

# Celebrating languages and innovation

Madang hosts three-day linguistics and traditional music and dance symposium



■ Rempi children and their elders performing at Alexishafen.



■ Patrick Matbob from DWU.



■ Dr Aikehvald from Cairns Institute.

By DON NILES

**M**ADANG recently hosted joint conferences of two organisations concerned with aspects of culture in the country. The Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea held its annual conference with the theme "Celebrating Tok Pisin and Tok Ples".

At the same time the International Council for Traditional Music's study group on music and dance in Oceania held its eighth symposium with the theme of "Celebrating innovation and continuity." The conferences were held from Sept 17-19.

Divine Word University was the organiser of the conferences and hosted the first day at its Madang campus. The events of the other two days took place at the Conference Centre in Alexishafen.

Thirty-two presentations were made over three days. Participants from PNG came from DWU, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, Pioneer Bible Translators, Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of Goroka and University of PNG.

Overseas participants came from institutions in Australia, Germany, New Zealand and the United States. The recent blockade of the Highlands Highway prevented more staff and students from UOG from attending the event.

Prof Alexandra Aikehvald from the Cairns Institute, James Cook University, gave the keynote address for both the linguistics and music conferences. For the former, she discussed linguistic diversity and multilingualism, and for the latter, she talked about parallel structures in Manambu songs from East Sepik.

The Linguistics Society of Papua New Guinea was founded at the UPNG in 1967. In accordance with the themes of this year's annual conference, other presentations concerned aspects of various local languages such as Enga, Gadsup, Kuanua, Kove, Yopno, Eibela and Mussau, or the vitality of two different languages in the lower Ramu.

Other presentations concerned *Tok Pisin* or the creolised German once spoken in the Rabaul area. A number of scholars talked about bilingual education. Over and over again, the conference heard how initially learning to read in a language known to children will definitely help them learn to read and write English.

The International Council for Traditional Music was founded in London in 1947. It presently has 18 study groups. The study group on music and dance in Oceania started in 1979 and has previously held symposia in Australia, Japan, Palau and the US.

Presentations on music at this year's symposium also concerned aspects of traditional expression, such as the revival of *lomo* performances in Yangoru and the Urim Christian church, innovation in Baluan *popolot*, changes in Lihir lyrics, the development of a *singsing* based on Rempi children's dances, the distinctiveness of Hagen melodies and Kuman *owa* long-distance communications.

Popular music research focused on the recording industry and humour in music. Such exchanges between local and international researchers are essential to academic study in both linguistics and music.

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