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WHAT'S NEW IN THE PACIFIC

NEW CALEDONIA

The Institute of Archaeology of New Caledonia and the Pacific was created earlier this year (2010). The "Pacific" was added to the title of the Institute to strengthen ties with colleagues of the region and to allow work outside the limits of New Caledonia.

The Institute's board is composed of representatives of the Provinces and the New Caledonian government as well as one representative of the Senate of High Chiefs. The board makes decisions about overall objectives of the Institute, along six main missions that were given to the Institute at its creation.

Christophe Sand was chosen as the first Director, with a team of eight archaeologists. It is hoped to add two people full-time before the end of the year. The Institute has moved into a new building at the edge of the town of Noumea and plans are being made for a field program this year. It took nearly 20 years for this goal to be reached and for the creation of an official archaeological structure in New Caledonia.

NEW ZEALAND

A fleet of traditionally-designed Polynesian canoes left in April to re-create past migrations. Four double-hulled canoes left Auckland for French Polynesia (a voyage of 2,485 miles), the departure point for the Polynesian migrations to New Zealand, Hawai'i and Easter Island at the end of the first millennium. The 3 month voyage retraced the great Polynesian migration journeys of 1,000 years ago – although in the opposite direction. This voyage was an attempt to revive traditional sailing skills, including navigating without instruments or maps. The canoes, however, were hybrids: a mix of the old and the new. They had fiberglass hulls but were lashed with rope, and were large enough to carry up to 16 people. The crews came from New Zealand, Fiji, the Cook Islands, Samoa, Vanuatu and Tonga. Their arrival in Ra'ivavae and then Mo'orea was greeted with great excitement and celebration. They sailed for Tahiti, to pay respects at Taputapuatea at Raiatea.

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