

Year in the Life of Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor

In this year's life of Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (POPA), our inspiration comes from gems and precious stones because each symbolizes unique meaning and beautiful colors. We believe that each staff has his or her own gift that they can share to serve the public. Everything's a story, you are a story and we are a story.

In ancient time gems and precious stones have often symbolize and indicate deeper meaning. Find below list of the precious and semi-precious stones of each month.



Garnet stone

Garnet - birthstone of January. It is considered a great gift that symbolizes friendship and trust. In all its work, POPA tries to build good relationship with all its clients and stakeholders. POPA wants to **build trust with the public**. One way to do this is to continue public awareness about the value and benefits of our office to the public.



Compliance Investigation Office (CID) Advisor
Sophia Pretrick

On January 16, 2019, the Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (POPA) started the New Year right by presenting a Fraud Awareness Briefing (FAB) at the FSM Postal Services, Headquarters. This is part of POPA's proactive efforts in promoting good governance and outreaching to the public to be aware of the values and benefits of POPA in relation to fighting fraud and corruption. The training attendees included all the Postmasters from Pohnpei, Yap, Chuuk and Kosrae with the FSM Postmaster General

Amethyst - birthstone of February. The word amethyst comes from the Greek word amethystos, meaning sober. In ancient Greek and Roman culture, the amethyst gemstone was associated with the god of wine, Dionysus, and it was a common practice to serve this beverage from amethyst goblets in the belief that this would prevent overindulgence. In Greece, however, wine was considered the privilege of the upper classes. Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, represented not only the intoxicating power of wine, but also its social and beneficial influences. He was viewed as the **promoter** of civilization, a lawgiver, and a lover of peace. POPA will always **advocate** for transparency and accountability.



Amethyst stone



POPA's Administrative Officer Elaine Carl distributing "Year in the Life" to Senators Loyola, Lekka and Neth (from left to right)

On February 14, 2019, POPA held an exit conference for the audit of travel and transportation of Pohnpei State Government. It was attended by the Governor, Speaker of Legislature, Director of Department of Treasury and Administration, representative from



Exit Conference (Travel and Transportation Audit)

Attorney General's Office and Chief of Budget and Planning Office.



POPA meeting with Madolenihmw Councilmen

In the same month, POPA also had a meeting with the councilmen of Madolenihmw Municipal Government (MMG). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss with them the Management Report that was issued regarding the audit of MMG cash receipts and cash disbursements for Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018.



Aquamarine stone

Aquamarine - birthstone of March.

The name Aquamarine immediately brings to mind a stunning pastel sky blue or bright color of the sea. For centuries, this timeless gemstone has been a symbol of **youth, hope,** health and fidelity. POPA believe that well educated, productive and fully engaged young people can help break the cycle of fraud and corruption in the world.



Participants from the 2019 FSM Annual Finance and Budget Conference

The best way to prevent Fraud and Corruption is through Public Awareness and Public Education. POPA in collaboration with Youth-4-Change conducted awareness regarding good governance, integrity and anti-corruption at the FSM. Young people are some of the most important agents of change in the fight against corruption. POPA is partnering with Youth-4-Change in this endeavor. In the 2019 Annual Finance & Budget Conference, held at the COM/FSM Gymnasium from March 11-14, 2019, Youth-4-Change presented and showcased their own songs and music video about corruption. The conference was attended by more than 200 delegates from the four (4) FSM States. Fraud and Corruption impact all aspects of our society and that is why people especially in the Government Sectors need to know the impacts, how to prevent it and what to report. Pohnpei Youth are the future leaders of Pohnpei and are great ambassadors for doing anti-corruption activities. That is why POPA is educating and partnering with Pohnpei Youth-4-Change in the anti-corruption campaign. If our youth can invest their time for the good of our Island Pohnpei, lets also support and invest in our youth. As Franklin Roosevelt said "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."



