

Lawrence Daveona:

**BRIEF ON MATHEW KOVE'S
RECONCILIATION HELD IN GUAVA -
16TH TO 24th OCTOBER 2009**

Introduction

The Guava families' quest for reconciliations initially started in 1996 with a phone call request from Francis Ona to me to come home and talk about this issue. I did not go home that year but made it in 1997 with my sister, Mrs. Anna Ampa'oi. Since that time I have visited home every year up to the time of his death and onwards pursuing this issue of family reconciliation but to my disappointment I found that despite Francis Ona's willingness there were always other people around him (his advisers) that did not share his views on family reconciliation. During my many visits I found out that many of my family members were receptive on the issue of reconciliations mainly because they were worried about what other people will say despite the fact that many people in Kieta district were in support of Kove and Ona families' reconciliations.

Panguna Landowner's Association executive has been working on the overall PLA reconciliations since 2006. Some funding assistance from our former member for Central Bougainville in the National Parliament was put through ABG Administration soon after discussions with PLA executive and because of this the ABG President then, Hon Joseph Kabui also committed K100, 000.00, and however nothing happened despite numerous attempts by PLA executive members to follow up on the funding.

Then came 2007 National elections and PLA executive again approached our new member for Central Bougainville in the National Parliament, Hon Jimmy

Miringoro to look for some funding from the National Government. In late November of 2008 the Deputy Prime Minister, Hon Sir Dr Puka Temu came to the assistance with an amount of K116, 000.00 for the PLA planned reconciliations. Again nothing eventuated and to date none of us know about what this amount was used for by our National MP.

At the inauguration of his presidency in early January 2009, Hon James Tanis MHR, during his speech stated that the first and foremost he would be attending to the issues of Panguna Landowner's reconciliations and Disarmament. True to his words and under his Minister for Reconciliation, Hon Robert Sawa's direction the first phase of PLA reconciliations took place between 16th to 23rd October 2009 in Guava village and also in Panguna.

PLA Reconciliation.

The reconciliations that we went to attend during this period included the following reconciliation ceremonies;

- Mathew Kove's reconciliations in Guava-16th – 24th October 2009
- Ex-Combatant's cleansing in Panguna-Thursday 22nd October 2009
- Old and New Panguna Landowners Association executives in Panguna-Friday 23rd October 2009

Mathew Kove's Families Reconciliations-Guava Village

Of special interest to Severinus family and I was the families' reconciliation relating to Mathew Kove's abduction and eventual killing of Kove by our own cousins in the early morning of Friday 13th January 1989. The families in this reconciliation that took part and those others that assisted and also witnessed one way or the other this included the following;



Kove's two surviving sisters & Bubus

A. On Mathew Kove's side were his 4 sisters' children plus his own children;

- Tarue family and her descendants (my mother and I am included here)-Deceased
- Toromari family (my mother's sister)
- Tainu family (my mother's sister)
- Dutaori family (my mother's sister) Deceased
- Mathew Kove's children, their children and their relatives
- Severinus Ampa'oi's family and relatives



Reconciling family members

B. Francis Ona's side included the following families;

- Francis Ona's sisters, brothers and their children
- Ako-o 's children and their children
- Pisi's children and their children
- Cecelia's children and their children
- Perpetua Serero's children and their children

C. Mediation team consisting of five village chiefs (Village court magistrates)

- Moroni Village x 2 Magistrate
- Mosinau Village x1 Magistrate
- Pangaa Village x 1 Magistrate
- Paraiano Village x 1 Magistrate

D. Catholic Priest who officiated at the church service

E. ABG Administration officers who coordinated and facilitated for the whole PLA reconciliations program

- Mr. George Manu
- Miss Dorcas Awasi

Process involved in customary reconciliation

In order not to dig into old wounds of the past especially the requirement for those relatives of families involved in the killing of Kove to do certain customary obligations # “Domang mi-inta” all the family members of the above families agreed not to deal with this issue for the benefit of the future generation. We all agreed that the well-being of our children and our children’s children now and in the years to come must override our personal and emotional feelings on what has happened in the past.

Mediation process



Clan chief making a point during mediation

The next phase involved 3 days of mediation conducted by the village court magistrates who were hand picked because of their knowledge of the reconciliation issue at hand but more so because these people are widely regarded in the whole of Kieta District as having accomplished important reconciliation mediation ceremonies in the past.

