

# *The Ni Vutia Workshop Report*



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## **IBE NI VUTIA WORKSHOP**

### **03 – 06 July, 2007**

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### **Introduction:**

The Living Human Treasures project is a newly established project in the Department of Culture and Heritage in 2007, to establish a system in preserving the skills and techniques necessary for the creation of cultural manifestations that are identified in the 14 provinces of Fiji as having high historic or artistic values.

The primary purpose of establishing this system in the Department of Culture and Heritage, is to identify those persons who embody in the very degree the skills and techniques necessary for the production of selected aspects of the cultural life of a people and the continued existence of their material cultural heritage.

The **Ibe ni Vutia Project** was once of the project pursued as a result of the extensive Community Awareness Program undertaken by the Ministerial Cultural Mapping Team in 2006. It was highly recommended by the team that a revival workshop be conducted due to being in the verge of losing their traditional mat weaving skills. A project entailed the identification of only three women in the Tikina of Vutia as custodians that skill possess this particular craftsmanship.

After consultation with the Cultural Mapping Team, the Department had planned to conduct a pilot Project in the village of Vutia in the Province of Rewa from 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2007 to involve women from Muana-i-Cake, Muana-i-Ra, Narocivo and Laucala villages.

The project in the Village of Muana-i-Cake in Vutia was identified by the Cultural Mapping Team as an important and vital area to begin with the LHT project due to the following reasons: the geographical location, i.e: easy to access in ways of transport and communication and consultation of the Porvisional Office of Rewa with the villages involved in the project.

Within the four days workshop, the LHT project Officer (Mr. Etuate Lasaro) was present as an observer in the workshop.

## 2.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- (i) This pilot project is to identify the remaining few custodians of indigenous traditional knowledge and cultural skills in the community and revive the skills to the local villages in the community.
  - The workshop was mainly to revive these skills and to consolidate their traditional customs and unique to their respective villages.
  - Have the knowledge of traditional skills which were taught through their forefathers and knowing that the skills acquired from the workshop will be passed on to younger generations.
  - Learn to appreciate their natural surroundings and what they can benefit from it.
  - To educate the participants on the Living Human Treasures.
  - Develop awareness on the need to protect and promote our dying living treasures.
  - Recognize and promote living human treasures.
- ii) To give greater recognition to the custodians of endangered traditional knowledge and skills for maintaining and preserving their skills despite rapid economic and social changes facing the community.

## OFFICIAL OPENING

### Day 1

#### Official Opening – 03/07/07

The Officials from the Department of Culture and Heritage arrived into the Tikina of Vutia (Muana-i-cake and Muana-i-Ra), in the district of Rewa. Out of respect to the villagers, a traditional presentation (Sevusevu) was presented to the village to notify them of their presence.

The speech made by the Chief Guest, the representative of the Turaga na Tunidau in the Vanua of Nadilo, Vutia, who highlighted the importance of maintaining their cultures and traditions, thus basing his words from the Book of Psalms 126: *When the Lord brought us back to Jerusalem, it was like a dream!*, reviving the knowledge to our traditional craft is like making us prosperous again and giving back our pride which was in the verge of extinction.

He therefore acknowledged the Ministry of Fijian Affairs and the Department of Culture & Heritage in insisting this concept of assisting them in having this workshop to enable them to identify their cultural manifestation so that their women will be encouraged to learn and pass on the skills to the younger generation.

The workshops started on a high note with 78 participants and 6 facilitators and were divided into groups of 6.

The morning and afternoon tea were served with special lunch prepared for the Chief Guest and the Government Officials. Great support was shown from the village elders throughout the day.

### **DAY 2 – 4/07/07 – Wednesday**

The workshop started at 9.00am with a hymn and morning devotion led by one of the participants

In each group they were shown how to weave mats for early beginners and the rest were taught how to weave the Vutia mat. The Vutia mat has a special identification or design which is well known throughout the Rewa Province and Fiji as well.

The four corners of the mat are unwoven and then stripped into finer layers and are rewoven with black stranded pandanus strips intersecting at intervals from ancient design which express legends of how it is linked to the chiefly households of the Burebasaga Confederacy special events.

This is the most difficult part which had been forgotten in the past years but due to perseverance and dedication, they managed to improve the performance of their practiced skills and knowledge which had been forgotten through time.