Youth-4-change with CCA students



Diamond

Diamond - birthstone of April. The word diamond comes from the greek word adamas which means "unconquerable, unalterable, and **unbreakable**". Finding the perfect diamond is not something to take lightly. Diamonds are formed under pressure but they are not formed overnight

Like diamond, POPA is trying to **improve ways** to better serve the public. The Public Auditor makes a point to have regular staff meetings to keep everyone informed of the office works, challenges, and to innovate as a team. Being in a public service is a privilege and challenging at the same time. However, we always remind ourselves that in order to shine like diamonds, the process is not always easy, and comes with a lot of pressure. **But we will always be unbreakable in our mission to serve the public with integrity.**



Staff Meeting

Emerald - birthstone of May. Green is the color of spring and has long symbolized love and rebirth. According to ancient folklore, putting an emerald under your tongue would help one **see into the future.**



Emerald stone

In May 2019, POPA's Audit Manager, Alice Etse attended a workshop entitled: Implementing SAI Performance Measurement Framework (PMF). The framework aspires to assess SAI contribution toward strengthened accountability, transparency and integrity. It gives SAIs an opportunity to become model organizations, leading by example in promoting transparency and accountability through credible public reporting on their own performance.



Participants from the Workshop in Fiji

We would like to see **POPA as one of the model SAIs in the future.** We want to change Pohnpei for the better not only by our opinion but also by our example.

Randy Laborete, the new Investigative Auditor of the Kosrae Office of the Public Auditor (KOPA) had a one-week training under Investigative Advisor, Sophia Pretrick of the Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (POPA). The training was conducted on May 13 to 17, 2019 at POPA's office. The training focused mainly on POPA's Compliance Investigation Division (CID) management and techniques. A walkthrough of the mission and goals of CID, the manual of operation procedures (MOP), CID strategic plan, complaint management system, CID's case studies, Ethics & Fraud training, etc. Since Laborete will be heading the CID in Kosrae, it is important to put the systems and procedures in place first in order to guide the operations and functions effectively and efficiently. This kind of collaboration and support in assisting each Public Auditors Office to grow and share knowledge is part of the fight against fraud and corruption in the Federated States of Micronesia.



Sophia Pretrick and Randy Laborete with the Public Auditors of POPA and KOPA

Like Emerald stone, POPA **wants to shine** even our worth is not spoken of.



Pearl

Pearl – birthstone of June. Persian mythology referred to pearls as the “tears of the gods,” while Ancient Chinese legend claimed the moon held the power to create pearls, instilling them with its celestial glow and mystery. It was Jackie Kennedy who said **‘pearls are always appropriate’**, meaning they suit in all occasions and all outfits.

Transparency and accountability should always be in the minds of people working in the public sector. The Public Auditor always remind his staff and his community the importance of the two said core values.

On June 14, 2019, Pohnpei State Public Auditor Ihlen K. Joseph paid a courtesy call on his Excellency, President David W. Panuelo. In the meeting, the Public Auditor and the President discussed important issues including transparency and accountability in the government and the status of FSM Trust Fund. The Public Auditor also shared and explained the role of Pohnpei Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) or Office of the Public Auditor in promoting transparency and accountability in the public service. He shared that Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (POPA) has received technical assistance grants from United States Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs for staff training and capacity development programs. The Public Auditor also as one of the FSM Trust Fund Board of Trustees shared the status of the fund with the President. President Panuelo assured the Public Auditor that his administration supports transparency and accountability and building trust and confidence in all citizens of the FSM and other different stakeholders.



