Wantok* in 1967, a time when 24 other Tok Pisin publications – either from the churches or the government – were already in circulation in Papua New Guinea. To date none have survived – but *Wantok* did.

With all work done for the first issue, *Wantok* rolled out of the Wiriu printing press in Wewak on 5 October 1970. Then Speaker of the House of Assembly, the late Sir John Guise, pressed the button to start the press rolling.

‘Read - then smoke it’

The paper, which in the early days carried the slogan “Read it before you smoke it,” is truly a remarkable newspaper that is older than the nation it serves today.

It brings weekly news and information to the bulk of present day Tok Pisin readers in the country.

Pacific Media Centre director associate professor David Robie also praised Fr Mihalic’s “extraordinary contribution to the cultural and media life” of a dynamic developing nation.

Apart from creating *Wantok*, Fr Mihalic wrote the Tok Pisin dictionary for Papua New Guinea and translated the PNG Constitution into Tok Pisin, wrote 30 books and educated some of the top journalists in the country today.

Although he died in 2001, he will still be remembered as long as *Wantok* lives – and well beyond. — *Henry Yamo*

Women's rights activist calls for 'equality and justice for all Muslims' on NZ diversity tour

MAINSTREAM and traditional interpretations of sharia law can and should be changed to ensure equality and justice for all Muslims, says a women's rights activist.

Speaking at a Muslim Women's Rights are Human Rights public forum organised by the Umma Trust in association with the Pacific Media Centre at AUT University, Ratna Osman called for a progressive interpretation of Islam that recognised women's rights.

She also appealed for the acceptance of "the concept of family as a place of security, harmony, support and personal growth for all members".

Osman, acting executive director of Malaysian women's rights advocacy group Sisters in Islam, used readings from the *Qur'an*, the central religious text of Islam, to support her argument for women's rights in Muslim societies.

Explaining the difference between *sharia*, laws based on divine word of god, and *fiqh*, a human construct or interpretation of sharia, Osman told about 60 people at the forum that "fiqh is not God's word. It can be amended, it can be changed".

Osman told the group that Islam was the earliest religion to emancipate women, outlawing female infanticide and giving women other rights—such as the right to hold contracts, to choose who they marry, and to divorce, among others.

She addressed issues that relate to women's rights in Islam such as polygamy, child marriage, domestic violence, and lack of autonomy faced by many women living in traditional Muslim families or societies.

Equality examples

According to Osman, examples could be found within the *Qur'an* that advocate for justice and equality between Muslim men and women.



Sisters in Islam speaker Ratna Osman and AUT University senior lecturer Dr Camille Nakhid, a board member of co-host Pacific Media Centre at the seminar. Photo: Del Abcede/PMC

She called for a revision of normative beliefs that acknowledged "what is divine and what is with human interpretation".

Osman described "resurgent Islamists" who were "in the mainstream and propagating the patriarchal" interpretation of Islam as creating a sense of fear around discussing women's rights.

She said women's rights were often rejected by conservative Islamics as a "Western agenda" and that conservative leaders often suppressed dialogue about women's rights by labelling it "too sensitive a subject", a practice challenged by the Sisters of Islam and other progressive Islamics.

According to Osman, the benchmark of interpretations of Islam should be justice, a human right that Islamic women are, at times, denied by conservatives. – *Yvonne Brill*

Teaching award for director

PACIFIC MEDIA CENTRE director **David Robie** has been honoured with a Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Associate professor Robie, from the School of Communication Studies, has been working at AUT for eight years after being a journalist for 30 years, much of it working in the Asia-Pacific region, and after being head of two journalism programmes in the Pacific.



He says using methods such as problem-based learning designed to extend students as much as possible is key to his teaching.

"We have a global crisis in journalism in terms of professionalism and credibility, particularly in Western countries," he says. "I am committed to students rediscovering the traditional values of the Fourth Estate in the digital age and striving for truth, fairness and balance; and a lot of courage."

He credits his award to the enthusiasm and insight of the students and colleagues in his support crew.

Dr Robie did a masters degree in journalism at the University of Technology, Sydney, and a doctorate in history/politics at the University of the South Pacific.

Among his developments at AUT have been the establishment

of the *Pacific Scoop* and *PMC Online* media, research and education websites.

This is the first award he has won for his teaching innovations, although he has won several journalism awards, including NZ's Media Peace Prize in 1985 for his reportage of the *Rainbow Warrior* bombing and humanitarian voyage, and Qantas awards for feature writing.

His students won a bagful of awards for their "courageous coverage" of the George Speight coup in Fiji 2000 and many other publishing prizes. – *Caitlin Madden*

- A recent edition of the *Indigenous National Times* has featured an article by PMC board member **Dr Camille Nakhid** examining racism in North Queensland. She did a "walkabout" visit to the Tjapukai and Yarrabah tribal communities near Cairns.

