



SMOL TOKTOK BLONG ViVa



January 2016

Newsletter of the Victoria-Vanuatu Physician Project

Survivor Vanuatu

It was the calm before the storm. On March 16th, 2015, one day before Cyclone Pam struck the island of Tanna, the air was hot, humid, and still. Warnings of the approaching Category 5 hurricane had already been heeded and tourists had left the island, families had moved to higher ground, put sandbags on their roofs, or took shelter in concrete buildings or caves.

It took three hours for the eye of the storm to pass over the island. The rain and wind made a powerful noise. It was dangerous to go outside because of flying branches and falling trees. One man witnessed the hospital family shelter lift completely up and fly away. All traditional wood and thatch houses were blown down and most of the roofs on concrete buildings were torn off or damaged. Families tried to flee to stronger structures or huddled against the inside walls getting drenched with rain.

When the storm passed and Tanna people came out of their shelters, they found not only their houses gone or damaged, but the ground covered with branches and fallen trees. Not a single leaf remained on the trees. The countryside had turned from green to a brown soggy mess. It was a miracle that only 5 people out of 35,000 on Tanna were tragically killed by flying debris and falling walls in the worst cyclone in anyone's memory. But the people are strong and resilient. With help from multiple agencies and governments, they have cleaned up the island, replanted their crops, and repaired their houses. The green has slowly come back to Tanna.

These are the stories that Drs. Eugene Leduc and Lisa Veres heard from Lenakel Hospital staff and others during their recent visit to Tanna Island, Vanuatu. They visited between December 10th and 16th.

(Cont'd next page)

Tanna, the Movie Feb 9



While working on Tanna, ViVa doctors Sean Cruz, Andrea Lewis, Jeff Unger and his wife, Carla Rokosh met an Australian film director, Dean Bentley, and his family who were living in the traditional village of Yakel. He was directing a fictional full length movie with actors from the Yakel tribe, people well known to all ViVa doctors and who showed their gratitude for the ViVa program by performing a custom dance during the final salu-salu last February.

"Tanna", which was shown at the Venice Film Festival is coming to Victoria. It will be screened by the Victoria Film Festival on February 9th, at 7:15pm at the Odeon Theatre. It is a Romeo and Juliet story based on a true life event. Those who have seen it, including on Tanna, have praised the movie for its authenticity, cinematography, respect for the culture, and good acting!

Tickets are available from the Victoria Film Festival web site. ViVa alumni and friends are welcome to come to an informal social after the movie at the Mint Restaurant, 1414 Douglas Street at Johnson.

To unsubscribe from this newsletter, send a request to info@vivaproject.ca

Contact Information:

President: Jeff and Carla Unger

Secretary: Lisa Veres

Treasurer: Pat Clinton-Baker

president@vivaproject.ca

secretary@vivaproject.ca

treasurer@vivaproject.ca

(Survivor – cont'd from page 1)

Eugene and Lisa report that the morale of man-Tanna was surprisingly good despite the hardship they have endured. People were very friendly as usual. Also, after several months of drought, the rains returned strongly in December so there was renewed optimism that fruit and crop production would soon come back to normal. Tourist resorts and bungalows were back in operation and eager for more visitors.



Lenakel – main street after Cyclone Pam



Lenakel – main street December 2015

Hospital Damage Report

Fortunately, most of the damage sustained by the hospital was on just one side, with some flooding in the maternity and children's wards and the operating room. The rest of the hospital remained intact and many people actually took refuge in the outpatient department and in the Rotary Women's Skills Centre during the cyclone. Stopgap repairs to the roof were made by the Australian army shortly after the cyclone. All the wards and theatre have been cleaned up and are

in use again. There is still extensive damage to ceilings, eaves, and gutters, and window screens which Rotary has started to repair with ViVa funds.



Hospital ceiling and eaves damage still to be repaired

The Rotary team and local workers have already repaired the Doctors House and have plans to repair some of the other staff housing which was badly damaged. The water and electrical and internet systems are all working again and the hospital is back to its pre-cyclone level of function.



Nurse Robert Moise with Relief Container

Canadian Relief Container

The 20-foot container loaded with medical equipment and disaster relief supplies from Victoria, BC, had arrived last October on Tanna and was unloaded and moved up to the hospital where it sits on concrete blocks. More than half the supplies were distributed to the hospital and other communities on Tanna and the rest remain in the container for future disaster relief.

Lisa and Eugene heard how grateful the hospital staff and others were to receive the container and supplies. Some were very emotional expressing their appreciation for being remembered by ViVa and all those in Victoria including Disaster Aid Canada, Pacific Peoples Partnership Compassionate Resources Warehouse, and the Williams family who made this possible.

New Zealand Doctor arrives on Tanna

Dr. Leanne Cameron and her family arrived on Tanna in mid January to stay and work for 6 months alongside the current ni-Van Doctor Robert Vocor. She will be moving there with her husband, Matt and their four children, all under the age of 8 years of age. This was an arrangement between her and the Vanuatu government, not a ViVa sponsorship, but we have been helping her as much as we can from afar.

Dr. Leanne is an emergency room physician in New Zealand. She and her husband are adventuresome and enthusiastic and sound like a good fit for Tanna. They are looking forward to their stay and think that other New Zealand doctors may be interested in replacing them when they leave.

Vanuatu Medical Students Graduate

Dr. Basil, the director of Vanuatu post-graduate training met with Lisa, Eugene, and Matt Cameron (Dr. Leanne's husband) in Port Vila on December 16th. He reported that 18 ni-Van medical graduates will be arriving in Port Vila in January from their education in Fiji, China, and Cuba. Together with James Cook University in Australia,

he has developed a 2-year internship program for these graduates before they become fully licensed doctors in Vanuatu. Even more good news is that another 14 graduates will be arriving one year later. He is optimistic that within 2 years Tanna will soon have its own doctors and will no longer need to rely on foreign doctors!



Dr. Basil, Matt Cameron, Drs. Eugene and Lisa in Port Vila

Donate Now!

It is not too late! We are still accepting donations. There are a number of ways you can donate, including online with PayPal. Just go to our website www.ViVaProject.ca to find out how **you can help now!**

For more information on ViVa, Cyclone Pam and its devastating effects, the relief and fund-raising efforts, and the next ViVa meeting, visit our website www.ViVaProject.ca