

Healthy Community, Healthy Land: rediscovering the art of community self-governance

**A Report on the visit of a delegation from Raja Ampat, West Papua
Province, Indonesia to Scotland - The Isles of Lewis & Harris,
April 2019**

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Visit of the Papuans to the West Harris Trust where local hosts included Neil Macdonald, John MacAulay, Rhoda Campbell and Neil Campbell

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Main Report

History and Background to the Study Tour

Between 20th and 30th April 2019 a delegation from the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua (covering the western half of New Guinea) visited Scotland to learn from people in the Hebrides about what it takes to rekindle and govern community, and to share their own experience with these things.¹ Most of the delegation's time was spent meeting with Community Land and Development Trusts on the Hebridean island that is known as Harris in the south and Lewis in the north.

The core of the delegation were village leaders from a range of island settlements involved in community-based ecotourism and who are members of the Raja Ampat Homestay Association (PERJAMPAT).² The Association represents around a hundred indigenous, family-run, ecotourism businesses dedicated to sustaining their island home and way of life.

The exchange explored how land reform in Scotland has given communities the means to recover from bygone trauma of eviction, decades of emigration and the loss of language and identity. It revealed the common ground that rural communities in Papua share in that story, and facilitated discussions around:

- (1) The importance of remembering and celebrating community language, history and identity, and of ensuring that future generations learn about these things, too.
- (2) The qualities of collaborative and spiritually grounded leadership needed to hold healthy community, and to work accountably and in service of others.
- (3) The role that community ownership and enterprise play in meeting basic needs such as health, education, energy and housing, while strengthening the bonds between people and with the land.
- (4) Supporting organisational structures that serve to keep land in community ownership and management; and to engage government.

This visit was inspired by a previous programme of exchanges beginning in 2012, when the planning arm of the Papua provincial government (BAPPEDA), sent a delegation of civil servants to the Isles of Eigg and Skye. Papua and West Papua provinces enjoy a form of Special Autonomy similar to Scotland's devolved settlement. Supported through a combination of the province's own funding and technical assistance from the British-government climate change programme in Indonesia, the objective was to study climate change in the context of land reform and community empowerment. This inspired three further visits by the Papua provincial government over 2013 – 2015³ to further explore how land reform and community-led development in Scotland was working to breath new

¹ The organisers are grateful to Dr Calum MacLeod, Policy Director at Community Land Scotland, and Michael Russell MSP for their letters of support for visa applications.

² Perkumpulan Penggerak Usaha dan Penghidupan Masyarakat Asli Raja Ampat.

³ Civil servants to Glasgow and Fintry Development Trust in 2013; civil servants and provincial parliamentarians to Edinburgh in 2015; and civil servants to Harris and Lewis, also in 2015.

economic and cultural life back into remote, highland and island communities. The experience, in turn, inspired changes to Papua province's land use regulations to better protect customary rights in land and work to design a new approach to community-led development.

From the Scottish side, these visits were conducted under the auspices of the Centre for Human Ecology (CHE) led by two of its fellows, Alastair McIntosh (who has had four years Melanesian experience in the South Pacific) and Vèrène Nicolas (with African experience). In 2013, Vèrène and Alastair were invited back to conduct training in Papua, both in Jayapura with civil servants and in villages on Numfor Island.

All five of these prior engagements had been governmental and governmentally resourced. It had long been the hope to work directly with village leaders. This became possible in 2019 thanks to associates of Common Cause Foundation who knew of CHE's work and who pointed a private foundation in our direction. Vèrène and Alastair then had several meetings in Glasgow with the foundation's associates, and with further work the CHE was granted \$31,845 (£24,830) for the Scottish study tour, as well as travel costs from Indonesia.

The delegation visiting Harris and Lewis in 2019 consisted of six village representatives from the Raja Ampat islands in West Papua province; as well as Maxi Ahoren, elected to represent indigenous peoples' interests in the West Papua provincial government.

The delegation was supported by:

- Alex Rumaseb, the former head of the Papua provincial planning agency and who has dedicated his retirement to advocating for an alternative, sustainable development pathway for Papua (Vision 2100). His participation integrated those efforts and brought continuity with what the Papua provincial government had learnt on previous visits.
- Laura Resti Kalsum and Wahyuddin Nur, both advisors to the Raja Ampat Homestay Association on business and organisational matters.
- Maria Latumahina and Adrian Wells, from the social enterprise Seventy Three Pte Ltd and which had previously supported the Raja Ampat Homestay Association under the Bird's Head Seascape marine conservation initiative. Maria grew up in Raja Ampat and is on the Advisory Board of the Raja Ampat Homestay Association.



Retired civil servant & educator Alex Rumaseb brought us the books he's published in Papua - on collaborative leadership, and liberation theology, based on previous visits to Scotland

- Three members of the CHE training team – CHE Fellows Véréne Nicolas, Alastair McIntosh and Sibongile Pradhan.
- Two discussants, John Fellowes and Catherine Sparks, with many years' experience in supporting indigenous initiatives for land stewardship and cultural revival, including among small-island communities.

Ten nights were spent in Scotland, seven of them at the Harris Hotel which was ideal both as a base and for training space. Starting with an introduction to the prehistory of the island, and its imprint on the land and psyche, the enquiry deepened each day to explore the trauma of the clearances; questions over what kind and scale of development most benefits community; the processes that have re-empowered communities in Harris and Lewis (remembering revisioning, reclaiming); the leadership and eldership needed to guide such processes; the roles of the arts in escaping past trauma; and, finally, the contestations that can arise once communities start to reclaim their future. A summary of the visit schedule, including all these topics, is attached in Annex 1 to this report.

Each morning and in the evening, Verene and Sibongile supported the visitors in digesting these encounters and framing their questions for the day ahead. Among other things, participants reflected on the qualities of the people they met, and the struggles they have faced in regaining their land and rebuilding community. Where scripture heavily influences how many in the group from Indonesia view the world, Alastair supported participants in critically reflecting on the spiritual values that underpin their relationship to land and their ancestors, as well as their work as leaders and elders in the community, from a liberation theology perspective.

The main lessons from this process were distilled into a set of six PVC A2 sized posters that are appended to this report (Annex 2) and that were designed for the Papuans to share with their own communities when they got home. Participants were also equipped with a detailed record of the visit in Bahasa Indonesia which Alex Rumaseb has compiled in the form of a short publication.

We were keen that communities on Lewis and Harris should also benefit from the exchange. The affirmation that the visit gave to the work of the Community Trusts, and also the shared insights into what it takes to hold community, is apparent from the press coverage on the island - which is also appended in Annex 3. There was such richness from each of the meetings during the week – programme appended – that only the most scanty justice can be done to them here.

Arriving (Saturday to Monday) – the Ancient Sites

The delegation arrived at Glasgow on Saturday 20 April 2019. Two of them were Muslim, the rest Christian, and as Easter is important to them they wanted to mark it in some way. Vèrène & Alastair held a welcome lunch at their house with a simple self-created Easter celebration. Our Muslim friends joined in, and as there was a copy of the Qur'an in the house, we had Christian celebration, a reading from the Islamic tradition and in the house were Melanesian artefacts such as the kina shell, representing indigenous spiritual traditions. The effect of this was to set the visit off on a footing of deep searching and recognition of, but acceptance of, differences amongst us.



Wahyudin reads a passage from the Qur'an at the Easter sharing

On the Monday morning we caught an early flight up to Stornoway. We went via the Carloway broch and the Callanish Stones down to Tarbert and the Harris Hotel. This anchored the visitors in the island as a place of very ancient settlement, and also in its clan history. It showed that we had cultural and religious sites going back to Neolithic times. That night, at the hotel, we were welcomed to Harris with a Gaelic prayer by local elder, Shonny MacAulay. Shonny is a boatbuilder and an important traditional bearer in Harris. He introduced the group to the history and traditions of the island, and how life has changed over time with emigration and as people have grown more detached from the land and sea.



At the 5,000 year old Callanish Stones – even when the sun shines, it's cold in Scotland!

Tuesday – the Welcome at Loch Leurbost

The morning sessions were led primarily by Véréne and Sibongile, processing what had been experienced the day before and preparing the group for what was coming next.

After lunch we went to Alastair’s home village of Leurbost. There our hosts were his friend from earliest school days, the blacksmith and president of the North Lochs Historical Society Shonny “Rusty” Macdonald, and two of the younger generation, Evelyn Coull MacLeod and Catherine Mary Maclean.

