

MESEISET

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

and **HAPPY NEW YEAR** by Campus Dean Kind Kanto

Christmas is a time for Christians to celebrate the birth of Emmanuel, the savior of the world. If you are Christian, you have reason to celebrate. If you are not Christian, I do not know why you plan to celebrate Christmas, or what you plan to celebrate.

The end of our Fall Semester 2013 coincides with the Christmas season. Students, if you studied hard during the semester and earned good grades, you do have good reason to celebrate at this time. However, should you be one of those who only came this semester to get refunds or to use our COM-FSM wi-fi, who did not really care about studies, and who failed in classes, I do not know why you plan to celebrate, or what you plan to celebrate.

Faculty and staff, we can celebrate the end of a successful Fall Semester if we have been successful in implementing our duties and responsibilities. If we did not, I do not know why we plan to celebrate, or what we plan to celebrate.

Any way, Merry Christmas to all staff, faculty, and students of COM-FSM Chuuk campus. May we all celebrate the successful completion of a semester with great accomplishments in our duties and responsibilities, and in our studies. May we also celebrate Christmas with the belief that our savior has come to save us. May we all have a safe and merry Christmas. See you next semester!

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL. ☺

STUDENT VIEWPOINTS

Three articles in this Meseiset issue are student viewpoints on how academic learning in two courses (SS 170 World History and EN 208 Philosophy) can help guide student participation in Chuuk Campus affairs. Read the articles:

- Viewpoint #1: “Consensus Among the Iroquois” by Jenolyn Hartman (page 3);
- Viewpoint #2: “Participatory Democracy” by Robert Meika (page 3); and
- Viewpoint #3: “My Personal Philosophy” by Lilly Jean Sos (page 5).

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MESEISET DISCLAIMER POLICY

Any expression of opinion or viewpoint of the writer(s) of an article in this Meseiset publication is solely the responsibility of the writer(s), not of the COM-FSM system.

ACCJC ACCREDITATION STANDARD #2: STUDENT LEARNING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, PART A

Remember — WASC/ACCJC has four accreditation standards. The first standard (as discussed in the last issue of Meseiset, November 2013) was “Institutional Mission and Effectiveness”. Now, Standard #2 is “Student Learning Programs and Services”.

COM-FSM has three programs and services to help achieve student learning. They are:

- Instruction
- Student Support
- Library and Learning Support.

INSTRUCTION: First, who is responsible? Obviously, the primary person is the Instructional Coordinator (IC) Mariano Marcus. Who else? The next in line are the full-time and part-time instructors in Language and Literacy (English), Education and Social Sciences (ED/SS), Math/ Science (MS), and Business and Computer. You know who these faculty members are, and so their names do not need to be listed here.

Second, what kinds of courses are offered? You know two kinds: academic and vocational. However, here is the full list: “*collegiate, developmental, and pre-collegiate courses and programs, continuing and community education, study abroad, short-term training courses and programs, programs for international students, and contract or other special programs, regardless of type of credit awarded, delivery mode, or location*”. If you do not understand some of these programs and services, you need to ask the IC and faculty.

Third, are courses accredited? Every course has an approved course outline, and each instructor must teach from a syllabus that reflects the student learning outcomes (SLOs) in the course outline. Do students need to see these course outlines, syllabi, and SLOs? Yes, yes, yes! At the beginning of each semester, each student must receive the course outline or syllabus for each course taken. Then, during the semester, each student must know which SLO is being taught at any time of classroom instruction. If you do not know, then you are not being properly taught.

Fourth, how would ACCJC know if student learning occurs in any class? Instructors are supposed to assess or measure student learning in each class. This is called “assessment”, and as-

essment data come from tests and assignments. Important assessment tools include pre-/post-testing, readability checks, and item analysis. Fancy words, but essential in measuring and improving student learning at Chuuk Campus.

Fifth, does COM-FSM have general SLOs for students to achieve? There are two kinds of general SLOs: 5 general education outcomes (or GenEd) and 8 institutional student learning outcomes (ISLOs).