The first day was Tuesday 20th October 2009 and the relatives of all the families who have not met together for over twenty (20) years gathered at the reconciliation venue. Looking around one could see the unimaginable environment of ones close knitted families who have been separated for so long but despite this lengthy separation those of us who have lived in Port Moresby (and vice versa) still had memories of home because we have named our children and our grand children after our family members who have passed on. Our children and grand children having been named after our deceased family members has been our symbol of being real about where our roots are. At this first meeting there was the odor of both joy and sadness and tears flowed freely as we embraced each other. Personally I have travelled home many times during the 20 years of being separated and I have met most of my family members but this moment was some very moving experience.

At this juncture I need to briefly explain to everyone who has no idea at all about who Mathew Kove was before he was abducted and killed by his nephews (Francis Ona's first cousins presumably under his instructions).

Mathew Kove was the Paramount chief of Guava and one of the principle landowners in the Special Mine Leases (SML) of the Panguna mine. He was a respected leader of his people and this respect extended to a lot of villages in Kieta district who knew him as a "Didiman" (Agriculture officer in the colonial days). Because of his leadership attributes but more so he had titles to quite a number of leases in SML he was elected to be one of the executive members of the old Panguna Landowner's Association (legitimate) and also a Board member of the landowner's company, Road Mining Tailings Leases Trustees Limited, (RMTL). In his capacity as an executive member of both landowner organizations he was very instrumental in fighting for Panguna Landowner's concerns in any negotiations with Bougainville Copper Limited, (BCL). During his time as an executive member of both organizations with other executives they achieved a lot for the landowners despite their limited educational background and further without any legal representation. Despite his genuine efforts to fight for the landowner's cause some of our relatives perceived that he was pro BCL and as a

result he met his fate. This was the man that we as the family members have come to reconcile for what had happened to him.

On the first day of mediation the mediators took us through the process that they would take to enable the families concern to come out openly and truthfully with their respective issues of concern. The reconciling families have agreed to the following,

1. That the reconciliation will take place for the families that have agreed to take part as planned from today onward.
2. Other related families who have not consented to take part in this reconciliation have been advised that it is their own decision and that they will have to bear the consequences of their own decisions.
3. That the mediation process will take three days from Tuesday 20th to Thursday 22nd October 2009. On Friday 23rd October 2009 the actual reconciliation will take place. This would involved the following,
 - a) Removal of the remains of Mr. Kove from where he was buried and have the remains brought to the venue of reconciliations to be placed in the casket specifically brought in by Port Moresby families so as to have his remains buried properly.
 - b) Cleansing and invoking of the clan spirits to release and forgive the member's families and their children from further disturbances in their lives. This will involve the clan chiefs to go into the Holy Ground and recite certain comments to the spirits so as to make sure bad things do not happen in the future.



Clan elder invoking the spirits for forgiveness & protection

- c) A priest to be brought in to officiate at the families' reconciliation and burial ceremony on the final day.

The team leader of the mediators informed us that the process would involve the following,

1. That the members of the mediation team have different roles to play during the mediation process based on how the families involved in the reconciliations have agreed to deal with their reconciliations as stated above.
2. All the families present will be requested to voice any issues of their concern to the floor where the mediators will determine the main concern and place a broom stick depicting that concern.
3. When all the issues of concern are brought out onto the floor and a number of broom sticks have been placed against the issues the discussion on each of the issues will commence and this will go on until a satisfactory and

amicable solution is agreed to by all the families reconciling and only then the broom stick that depicts that particular concern will be removed. If there is no amicable solution reached during the discussions on a particular issue the broom stick which has been placed against that issue will remain.

4. It is also very important to note that any discussion on any particular issue will be kick-started by the person who has brought the concern before the mediation team and the families taking part in the reconciliation. After his/her explanations as to why he/she has brought that particular concern forward the team leader will have the floor open for further comments until an amicable solution is reached. Each of the broom sticks representing the issues of concern will follow the same process and the mediators will deal with them in the same manner.



Mediation in progress

5. Of particular importance to note here is that each of the mediators as mentioned earlier above has an equally important role to play in all the rituals that are customarily required especially in this respect relating to the removal of the remains of a death person and in this case a person who

died not because of natural death but because he was killed for whatever the reason that those who killed him had. I would like to note again here that out of the people who may have had some say in my uncle's death there are only two people who are still alive. The two that are still alive are Mekamui commander Moses Pipiro and his other counterpart commander Chris Uma. All the rest have all died and there were seven of them and mostly very close family members.