We walked down to the seashore and filled a large pot with shellfish – mussels and a few cockles. The Papuans were astonished by this. They said it was exactly what they’d do to welcome visitors, but they didn’t expect it here. We sat in some ruins of what had been a traditional stone thatched “black house”, made a fire with driftwood, and cooked the shellfish up. As we started eating, Evelyn said, “this will be the first time in a very long time that a meal’s been served here.” She explained that it had been the house of one of her grannies, going away back.

Rusty then told how in the 1820s the people had been evicted from the area to make way for sheep ranching. The landlord around this time was also governor of the Barbados slave colony in the Caribbean. One of the “cleared” families had been a Smith family, to which he and others in the village can trace their descent. So it is that people in the village today – present company perhaps included, some of whose relatives lived within our memory (into the early 1970s) in black houses – have not-so-distant relatives now living in a White House.



The shellfish feast at Croigearraidh (“Croy-garry”) on the shores of Loch Leurbost



Rusty, Evelyn and Catherine Mary told about the Clearances and the White House connections to these Black House ruins.

We talked about how President Donald Trump’s mother had been born about 12 kilometres away in 1912, and had emigrated to America in 1930. Multiple layers of trauma afflicted the island at that time – the Clearances, the First World War, fishing boat drownings, epidemics and mass emigration. Only now is the island coming to talk about them. We were never taught about such history in school. Understanding our past is important for shaping our future. This is so not just on Lewis, but in other parts of the world as well.

That night, back at the hotel, we met with the ethnographer Magaidh Smith, who shared about her work collecting stories about the fishing industry. We’d noticed the abandoned boats down at Loch Leurbost. Also, the way in which climate change is fast impacting on the coastline, eating away the “feannagan” raised beds of former arable subsistence agriculture. As we talked, comparisons were made by the Papuans of what is happening in their own place back home – how history and traditional language are being forgotten, and about the impacts of the global warming - and why it is so important to raise awareness of these aspects of a changing world in their own communities.



Erosion of arable land from sea level rise and storm surges, linked to climate change

Wednesday – West Harris Trust

It is in this context of communities having lost control of their land and resources that Scotland's rolling programme of land reform is now taking place. Certain parallels might be made in Indonesia, with President Joko Widodo taking steps to strengthen indigenous people's control over their forests, and provisions on the protection of indigenous people's right under Papua's and West Papua's special autonomy status within Indonesia. Nearly 3% of Scotland's land is now back under community control, with over 400 land trusts registered. The West Harris Trust is one of these.



West Harris Trust: Maria and Adrian facing, Shonny MacAulay, left



West Harris Trust: our hosts Neil Campbell, Rhoda Campbell & Neil Macdonald at top right in the Machair Café at their community hub

The Trust's main focus (see also picture on the first page) is affordable housing to keep young people in the local community, renewable energy (wind and hydro) and ecotourism.

It has only been going for a few years, but already the school roll has become healthy, and prosperity is being drawn into an area that had been becoming a desert of holiday and second homes for people who don't live there.

The Raja Ampat Homestay Association is – at present – the closest equivalent to a community trust back home in Papua. The visit to the West Harris Trust gave the visitors a first glimpse of what their organisation could eventually grow into as an agent for community-led development.

Thursday – Sir E Scott School, North Harris Trust and Pairc Trust

This packed day began at the junior-secondary school in Tarbert. We attended morning assembly. The Papuans made presentations about their part of the world and why they had come to Scotland. They sung in a song in Indonesian, and were astonished to have the children sing to them in Gaelic, and to learn about the emphasis placed on the recovery of Gaelic as the indigenous language of the island. To them, school is where you go to lose your language and traditions. Islanders told them that such is exactly what used to happen in Scotland too, but now we are becoming proud again of what was once nearly lost.



At Sir E Scott School with head teacher Aileen Macsween

The women from Raja Ampat felt that they now need to lead by example, and to start teaching in their indigenous Beteo language in the village infant school. They said that teaching children about their environment, in particular, would be more meaningful in Beteo because it has so many more terms about nature compared to Bahasa Indonesia.



At the North Harris Trust with Gordon Cameron and David Cameron (of CLS)

At the North Harris Trust in Tarbert we met with David Cameron of Community Land Scotland and the Trust's manager, Gordon Cameron. The NHT is big, managing 25,500 hectares and with 13 directors elected from the community and 6 staff members. We were talked through "Where we started, where we are today and where we

hope to be in the future.” Similar to the West Harris Trust, the North Harris manages social housing, renewable energy and ecotourism. It also has extensive interests in relatively wild land (in partnership with the John Muir Trust), sporting interests in salmon, trout and red deer, and extensive business development such as helped to move Harris to a position of virtually full employment, albeit some of it very seasonal. David Cameron spoke about how rural people in Scotland looked at land purchase as the basis on which to rebuild a thriving community. Where it has succeeded, culture is undergoing a revival. People are more healthy, and have a greater sense of purpose and self-worth; people feel more confident, they are a more “can do” – “nothing is off limits”. In places such as north Harris, land reform is also working to attract families back into rural communities with employment, affordable housing, a good environment and a social life.

Both the NHT and Community Land Scotland work closely with the Scottish Government in formulating land reform policy, and there is now a £10 million per annum fund that enables communities to buy land, working within the market system but with the community right to buy being at economic rather than speculative valuation. David’s bottom line message was: “The most important thing in any community is that they make up their own minds – it must be a bottom-up approach.”

Some of the folk from the Raja Ampat Homestay Association hold identical positions – as directors and managers - to David and Gordon in their own organisation back home. As they left the NHT, the conversation turned to how they might better role-model the commitment and leadership needed to hold a community; one of their biggest challenges to date has been the ability dedicate sufficient time in service of their members alongside their day jobs. They noted how most folk in Harris have seem to hold down multiple jobs to make ends meet yet, somehow, organisations such as the NHT work.

At the Paric Trust, a much more recent trust and less well established, we started at the community museum and shop seeing how the beginning is in small steps that provide basic services and raise awareness. We met in the Orinsay village hall, a wonderful spread of tea and cakes, and discussion was mainly with women of the community until near the end. There our hosts, Carice, Nellie, Lousie, Fiona Stokes the Manager and Ishbel MacLennan who is on the board said how part of what being a new land trust involves is managing expectations. “People want big solutions to the community’s problems, but there are no big solutions. Big solutions don’t work. It’s the little things that make the difference.” Community development is not a numbers game. It’s better to have 2 families come to a remote area like Pairc and stay for 10 years, than to have 10 families each stay for 2 years. Community is based on people helping one another. The Papuans remarked how they face exactly the same challenges as community leaders in managing expectations, and how difficult it can be to retain the trust and confidence of community members on the one hand while ensuring that people do not also take things for granted on the other.



Pairc Trust meeting and Alastair with his old primary school teacher, Marion Mackinnon (now Macdonald)

A special surprise for Alastair while in Pairc was a reunion with his old primary school teacher in Leurbost, “Miss Mackinnon” as she used to be.

There was such kindness in this small community, such honesty, and when the men of the Nicolson family joined in at the end, lots of hilarity too.

Meanwhile – processing the experience

By this stage the Papuans were deep in their process of reflection, translating and processing what they were seeing on the island into their own situations back in Papua. This, happening both in the morning and evening sessions at the hotel, and informally during meals and on minibus journeys. Much wisdom was coming through, with eye opening realisations that would shape up into their poster themes at the end of the week.

In particular, struck by the stories of the clearances and about the struggle for Scottish land reform, they spoke about just how easy it will be to lose their own land – bit by bit until it is all gone. “But once its gone, it will also take us hundreds of years to get it back”.

It came up in conversation that banks were now pushing households to take out large loans and that many people have now found themselves trapped in debt. Yet most people shrug it off, unaware that (depending on the terms of the loans) they risk losing their land as collateral.

They were also deepening in awareness of what culture is, how it relates to the land, tradition and languages, to relationships between people, to structures of social and political organisation, and to all that it means to anchor a community in that which gives life. As a peoples who are already intrinsically spiritual – Indonesia has one of the highest rates of ranking the spiritual as important in the world and it is written in to the constitution – they were deepening in their insights into spiritual authenticity and corruption. For example, they talked about the “prosperity gospel” of “vote for me and I’ll get money to build your church” and how that, in turn, was corrupting community life.



A key question was posed at the end of the week: what will you do differently (at individual, organisational and community levels) as a result of this trip? Some clear commitments emerged. These include: encouraging communities to grow more of their own traditional food rather than to depend on imports (members of the group noticed how very few people in Harris and Lewis still cultivate the land); setting up more effective organisational systems; learning how to create buy in from the community about their association’s strategic directions; ask critical questions of NGOs and governmental agencies; and making much better use of their inner resources as directors (time, vision and leadership abilities).