The 5 GenEd outcomes are: (1) effective communication, (2) critical thinking & problem-solving, (3) quantitative & scientific reasoning, (4) ethics & culture, and (5) workplace readiness.

The 8 ISLOs are: (1) effective oral communication, (2) effective written communication, (3) critical thinking, (4) problem-solving, (5) intercultural knowledge & competence, (6) information literacy, (7), foundations & skills for life-long learning, and (8) quantitative reasoning.

You can see that there is some overlapping of the 5 GenEd outcomes and 8 ISLOs.

Boy, this is boring stuff to read and digest. Yet, you have to know all of this info. So, learn and understand Standard #2. φ

12-WORD SEARCH: ACROSTIC

by Sofia Fred and Bernardita Seady

R	U	N	O	F	F
H	A	I	L	A	W
A	A	I	U	E	O
E	O	L	N	A	L
S	T	O	M	A	E
E	Z	E	E	R	B

[Answers are found on page 11.]

VIEWPOINT #1:
CONSENSUS AMONG THE IROQUOIS

SS 170 (World History)

by Jenolyn Hartman

We should all study world history in order to live better lives in Chuuk today. Specifically, I am talking about a practice called “consensus” among the Iroquois people in New York more than 300 years ago. These people knew how to communicate effectively among themselves. By definition, consensus is “*broad unanimity*” or agreement among all members of a group, according to the Microsoft® Encarta® Dictionary Tools (1993-2002). As far as I am concerned, this would be an excellent practice among stakeholders at Chuuk Campus.

More than 400 years ago, separate and independent tribes of American Indians in New York established the Iroquois Confederacy, a council of chiefs representing the various tribes. They met every now and then to discuss common issues and, according to the Microsoft Encarta Reference

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VIEWPOINT #2:
PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

SS 170 (World History)

