Dear Members, Partners & Friends,

Kia orana i teia mataiti ou!

Welcome to the February newsletter of Te Ipukarea Society, we hope you had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year period. After a break over the festive period, the TIS staff and executive committee are once again busy working on some exciting projects.

TIS gains two new members of staff

In the last two weeks Te Ipukarea Society has welcomed two new members of staff at their Tupapa office. Under the title of ‘project officers’, Alanna Smith (22) and Liam Kokaua (24) will be assisting in the implementation of various environmental projects which TIS is involved with. They are currently working with project partners such as Birdlife International (bird conservation), and UNESCO (marine education for youth) as well as being involved with the current Cook Islands “50-4-50” cycling campaign. Both new employees are Cook Islanders and recent university graduates who have returned to Rarotonga after completing their studies. Alanna recently completed her Bachelors of Applied Science from Otago University majoring in Environmental Management. She is of the Matenga family of Titikaveka and also has connections to Atiu. Liam graduated with a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Geography and Pacific Studies from Auckland University in 2014 and is currently finishing his postgraduate Honours in Geography. Liam’s Cook Island connections are to the village of Nikao through the Kokaua family and to the Northern group through the Marsters family. Both are passionate about looking after the unique natural environment of the Cook Islands and are excited to be back home living on Rarotonga.

50-4-50 Cycling Campaign Kicks Off

On January 24th the Cook Islands’ 50 days for 50 years cycling campaign was launched at the Punanga Nui market. The aim is to get Cook Islanders to ride to work or school for at least 50 days before the 7th August (last day of Constitution celebrations). The campaign hopes to reduce impacts on the environment from
substituting motor vehicles for bicycles, and also provide health benefits to locals through exercise.

The project is a joint effort from the Climate Change office at OPM, TIS, the 50th Celebration Committee and Ride Raro, other partners include the National Environment Service, Ministry of Health, Education, Storytellers eco cycle tours and the Cook Islands Cycling Federation. Registrations of participants was the main objective of the first day, with over 50 people registering. Jakub from Ride Raro also designed an obstacle course for budding cyclists which drew a lot of attention. A monthly newsletter will be sent out to each of the registered members to keep everyone up to date with upcoming events and additional information.

A 50 days for fifty years Facebook page has been set up which we encourage all our members to ‘like’ the page and support. There will be posts daily to keep everyone motivated to push through with the campaign, along with updates on the upcoming events. The page can be found at: https://www.facebook.com/pages/50-Days-for-50-Years/367852386753315

For now all members should look forward to a ‘Valentine’s Day Fun Cycle Challenge’ that is to take place on the 14th of February. CITC, Knickers in a Twist and The Café have sponsored the event to ensure that prizes are up for grabs along with a fun filled day of cycling activities. More information will be sent out over the next few days both via email and through the 50-4-50 Facebook page.

We now have over 80 members registered into the campaign lets now push for 100! Cycling has numerous benefits including reducing risks of NCD’s, saving money on petrol, and reducing air pollution. So spread the word and Ride On!
**Storytellers visit TIS**

On the 28th January David Furnell from Storytellers Eco cycle tours made a presentation to TIS members and staff in the TIS hall. David gave a detailed explanation of the purpose of his business as well as the history behind it, as Storytellers has now been operating on Rarotonga for over a year. Storytellers is an eco-tourism operation which, once profitable, will give 10 percent of their profit back to the community. Storytellers are a corporate member of TIS and have an environmental message, promoting cycling as an environmentally friendly mode of experiencing the Cook Islands. They also utilise local Cook Islanders as informative tour guides to foreign visitors, explaining local culture, history and legends relating to the land.

**Ipukarea team head to Mitiaro for Maroro Tu**

Last year Te Ipukarea Society was successful in obtaining funding under the UNESCO participation programme to produce a documentary about the annual flying fish spawning (maroro tu) and the traditions behind it.

In late October and early November, Kelvin Passfield, Mary Raui, Graham MacDonald and Paolo Cattania travelled to Mitiaro to start work on the project. Flying fish spawning takes place during the week before and around the full moon, that is, in the last quarter of the moon phase, between June and December. We travelled a bit late in the season to see the best of the spawning, but did manage to conduct a number of interviews with members of the community. We will return in July or August this year, during the peak of the season, in the hope of getting some good footage of the spawning event and the traditional fishing methods used.

**Protecting our environment**

Part of our role as TIS is to identify issues affecting our islands and act on them through political pressure, group action and campaigns. We rely on our active members to let us know if there is an issue they’re concerned about. If you have any questions or concerns about something you see happening in our environment, please let us know.

*Until next month- Kia manuia from the team at TIS!*