Some of the Papuans’ experiences of community organisations that Véréne is gathering here might sound familiar to some Scottish land trusts. E.g. “A lack of collaboration between management and board directors,” “Not all directors understand the vision, mission and values of the organisation,” and “Not abiding by decisions made in a participative way.”

Spiritual aspects of the visit

Each day began with a spiritual reflection that was inclusive of the three faith perspectives present in the group – indigenous tradition, Islam and Christianity. Moreover, the spiritual life from within a Presbyterian (Protestant, Reformed) tradition was a strong feature underpinning many of the community groups that we visited.

This part of the trip is hard to encapsulate in writing, but it involved building up their confidence that the spiritual life as many of them experience it is not the same as the corrupted forms of religion that they might see around them, in particular, variations of the “prosperity gospel” that link money, politics and religion. The evidence of climate change, eating away at the *feannagan* potato patches that they saw at Leurbost, was striking in reminding that the world is living on borrowed time. Already the Papuans are seeing the effects of sea-level rise. Some of them will be faced with the loss of their communities within the next half century. How can faith respond to that?

Perhaps in two ways. One is to strengthen the skills and values of being communities, so that vicissitude can be responded to from a position of social resilience rather than brittleness. The other, is to be able to carry their values with them. The Jews have historically done this, so have groups like the Sikhs in exile. What might that mean in a Papua context if, in the future, people have to physically move but still – to use a form of words – carry the sense of God grounded in their place with them? These are very speculative questions, but they are the kind of thoughts that arose out of the study tour.

We also discussed sense of personal presence, grounding and bearing in terms of undertaking leadership in our communities from a place that is inwardly resourced. One's spirituality overlaps with, but is not necessarily the same as one's religion. Religion is more about shared experience in the outer life, whereas spirituality is more about the inner life. This made a lot of sense to them. Those who have taken strong leadership positions, and wrestled with the implications, understood it very well. It was probably helpful for them to have it named so that they could better understand such dynamics of spiritual activism. They saw this embodied in several of the Lewis and Harris people with whom we met.

They also experienced a sense of deeper meaning revealed from within the land itself and wild nature. One example was when we stopped at the Broch on the way from the ferry to Harris. A golden eagle soared low overhead, pursued by smaller birds. It gave a metaphor by which we were able to talk about leadership. The eagle as the largest bird in the sky has to keep focussed on its far-seeing vision. If it allowed itself to be distracted by reacting to the mobbing of smaller birds, it would never get its food. We too have to distinguish between the real tasks to which we're called and distractions. In facing difficulties and in hitting irritating obstacles, we need to distinguish between reacting and responding.

Friday – Point & Sandwick Trust – Historical Trauma and Memory

The frame of understanding of this study tour is that community disempowerment has come about through intergenerational processes, primarily of colonisation and subsequent trauma. Trauma in this sense is psychic (psychological) injury. It can be individual, family wide, community wide and national. In the case of Indonesia, the impacts of Dutch colonisation and then the New Order regime are still being processed. Likewise, in the case of the island of Lewis and Harris, it is only now that we are waking up to how the Clearances have shaped us, and subsequent trauma after such evictions, including the effects of the two world wars, mass emigration and the Spanish Flu and TB epidemics.

The Point & Sandwick Trust is a community development rather than a land trust. The land belongs to the wider Stornoway Trust, a long established community land trust, the factor of which, Iain MacIver, we met with a previous delegation of Papuans to in 2015. Point & Sandwick are best known for their initiative in setting up 3 wind turbines that produce some \$1 million a year for distribution in the community. However, our purpose in meeting with them was not to look at energy issues, but to seek insight into the wider handling of historical trauma and recovery of community agency that the Trust's people understand.



Memorial of the lolaire Disaster, 1919. "That rope pulled life back into the community."

On 1 January 1919 the lolaire, bringing returning service men home from the First World War hit rocks just off Sandwick. Some 200 drowned just yards from the shore. Of the 79 survivors, 40 got to safety by means of a rope that one man managed to swim ashore with. Such was the impact on the community that only this year, on the centenary, has the island properly been talking about it.



A photo of what remained of the lolaire after the tragedy

The wreck of the lolaire, so heartbreakingly close to home

learned that his own grandfather had been lost in the tragedy. His father never spoke about it. That pattern was repeated in many island families.

Our visit to this community was organised by Alastair's friend Katie Laing with Rhoda Mackenzie, a director of the Trust. We went down to the memorial site where the names of all the lost are written, and saw the monument, in the form of a coiled rope that was the life line. Later, we heard from Malcolm Macdonald, chair of the Stornoway Historical Society, who said how it was only in adulthood that he

Yolanda Gampel of the University of Tel Aviv says that trauma that is not processed transfers from one generation to another, rattling about like stones in the belly. This year, however, what happened is being integrated into the community's self understanding. There have been many events – historical, religious and artistic. The Papuans made a very

interesting observation. They had been especially moved by the monument of the life line. One said: “That rope pulled life back into the community.” It led to much reflection as to what kind of things give lifelines to a community, in a modern world of deadlines.



Land Reform: monument to the Aignish Riot (designed Will Maclean, built Seumas Crawford, architect John Norgrove). On right, Rhoda Mackenzie is at the back, behind Angus Nicholson.

We moved on from the lolaire memorial to another monument, this time of explicit re-empowerment, marking the land raids and agitation of the 1920s. When the soldiers came back from the First World War – one in six never returned, one in five were lost when the lolaire is counted in – the promise of being given “land fit for heroes” was not honoured. At various places on the island there was unrest, with riots and land being occupied and planted out with crops. Today, these events are proudly marked with monuments around the island. They demonstrate the role of art in marking history, and punctuating consciousness of where the community has come from, and where it might be headed as it regains control. Members of the group from Raja Ampat remarked how important it was that they, too, remember their history – including the trauma of the Pacific War in the 1940s - in these ways; and how urgent it is that this history is documented, as so few remain who still remember it.

The Ecotourism Seminar

But the Papuans were not just there to listen. In each of the communities that we visited, they also shared from their experience. After the morning with the Point and Sandwick Trust we retired to a hall and prepared for an Ecotourism seminar in the afternoon, to which community leaders and professionals involved in island tourism had been invited to hear of the Papuan’s experience with the Raja Ampat Homestay Association.



Seminar on Ecotourism, led by the Papuan team for Isle of Lewis tourism & enterprise

The seminar was chaired by Katie Laing with the Papuan presentation launched by Jacob Sauyai. They told how they had set up their own management system, involving around 100 families with “homestay” lodgings – like crofts that have a holiday cottage attached. They do their own quality control, bookings, and training, with specially tailored work-arounds for problems like how to make bookings on islands where there is little mobile signal. By bypassing agencies like booking.com they keep all the money in the community. Also, by having many families invested in ecotourism, it helps to keep out the big corporate endeavours, that would reduce them to being servants rather than the masters of their own destiny. This resonated with discussions that folk in Lewis are having around alternative visions of community and corporate wind energy models.

About a dozen islanders attended. They represented Highlands and Islands Enterprise, tourist associations and community land and development trusts. It was a very rich exchange of experience and had the added value in building the Papuans’ confidence in expressing what they had to offer to a wider world. Both they and folk from the Point and Sandwick Trust spoke of the importance of having a vision for their community, holding dear to it and never giving up, however impossible that vision might sometime feel. Both their sets of achievements reflect years of grit and determination in the face of a lot of scepticism, even among their own folk.

Saturday – Uig Heritage Centre, Suileachan Monument and Malcolm Maclean

Malkie Maclean is one of the islands' cultural icons, formerly director of the Gaelic arts programme, author of a seminal book "From the Land", and today the chair of UNESCO Scotland. This visit was to meet with him at the heritage centre museum, to visit the Suileachan monument – a spectacular construction to mark the 19th century clearances and the early 20th century land raids, and then to go to his home and share and consolidate the experience of the past week.



Malcolm (Malkie) Maclean with Mama Enggelina and Mama Morin

We began with tea at the Community Centre with its heritage museum. This makes a modest charge of £2 for entry thereby creating employment, and what distinguishes the collection is its emphasis on oral history. A rich repository of recorded interviews is held as well as artefacts of material culture.



Laura at Heritage Centre

Malkie pointed out that oral history, including the language itself, is often overlooked, yet for an oral culture such as Gaelic was until relatively recent history on the islands, the spoken word makes up the water of the carrying stream.