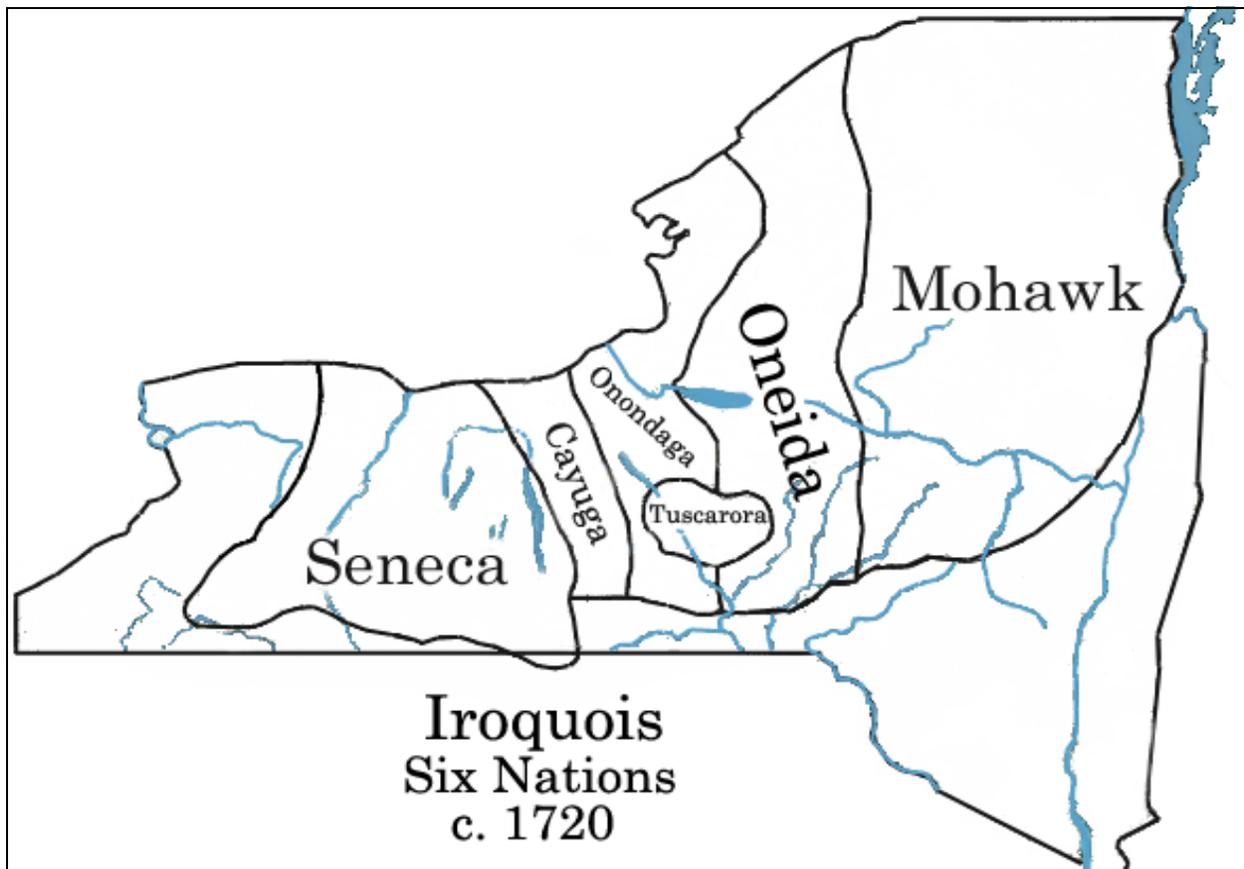
by Robert Meika

Participatory democracy, according to a dictionary, is “a process emphasizing the broad participation of constituents in the direction and operation of a political system”. It was like that in the Iroquois Confederacy. As far as I am concerned, the practice of participatory democracy among the Iroquois tribes of New York was their greatest legacy for us to learn and copy.

Another way to explain this kind of democracy would be “citizen participation”. It worked well in the Iroquois Confederacy, and it would work well at Chuuk Campus. We the students at Chuuk Campus must learn to become citizens and participate in Chuuk Campus affairs, such as SBA Council meetings as well as classroom discussions.

Let me review what world history teaches us. The Iroquois Confederacy united six independent tribes. They met together to discuss peace and

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PRESIDENT DAISY VISITS CHUUK CAMPUS

COM-FSM President Joseph Daisy visited Chuuk Campus December 4-5. Earlier, December 2-3, he attended the COM-FSM Board of Regents meeting which was held in Chuuk.

Our Board of Regents held its meeting in Chuuk December 2-3. The Board discussed the COM-FSM budget for the fiscal year 2014-2015, as well as other matters. Campus Dean Kind Kan-to accompanied the president to the meeting.

On Wednesday, December 4, we held a one-hour All-Campus Meeting (ACM). The purpose of the meeting was for President Daisy to meet with students. He first presented a brief background on what COM-FSM did in the past two years. He explained how we got out of our dilemma of the “probation”. Then, he advised students to “be successful” in their studies. He gave four key pieces of advice: study, work hard, be prepared, and finish the degree program.

After the meeting with students, he toured the campus with Dean Kind Kanto. They visited several classrooms to observe teaching-learning expe-

periences in the classrooms.

Later, Wednesday afternoon from 3:00 to 5:00 pm, the president met with faculty/staff. He said that the Board of Regents had just approved the FY-2015 budget. However, he added, it includes a decrement of funds. He therefore encouraged all, given limited funding, to pool their resources to do their best in providing quality education for students.

On Thursday afternoon, President Daisy participated in a special ceremony to plant a root stock of spider lily (*Crinum asiaticum*) between the library and student center. The picture on page 9 shows the spider lily plant which the president had planted outside of the Student Center.

Later that Thursday evening faculty/staff and students sponsored a potluck dinner for the president on campus.

President Joseph Daisy thanked everyone not only for the potluck dinner, but much more for making his visit to Chuuk a rewarding and positive experience. φ

VIEWPOINT #1: CONSENSUS

(continued from page 3)

Library 2003, “no political decision could be reached unless there was full consensus” among the chiefs. Do you know what that means? All — not just a majority — had to agree. In addition, all had to talk — not just a few. No one came late to the council meeting, and no one could leave before consensus was reached! Once the meeting had begun, no one was allowed to leave until all left together at one time — only after they had agreed to make that decision. It was all or nothing!

