

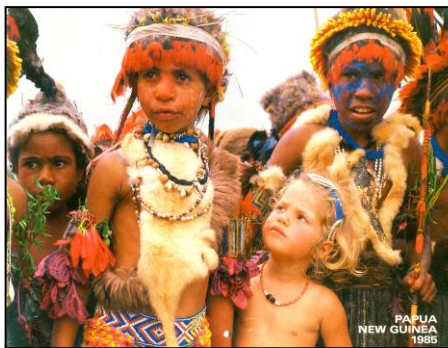
Lighting Up Papua New Guinea

Emotional homecoming launches LUTW project in memory of Capt. Nichola Goddard

By Grady Semmens

Losuia, Papua New Guinea -- The moment they stepped down onto the scrubby airstrip that sits like a scar across the lush farmland of Kiriwina Island, the memories came flooding back for Tim and Sally Goddard.

There was the tropical heat and the smell of vegetation and wood smoke in the air. The faces of friends they had not seen for more than 25 years. Walking into the school they started in 1981 and passing the ocean-front house that was their home for two years shortly after they were married. And of course, there were all the recollections of their baby daughter, Nichola, who spent her first two years of life on the remote coral atoll that is part of Papua New Guinea.



Nichola Goddard as a Child in Papua New Guinea

“Nichola was the only blonde person on the island, and everyone still remembers her that way,” Sally Goddard said. “Other than that, she was just like all the other children and she even learned to speak Kiriwinan before she learned English. This place will always be an important part of who she was.”

It was an emotional homecoming for the Goddards as they revisited the South Pacific nation at the end of July to help launch Light Up Papua New Guinea/ The Capt. Nichola Goddard Project in memory of their eldest daughter who was the first female Canadian soldier to die in combat when she was killed during military operations in Afghanistan in 2006. The project led by the U of C’s Light Up The World Foundation aims to place solar-powered lighting systems in the estimated 1,820 rural first aid posts that are the most basic level of health care in Papua New Guinea.

“To come back here after 25 years is so amazing. All we have to do is walk through town and we meet people who remember us as the founders of the high school. They also remember Nichola and they have heard her story,” said Tim Goddard, the U of C’s former Vice-Provost (International). “We wanted to start this project in a place that has symbolic value, so we decided the first lights should be installed here on Kiriwina.”

The Goddards were joined by Light Up The World trainer Walt Ratterman and Shirley Dindillo from the Papua New Guinea-based Appropriate Technologies Projects Inc. who spent three days training a group of local residents to install lighting systems in eight aid posts on Kiriwina and one of its neighbouring islands. Each system is comprised of a five-watt solar panel, a motorcycle battery and charge controlling device and two light emitting diode (LED) lamps. The systems are designed to provide four hours of light per night under normal conditions.



The Light Up Papua New Guinea Team from Left to Right: Grady Semmens, Shirley Dindillo, Valerie Fortney, Diane Bos, Walt Ratterman, Sally Goddard, Joshua William, and Tim Goddard

“Having these lights will be so useful because at night when emergencies come in, instead of looking around for kerosene to light a lamp, the lights will just be there,” said Moses Tobwayoyu, the community health worker who oversees the aid post in the village of Kaibola that serves more than 2,000 people. “Having lights will make a big difference because people will not be afraid to come to the clinic at night because they know there will be light.”

Kiriwina Island’s district health officer Joshua William said the project also stands to benefit the country’s health care system as a whole by supporting PNG’s front-line health care workers.

“This is a real morale booster for our community health workers because it makes them feel like they are valued and are doing something important,” William said. “Trying to deliver a baby, bandage an injury or treat someone for malaria by the light of a hurricane lamp is not easy, so I think these lights will help a lot.”



LED Lamps in Aid Post in Papua New Guinea

The Goddard’s chose the aid posts as the focus of the project after discussions with Papua New Guinea’s ambassador to North America Evan Paki because they wanted Nichola’s legacy to help ordinary people across the entire country.

“The aid post orderlies are the backbone of the country. They are the ones who are assisting with childbirth, helping people when they get sick, giving immunizations and health care advice,” Sally Goddard said. “I think anything we can do to support them is worthwhile.”

“We deeply appreciate the assistance this will provide to the people of Papua New Guinea and are honoured by the Goddard family’s continuing interest in our nation,” Ambassador Paki said. “The fact that this project is conceived in memory of a young woman who gave her life for her country makes it even more meaningful.”

The ambitious project is expected to take seven years to complete and involves ongoing fundraising efforts to cover the rising costs of fuel and supplies that will be required to access the remotest regions of Papua New Guinea.

“Travel in this country is not easy. It is mountainous, heavily forested and in most cases will require renting trucks, boats, planes and helicopters,” Tim Goddard said. “We want to keep the momentum going by letting everyone know that these lights make a big difference and are improving the lives of people around Papua New Guinea.”



The Challenges of Travelling in Papua New Guinea

For more information or to donate to Light Up Papua New Guinea/The Capt. Nichola Goddard Project, visit www.lutw.org or call (403) 266-5004.

See a video story about the project on our website at http://www.lutw.org/project_png.htm or on U-Now TV at www.ucalgary.ca.