We then went up to the Suileachan Centre. This is the largest of the island's land monuments. It comprises two circular chambers. The first is laid with granite slabs inscribed with the names of land raiders, the men who seized land and planted their crops.

The evictions in this area had been part of that same rolling sequence, initially set in place from the Barbados by Colonel (later General) Francis Humberston Mackenzie. The same wave of clearances that saw the eviction of Donald Trump's maternal ancestors both further north and east.



The first chamber of the Suileachan

When Mackenzie died in 1815, his daughter Lady Mary inherited the whole of Lewis, her four brothers have predeceased the father. She had led a debonair life in India as the wife of Sir Samuel Hood, who commanded the British naval fleet out of Madras. She claimed to have been the first white woman to have shot a tiger. However, he also died around the same time as Mackenzie. She came back doubly bereaved and seems to have taken to strict religion.



Doorway to the second chamber

In 1824 she brought in to the island from the mainland the Rev Alexander Macleod, the first of a number of evangelical clergy who taught a form of Calvinism that was heavy on the use of fear. Macleod's diaries show how he prided himself in the use of fear. His letters to Lady Mary show that he was also greedy for land, but wanted to ensure that the evictions that this necessitated were not linked to his name, lest it damaged the faith.



In the second chamber of Suileachan. Note the brazier and the seats around, for the youth to have parties.

Back at Malkie's house we digested all this history and the Papuans shared from their experience. The Suileachan monument was particularly powerful for them. As on the previous day, they spoke about the importance of vision: a vision that brings community together and, as David Cameron noted a few days previously, a vision in which there are no limits to what they might be able to achieve. They felt that the Suileachan symbolised all this.

By now, their experience from the week was virtually complete.

An unplanned incident

A disturbing but instructive thing had happened on the way over to Uig, a journey of nearly an hour and a half by minibus from Harris, which necessitated planning for a short roadside stop halfway there with it being straight after lunch. Some interest had been expressed in ancient habitation. Alastair realised that halfway across the island there was an ancient "both" site, a corbelled stone dwelling said to have been a Druid's house. A deep ditch down by the road and plenty of rocks could make a suitable comfort stopping point. He considered contacting the person who rebuilt the structure, an old friend of his, but decided not to as we would be very short of time.

We parked, walked the short way up to the track, when suddenly the said friend appeared, very angry, because the gate down at the road had been left open and the sheep were with lamb. Alastair should have known better! The instruction to close the gate had been passed on, and it had been pulled to but not properly latched.



The *both* – a bronze age dwelling.
“Forgive us our trespasses...”

It was an regrettable incident and back at the hotel that night we talked it through. Alastair said that it was his fault for having tried to fit too much in. It would have been better not to have gone there than to have tried to make a quick visit the way we did. His friend would have been concerned, not just because of the risk to sheep, but because of the possible damage to his reputation. Why? Because the site that he had so lovingly restored had led to the gate being left open, and that could have caused upset in the village. Added to this would

have been his disappointment to find that of all people leading a group of tourists, it was yours faithfully, Alastair! However, that said, the Papuans were fascinated by what had happened. They said that it exemplified a problem that they have too with ecotourism. Frequently, things happen without proper consultation with traditional keepers of sacred sites. Kristian said, “I think that what has happened today happened for a reason – so that we can all learn from it.”

Sunday – and the mountain

We had begun the week with a homespun Easter sharing that included input from our Moslem friends. On the Sunday, most of us including one of the Moslems attended the service of the Church of Scotland in Leverburgh, South Harris. The Rev Donald Angus MacLennan had kindly consented to presenting his sermon line by line, so that it could be translated by Maria. The Papuans contributed song in their tradition.



With John MacAulay at the once-threatened mountain, Roineabhal

Shonny (John) MacAulay, an elder in the church, later followed us down to the medieval St Clement's Church where he shared the story of the "superquarry" proposal, by which a multinational corporation were going to ship the belly out of the mountain away to use as roadstone. That story does not need retelling here.

Finance

The grant that made this trip came from a private charitable foundation under which the Centre for Human Ecology received \$31,845 (£24,830) to organise and facilitate the visit on Harris and Lewis. This was fully expended, and full accounts and supporting documentation have been prepared.

Outcomes – the poster set and graduation

Much preparation went into this visit, and one aspect of it was to recognise that whereas previously, we had been working with civil servants and parliamentarians, this time we were working with village animators who would hopefully play a much more hands-on propagation role back home.

To this end Sibongile's distinctive role was to draw together the Papuans's responses and, on the Sunday afternoon, work with them to represent these in a set of six posters which were finalised on the Monday and given to them, printed on A2 PVC sheets, to take home on the Tuesday. These are appended. They are based upon an exercise – **Past, Present, Future** – from the Solomon Islands Development Trust in the 1980s.

For each domain of life that the Papuans identified, an image portrays how it was in the past, how it is now, and two options for how it might be in the future. In village-based discussions these can be pinned up and used to stimulate debate.

The common thread that runs through these different posters is the influence of money: how it is rapidly chipping away at the values that underpin traditional life; and, the choices that communities now face over what kind of society they want to be – in respect of their land, culture, language, institutions, economy and spiritual life.

For example, the poster for Spirituality shows the past as an indigenous spirit house, the present as a church influenced by the \$\$\$ of the prosperity gospel, and the future, either an indigenously-based church, or the prosperity gospel going ballistic with the place of worship being in the shopping centre.

While members of the group from Raja Ampat might have achieved remarkable things with their ecotourism, they also speak of how hard it is to now hold community. However, the

opportunity to share with the Community Trusts on Harris and Lewis, and with tradition bearers such as Shonny McAulay, “Rusty” Macdonald, Evelyn Coull MacLeod, Catherine Mary Maclean, Magaidh Smith and Malkie Maclean, worked to give them hope that it is possible to find new meaning in their traditions and to grow community in the modern world.

In particular, those encounters illustrated how important it is to have grounding in their spirituality, language and culture, and to harness their inner resources including their time, vision and leadership skills, in order to navigate the pathway ahead. This inner work marks the next phase of their journey ahead.

Finally, on the last night we had a graduation ceremony. The training team blindfolded everybody with napkins from the hotel. Sang a round of the song *Lovely Stornoway*, and each person with a Jimmy Hat. Their blindfolds were then removed to much hilarity. The week had been a deeply moving, at times disturbing, and a joyous time.



“It’s not a beauty competition, Ladies” – Laura, Mama Enggelina, Vèrene, Mama Morin, Sibongile & Souhoka



“O yes it is a beauty competition!” – but Maxi on the right is not so sure



One last picture from that mussel feast at Loch Leurbost – gathering the shellfish from off the rocks