No “Chuukese time” and no break or recess. No snacks, no lunch nor dinner. You want to use the restroom, women would bring buckets for you to relieve yourself.

That is what we need in Chuuk, including our own Chuuk Campus. No excuse for coming late. No excuse for leaving early. No excuse for using the bathroom. No excuse for being hungry or thirsty.

The idea of Iroquois consensus might have been strict, but it was effective in decision-making. Every person was serious and spoke at



the Iroquois meeting, or else he would not be a chief to represent his own tribe. One for all, and all for one! For real! Get the work done — for the good of all tribes.

One more point: A chief representing his own tribe at the Iroquois meeting was selected by the women of that tribe. If the women felt that their chief was not doing a good job at the confederacy meeting, they could remove him as chief and select another tribal representative.

I say that we in Chuuk should practice consensus now and forever. φ

VIEWPOINT #3: MY PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

(an assignment in EN 208)

by Lilly Jean Sos

Name of Philosophy = **WALK THE TALK**

Have you heard of the phrase, “*Action speaks louder than words*”? What about “talk the talk, walk the walk”? Both mean pretty much the same. My personal philosophy reinforces these ideas, but I re-state these words: “walk the talk”. When your talk matches your walk, that is “walk the talk”.



Metaphysics

- Anthropology
- Theology

Man is both an individual and a member of society. He therefore thinks about himself and communicates his thoughts with others. His communication is the talk. Sometimes he talks too much and makes promises, but he does not take action that matches his talk. Action that matches the talk is the walk.

The worst kind of communication is hypocrisy. That is when a man says one thing and does the opposite. Or, he does something wrong and blames others for his wrong. We sometimes call this kind of person as a bigot or Pharisee. We already know about Pharisees, because, in the New Testament of the Holy Bible, Jesus Christ did not at all like the words and actions of the Pharisees. Today, any good dictionary includes the definition of a Pharisee – look it up in the dictionary!

Do you know any hypocrite, bigot, or Pharisee in Chuuk? Sure, you do! Maybe you are yourself one of the hypocrites, bigots, or Pharisees in Chuuk – maybe.

Epistemology

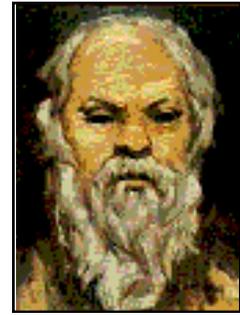
- Empiricism
- Logic and Reasoning
- Intuition
- Undisputed Authority

Now, let me describe two philosophers – the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates and the modern-day Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire. Both have taught us how to practice “walk the talk”. First is Socrates. He was a teacher, and his lesson for students was “*to learn about the morality of the soul in man’s heart and to search for truth*”. In his discussion with students, Socrates was able to quickly figure out who was telling the truth – not by what they said, but by what they did. In effect, Socrates really believed that action spoke louder than words, and that talking the talk was nothing without walking the walk. Second is Freire. He was also a teacher, and he said something very famous, “*Human existence*

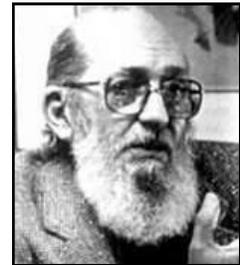
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(continued from previous page): **MY PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY**

cannot be silent". What did he mean by this? The true Nature of Man lies not in his words, but in his action. Freire did not like how the Brazilian government mistreated the poor people of the Amazon River Valley. So, yes, he spoke out against the government, but he also led strikes against the government. In effect, Freire's action (leading the strikes) spoke louder than his words (hating what the government did to poor people). And, by the way, the Greek government told Socrates to shut his mouth and to stop teaching the youth. Socrates refused to obey the government, and so he was arrested and put into prison. The government told him – if he stopped teaching, he would be released from prison. Well, Socrates committed suicide in prison – his suicide was the action to show everyone that he would never stop teaching. Both Socrates and Freire really proved the practice of walking the talk.



