



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