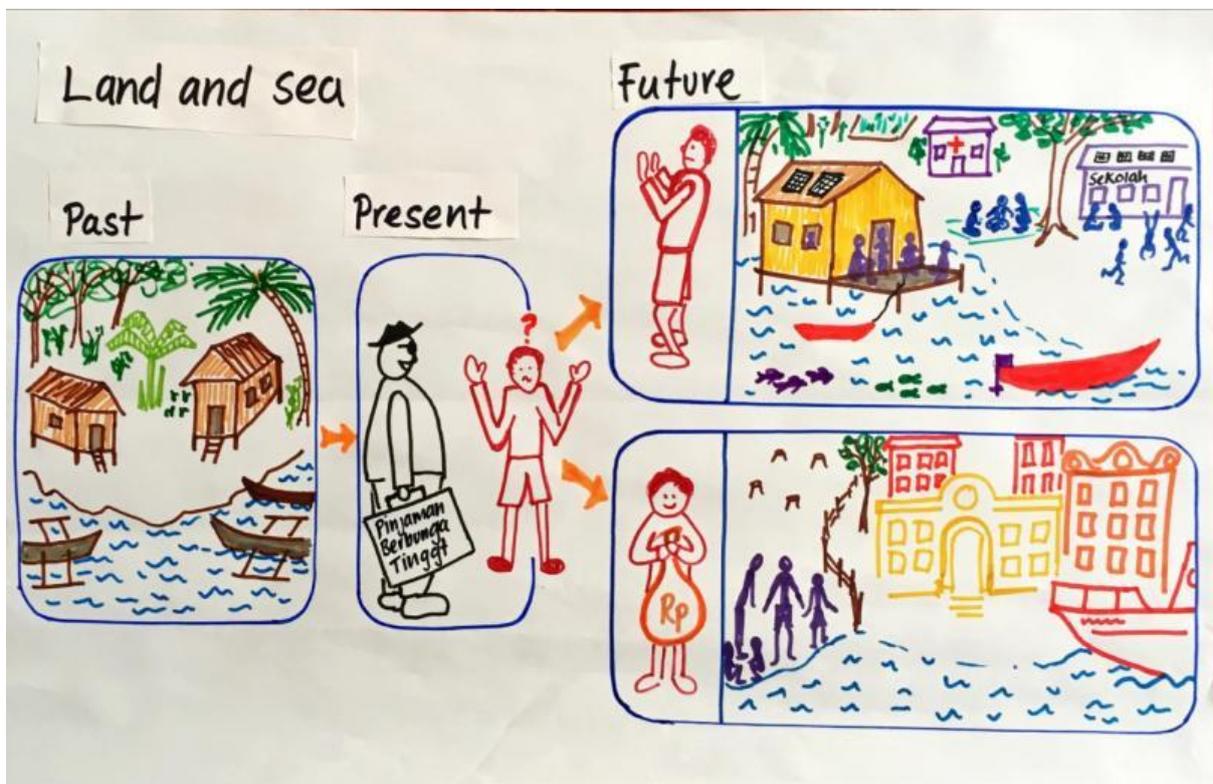
Annex 1: The visit schedule

Final Version 19-4-2019		Papua-Scotland Study Tour 2019 – The Isles of Lewis and Harris – Programme	
Sat 20 – Tue 30 April 2019		Healthy community, healthy land: rediscovering the art of community self-governance	
Saturday 20 & Sunday 21 Arrival and welcome to Scotland.	Morning – breakfast 07:45; 09:00-12:00 Church option for Easter Service. There are also plenty of mosques in Glasgow.	Afternoon – sandwiches at hotel or packed lunches 12:00, then outing. Welcome over lunch at Véreine & Alastair's house in Govan at 12:15. Véreine and Sibongile will leave at 15:00 to head up to Lewis as advance party and obtain vehicles. Island fortifications like the Broch remind us that conflict and trauma are very ancient in most human societies. So is a sense of the sacred as Callanish suggests. Lunch at the Callanish Centre at 13:30 followed by discussion of comparisons with Papua. How can we understand old wounds and what we may unconsciously carry, and start to heal our past? Harris Hotel check-in from 14:00. Afternoon for rest.	Evening – meal at 18:30; 19:30-21:00 Early to bed for taxis to airport next morning around 05:15.
Monday 22 Prehistory of people & place, how conflict and peace left marks upon both land and the psyche, impacts of the 'outsider' world.	Check in by 06:00 for 07:00 Stormoway flight, arriving 08:00, then over to the Dun Carloway Broch (a 2,000 year old dry-stone fort) and on to the 5,000 year old Callanish Stones.	Visit Alastair's home village of Leurbost with, if he can get off work, John 'Rusty' MacDonald, chair of the North Lochs Historical Society. (Also, coming from the parish are Evelyn Coull MacLeod and Catherine Mary Maclean). Reflection on the 19th century clearances at the ruins at Colgpearraich, Loch Leurbost; also climate change. Reading the past, present & future. High tide 11:00, cross river at 14:00.	Open welcome with a Gaelic prayer at the Harris Hotel from boat builder and church elder John MacAulay – sharing about the history of Harris from ancient times to now.
Tuesday 23 The Highland Clearances – land, colonisation and cultural trauma. Where the past leaves us today. Focus on fishing communities.	Group process work led by Véreine and Sibongile.	Take packed lunches (or lunch in hotel) to go down to south Harris to St Clement's Church for 13:30 (45 mins drive). See the history and discuss the once proposed Harris superquarry with John MacAulay. Then, back to the relatively new West Harris Trust for 15:00 (25 mins drive) meeting in café with Rhoda & Neil Campbell: ecotourism, affordable housing, renewable energy, etc... Learn how a community land trust works, compare and contrast models of development and local control.	Lessons and reflections from the day, then sharing traditions with cultural educator Marazith (Magale) Smith of Achmore who will focus on fishing and the maritime community.
Wednesday 24 What kind of development? Big or small scale? Control by others or self-reliance? How land reform works, what it is achieving, a case study of ecotourism.	A sharing with children aged 10-14 at Sir E Scott School 09:00 – 09:30, head-teacher Aileen MacSween, Papuans to make a short presentation, exchange of songs and Q & A, then group process work back in the hotel.	Drop-in and photo at Community Land Scotland (Farbert) & North Harris Trust with David Cameron, 12:30, photo-call. Then Palic Trust, Lewis, starting Ravenspoint community shop/café with Ishbel MacLennan at 14:00, then at Orinsay Hall at 15:00 hosted by Iain Nicholson & others. A Papua group visited Orinsay in 2015. This time, our group would welcome an opportunity to describe their situation in Papua, their challenges with land and community leadership, talking it through in ways that might exchange experience & learning with the Palic community.	Lessons and reflections from the day.
Thursday 25 How a community is moving from past disempowerment to creating its future. Leadership and eldership. Re-membering, re-visioning and re-claiming the meanings of community.	Group process work led by Véreine and Sibongile.	After viewing Palic & Sandwick Trust's 3 wind turbines on the way north: a. At 11:15 visit the Iolalaje disaster memorial and the Aikrish land agitation memorial to think about what communities carry from their history – both bigyone loss, and the potential of ongoing re-empowerment. b. At 12:30 over packed lunches and guest lunches at Aird Community Centre, an exchange with Trust representatives and visitors about the Papuan's thoughts on what they've just seen. Did it speak to their own history and experience of land, trauma, conflict and re-empowerment? How do history, the arts, language, etc. build social cohesion and economic resilience? c. At 14:30, Papuans to make presentation on their Raja Ampat Homestay Association to local guests involved in tourism & development (see night).	Lessons and reflections from the day.
Friday 26 Sharing community experience - deeper insights and two-way sharing into how communities work, how historical trauma can be processed, role of the arts & memorials, and issues that can arise around contested access to local natural resources – case study of wind energy. In looking towards reclaiming the future, Papua ecotourism case study.	Leave hotel at 10:00 for Sandwick (near Stormoway) via the Pentland Rd so as to pass the 3 wind turbines owned by the Point & Sandwick Trust. These power the equivalent of Lewis & Harris domestic demand and, last year, returned £800,000 to the Trust for community benefit. In contrast, large corporate-led wind farms offer a very much lower level of community benefit.	Set off to Uig at 12:30, arriving 14:00, to cultural historian Malcolm Maclean, chair of UNESCO Scotland who edited "From the Land". Refreshments at community centre , see museum and Sillieochan monument to the land raiders, then to his home for a 2-way sharing on arts, psychology, religion & history in conscientisation (raising of consciousness & conscience) towards empowerment.	Lessons and reflections from the day.
Saturday 27 What have we both shared and learned about the healing of community and the land?	Group process work led by Véreine and Sibongile.	Consciousness and conscience towards empowerment.	Lessons and reflections from the day.
Sunday 28 Integration of the week.	Church option at Leverburgh Church of Scotland , Rev Donald Angus MacLennan. Muslims and people of no faith are also welcome.	Closing reflections led by Véreine and Sibongile. What will we be taking home from Harris & Lewis? What makes for a healthy community and healthy land? What is the part of religion & spirituality in giving life or harming it? What have we learned about trauma, conflict, leadership styles and empowerment?	A celebration of the week in a gentle manner that is in keeping with island's traditions of Sunday observance.
Monday 29 – Tuesday 30	Depart for Stormoway Mon 10:30 for 12:35 Glasgow flight.	Véreine & Sibongile to make and copy A1 size take-home posters in Indonesian with key learning points from the week. Estimated weight, 2 kg.	Group free time in Glasgow. Depart Glasgow Tue 16:55.