POPA team with President David W. Panuelo



Ruby stone

Ruby - birthstone of July. The name ruby comes from the Latin word “ruber”, meaning red. Rubies have historically **signified great passion** and have always been associated with deep love and courage. Like ruby stone, POPA staff has great passion in **improving themselves.**

The Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (POPA) is pleased to announce that Ms. Sophia H. Pretrick, a Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE) has completed her Master of Fraud and Financial Crime on May 10, 2019 at the Charles Sturt University (CSU) which is based in Australia through Distant Education. She was conferred her degree on August 20, 2019. The Master of Fraud and Financial Crime aims to meet the educational needs of those with responsibility for fraud and financial crime deterrence, prevention, detection and investigation in the public, corporate and law enforcement sectors. Sophia wants to share not only her achievements but also what she learns from her professional journey. She pursued her Master’s Degree because she wants to challenge herself to attain higher education and to continue learning so she can do her job right for the people of FSM. Due to the changing environment and fast-pace technology, the complexity of her work make it vital to continue learning and upgrading her knowledge. This would make sure she’s one-step ahead in the anti-corruption works in the public sector. Completing her Master’s Degree was a challenge for her. She has to balance time with family, her studies and office workload. She was able to overcome all the challenges because of the support from her family and the work management.



Sophia Pretrick

She wants to encourage the young generation to follow their dreams and always take opportunities that will come their way especially when it comes to enhancing their skills and knowledge. She shared that “it is never too late to pursue higher education or any of our dreams”. Her late mother, who was her teacher/mentor encouraged her to finish what she started. With the right support system, determination and faith in God, anything is possible. Reaching your dreams should not be the destination, your achievements would inspire others and so always share your skills and knowledge to motivate others”. Currently, she is mentoring Auditors/Investigators from the Public Auditors offices to pursue and becoming Certified Fraud Examiner.



In the same month, we also welcomed two young professionals as addition to POPA team: Ms. Trinia Eliou and Mr. Derek Dainard.



Peridot – birthstone of August. The peridot comes from the Arabic “faridat”, which means “gem”. In ancient times, Egypt was the primary source of the peridot called the “Gem of the Sun” believed to **protect its wearer from the terrors of the night.** Like Peridot, POPA is the protector of public funds and other resources through its audit and investigation works. POPA reports on how public monies are being spent so that appropriate action can be taken to secure and safeguard public funds. In a way POPA is protecting and preventing public funds from mismanagement, misuse, abuse, theft, loss and any other irregularities.



Audit Manager, Alice Etse

On August 26-30, 2019, POPA attended the 30th Annual Confence of Association of Pacific Islands Public Auditors (APIPA) held at Dusit Thani Guam Resort. The conference, hosted by Guam Office of Public Accountability, was attended by 450 participants. On August 30, 2019, POPA along with other seven (7) Government Audit Offices closed the 30th APIPA conference as presenters on the plenary session, entitled “Accountability and Transparency in the Pacific: Successes in our Islands highlighted the success of the Pacific Islands government audit offices. The auditors presented short summaries of their recent audits, findings and recommendations, challenges of their respective offices,

strengths and weaknesses of audit follow-ups and what happened after the release of the audit reports. The United States Graduate School faculty member Mr. Drummond Kahn facilitated the session.



Sapphire

Sapphire - birthstone of September. Upon hearing the word “Sapphire”, many immediately envision a stunning violet-blue gemstone. “Sapphire” is Greek for blue, after all. Since ancient times, the **Blue Sapphire has represented a promise of honesty, loyalty, purity and trust.** To keep with tradition, Sapphire is one of the most popular engagement gemstone today. POPA also **values honesty, loyalty and trust** by and to the public. That is

why, POPA is committed to implement its strategies and activities to achieve its short term and long term goals.

Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (POPA) had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Freddy Ndjemba, of International Organization of Supreme Audit Institution (INTOSAI) on September 12, 2019. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss POPA’s Strategic Management and Operational Plan (SMOP) for Fiscal Years 2018 to 2022. The SMOP generally describes what POPA is aiming to achieve during the planned period. It discusses POPA’s Strategic Management and Operational Plan (SMOP) for Fiscal Years 2018 to 2022. The SMOP generally describes what POPA is aiming to achieve during the planned period. It



Mr. Ndjemba with POPA staff

discusses in summary the strategies and activities to achieve POPA’s goals and objectives during the plan period. During the meeting, Mr. Ndjemba commended POPA for prioritizing the completion of its SMOP and taking ownership of it. He pointed out POPA’s strategies are within the context of the office needs and capacities. Mr. Ndjemba also shared some insights on how to improve those strategies based on what the office already has in place.