6. The rituals that each one of the mediators would need to perform were as follow,
 - a) One would perform the customary ritual that would be needed to be carried out at the scene of where my uncle was buried before the remains are removed from the site.
 - b) The other would involve the setting up of the Holy ground for the invoking of the customary spirits for the forgiveness and family togetherness ceremony.



Holy ground set up

- c) Again another one was to carry out the bad spirit's cleansing and protection in the future of the respective family members.



Evil spirit's cleansing

- d) The final one would of-course be the actual reconciliation ceremony that the priest would perform over the Holy Water where all the reconciling parties were to shake hands together in the dish of Holy Water.

So from Tuesday 20th to Thursday 22nd October 2009 the mediators took us through the above reconciliation process and of particular to note were the main issues of concern (depicted by broom sticks) as to why uncle Kove was killed. These issues were put on the floor by both families taking part in the reconciliation and these were;

1. Land issue:
2. Money issue:
3. Leadership issue:
4. Jealousy
5. Sorcery

The above issues of concern were discussed one by one by all the families. As most of us have not spoken about the issues at hand with the other opposing families for over 20 years it was very evident that the answers that came out as per the process of talking frankly together brought down tears to those of us that were old enough to know what had happened to uncle Kove and why. So all the above issues were dealt with thoroughly by all the families who took part in the reconciliation under the guidance of the mediators and the only one that all the families concerned agreed to put off to a later date was the issue of Land ownership.

The other very important issue that we again agreed to with other dissenting members of our families was the removal of the remains of Kove from where he is currently buried. After seriously considering the consequences of what would have happened if his remains were removed without proper consultation with the landowner families of the land that he was buried, we again agreed to leave this particular issue to be attended to at a later date by those relatives that did oppose the removal of the remains.

Friday 23rd October 2009 was set aside specifically for the families' reconciliation program after the successful completion of the mediation process. (Refer reconciliation program)

To cut the whole story short our families' reconciliations with respect to death was a great success and at the end of it all we were all relieved. I noted above that there were other family members that did not take part. Yes, they did not actually take part but they were there in person and we heard their views and took them for what they were but the majority of family members especially those families' members that were a party to the killing of my uncle did take part under the leadership of families' elders Philip Miriori and John Amuna, the brother of the namesake of Mathew Kove who is known to have actually killed him.

PLA-Old & New reconciliation-Panguna



Panguna District Administration

After we completed our reconciliation in Guava, Severinus and my family were picked up by UNDP vehicles and driven down to Panguna to take part in this reconciliation in which our President officiated and was the main witness with many of his Cabinet members and ABG Administration officials. This ceremony had started in the morning with the participation of the school students from the nearby schools and chiefs and villagers from all the Panguna mine leases from Lower tailings, Upper tailings, Port Mine Access Road, Loloho Port and Arawa town leases.

At this reconciliation there were five main speakers who spoke and they represented the following organizations,

1. Old PLA

- Lawrence Daveona
- Severinus Ampa'oi
- Michael Pariu

2. New PLA

- Philip Miriori-He also spoke on behalf of Mekamui Government of Unity as its Chairman.

3. ABG

- Hon James Tanis MHR. The president's speech was straight to the point and that is to say that the President stated very clearly that, and I quote;

“Panguna Landowners have now spoken and agreed and have begun their reconciliation process and I and my cabinet Ministers are the witnesses on this occasion. There is no more room for people to blame Panguna Landowners and still carry on their fight in any region of Bougainville. I will not entertain any factions that carry on their fight using Panguna Landowner's as their excuse”.

Ex-Combatant's-“Ereng Duu”- Blood cleansing ceremony- Panguna.

Those families who took part in M. Kove's reconciliation process and ceremony did not attend this as we did not see any significance of this event and further we expected some of these ex-combatants to attend our families' reconciliations as some of these Mekamui soldiers took part and or were witnesses to his abduction and eventual killing.

Conclusion

To conclude I would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for eventually making the event of Mr. Kove's reconciliation ceremony come to fruition after over twenty years. On behalf of the families that took part in this reconciliation I am grateful and thank in particular the following;

- Hon James Tanis MHR-President of the Autonomous region of Bougainville
- Hon Robert Sawa MHR-Minister for Reconciliation & Disarmament and his Officers, especially Mr. Dennis Kuiai the CEO of the Division, Mr. George Manu, the overall coordinator of PLA reconciliation program and also Ms Dorcas Awasi.
- Mr. Otto Noruka the District Manager and his officers from Panguna District Administration for a job well done.
- Mr. Julius Nakonang and his team of chiefs who acted as mediators through out the reconciliation process.