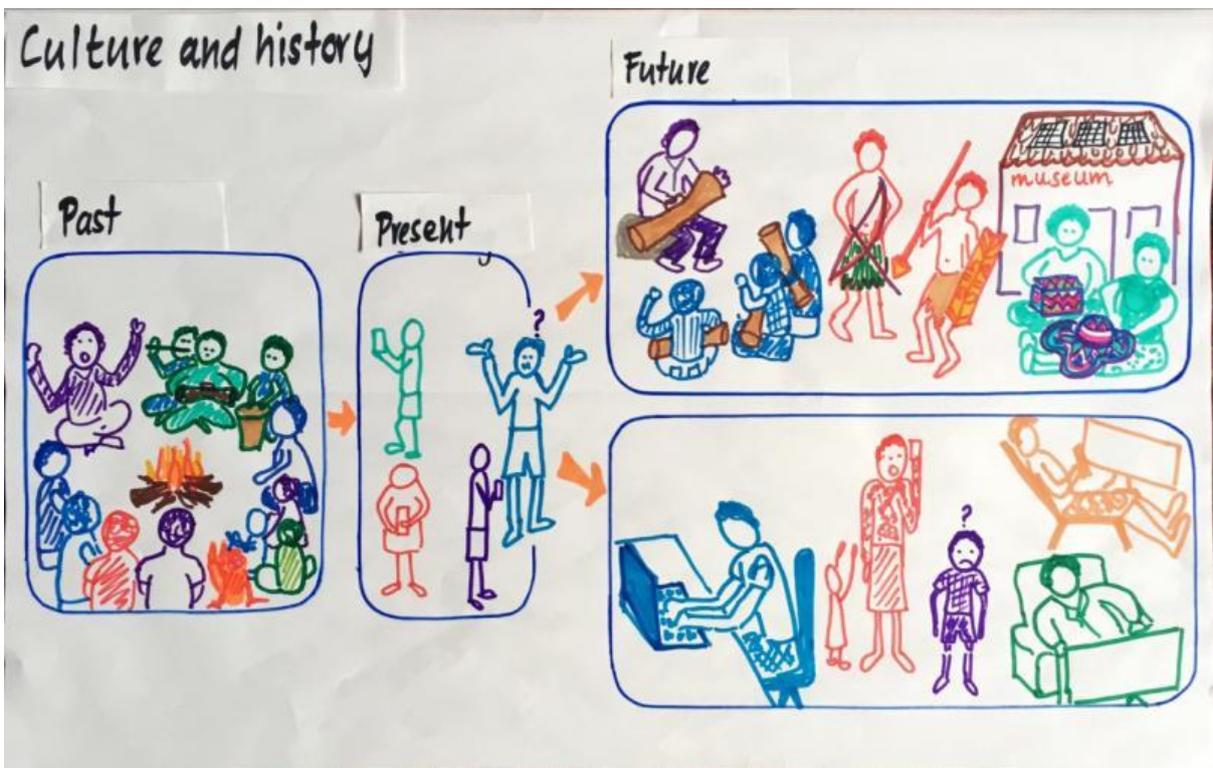
Annex 2: The Set of Six A2-size Past-Present-Future Posters for Village Educational Use

Drawn by Sibongile Pradhan from the lessons that the Papuans wanted to take home from Scotland

1. Land and Sea



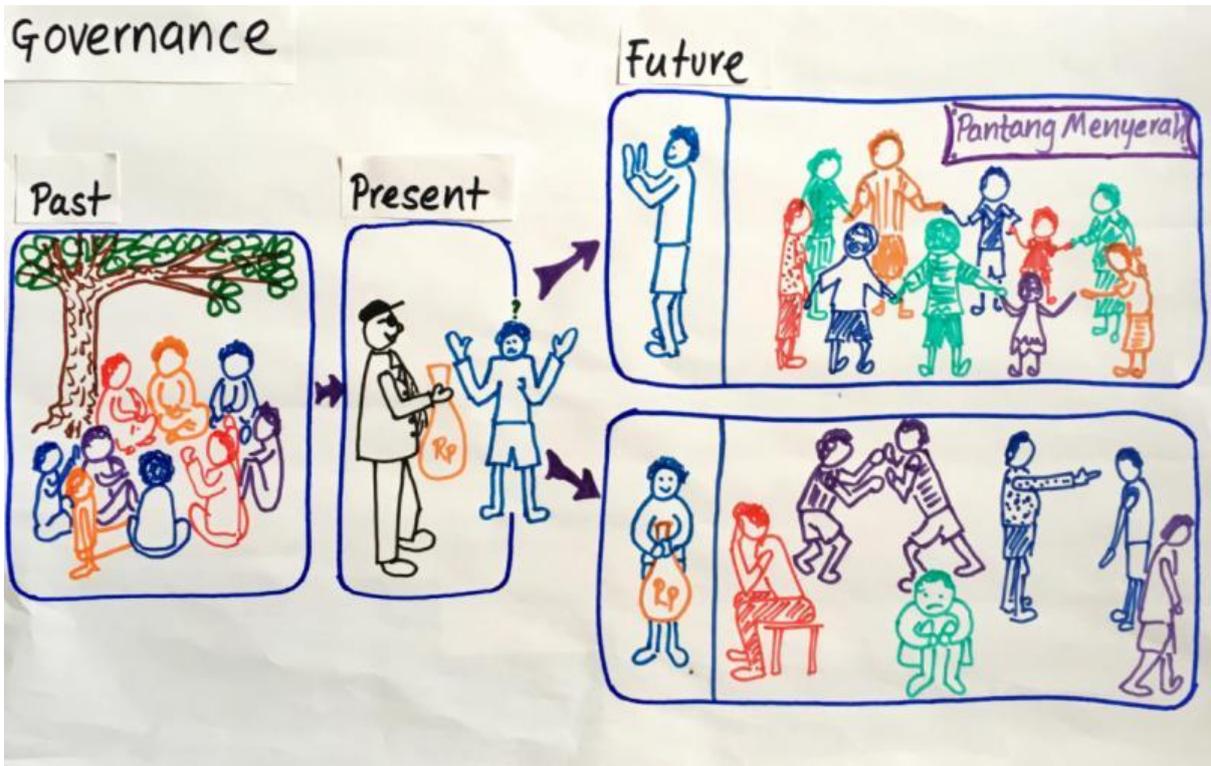
2. Culture and History



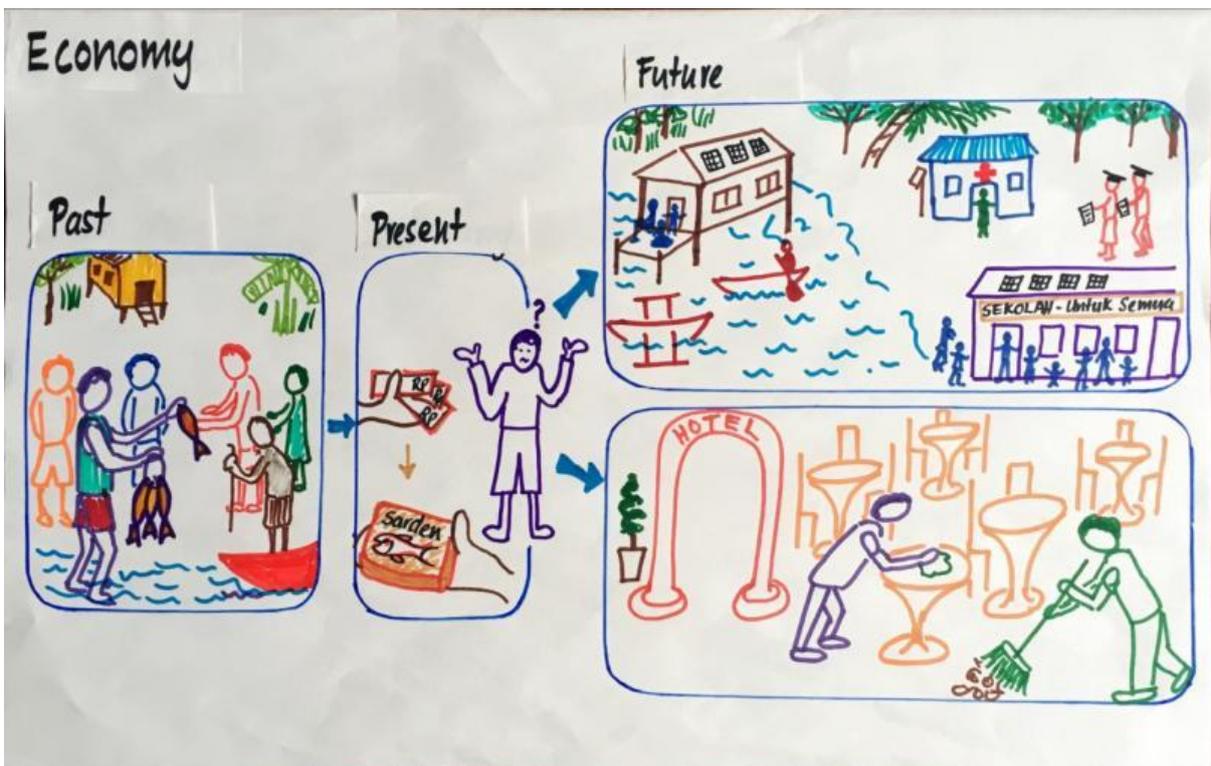
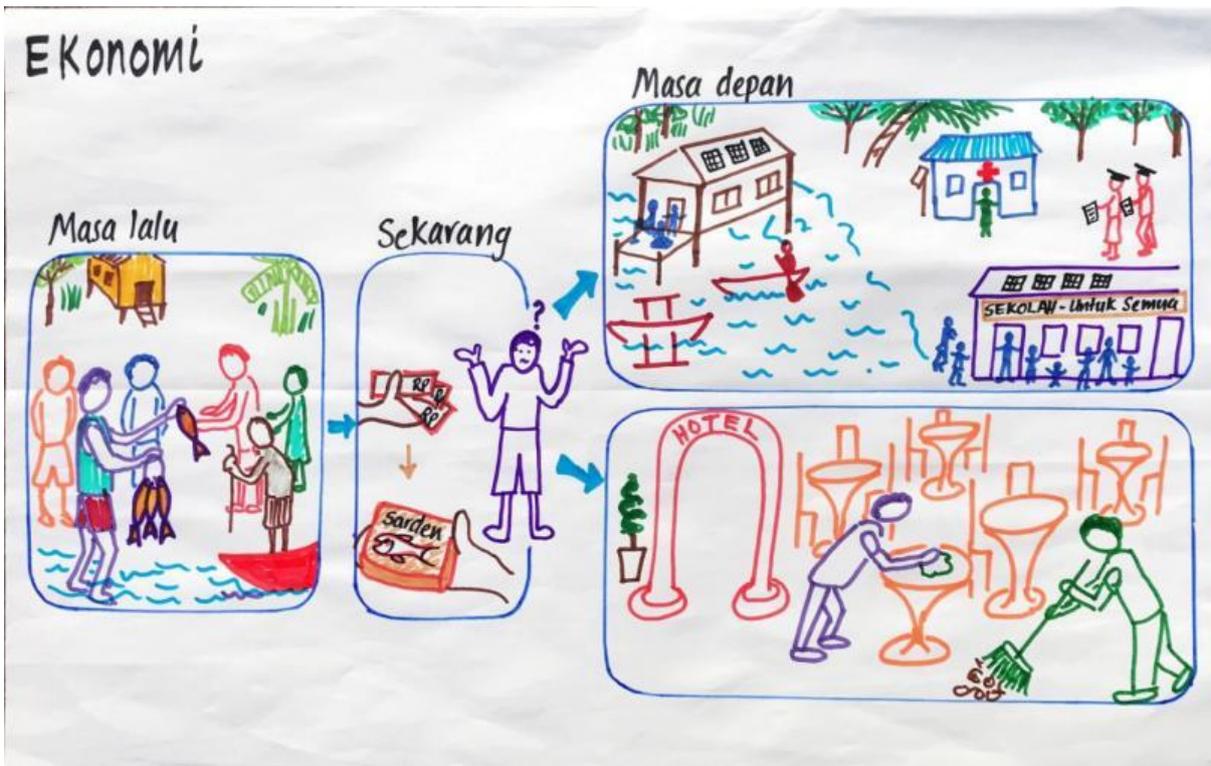
3. Language



