

Troy Sutherland digs it up with Earthwatch

Late last year I was lucky enough to represent nabCapital on an Earthwatch project in Fiji. As many of you would be aware this was part of nabCapital's ongoing CSR program.

The project was an archaeological dig at the oldest known human site in the Fijian Islands - Bourewa Beach (previously dated to around 1200-1100BC). The focus of this dig was a large scale excavation of what was thought to be the first village in Fiji.

The entire team (c. 30) stayed at the traditional village of Vusama, with each team member hosted by a family in the village and for 2 weeks we became part of their family. This cultural emersion was one of the highlights of the trip as the warm and friendly villagers' welcomed us into their traditional lifestyle with ease. Many nights of swapping stories and learning about each others culture was enjoyed by all, as was a healthy amount of Kava.



On the first day the research team cleared the site of all vegetation and laid out markers indicating past excavation pits. The entire

team were split into teams of five (with at least one experienced team leader). Each team was in charge of an excavation pit 2x2m or 2x4m wide. Once the pits were accurately marked out and recorded, the excavation could begin. The pits were dug down 10cm deep at a time with any items of interest being collected with details of the site, date, pit and layer.

At any one time we could be digging, lifting buckets out of the pit, sifting the excavation material, or sorting and categorising the finds. Roles were rotated however the majority of our time was spent digging in the pits.



Most of the teams spent one or two days washing pottery in the village as a break from the heat and physical exercise at the pits.

The site at Bourewa is the earliest known Lapita era site in Fiji. The Lapita people are well defined by the type of pottery they created. The remains of the intricately decorated pots are plentiful and help provide an insight to life 3000 years ago. All in all the site was rich in significant finds during my two weeks with the project.

We found countless amounts of decorated and plain pottery, stone tools, artefacts, jewellery and the skeletons of 3 early Fijians.

It was a great experience and I was indeed humbled to be given the chance to go. I encourage you all to consider getting out of your comfort zones and apply for the next round of Earthwatch projects.

Troy Sutherland, Associate Director

This page contains only a snapshot of Troys expedition. Please view his full report on the BNZ intranet at: Corporate>Business Units>Corporate & Institutional Banking>Corporate Social Responsibility