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Meet Lengkon, our new manager

The South Pacific WWII museum is marking an exciting new year with the arrival of our Project Office Manager, Lengkon Tokon.

Lengkon is taking up the role following the passing of our previous office manager Alma Wensi in May last year. Our search for a replacement for Alma was a difficult one for us given the tremendous legacy he left behind. After sorting through the many applications we received, Lengkon stood out as the perfect candidate to continue our mission to see the Museum through to fruition.

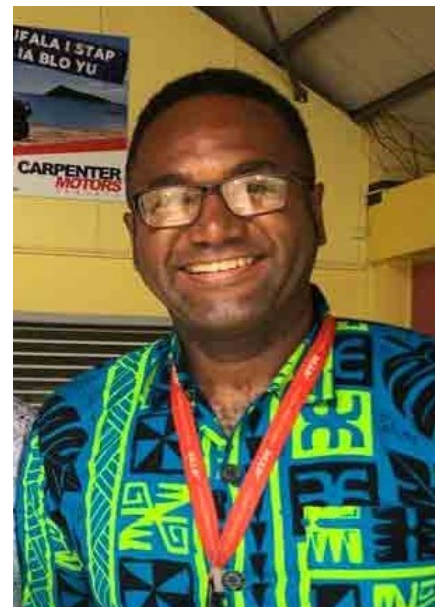
Lengkon has worked in many industries, and was most recently at Air Vanuatu as the airline's Airport Coordinator at Santo-Pekoa International Airport. He is fluent in English and Bislama and as Lengkon puts it, has "a basic grasp of the French language", which will no doubt come in handy given the broad scope of visitors to the mini museum and Development Office.

Museum Committee Member Mary O'Reilly, who headed up the recruitment committee said, "Lengkon is an experienced, friendly, and enthusiastic person. He has a desire to contribute to and become a valid member of the Santo community and sees the Museum Project as an opportunity to do that locally but has an immediate grasp of the global impact this could also have for Santo and Vanuatu."

Museum Chairman Bradley Wood is also very excited to have Lengkon coming on board. "Lengkon has some wonderful ideas and a work ethic that impressed me during the interview process," Bradley said. "He also has a vision for how to improve his workplaces and provide development opportunities for his staff, which will be a tremendous asset to the Museum as we continue to grow."

Lengkon is very much looking forward to his new role with us and envisages exciting times ahead: "I see great potential in the South Pacific WWII Museum project for Santo, Vanuatu and the Ni-Vanuatu people. I can also see the potential for growth and the social contribution that this project can offer."

When you're next in Luganville, come down to the Office and mini museum and and say hello. to Lengkon.



Our best month yet for visitors

Visitor numbers continue to grow at our mini museum and Development Office in Luganville.

In December this year in fact, we've had a record 831 visitors come through, nearly 40 per cent up on a year earlier. Our previous record month was also in 2019, when we had 725 visitors in April.

We're getting fantastic numbers from visiting cruise ships and Marina and Melody do an incredible job answering everyone's questions and always have a smiling face to greet everyone.

Cruise ship days are always hectic, with a large number of people in a small space of time, but we also have many visitors who drop by individually or in small groups, and can spend more time with us.

Some visitors, like Scott Saewart, tells us in advance that they're visiting – in his case, he was following in the footsteps of his father, who served on Espiritu Santo.

He told us: "Thank you so much for arranging our visit with Marina and Melody. They were fabulous and I donated an information, booklet and copies of pictures with staff about the 353rd engineering regiment and battalion which were stationed on Santo. I found Santo to be an incredible place with incredible people as well. We spent a day with Willie of Paradise Tours seeing the WW2 sights and history. I plan to come back in a couple of years and spend at least a week there."

Thank you Scott for your kind donations, and thank you to the many hundreds of local and international visitors who also came to learn about our work.



Scott Saewart with Melody and Marina

Save the dates for our big Santo sale!

Thanks to a generous sponsor, we will be having an exciting sale of household, hardware and tools in the last week in February.

The sale will be in a marquee directly opposite our project office in Luganville's Unity Park and will run from Monday 24th February to Saturday 29th February (yes that's right, it's a Leap Year in 2020!)

All proceeds are for the SPWWII Museum fundraising efforts.

Thank you to Luganville Municipal Council, Santo Hardware, and Lester Roy Security Services for their assistance.

Inspiring Everyday Heroes

Inspiring Everyday Heroes is our Museum brand and means how the stories of yesteryear and our project can inspire today's new generation.

Until recently, our very close neighbours were the Mammias at Luganville's market.

The market was based in Unity Park while its usual home near the Municipal Council was being renovated and extended.

The markets show the very best of Ni Vanuatu produce and it's a great place to meet the friendly vendors, who travel many miles from country villages and often stay overnight.

We're delighted that late last year, the market renovation was completed, after support from the Governments of Vanuatu and Australia, and UN Women.



The market has been renovated to make sure there s no flooding or leakage inside the market during rainy days. There is also more space for more tables to cater for the increasing number of women selling at Luganville market.

This market has been a lifeline for generations of families from all over Northern Islands of Vanuatu, particularly women.

So this month we'd like to salute our Market Mammias as our Inspiring Everyday Heroes.

Photo courtesy of UN Women/Trisha Toangwera

The month in military history

This remarkable photo marks the final moments of one of the Japanese planes which attacked a U.S. Task Force on January 29, 1943 off Rennell Island, Solomon Islands, and severely damaged the heavy cruiser, USS Chicago (CA-29). The US Navy photograph is now in the collections of the National Archives. The US ships had spotted unidentified aircraft on radar, but did not take the threat seriously. In fact 31 Japanese torpedo bombers had circled around to attack the vessels out of the darkness, but with their targets silhouetted by the twilight. The first attack failed, but a second attack put two torpedoes into the Chicago. While the US taskforce tried to protect the crippled ship the next day, further attacks sank the heavy cruiser. The remaining US vessels returned to Espiritu Santo, licking their wounds..