4. Governance



5. Economy



6. Spirituality

Iman dan Keyakinan



Spirituality



Annex 3: Press coverage of visit included *The (Glasgow) Herald* (below), *West Highland Free Press*, *Stornoway Gazette* and local BBC radio news reports

Wednesday May 1, 2019

ANALYSIS, INSIGHT, OPINION

NEW

Make wind farms pay? Papuans travel 8,000 miles to find out how

It was set up to provide income for a rural community, and now the success of a Lewis renewables is helping others around the globe, reports **JODY HARRISON**

IT was hailed as a way to revitalise ailing rural community and put the people's destinies back in their own hands.

Now the success of a communally owned wind farm on the Western Isles is inspiring others round the globe to follow suit with their own projects.

Islanders on Lewis have been sharing the secrets of their prosperity with a group from an Indonesian archipelago, who were given a tour of the wind farm owned by the Point and Sandwick Trust.

The Trust administers profits from the £14 million Beinn Ghrideag wind farm built on common land at North Sandwick, which generates £300,000 a year in net income for the local community.

Around 12 people from West Papua Province visited the site last week, accompanied by activist Alistair McIntosh and others from the Centre for Human Ecology, to explore the theme of Healthy Community, Healthy Land: rediscovering the art of community self-governance.

Organisers said that the visitors were told to simply "never give up" on their projects, and that anything was possible if they worked together to realise their goals.

Rhoda Mackenzie, a Point and Sandwick Trust board member and spokeswoman for the campaign to build four more community wind projects in the area, said: "They seem to be realising what we're realising - that doing it yourself is the only way to do it, sustainably."

The study group visited historic sites including Callanish Stones, St Clements Church and the UI Church along with a number of community trusts and undertook group process work in the evenings.

They were shown the Beinn Ghrideag wind farm and heard from Donald John MacSweeney, Point and Sandwick Trust general manager, who told the story of the decade-long struggle to build Beinn Ghrideag.

The final speaker was Alasdair Nicholson, who spoke on the theme of community empowerment and confidence and the parallels across international communities from his unique perspective as a community development consultant and the founder of what is now Third Sector Hebrides.

Later, the Papuans gave a presentation on their community co-operative eco-tourism project, the Raja Ampat Homestay Association.

During the presentation they gave the benefit of their experience to an audience which also included representatives from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Outer Hebrides Tourism, The Standing Stones Trust, Galson Estate Trust, Bragar and Arrol Community Trust and the Western Isles Tour Guide Association.

Adrian Wells, one of the translators, said the visit had been "very, very powerful" for the Papuans "because it's a big mirror for them".

He explained: "They see themselves reflected in the work of the community



■ The Indonesian party visited historic sites in the Western Isles and given a tour of the wind farm owned by the Point and Sandwick Trust.



■ Alasdair Nicholson speaks to the group at Aighlish Land Raids monument.



■ Alistair McIntosh and Donald John MacSweeney with the subcontinent visitors in the UI Church.



■ The Dani tribe from the central highlands of western Papua New Guinea.

land trusts here. There is a very great deal that's similar in terms of its rights in defending community land, in creating economic opportunities for their young people, in revitalising language and culture and identity.

"There's been a lot of quite open honest discussion about what it takes to hold community together.

"What's been great is that it's been a real two-way conversation between folk here and them. The story keeps deepening as they go round and this has been a great day to bring it together with the experience of Point and Sandwick."

Visit organiser Mr McIntosh said there were some clear takeaways from the Papuans' visit.

These included the importance of "small local museums" like those at Paic Trust - "we need those too so we can save things

“The information that we've got is 'never give up'”

before they're lost" - and the importance of language and history.

One of the group, Angelina Demaya, added: "The information that we've got from today and some of the visits to the community trusts is just, 'never give up'."

"We have faced very similar struggles to the one you have talked about and that is why never giving up is such an inspiration, so we can achieve our dreams."

She said the group was moved by Point and Sandwick Trust's "energy, spirit and commitment to work for the community", adding: "There's something about the quality of those people at Point and Sandwick.

"They believed in their own dream. These people in the trusts are not driven by money.

"They are driven by their vision, their

care of place and one another. This is what keeps people together."

Mr McIntosh said: "I think, in Point and Sandwick, we have seen a community that is rooted deep in a poetic cultural tradition, that has survived historical trauma and has come through with a confidence and competence in how to take control of their own affairs for the benefit of the whole community.

"This has profoundly inspired our guests from West Papua, whose history has many similarities, who have faced a similar rapid transition into modernity, and who, through their visits to this island, have been more deeply awakened to how we can live."

He added: "Not just any old life, but in accordance with the spiritual traditions of both communities, promised life abundantly."

New Heart 200 route raises fears over tourism traffic

LOCALS fear their roads will be flooded with tourists as a new influx of traffic is prepared for a new influx of traffic. 200 tourist initiative will have road closures in the margins where drivers can't see where the edge of

Phone prices a turn off for buyers

MARTYN LANDI smartphone users think the habits the phone industry is their sm

editor@whfp.com

news
naidheachdan

Island examples bring hope for land reform

• Campaigner hails empowerment and social action

BY MURRAY MACLEOD
newsdesk@whfp.com

Scotland's land reform movement is acting as a "lighthouse" for indigenous communities across the world who want to explore the possibilities of land rights for themselves, according to a leading supporter of community-owned estates.

Writer and campaigner Alastair McLintosh (pictured), who was one of the founding members of the Isle of Egg Heritage Trust, was speaking

during a tour of Lewis and Harris with a party of 17 delegates from the West Papua Province of New Guinea, Indonesia.

