

Media Release

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PNG LNG Project *Kastom Stori-Sene Gori* initiative connects the generations

The pictures and stories have been submitted, and the winners have been chosen for the PNG LNG Project *Kastom Stori-Sene Gori* competition.

Over 3,700 pictures and stories were received as part of a competition that asked school children in the Project area to interview their elders about traditional life and write or draw about what they heard.

Students in grades 3-6 participated in the picture drawing competition, while those in grades 7-12 wrote stories.

The seven top winning schools, which were the schools judged as those that submitted the most entries, each receive K10, 000 to assist with school infrastructure or supplies. The winning schools are LeaLea Primary School (LNG Plant Site), Kikori Primary School (Kikori area), Don Mosley Primary School (Gobe/Samberigi area), Waro Primary School (Kutubu/Moran area – Fasu), Kutubu High School (Kutubu/Moran area – Foe), Idawi Primary School (Hides area) and Tari Secondary School (Tari/Pori area).

All entrants receive a certificate of participation, and over 750 students who were judged as having the best stories or drawings, receive a prize pack of books or other items.

The judges of the competition were Nora Vagi Brash, a famous PNG short-story writer; Michelle Smith, author of *Toea* children's reading books; Fegsley Risapi, senior curriculum and assessment officer at the Department of Education; Peter Leo Ella of UPNG Press; and Natalie Pidik, a performing arts specialist.

Prior to the competition, school supplies were provided to schools in the Project area. Over 22,000 school children from the Highlands to the coast – even in the most remote communities in the Project area – received school packs containing notebooks and a pencil case packed with stationery to help students either draw or write the elders' stories.

Peter Graham, Managing Director of Esso Highlands Limited, the operator of the PNG LNG Project, said that the *Kastom Stori-Sene Gori* contest preserves local culture in a time of change, by connecting the newest generation to their elders through the story interviews.

“For months, school children have been interviewing their grandparents, aunts and uncles, mothers and fathers about the ancient stories passed down over the centuries,” he said.

“This is particularly important here in PNG as we all know that storytelling plays a vital role in the community life of Papua New Guineans. Many of the 800 languages of Papua New Guinea have no written form, and the oral tradition passes the fundamental culture of the people from generation to generation. But with the advent of modern technologies like television, radio and mobile phones, this is changing.

“The contest has done more than capture the old stories, however, because teachers throughout the Project area have used the contest in their classrooms to improve reading and writing skills.

“We would like to thank all the people who helped to make this competition for the schools a success, including the judges, the schools that participated, and the many parents and grandparents who took the time to re-tell the stories that were entered. We hope the process was rewarding and enriching.”

Alex Ako, Headmaster of Boera Primary School said that the competition had been a great success.

“The children really like this *Kastom Stori* idea. As Headmaster, I like it because it does more than preserve our culture for future generations. We use the stories as a tool for literacy to improve spelling and grammar,” he said.

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Participating interests include Esso Highlands as operator (33.2 percent), Oil Search Limited (29.0 percent), the National Petroleum Company of PNG (PNG Government, 16.6 percent), Santos Limited (13.5 percent), JX Nippon Oil & Gas Exploration (4.7 percent), Mineral Resources Development Company (PNG landowners, 2.8 percent) and Petromin PNG Holdings Limited (0.2 percent). Visit pnglng.com for more information about the Project.