Socrates



Freire

Axiology

- Ethics
- Aesthetics

It may be easy to say “walk the talk”, but how does it work? I call it CFSC = Control + Faithfulness + Strength + Carefulness. CFSC begins with two assumptions. The first is “*Action speaks louder than words*”. At the same time, the second is “*It is easier said than done*”.

- (1) Control is a balance between two halves. The first half is to know what to say. The second half is to know how you will do what you say. In other words, control is in your mind – knowing what to say and how to implement your words.
- (2) Faithfulness is the trust in the balance. The two halves match, and you know it. However, you must have faith in yourself to make the balance work as one. This faith describes how much trust you have in yourself.
- (3) Strength is the courage and commitment in your mind and heart. You know now what must be done – what action you must take to match what you say.
- (4) Carefulness is the love that guides your footsteps. You know the consequences of your action. You know that your action is good/right, not bad/wrong. So, with care and carefulness, you take the first step in your walking the talk.

Now, walk the talk.

Value Systems

- (1) walk the talk
- (2) CFSC

STRANGE BUT REAL VOCABULARY WORDS IN CHUUK

syzygy
antidisestablishmentarianism
supercalifragilisticexpialidocious
pneumonoultramicroscopiciavolcanokoniosis
sdubet (*a Chuukese spelling of “stupid”*)
some arise (*a Chuukese spelling of “summarize”*)

MORTLOCKS WINS ACADEMIC TALENT SHOWDOWN!

The Mortlocks team won first-place honors in the Academic Talent Showdown on Friday, November 22. It received 86 points by answering questions on English, math, science, social sciences, and business/computer. Runner-up was Faichuuk with 68 points, beating Northern Namoneas by just three points.

The showdown was sponsored by our SBA Council, headed by SBA President Shawn Mori. During the two-hour event on November 22, he was seen walking around the Student Center. He was visibly worried that something might go awry and ruin the activity. He should not have been worried at all, for the showdown was a huge success.

Approximately 100 students participated in answering easy, medium, and hard questions, while many more students were on-lookers. The Student Center was crowded with students, participants and on-lookers alike.



Faichuukese team runners-up

Danie Mamangon served as judges. Ben Akkin and Kersweet Eria were timekeepers. Other faculty/staff members were in the audience to cheer the students on.

For two weeks prior to the showdown, the questions (without answers) were distributed to the five regional teams. Team members then organized practice sessions of their own. Teams were allowed to ask tutors and instructors for assistance; and, of course, tutors and instructors were duly informed to guide students, not to give answers to them.

How did instructors develop questions? The showdown questions were based on questions which the instructors would have asked on their final exams. The showdown questions were therefore not exactly final exam questions, just similar to final exam questions. In effect, student participants benefited a great deal by practicing for two weeks how to review for their final exams.

Near two o'clock, when the showdown was expected to end, a student requested that the time be extended to 5:00 pm. Other student participants also wanted to lengthen the showdown time period. After the showdown had ended, several faculty/staff members voiced strong support to have another showdown during the Spring Semester 2014.

On Wednesday, November 27, our Chuuk Campus Management Council reviewed and discussed showdown activities. A motion to request the SBA Council to initiate plans for another showdown during the spring semester was unanimously approved. So, everyone, let us expect another great inter-region competition — maybe even greater than last month's event!

Congratulations to the Mortlocks team members! Congratulations to all of the student participants. φ



Mortlockese team winners

Faculty and staff were involved. For one thing, instructors were responsible for submitting questions for students to answer. The number of questions submitted was so numerous that it was impossible to select all such questions. Rather, the questions asked of student participants were selected randomly. Also, several persons assisted the SBA's production. Wilson Bisalen and Virginia Mamanogon were the hosts. Lynn Sipenuk was the quiz master, or mistress of ceremonies. Rick Chiwi, Alton Higashi, and

WAS THE ACADEMIC TALENT SHOWDOWN A SUCCESS?

by Wilson Bisalen

Answer: YES! This would be a general response by participants — both students and faculty/staff — of the Academic Talent Showdown on November 22, 2013.