We were rewarded and inspired by the arrival of the *Noda Gauna Film Crew* from Fiji TV who came onboard in support to document the various process involved in making of the Ibe ni Vutia

### **ADDRESS BY THE SCDO**

1. The importance of selecting the Ibe ni Vutia as a pilot project for the Living Human Treasure Program in the province of Rewa as the process will be a model to other provinces throughout Fiji.
2. The importance of protecting and preserving the knowledge and skills of the mat weaving.
3. Importance of preserving the art as a form of identity to the people of Vutia as it has eyes, heart and soul of emotional sensitivity which can be lost if it is neglected or ignored
4. the importance of documenting the various processes involved
5. the benefits it entail to the trainer, participations and to the younger generation
6. encouraging the villages in sustaining their raw materials

### **DAY 3 – 05/07/07**

The day began with a prayer and a hymn from a facilitator. There were group photos taken by the TV crew. The women had the opportunity to demonstrate the various processes involved from the planting of young pandanus plants,

detaching of leaves from the plant, spine removal and boiling process before placing the voivoi on the grounds for drying. They also had to demonstrate the procedures taken to dye black the leaves which were later used for designing while weaving.

## **METHODOLOGY DOCUMENTED**

### **A) Method of planting:**

Suckers or side shoots from mature plants are planted and spaced at six to ten feet apart. Closely spaced planting makes weeding and harvesting difficult.

Forks and long narrow post hole spacers were used to soften the soil before planting the shoots. In the fertile coastal land, voivoi is ready for the first initial harvest six months after planting. In other areas, growth to maturity is slow and may take as long as twelve months.

### **B) Harvesting:**

Mature leaves are cut from the base of the plant. Harvesting is a delicate affair. It is a pruning time for the plant. While four to five leaves are cut from the plant and should be cared for as to not harm the plant. With a long-handled sharp knife, and standing on the lee side of the leaves, the harvester inserts the knife above the top leaves then pushes the knife forward and backward until all the leaves are cut.

Leaves should not be cut close to the base that's the side shoots which will grow out as suckers, are damaged. The spines are removed and then the pandanus area coiled out for boiling and it should be boiled on a sunny day. After ten to fifteen minutes of boiling, then the leaves are spread for drying on the grass under the sun for 2 days or more. After drying, the leaves are then tied into bundles of 10.

Straightening process uses the clam shell by scraping the blunt edge to straighten up the fibers into smoother and tender surface. This will make it easier for the women to strip and weave mats.

## **SCHOOL VISIT**

We were delighted when the teachers and classes 6, 7, 8 joined this workshop. They were brought to view and understand how their traditional village mats were woven so to disseminate the skill and knowledge to the younger generations of Vutia.

**\* Please find the above procedure as Appendix 1.**

The day ended on a high note.

**DAY 4 – 6/07/07**

At 8.30am, the FAC Staff together with SCDO, Ms Niqa Tuvuki arrived for the closing of the Vutia workshop.

The church service was conducted by the church minister of the Vutia Methodist church.

The Roko Tui Rewa was invited as Chief Guest.

In his address he encouraged the participants to be vigilant and to continue from where the workshop had ended. He was promoting village based workshop which begins at home, not only on special occasion but the continuation of weaving in to the advance and master skills level, like it was done in the past. During the closing ceremony, the chief guest was given the honor to present the certificates to the 78 participants and the 6 facilitators.

The ceremony was witnessed by village elders together with the village youths, who came in numbers to support the mat weaving workshop. The program for the day ended with a meke "seasea" performed by the village women before a kanamagiti prepared by the village

Lunch was served with various kinds of delicious sea food.

At 4.00pm, the I Tatau was presented to acknowledge the village people for their anticipation and for a well organized workshop, and also for the hospitality shown to Staff who were billeted at various homes in the village during the 4 days of workshop.

**PARTICIPANTS**

There were 72 participants who attended the workshop, 39 from Muana-i-ra, 27 from Muana -I-Cake and 2 from Laucala Island. The 2 participants from Laucala Island came all the way from Suva just to attend the workshop.

**\* please find table attached.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- ❖ Since it is a pilot project the model of which to be taken on in other Provinces, the Master weavers should be presented an award as a form of recognition during a formal ceremony presided by their high ranking Chief of their province and be linked with a program of activities revealing and celebrating the worthy course at their Tikina level
- ❖ Recommended to their Provincial Officers the utilizing of their skills at their District Schools to teach the younger generation
- ❖ A continuous publicity to keep the Living Human Treasures widely known to the public.

- ❖ Discuss with the Department Legal Officer and IFLC the importance of registering and protecting their traditional designs through the IPR Legislation for traditional knowledge so that it wont be exploited
- ❖ This is also practical in a later stage to develop a code of ethics which external user must observe when recording (Visual, audio, written) their traditional and customary knowledge.
- ❖ The District School within the Tikina to introduce mat weaving skills ~~to the~~
- ❖ Master Weavers to be eligible for Craft Fairs and also pursue place in future national, regional and international events.
- ❖ Introduce the yearly "Solesolevaki" Programme in order to transmit the traditional knowledge to youths, etc.