The group were looking to study how communities who have taken ownership of the land on which they live have been able to generate a sense of empowerment, enabling action on issues such as social housing, support to small businesses and cultural regeneration.

The vast majority of Lewis and Harris is now under community ownership, from the North Harris Trust to the long-established

Stornoway Trust and Carloway and Galson in the north.

The group from the West Papua Province, he said, "have use of their traditional lands, but are in great danger of losing that because of pressure from things like palm oil plantations, mining, and fisheries at risk from exploitation from ships coming from away."

"All of the kind of issues we have experienced in these islands, either in the past or in the present, they are

facing too," he said. "When they see here what communities are doing with land reform — taking back control of their own place — it helps them to understand better either how to take back control themselves or not let go of it in the first place."

Mr McIntosh was brought up in Lewis and in the 1990s fought against proposals for a superquarry on Harris.

"What's happening with modern Scottish land reform is a lighthouse to the world," he said. "There are groups coming from various parts of the world to visit places like Egg, here in North Harris, in Lewis and so

on. What astonishes them is to see this being done by western people.

"We had people saying that they never knew western people had people here have lost their indigenous culture but here in the islands they've still got it and in recent decades we have really learned to value it again.

"They find that mind-blowing and it makes them think 'we need to reclaim parts of our culture, like our languages, our stories, our place names and so on'. As one of the group put it: 'There is no life without land'."



Photograph: VERENE NICOLAS



Insights and questions from visitors



Malcolm Macdonald speaking

Lewis trust offer inspiration to Indonesia

BY KATIE LAING
newsdesk@whfp.com

A study group from Indonesia rounded off their visit to Lewis last week with an information-sharing session with representatives from Point and Sandwick Trust — and were inspired to "never give up" in the pursuit of their community dreams.

Around 12 people from the West Papua Province were on the island, accompanied by activist Alastair McIntosh and others from the Centre for Human Ecology and translators, to explore the theme of 'Healthy Community, Healthy Land' — rediscovering the art of community self-governance.

During the week, they visited historic sites including the Callanish Stones, St Clements Church and the Ul Church, sites of the Clearances, a number of community trusts including West Harris, North Harris and Paice, and undertook group process work in the evenings.

On Friday, they were shown the community-owned Beinn Ghridaig wind farm and taken to the 'Iolair' and Aighish land riot memorials, before an information-sharing session which began with a presentation from Malcolm Macdonald — chair of Stornoway Historical Society and author of 'The Darkest Dawn: The Story of the Iolair Tragedy' — on the subjects of the 'Iolair' and the land riots.

They then heard from Donald John MacSween, Point and Sandwick Trust general manager,

who told the story of the 10-year struggle to build Beinn Ghridaig, and from Rhoda Mackenzie, a Point and Sandwick Trust board member and spokeswoman for the campaign to build four more community wind projects in the area.

The final speaker was Alastair Nicholson, on the theme of community empowerment and confidence and the parallels across international communities, from his unique perspective as a community development consultant and the founder of what is now Third Sector Hebrides.

Later, the Papuans gave a presentation on their community co-operative eco-tourism project, Raja Ampat Homestay Association, giving the benefit of their experience to an audience which also included representatives from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Outer Hebrides Tourism, Urras nan Tursachan, Urras Oighreachd Ghabhann, Bragar and Anol Community Trust and the Western Isles Tour Guide Association.

Afterwards, Rhoda Mackenzie said it had been "a fantastic day of shared experience". She said: "They seem to be realising what we're realising — that doing it yourself is the only way to do it, sustainably."

Visit organiser Alastair McIntosh said: "I think in Point and Sandwick, we have seen a community that is rooted deep in a poetic cultural tradition, that has survived historical trauma and has come through with a confidence and competence in how to take control of their own affairs for the benefit of the whole community."

"This has profoundly inspired our guests from West Papua, whose history has many similarities, who have faced a similar rapid transition into modernity, and who, through

their visits to this island, have been more deeply awakened to how we can live — not just any old life, but in accordance with the spiritual traditions of both communities."

When Donald John MacSween gave his presentation, he told the Papuans it was "very important to keep on dreaming and not to listen to somebody who says 'no'."

He said: "We built our turbines and now they make something like a million pounds a year for our community. We operate them, we own them."

Alastair Nicholson with the group at the memorial to the land raiders



COMMUNITY

"Never give up!"

Indonesian visitors inspired by efforts of community Trust

By GAZETTE REPORTER
news@stornowaygazette.co.uk
oggazette

A study group from Indonesia rounded off their visit to Lewis last week with an information sharing session with representatives from Point and Sandwick Trust – and were inspired to “never give up” in the pursuit of their community dreams.

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The final speaker was Alastair Nicholson MBE, on the theme of community empowerment and confidence and the parallels across international communities, from his unique perspective as a community development consultant, and the founder of what is now Third Sector Hebrides.

Later, the Papuans gave a presentation on their community cooperative eco-tour-



Pictured above Alastair Nicholson speaking at Aighish land raids monument to the group and below the visitors at Iolaire memorial.

Sandie Maciver of SandiePhotos.

ism project, the Raja Ampat Homestay Association, giving the benefit of their experience to an audience which also included representatives from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Outer Hebrides Tourism (The Standing Stones Trust), Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (Galsion Estate Trust), Bragar and Arnol Community Trust and the Western Isles Tour Guide Association.

Afterwards, Rhoda Mackenzie said it had been “a fantastic day of shared experience”, with “lot of similarities between us”. She said: “They seem to be realising what we’re realising – that doing it yourself is the only way to do it, sustainably.”

Adrian Wells, one of the translators, said the visit had been “very, very powerful” for the Papuans “because it’s a big mirror for them”.

He explained: “They see themselves reflected in the work of the community land trusts here.”

“There is a very great deal that’s similar in terms of its rights in defending community land, in creating economic opportunities for their young people, in revitalising language and culture and identity.

“There’s been a lot of quite

open honest discussion about what it takes to hold community together.

“What’s been great is that it’s been a real two-way conversation between folk here and them. The story keeps deepening as they go round and this has been a great day to bring it together with the experience of Point and Sandwick.”

Visit organiser Alastair McIntosh said there were some clear takeaways from the Papuan visit.

These included the importance of “small local museums” like those at Paicr Trust – “we need those too so we can save things before they’re lost” – and the importance of language and history.

The Papuans said: “Our children lose the language at school. Our place names are also all in local language. How will our children be able to talk about the places without the language?”

They said they were moved by Point and Sandwick Trust’s “energy, spirit and commitment to work for the community”, adding: “There’s something about the quality of those people at Point and Sandwick. They believed in their own dream.

“These people in the trusts are not driven by money. They are driven by their

vision, their care of place and one another. This is what keeps people together.”

Alastair added: “I think, in Point and Sandwick, we have seen a community that is rooted deep in a poetic cultural tradition, that has survived historical trauma and has come through with a confidence and competence in how to take control of their own affairs for the benefit of the whole community.

“This has profoundly inspired our guests from West Papua, whose history has many similarities, who have faced a similar rapid transition into modernity, and who, through their visits to this island, have been more deeply awakened to how we can live – not just any old life, but in accordance with the spiritual traditions of both communities... promised life abundantly.”

Alastair said the discussion had been “far, far more full than I was expecting”, adding: “I wasn’t expecting such a richness there.”

When Donald John MacSween gave his presentation, he told the Papuans it was “very important to keep on dreaming and not to listen to somebody who says ‘no’.”

He said: “We built our turbines and now they make

three other communities were inspired by DJ and those who had built Point and Sandwick Power.

“We knew that this was the model that this island needed to help itself. That’s where we found ourselves fighting officialdom and being told ‘you can’t do it’.”

“But we found that sometimes people will support us. Our community will support us.

“People are still scared to speak out against officialdom but the communities are empowered because of the success of the Point and Sandwick project and we have to keep fighting because there’s so much at stake. As has been said, no white horse is going to come in and save us...”

Bringing the whole session together, Alastair Nicholson noted Point and Sandwick Trust’s “refusal to give up when the going got tough” and cited the maxim that there was “no good or bad development; only appropriate or inappropriate development”, with community-owned development often being the more appropriate.

One of the Papuans, Angeli-na Demaya, responded to this through a translator, who said: “The information that she’s got from today and some of the visits to the community trusts is just, ‘never give up!’ – that’s the message she takes.”

“We have faced very similar struggles to the one you have talked about and that is why never giving up is such an inspiration, so we can achieve our dreams.”