I base my answer on results of a survey distributed to showdown participants. I distributed 105 survey forms on November 27, and a total of 36 persons responded on the forms. That would be a 35% response.

The survey asked respondents to rate the level of their satisfaction, on a Likert scale, to 5 items:

- *The showdown enhanced my learning.*
- *The instructions were clear and easy to follow.*
- *The students had ample opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas.*
- *The time allocation was enough for the showdown.*
- *Overall, the showdown was very satisfactory.*

There were 5 Likert-scale rating levels: SA(5) = strongly agree, A(4) = agree, N(3) = neutral, D(2) = disagree, and SD(1) = strongly disagree.

Among the 36 respondents, their average score was 4.3 — between “agree” and “strongly agree”. This is good news, because we can conclude that the showdown was successful.

However, on the survey form, were two questions to clarify the participants’ responses:

- *What was the most useful part of the showdown?*
- *What was the least useful part of the showdown?*

There were a few shared responses on “most useful”. First, student participants were given the academic questions (without any correct answers) ahead of time to practice. The questions on English, math, science, social sciences, and business/computer had been prepared two weeks before the actual showdown, and student participants in the five regions had ample time to practice in groups, with guided assistance from tutors and instructors. At no time, though, did tutors and instructors give answers to the questions during practice sessions.

Second, the questions were based on what the final exams would ask students to answer. So, the practice sessions helped student participants to prepare for their final exams. In effect, the questions were like a review of lessons as well as a preview of the final exams.

There were also two shared responses on “least useful”. The first was the use of the bell. It was a

distraction and served no useful purpose. The second was the lack of time. The time allotted for the showdown was only two hours, and students were hoping for more time.

In the survey results, there was a difference between student participants and faculty/staff. A few instructors described some academic questions as “too hard”, and yet no student identified the academic questions as “hard”. In addition, the time allotted to solving math word problems was insufficient — that one minute was just not enough time to work out an answer to a “hard” math word problem. All the same, one student commented, “*I didn’t know the answers to some hard questions, but now I know what to study for my finals.*” Good thinking!

The survey form also included space for anyone to comment and suggest ideas. An over-all agreement between student participants and faculty/staff was that the showdown should be held once a semester. Since the showdown on November 22 was sponsored by the SBA Council, it will be up to the SBA Council to decide whether the Academic Talent Showdown should be an event every semester or not.

Now, I have to be honest about something. Three faculty/staff members were not fully satisfied with the showdown. For one thing, the actual questions selected and asked during the showdown were not equitably distributed among the academic subjects — too many from the social sciences, not enough from business/computer. We cannot apologize for this, because selection of questions to be asked was random.

Also, a criticism by one faculty was directed against how the judges failed to judge correctly. I cannot address this concern, because it is a matter regarding showdown rules for the SBA Council to discuss.

Let me end this survey report with an over-all conclusion. Planning and implementation of the showdown activities were not perfect, and, if the event continues during the Spring Semester 2014, improvements can always be made by the SBA Council. At the same time, many student participants shared an important response — the showdown was fun! As far as I am concerned, fun was a great reason for the initial answer: **YES!** φ

WHO SAID MATH IS SIMPLE?

by Alton Higashi

Answer this simple question: How many months are there in a year? If you were an ancient Roman who lived 2,600 years ago, you would have said, “Ten”. And you would be correct!

During the ancient Roman civilization, the calendar had only 10 months. Besides, each new year began in March. Many years later, January and February were added, beginning with January. According to the Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2003, “*The Roman calendar was hopelessly confused.*” How true that was!

January was made the first month, because it was named after the Roman god Janus. He was the god of doors and gates, closing the door to the old year and opening the door to the new year. Also, Janus was a two-faced god — looking into the past and looking into the future. So, January 1 became the day to celebrate “Happy New Year”.