Mr. Ndjemba is originally from Africa but working in Oslo, Norway as the Manager of Capacity Development of INTOSAI. He was able to try Sakau and visited Nammadol ruins during his short visit to Pohnpei.

On September 9-19, 2019, Sinaroseta Palamo-Iosefo, Director of Practice Development of Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (PASAI) and Alice Etse, Audit Manager of Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (POPA) conducted an assessment of Chuuk Office of the Public Auditor. The assessment is part of the second regional initiative supporting the implementation of Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) Performance Measurement Framework (PMF). The SAI PMF is an assessment tool developed by the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institution (INTOSAI) Working Group on the value and benefits of Supreme Audit Institutions. It is used specifically to assess the performance of a SAI compared to international good practices, as well as to identify SAI’s strengths and weaknesses.



Sinaroseta Palamo-Iosefo of PASAI, Manny San Jose, Chuuk Public Auditor and Alice Etse, Audit Manager POPA

The SAI PMF has a broad coverage and includes matters such as SAI internal governance and ethics, audit quality and reporting, financial management, human resources and training, communication and stakeholder management. The target issuance date of report is January 2020, after the reporting meeting in Vanuatu held in November 2019 and quality assurance review by the International Development Initiative scheduled for December 2019.

The regional audit offices’ assessments initiative is part of the Strengthening of Public Finance Management and Governance in the Pacific Project funded and supported by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade also support this initiative.

Tourmaline and Opal are the birthstone of October. October also has two birthstones; Tourmaline and Opal. Orientals call these tourmaline stones the ‘**anchor of hope**’. Opal is an incredibly transformative stone, and it is thought to inspire confidence, motivation and optimism.

For this month, POPA attended the 5th Annual FSM Public Auditors Conference/Training held in Chuuk from October 14 to 17 at the Chuuk State Executive Building Auditorium. The conference was hosted by Chuuk State Public Auditor’s Office. This annual conference brought together 46 government auditors from the four (4) FSM States and the National Government to receive valuable continuing professional education (CPE). A 32-hours course entitled, “*A Noble Profession: Performance Auditing for Maximum Value and Impact*” was offered during the conference. Mr. Kip Memmot, Audits Director for Oregon Secretary of



Mr. Kip

State's Office conducted the training. The primary focus of the training is to help the Federated States of Micronesia auditors enhance the value and impact of their important performance audit work. The conference



FSM Auditors

also offered opportunity for the Public Auditors to meet and discuss management and auditing issues relevant to the FSM auditors.



In the same month, Ms. Velissa Edgar and Ms. Cherry Lyn D. Somcio completed the training for Teammate audit management software. Also, Mr. Robert Buchaman, PASAI legal-council visited Pohnpei to help SAI in FSM to strengthen their independence. As of this writing, POPA was already submitted draft of the bill that will help modernize the POPA's legal framework to ensure that its mandate and practices are properly aligned with International Good Practices and Public Auditing Standards.



Citrine

Citrine - birthstone of November. This bright shining gem is said to be a gift from the sun. The name Citrine, which is French for "lemon," fits well with its color range of juicy yellow to a bright orange-brown. Citrine is believed to **promote creativity**, help personal clarity and eliminate self-destructive tendencies.

On November 18-21, 2019, POPA attended a Workshop on Advocacy Strategy for Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) Independence held in Pohnpei, FSM. The workshop was facilitated by Mr. Freddy Ndjemba, Manager of Capacity Development of International Organization of Supreme Audit Institution (INTOSAI). Other participants were auditors from SAI Papua New Guinea, SAI Republic of Marshall Island, SAI Pohnpei, SAI Yap, SAI Kosrae and Office of the National Public Auditor Office.



