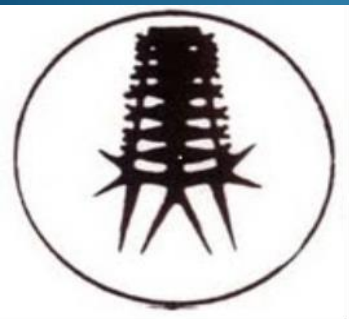


Solomon Islands National Museum Natural History Collection Strategy



Tony Ahikau Heorake
Solomon Islands National Museum,
Ministry of Culture and Tourism



Background



- SINM was officially established on 6th June 1969. But its history and development goes back to the early 1950's.
- 1978 to 1980s, cultural activities were better organised and funded.
- 1980s to 1990s, national “culture” becomes a resource to be marketed in the context of national development.
- “Civil crisis period”, SI experienced both economic and political ruin.
- 2003 – SI invited the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) to curb conflict.
- 2003 to 2012, cultural revival and soul searching & FOPA.
- 2013 SI Nasinol Policy Framework *blong* Kalsa.
- 2012/13 – SINM Natural History Collection Strategy (initial draft).

Why Natural History Collection Strategy?



- Set out the priorities for collection development and acquisition over the medium – long term.
- Document the diversity of life in Solomon Islands.
- Provide access of this information to the public.
- Educate and promote the value of natural history collection to a broad audience.

State of Natural History Collection @ SINM



- Relatively small collection (≤ 1 % of SI biodiversity).
- Stuffed birds and mammals, butterflies and skeletal remains but none exhibit ready.
- Wet specimen collection – marine specimens preserved in ethanol and formaldehyde but unfit for display and/or have already dried up.
- Much potential for growth and development in the area of Natural History @ SINM including tying the natural environment with folklore and traditional practices (TK & EC).
- Assess the knowledge gaps in natural history and address it.

Guidelines for Collection Development



Collection development should be driven by one or more of the following.

- Geographic representation
- Temporal representation
- Specimen representation
- Collection development through research projects/studies.



1. Geographical Representation

- Account for Solomon Islands geography, vegetation types, habitats and ecosystems.
- Represent significant specimens from major vegetation and habitat types.
- Emphasis on regionalised endemics and biologically and culturally important species.



2. Temporal Representation

- Environmental agencies and researchers utilise the collection in observing spatial distribution of animals over time.
- Thorough mapping and continuous collecting effort.
- Trace the introduction of introduced/alien/invasive spp., and monitor spp., status and environmental change in a particular region.

3. Specimen Representation

- Important to have specimens of different forms.

Eg: skeletons, display mounts, skins, furs and preserved tissue for histological, morphological and genetic study.

- Specimens are vital resources for researchers, students & visitors.



4. Collection Development through Research Projects



- Sign MOU with environment agencies/researchers for collection of specimens through research projects to be donated to SINM.
- Possible duplicating sampling for offsite repositories.

Collaborative projects with SINM



- 1976 – 1980s: National Sites Survey (NSS) Project (ongoing).
- 1980s -1990s: Museum in a Box & Museum Educational Kit.
- Mid-1990s: Pacific Alternatives Project (SINM, BPRSG & VCC).
- 2012 – now: The Nature Conservancy & German Archaeological Institute, Aust. South Sea Islanders Exhibition Project.
- 2016/17: Poha Cave Heritage Project (with Tourism Division and Poha Valley community).

Documenting Biodiversity in Solomon Islands

Objective 1: Document the diversity of life in Solomon Islands, identifying where species currently exist, or once existed in different provinces/islands.

- Identify gaps (SINM, non-museum orgs.).
- Explore roles of institutions & stakeholders.
- Establish a mechanism to assess and identify repositories for orphan collections.
- Develop central data base for all collections.
- Create strong linkages and partnerships with education & environmental groups. through MoUs.
- Document spp. across SI via biodiversity census, species forum.
- Acquire specimens to bridge gaps in collections.
- Preserve and maintain specimens using museum best practices, engage with other museum and ICOM.
- Employ collections manager/curator with natural sciences background.



Documenting Biodiversity in Solomon Islands

Objective 2: Promoting access of this information to the general public through digital and physical means.

- Identify and adopt collections data standards and procedures.
- Improve quality and quantity of collections information.
- Engage public with collections through workshops and forums.
- Conduct school talks and outreach programs.
- Establish a web presence with online access to collections.
- Facilitate and promote physical access through loan of specimens to schools for educational purposes.