Now, to understand the months of the year, you need to know Latin, the language of the ancient Romans. Janus, Februa (time of purification), Mars (god of war), Aperire (to open), Maia (goddess of spring), Juno (goddess of marriage), Septem (seven), Octo (eight), Novem (nine), and Decem (ten). The 10 months, right? Yes!

What happened to July and August? Well, July was added to honor the first Roman emperor, Julius Caesar, in 44 BC. August was added to honor the second Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar.

So, September was supposed to be the 7th month, October the 8th month, November the 9th month, and December the 10th month. However, because of July and August pushing their way into the calendar, September became the new 9th month, October the new 10th month, and so on.

That is not all. How many days are there in each month? The original plan by the ancient Romans was Jan=31, Feb=30, Mar=31, Apr=30, May=31, Jun=30, and then Sep=30, Oct=31, Nov=30, and Dec= 31. However, when July and August were added, both months needed 31 days (not just 30 days). After all, months named after two emperors had to have at least 31 days, not just 30 days each (to show respect for their leaders). So, added together, the original Roman calendar with just $31+30+31+30+31+30+31+30+31$ = 305 days had to be changed. If both July and August had 31 days each, then the number of days

August had 31 days each, then the number of days in the year would be $305+31+31 = 367$.

Fortunately (or unfortunately), when Julius Caesar and August Caesar were alive, the Romans knew that the number of days a year was really 365 (not 305). So, the ancient Roman calendar-makers had to solve this problem — to make the calendar correct (with 365 days). No problem. They stole two days from February and gave them to July and August. Bummers! I was born in the victimized month of February!

Then, about 1,560 years ago, Roman scientists learned that the earth revolves around the sun in 365.25 days (not 365 days). So, the calendar was changed again — to add an extra day every four years. That extra day was returned to February. Today, we call the fourth year by the name “Leap Year”. The next leap year will be 2016.

Who said math is simple? On Chuuk Campus, Danie Mamangon would claim that math is simple. Well, according to world history, Danie is wrong. After all, $365 \neq 365.25$.

Have a very Happy New Year, and do not worry at all about the 2014 calendar. ϕ

PRESIDENT VISITS CHUUK CAMPUS

President Joseph Daisy plants a spider-lily root stock near the Student Center on December 5.



Photo Credit: Edson Asito and Akius Herman.

VIEWPOINT #2: PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

(continued from page 3)

harmony. We learned last year that our COM-FSM President wanted all of us COM-FSM citizens, or stakeholders, to get involved in participatory democracy. Our Chuuk Campus Dean Kind Kanto also said that we should engage in something called genuine dialog — talk it out among ourselves and with our administrators, faculty, and staff. It makes good sense to me.

First, we can do Iroquois participatory democracy in the classroom. Mr. Alton Higashi told us that we can learn more and better when we discuss — instructor and students — lessons openly and together.

Second, we can do participatory democracy at our own SBA Council meeting. If Mr. Shawn Mori does all the talking, and if other council members do not actively discuss with him, then we are trying to encourage dictatorship for ourselves. That would be very foolish of us. From my personal viewpoint, the opposite of participatory democracy is what we the students are doing on campus — non-participatory dictatorship. Are we trying to learn how to live in a democracy or in a dictatorship?

I think that we the students have been mentally sleeping too long, waiting for others to tell us what to do, and then getting angry that they are telling us what to do.

In conclusion, participatory democracy means that we must share our thoughts. This sharing is not going to work when we are silent at meetings. We have to discuss our thoughts — with open mouths. I agree with President Daisy and Dean Kanto. The Iroquois lessons are ours now, and it is our job to apply the lessons to our daily lives. φ



ANOTHER WORD GAME:
SCRAMBLED WORDS

Another word game is called “scrambled words”. For instance, an English word — such as “SCHOOL” — will be scrambled. That is, the word is rewritten or scrambled as: C H L O O S. You must unscramble “CHLOOS” and write it correctly as “SCHOOL”.

Okay, below are 12 scrambled words. Unscramble them into good English words.