The workshop is part of INTOSAI Development Initiative (IDI) program called Strategy, Performance Measurement and Reporting program (SPMR) which aimed at supporting SAIs to better plan, monitor and manage their performance throughout an entire strategic management cycle, through the implementation of a sound strategic and operational planning process, as well as the establishment of an effective monitoring and reporting framework.

The program's rationale is that SAIs should develop and maintain a strategic planning and management process that enables them to achieve strategic outcomes and deliver value and benefits to the citizens. The program's global objective is to have strategically managed SAIs leading to higher performance.

The highlight of the workshop is the presentation of each SAI on how they are going to frame the issue on how to develop advocacy strategy for greater independence. The Strategic and Management Operational Plan (SMOP) developed by each SAI will help support the advocacy for SAI Independence.

Overall, the workshop hosted by Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor and Office of the National Public Auditor was a success. The workshop was full of brainstorming, inspiration from different challenges and strategies that each SAI was experiencing and most of all laughter and crazy stories from participants. When asked about their learning and experienced from the workshop, everyone shared that they learned from each other; through the workshop they were able to think new approach on how to implement their strategy and how to constantly change and update their strategy. As Mr. Freddy emphasized during workshop, "level up SAI ambition on what you can achieve based on the resources available on your organization" and always remember that "Accountability is the price we paid for Independence".



Zircon

Zircon- birthstone of December. In the Middle Ages, Zircon was said to aid in resting, bringing prosperity, honor and wisdom to its owner.

A year ago this month with the help of PASAI communication advisor, POPA launched the "Year in the Life" brochure. The brochure highlighted the activities of POPA for the recent year ended. POPA is proud to announce that "Year in the Life" was displayed at the PASAI booth at the International Congress of Supreme Audit Institution (INCOSAI) held in Moscow, Russia in September 2019. This second year of "Year in the Life", we want to do something different, that we have not done before. We are also issuing "Year in the Life" in Pohnpeian language.



Conclusion:

This year we would like to dedicate this article to two of POPA's very own: Investigative Advisor, Ms. Sophia Pretrick for her remarkable achievement by obtaining her Master's Degree and Cherry Lyn Somcio for her unrelenting dedication for ensuring POPA's stakeholders, networks and the public is updated about POPA news. Kudos to you two! We are super proud of you, ladies!—thank you for inspiring us to dream big and work harder!

Overall, year 2019 was a success for POPA.

So many audits, investigations and other activities were started and completed (detailed in POPA's 2019 Annual Report) during the year despite the challenges and struggles encountered along the way. It is clear POPA's performances and achievements couldn't have happened without a good and strong leader and amazing staff dedicated to supporting POPA's mandates and responsibilities. POPA is also very fortunate to have received support and assistance from its stakeholders, partners, associates, colleagues and the public during the past year. POPA appreciates and thank you all.

Going into the year 2020, POPA remains focused on the very principle that guides its work, the public interest. POPA and its staff value and are resolved to do its mandated duties and responsibilities with integrity, independence, reliability, respectability, impartiality and professionalism.

We thank everyone who was part of our life in 2019 and welcomes all to be part of the 2020!

Happy New Year, Everybody!

Meet the staff
January



Name: Pehres Pedrus
Title: Auditor III

February



Name: Alice Etse
Title: Audit Manager

March



Name: Sophia Pretick, CFE, MA
Title: Compliance Investigation Advisor

May



Name: Cardinia Joel
Title: Auditor II



Name: Derek Dainard
Title: Auditor I

June



Name: Cherry Lyn D. Somcio, CPA
Title: Senior Auditor

August



*Name: Velissa Edgar
Title: Auditor II*

October



*Name: Trinia Eliou
Title: Auditor I*



*Ihlen K. Joseph
Title: Public Auditor*



*Name: Elaine Carl Title:
Administrator Officer*

November



*Name: Jackleen Route
Title: Auditor III*



Written by: Cherry Lyn D. Somcio
Senior Auditor/Communication Officer