



Sharing our story

James Akiba, storyteller

'This story came from long time ago, from our ancestors of **Burum** (Boo-rroom) **Thabu** and **Karbay** (Karr-bai) **Thabu**; they passed it on. **Kaypaypa** (Kai-pai-par) **kulkub** (kool-koob), they were telling this story about **Girbar** (Girr-barr) and the **Madhubal** (Mar-thu-barl), the rain spirits. They passed it down, generation to generation.

'This story belongs to **Dhamuway** (Tham-u-way). The other clans have their own stories; this one belongs to us. That's how it is in our culture. This is a big story for us.



James Akiba Senior

'Before Girbar, there were no crops for the people of Saibai; she brought the first three crops to this island... The Madhubal dance has been there kaypaypa kulkub... I have danced the Madhubal dance, and now I have passed it on to my two boys...

'When we dance, we strengthen the power of the Madhubal. I get a very strange feeling in my heart when I dance that dance; a different spirit is working in me. My mind is there, focused on the Madhubal; I am Madhubal.'

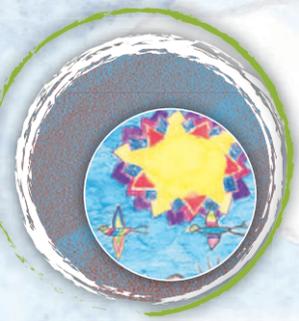


James Akiba Junior dancing the Madhubal dance

Glossary:

- Burum Thabu**—Pig Snake
- Karbay Thabu**—Crane Snake
- Kaypaypa kulkub**—a Saibai word for a long time ago
- Girbar**—ancestor of Thabu, Burum and Karbay Clans

- Madhubal**—rain spirits
- Dhamuway**—an overall name for Snake, Pig and Crane clans



The Story of Girbar

Late one afternoon, a woman named Girbar set out from her home at Ziril (Zirr-il) to fetch water from the **Mag**. She was carrying four **kusul** (koo-sool). There was a drought and the water was low, so she had to climb down the banks to the bottom of the waterhole.



By the time she had collected the water, the sun had set and it was growing dark. In a hurry to cross the swampy country and reach her home before nightfall, Girbar quickly put the kusul filled with water over her shoulder and turned to climb the banks of the waterhole.

Glossary:

Mag—the name of a particular waterhole
kusul—coconut shell water containers