

Artist Personal Profile

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VILIMAINA LEA
Fijian Artist

Creative and observant Vilimaina Lea is one of the weaving specialists in traditional basket weaving which was a skill learnt from her late mother and her maternal grandmother. Trying to put her stories together, Vilimaina seems shy, but when she starts to talk about weaving, her body language changes, she gestures and her face shows enthusiasm, happiness and self-confidence.

She reminisces her young days when she was only seventeen years old, she had to leave school early and concentrate on weaving, as life was really hard for the family to educate her other brothers and sisters because there were no form of income as her father was only a carver and her mother a weaver. That was only their source of income apart from selling food crops from their farm in Lomaivuna in Naitasiri, where the family called their home.



"Both my parents comes from the generation of woodcarvers from my paternal side from Ogea and from my maternal side, mum hails from the village of Naividamu in Fulaga who were renowned of the intricate designs in mat and basket weaving., of which the skills that I treasure to date. I was eager to learn more to develop my skills further due to my mother's inspiration, before she passed away in year 2000, encouraging me, that weaving will be one day an income generating to my family"

Vilimaina says, she enjoys designing her own types of baskets interwoven with the intricate designs taught by her mother, which makes her products very attractive to her customers. She normally uses white and brown pandanus and paogo (brown voivoi) to make her various sizes of clutch bags, hand bags and coin purses.

She also states that her husband who is a security officer is always be supportive in her weaving business and apart from that they support each other to look after her husband's sister's four children who were left in their care since 2011.

She proudly state that weaving is an everyday chore for her and is a great opportunity to work from home as she spends quality time with her family. She feels great that she could contribute to the family income.

Vilimaina began to participate in National Craft Fairs organized by the Fiji Arts Council in 2012, this, she states has also opened doors for her products to be promoted to the outside world and more recognized in her work. She usually receives orders from a shop in Hawaii and being awarded her License to use Fijian Crafted emblem on her local products registered by the Ministry of Industry and Trade has encouraged her a great deal for a brighter future.

Personal Contact:

Phone: 939 9872

resource person



Niqa Tuvuki

Fiji Arts Council
President Fiji Crafts Society

- M - (679) 9090 - 072
- T - (679) 3311 - 754
- F - (679) 3311 - 962
- E - niqatuvuki@hotmail.com
- A - Level 1, Procera House
Lot7, Waimanu
Suva.

www.fijiartscouncil.com