Statement on the Passing of the Roko Tui Bau, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi

Oct. 6, 2016 -- Tomorrow they bury our very good friend and Fijian colleague, the Taukei Naicobocobo na Turaga Roko Tui Bau na Vusaratu, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi.

Ratu Joni’s body will be escorted to Fiji’s chiefly island of Bau today by the chiefly members of the yavusa Ratu. It will then lay in Vatanikawate for a night, under a vigil maintained by the bati leka from Namara, before interment tomorrow at the sau tabu on Bau. Numerous delegations have presented their i-reguregu to honor Ratu Joni, including the Gone Marama Bale Roko Tui Dreketi, the Roko Tui Viwa, Roko Tui Kiuva, Taukei Nabou, the Roko Durucoko, the Kubuna Confederacy, the Methodist Church, the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, a Samoan delegation led by her Highness Masiofo Filifilia Tamasese nee Imo, and the King of Tonga, King George Tupou VI.

Ratu Joni was a distinguished Fijian stateman, high traditional chief, attorney, and Fiji’s last Vice President. He was a staunch supporter of human rights, serving on the Solomon Islands’ Truth and Reconciliation Commission and then on the Supreme Court of Nauru. He held the Samoan orator title of Suluape and was created Lord Tangatatonga, a life peer, law lord and privy counselor, by the late King George Tupou V of Tonga. Joni was also a friend and valued Director to us here at PEPP.

Ratu Joni proved himself a man of great integrity during a very difficult period in Fiji’s history, marked by the failure of its greatest institutions. He was an honest and modest man of great dignity and eloquence. Lesser known was his strong passion for the environment, which I first came to experience when we shared a symposium on the subject at the University of the South Pacific in 2009. We channeled some of that passion into our efforts at PEPP. His passing creates a void in PEPP that can never be filled.

Ni moce saka, our noble friend. Rest in peace.

Richard K. Pruett

Executive Director