Note:

These initial PLA reconciliations (3 reconciliations mentioned above) were funded by ABG at a cost of close to Three hundred thousand kina (K300, 000.00).

Bougainville Copper Limited assisted us with Five thousand kina (K5, 000.00).

Lawrence Daveona

**AQUITAL OF FUNDS RECEIVED FROM MR PAUL COLEMAN OF
RIO TINTO-K5, 000.00 FOR PANGUNA LANDOWNER'S
RECONCILIATIONS-KOVE'S CASE.**

Date	Description	Amount	Balance	Remarks
15/10/09	Received from Rio Tinto	K5,000.00	K5,000.00	
15/10/09	Severinus Ampa'oi-Kove's families	K2,000.00		No receipt
15/10/09	Lawrence Daveona-F. Ona's families	K3,000.00	K3,000.00	
16/10/09	Fly out Pom to Buka-Ute hire-Buka Airport	K100.00	K2,900.00	No receipt
	Water taxi hire	K100.00	K2,800.00	
	Lunch	K60.00	K2,740.00	
	Dinner in Arawa	K50.00	K2,690.00	
17/10/09	Breakfast	K 25.00	K2,665.00	
	Hire vehicle-Paraiano Vil.	K500.00	K 2,165.00	
	Lunch-Paraiano	K50.00	K2,115.00	
	Toromari (Kove's sister)	K50.00	K2,065.00	
	Dinner	K50.00	K2,015.00	
18/10/09	Breakfast	K25.00	K 1,990.00	
	Hire vehicle-Loloho	K50.00	K1,940.00	
	Lunch-Loloho	K50.00	K1,890.00	
	Dinner	K50.00	K1,840.00	
19/10/09	Breakfast	K25.00	K1,815.00	
	Consultations with PDA & PLA in Arawa			
	Lunch with light refreshments	K100.00	K1,715.00	
	Dinner	K50.00	K1,665.00	
20/10/09	Break fast	K25.00	K 1,640.00	
	Travel up to Guava-Food supplies salt, sugar, tea, coffee, biscuits, floor, noodles, rice, tinned meat/fish, cups, dishwashing soaps, steel wool, etc, etc, ...	K300.00	K1,340.00	
	Lunch on the way	K60.00	K1,280.00	
	Mediation session begins			
21/10/09	Breakfast	50.00	K1,230.00	
	2 ND Day of mediation			
	Morning and Afternoon tea	K150.00	K1,080.00	
	2 boxes of Spear (rolled cigarettes)	K70.00	K1,010.00	
22/10/09	Breakfast	K50.00	K960.00	
	3 rd Day of mediation			
	Morning and Afternoon tea	K150.00	K810.00	

23/10/09	Reconciliation day			
	Breakfast	K50.00	K760.00	
	Morning and Afternoon tea	K150.00	K610.00	
	By 5.00 pm our families' reconciliation was completed. We stayed at home again that night and began making preparations to leave the next day for Arawa.			
24/10/09	Breakfast	K50.00	K560.00	
	Severinus and his family left home at about 10.00 am and I stayed back with my family for the vehicle to come back and pick us up. It did return at around 5.00 pm and we departed for Arawa soon after.			
25/10/09	Breakfast	K25.00	K535.00	
	Hire of PMV to travel to Loloho and back	K50.00	K485.00	
	Lunch at Loloho	K50.00	K435.00	
	Dinner	K50.00	K385.00	
26/10/09	Breakfast	K25.00	K360.00	
	Meeting with PLA executive in Arawa			
	Lunch	K50.00	K310.00	
	Dinner	K50.00	K260.00	
27/10/09	Break fast	K25.00	K235.00	
	Meeting with PLA and BRA chief-Sisito			
	Lunch	K50.00	K185.00	
	Dinner	K70.00	K115.00	
28/10/09	Travel very early to Buka			
	Dinghy hire-Buka	K30.00	K85.00	
	Breakfast	K25.00	K60.00	
	Hire vehicle to airport for a return trip to POM	K50.00	K10.00	