(A) EASY SCRAMBLED WORDS

- (1) C U H K U =
- (2) A H M T =
- (3) D D E I I V =
- (4) A D O R =
- (5) A C P M S U =

The five scrambled words above are very, very easy – right? Right! The answers are shown below:

ANSWERS: (1) CHUUK, (2) MATH, (3) DIVIDE, (4) ROAD, and (5) CAMPUS.

Now, try the next four scrambled words:

(B) MIDDLING SCRAMBLED WORDS

- (6) C G H L O O P S Y Y =
- (7) A C E I I M N O R S =
- (8) A E I N O Q T U =
- (9) G I N O P P R S T U =

The four middling scrambled words are not so easy. The answers are shown below:

ANSWERS: (6) MICRO-NESEA, (8) EQUATION, and (9) SUPPORT-ING.

(C) HARD SCRAMBLED WORDS

- (10) A C C I I M M N N O O T U =
- (11) A E G I I N O R R S T T =
- (12) A A G I I L M P R S =

The three hard scrambled words are not at all easy. The answers are shown below:

ANSWERS: (10) COMMUNICATION, (11) REGISTRATION, and (12) PLAGIARISM.

CELEBRATING DECEMBER 25

Is December 25 really the birthday of Jesus Christ? Most Christians would, of course, say, “Yes!” However, nowhere in the Holy Bible is the exact date specified. According to the Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2003, “*Although the Gospels describe Jesus’ birth in detail, they never mention the date, so historians do not know on what date he was born.*”

Then, why do we celebrate December 25 as Jesus Christ’s birthday? For more than 300 years after the death of Christ, there was no such celebration.

- During the ancient Roman Empire, Roman people believed in many gods. In mid-December every year, they celebrated the ancient god of agriculture, Saturn, to thank him for a good harvest of crops. The pagan celebration lasted for several days, and it was called Saturnalia. According to the Encarta Dictionary Tools, saturnalia was a “*wild celebration or orgy*”. Also, according to the Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2003, “*During Saturnalia the Romans feasted, postponed all business and warfare, exchanged gifts, and temporarily freed their slaves.*”
- In time, the Roman Saturnalia included another celebration — to celebrate the ancient Persian god of light, Mithra. It was the time of the winter solstice — the shortest day of the year. The ancient Romans celebrated December 25 as the birthday of Mithra. So, Saturnalia was usually a two-week pagan celebration filled with revelry.
- In the 4th century A.D. the early Catholic Church wanted to stop pagan worship of Mithra. Since Jesus Christ was considered “the light of the world”, the church declared that December 25 was the birthday of the Christ child, not of Mithra. Now, both ancient Romans and early Christians could celebrate December 25 with revelry.
- Then, 1,200 years later (in the 16th and 17th centuries) Protestant groups wanted to stop the Christmas revelry. They believed that the revelry was still a pagan activity filled with “*gambling, flamboyant public behavior, and overindulgence in food and drink*”. They wanted Christmas to be a quiet and religious celebration of the “light of the world”. Yet, according to the Reference Library 2003, Christmastime continued for the next 400 years to be “*an especially boisterous event, characterized by huge feasts, drunkenness, and raucous public revelry*” in Western cultures.

In the past many years — hundreds and hundreds of years — new ways to celebrate December 25 appeared. Santa Claus became popular. The Christmas tree was added. The



exchange of gifts, especially for children, became known. More and more new activities — the yule log, the mistletoe, and the wassail — joined with the Mexican posada, the Jewish hanukkah, the black-American kwanzaa, and the Chinese “dun che lao ren” — to establish Christmas as we now know it. Indeed, Christmas today is an international celebration.

And, to be sure, let us not forget that Christmas is also a religious event. So, have a merry (but not too merry) Christmas and a happy (but not too happy) New Year! See all of you in January 2014 for the Spring Semester. ϕ



The original Dutch Sinter Klaas (or Santa Claus) rode on a white horse that could walk in the air.

ANSWERS TO 12-WORD SEARCH

(page 2)

ANSWERS: ban, below, breeze, fault, hail, law, rain, runoff, sea, soil, stoma, zone