

Joycelin's Heart for.. ART



By GERALINDA WARRE

Just watching her sit and sip coffee while chatting with me about her job (business) showed that she was really passionate about what she does and she knows what she wants to get out of life.

Joycelin Leahy, a 43 year old lady of mixed Morobe and Australian parentage is the owner of the famous tribal and contemporary art shop 'Beyond Art' located in Port Moresby and Beyond Pacific Art, an online store, based in Brisbane.

Ms Leahy loves Papua New Guinea tribal and contemporary art and describes it as rare and not to be found in any other parts of the world. "Papua New Guinea has one of the most distinctive tribal art in the world and we are so lucky to continue to enjoy and use some of this art through our traditions years after many other Pacific countries have lost their true traditions and traditional tools and material art", she said.

Having grown up in PNG's rich culture and its unique traditions, it is "in her blood" as she describes it. She regards herself as 'Meri Sipaia'. She is from Wagang Village, just outside Lae. She feels that in her life and her work- spending her time promoting as well as studying ways of sustaining culture and finding ways to educate our young about the importance of our unique culture is

one of the most satisfying aspects of her business. She also finds Australia an opportune place to promote PNG Culture.

"Having strong family values and The traditions that have moulded me has made me who I am. I know my roots and the strength and the benefits of my culture has moulded me and helped me throughout my life. Sadly, this lifestyle with strong life foundations is something that many PNG children miss out on when growing up in the cities or in other cultures. I keep bringing my boys back home to live and learn as well as enjoy what I grew up in. It's wonderful!"

Her life has not always been an easy one having grown up with a single mother and grandmother and now finding herself in the same predicament with two sons after her divorce seven years ago. Ms Leahy says it is all about being focused on what you want in life. The hardships are always temporary. In addition, she took care of her siblings, helped put most of her extended family members through school as well as assisted them in medical and other matters. Her sheer determination has overcome most challenges and enabled her to succeed in whatever she does.

"You have to have a vision or a plan in whatever you do; only when you have that, you can you overcome all challenges and achieve what you want. Always keep a mental picture of what it is that you truly want.

Ms Leahy has been promoting and selling PNG art and craft for over 20 years and is expanding her horizons around the Pacific with the introduction of her on-line shop which can be accessed on www.beyondpacificart.com. This online shop enables the majority of her customers to buy direct and having a base in Brisbane is convenient with internet payment options.

Beyond Art sells PNG tribal and contemporary art and craft. Her customers range from foreign visitors to the corporate and locals in the country. It is a complete store of PNG products from tribal and contemporary artefacts, house and deco pieces to jewellery and textiles. She has a network of suppliers and small crafts people throughout PNG

by her mother's family but cannot have the 'final say' or give advice unless she is approached by her cousin brothers and uncles. That is very true for many patrilineal societies in Papua New Guinea.

Taking a lead in maintaining cultural sustainability through her interests and studies, Ms Leahy said in reference to our rich culture: "those that we know are dying slowly, so take the time to learn from your elders."

Our people must acknowledge the unique national treasure that we have in our rich culture. It's not only gold, gas copper and other minerals found in our country. Our culture is an important asset and we must teach our children how important it is and why our cultures and traditions are rare and have to be enjoyed as well as sustained for future generations," Ms Leahy said.



Ms Leahy (middle) with colleagues who attended the conference for the Pacific Museum in Canberra

who also benefit in cash to support their families.

Beyond Art was a business developed from her interests in the PNG contemporary and tribal art and was initially a hobby. Her interest has also piqued in the area of traditions and cultures both in PNG and other Pacific islands. These include customs and taboos in villages as well as special ceremonies and annual events of a particular tribe.

She went to the extent of explaining traditional patrilineal ranking in her village. For example even an educated woman like her is still ranked below her cousin brothers' who are her uncle's children. She simply ranks below them because she is her-mother's child. Her mother is a woman thus she is under her late brothers' rank. So Joycelin, like her mother, is somebody that is highly valued

Her online shop will also have some noted dates or links of other related cultural events around the Pacific for the interested buyer or viewers to view.

Ms Leahy graduated from the University of Papua New Guinea as a journalist, worked with both the *Post Courier* and *Niugini Nius* and has held major positions both in the private sector and the government. She was Miss PNG in 1989. Ms Leahy was also involved in numerous community, youth and women's projects before moving to Brisbane for the schooling of her two sons. Ms Leahy spends her time working part-time (self-employed) and caring for her two handsome sons.