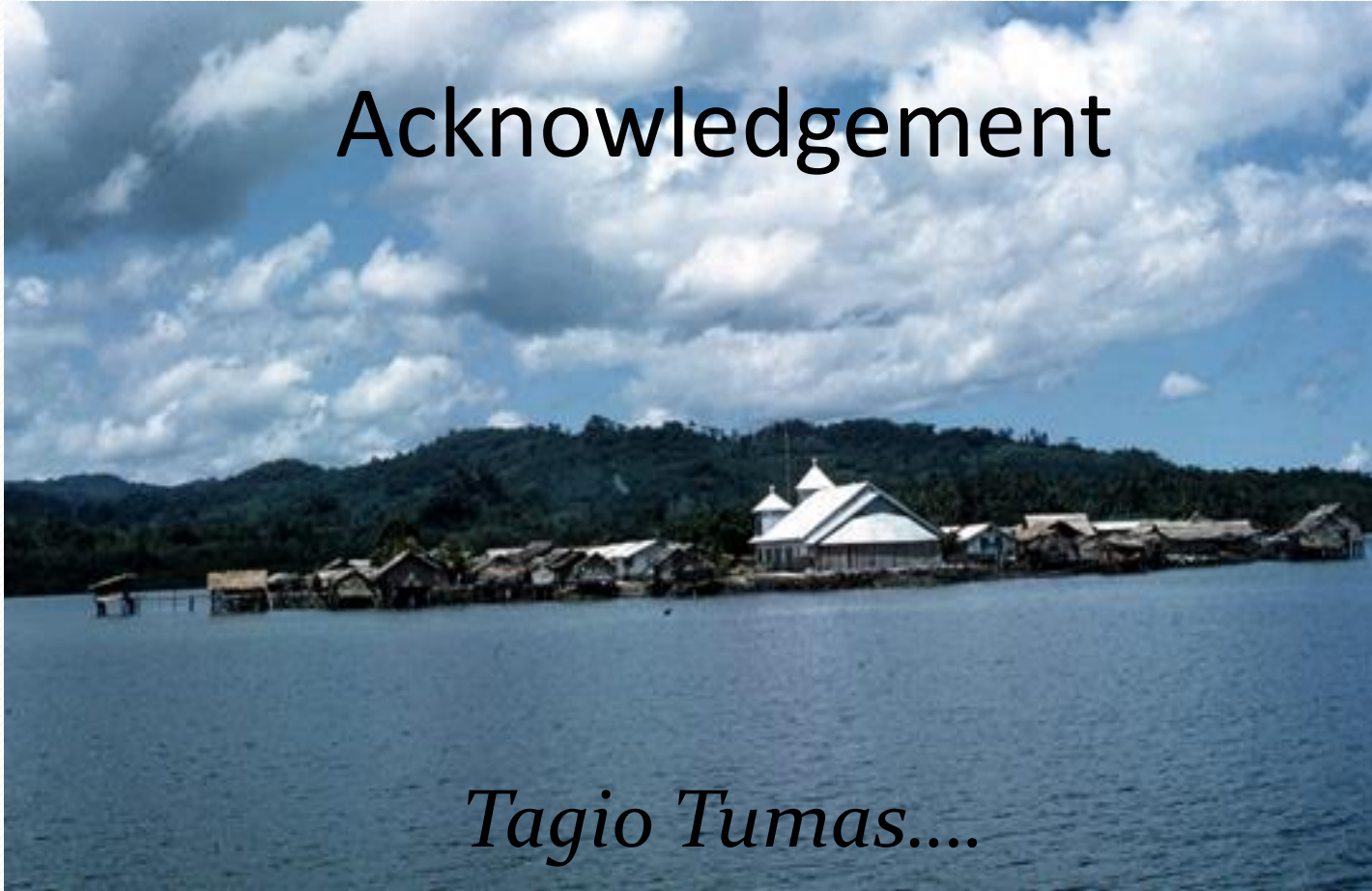
Documenting Biodiversity in Solomon Islands

Objective 3: Educating and promoting the value of natural history collections to broad audiences.

- Inform decision and policy makers of the importance of museum collections and natural heritage.
- Utilise educational environmental programs, talks & lectures to engage and educate the public about collections, natural history and the environment.
- Develop a natural history gallery to house and exhibit the natural history collection.
- Work with the Tourism Division to promote SI natural history and bolster the SINM collection effort.
- Highlight and support East Rennell Island World Heritage Site and the scientific study of island biogeography for sustainable eco-tourism purposes.



Acknowledgement



Tagio Tumas....