- **Kim Bowden** has been filing some excellent stories during her internship at the *China Daily*. **Yvonne Brill** is going to Beijing soon and **Chen Bei** (pictured) is now with the School of Communication Studies as part of the *China Daily*-AUT Exchange Programme, supported by the Asia New Zealand Foundation. **Corazon Miller** is now with the *Jakarta Globe*.





Environmental journalism seminar - 3 May 2011



Peace journalism seminar - 7 June 2011



Sisters in Islam seminar - 21 July 2011



Wantok niuspepa seminar - 28 July 2011

Pacific Journalism Studies



Graduate Diploma in Pacific Journalism

Level: 7, Points: 120, One year full time

The Graduate Diploma in Pacific Journalism addresses the shortage of Pasifika journalists in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It is suitable for people wishing to enter the media industry from another career or those already in the industry desiring a qualification. It will also appeal to students from the Pacific region. The programme is enriched by Pasifika and Māori and other media elective papers.

Graduates are able to enter a wide range of journalism and media related careers in both mainstream and Pasifika contexts.

Check out the rest of this information online at:

www.aut.ac.nz

New Pasifika Media Course

A new Graduate Diploma in Pacific Journalism is being offered to fulfil needs in our increasingly diverse media environment at AUT University's School of Communication Studies.

The one year course is an addition to other Pacific media opportunities.

- Certificate in Communication Studies
- Bachelor of Communication Studies
- Postgraduate qualification:
 - Bachelor of Communication Studies (Honours)
 - Postgraduate Diploma in Journalism
 - Master of Communication Studies
 - PhD

The new Graduate Diploma and Postgraduate studies are supported by the school's Pacific Media Centre.

The Pacific Media Centre's goals:

- Publication of the Pacific Journalism Review, peer-reviewed journal on media research in New Zealand and Oceania www.pjreview.info
- Pacific Media Watch D-Space digital repository
- Books and research publications
- Pacific Media Centre website, including Nuis Beat, Postmortem, Global Watch, Special Reports and research resources www.pmc.aut.ac.nz
- Film, photojournalism, TV and digital media research papers
- "Journalist-in-residence" research fellowships and masters and doctorate scholarships



Associate professor David Robbie, director of AUT's Pacific Media Centre and former coordinator of the University of the South Pacific regional journalism programme.

"This new course will be a boost for regional Pacific reporting and will also contribute to a higher Pasifika community profile in the New Zealand media. We hope journalists on this programme will push the boundaries of Pacific reporting in a challenging way."

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AUT and Pacific Islands Media Association Pasifika Communications Scholarships

These awards are sponsored and organised by AUT's School of Communication Studies and Office of Pasifika Advancement with the Pacific Islands Media Association (PIMA) for New Zealand resident Pacific Islanders seeking media qualifications. The scholarship is offered to assist one undergraduate and one postgraduate full-time student in communication studies each year.

The scholarship covers tuition fees for a maximum of four papers per semester, student services fee and Student Association fee (ALSM). It does not include books, material fees and miscellaneous charges.

Full tenure, criteria and application requirements in the AUT Scholarships Handbook or visit the AUT website at: www.aut.ac.nz/students/student_services/scholarships/current_aut_scholarships/design.htm

JOHN UTANGA – SENIOR REPORTER, TAGATA PASIFIKA, TVNZ

"I'm really excited that AUT is offering a Graduate Diploma in Pacific Journalism. It has the potential to significantly boost the number of trained Pasifika journalists and serve as a pathway to a significant career in the media."



"Also, many Pacific people already working in ethnic media have had little or no media training; this course is one way in which they can get further understanding of their roles and responsibilities as journalists while gaining a valuable qualification."

VAINGANA TAPALEAD – REPORTER, NEW ZEALAND HERALD

"Choosing to do journalism at AUT was one of the best decisions I've made. The course was awesome with a balance between theoretical work and practical work. I did the Bachelor of Communication Studies, and being Pasifika was a massive bonus because the course dealt with intercultural topics like how to report fairly on Māori and Pasifika issues."



"Now the new Graduate Diploma in Pacific Journalism is a step forward for upcoming Pacific journalists. We need more Pacific and Māori journalists to tell our stories and to take multicultural New Zealand into the newsroom."

LEILANI MOMOISEA – JOURNALIST, RADIO NEW ZEALAND

Leilani says that the political situation in Fiji is a good example of when Pacific news becomes mainstream news. "Just having that background information would help journalists form their view."



"It would be quite hard to come in cold. In the Pacific in general, you have to take a different approach to reporting. It's probably more difficult because in the Pacific they're not as open to the media. They can easily write you off if you just come in and don't know what you're talking about."

JOHN PULU – AUT STUDENT AND TREWS INTERN

"I'm a firm believer that Pacific people deserve to be served by and represented in the media and I have worked hard for this goal since leaving high school. I'm passionate about documenting Pacific Island issues and telling our stories."

