



## PNA World Tuna Day Art & Talent Quest

### SPECIAL MENTION ENTRY

#### *Pacific tuna in the wild*

By James Tuita (Solomon Islands)

Gleefully skipping the vast Pacific wild  
Gracefully dancing when the billows mild  
Cheerfully swimming for a thousand mile  
Splashing water music, the islands hailed

Camouflaged with deep ocean cobalt blue  
To fake its back from the predators above  
Its silvery belly, from the fish of prey below  
The yellow fins, its balance in surging billow

Clustering beneath the flocking gulls  
Clinging together in the stormy gales  
Carefully clustered from hungry whales  
Warily keep from the predators' bellies

Skipping past the islands, the coconuts bow  
For both are ingredients of a delicious stew  
That's a chiefly recipe in the islanders' dish  
And preference for the hungry chief's wish

Swimming near the islands, the fishermen smiles  
Its high feeding behaviour, when the moon smiles  
Their canoe, pole and line, the fishermen took  
To lure the tuna with their oyster bi-valve hook

The soaring frigates tells the weather is fine  
Whilst the flocking gulls directs the fishermen  
To the location of a great school of tuna  
So, hastily the fishermen paddled their canoe

Tuna-canoes were boarded by eight to ten  
Some to paddle while others do the angling  
The pole and line were held out to the sea  
A few moments nigh, a catch eventuates

Catches oft been plentiful, in good abundance

Sufficiently to flavour a lavish feast and dance  
The sounding cone shell calls all the villagers  
To attend the cultural tuna banquet tables

The festival wake was held beside a camp fire  
It's hi time, and so grass skirts be the attire  
The dancers danced traditional tuna songs  
With cultural chants and prolific recitals

Morning came when the priest announced:  
"My time will not linger on, soon I shall die  
Prepare a finely carved tuna like casket  
My skull shall remain inside; a sacred relic"

The priest avowed; "My spirit will live forever  
I shall lead tuna in great abundance inshore  
I will influence the mystical tuna charm for you  
Through my succeeding first-born son's prayer"

Soon the priest's succeeding son reigns  
And start performing the tuna rituals  
Claiming the promises of tuna blessings  
That his father's spirit will be manifesting

"Tuna!!" Shouted a man from his canoe afar off;  
"There's a great school of tuna coming inshore!"  
Hastily the villagers surrounded it with their net  
A sign of fulfilled promise by the deceased priest

The mode of cultural tuna conservation  
Depends on the priest's ritual divination  
And by the ancestral spirits' ratification  
Such custom belief holds respect and upkeep

Time has come and gone like vanishing vapour  
And the winds of changes inevitably puffs up  
"Look! There's a giant marlin fish go sailing by"  
As on the horizon shadow of a trawler went by

The priest held a dracaena branch, stood out clearly  
"Is that an omen of blessing or unwanted calamity?"  
Praying as he ritually waving the dracaena branch  
The spirits foretells: "It is an omen of tuna scarcity"

Today, there is evidence of tuna scarceness  
In nearby once tuna infest fishing grounds  
So, upon the beams of the sanctum houses  
Hangs the oyster hook, pole and line; useless

The cultural tuna ceremonies definitely cease  
All powers now in the hands of government  
For conservation, and benefit for the nation  
This left the local tuna cultures in total ruin