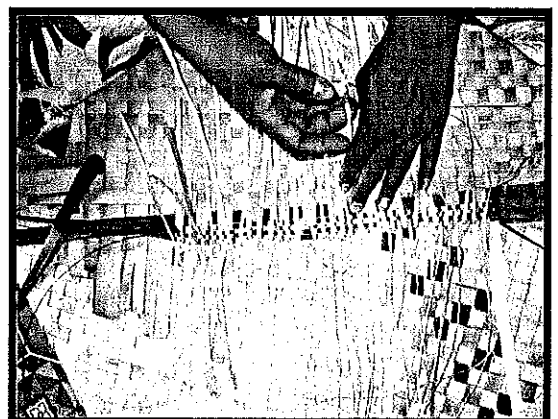
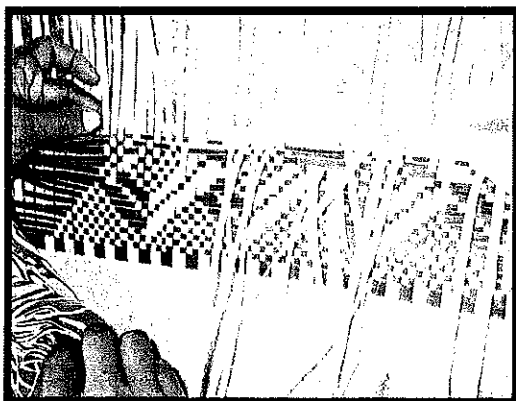
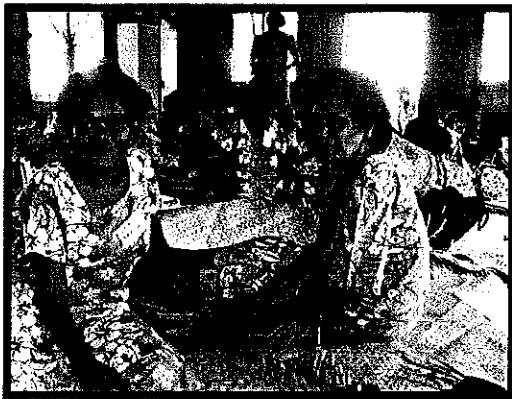
## **CONCLUSION**

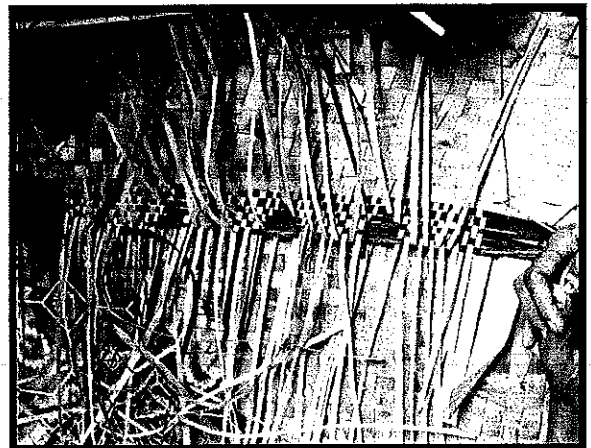
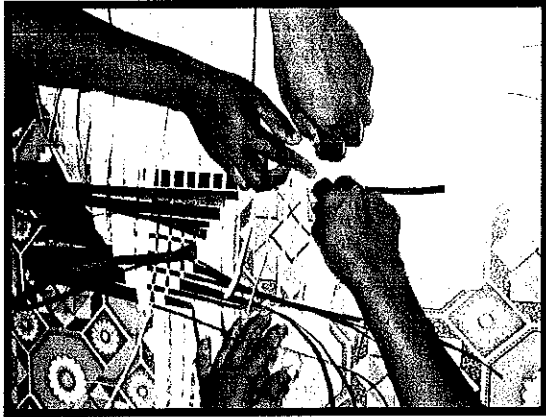
The workshop was a successful one for the Fiji Arts Council and from the Living Human Treasures Project. It was also successful to the people from the Tikina of Vutia in terms of how the workshop was implemented and the knowledge and skills transmitted to the younger generations of Vutia. The Tikina of Vutia has the potential to expand and develop through Tourism projects because of the richness and wealth of the resources that they have in abundance to support their traditional knowledge.



## Photos from the Workshop







**VUTIA MAT WEAVING WORKSHOP, VUTIA, REWA**

**3<sup>RD</sup> – 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2007**

**FINAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Fees for Resource Person 7 @ \$150.00	\$1,050.00
Food for Participants 78 X 4 days	1,000.00
Meal Allowance for 3 staff – 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> July	297.00
Boat fare - Laucala Women on 3/7 & 6/7	60.00
Nasali/Vutia/return – Official Opening 3/7	60.00
Nasali /Vutia for staff – 5/7	30.00
Closing of Workshop Nasali Landing /Vutia/return	60.00
Awareness – Vutia on 4/06.07	50.00
Awareness – Vutia on 20/06/07 Laucala & Muanaicake	80.00
Fuel for GM823 - Official Opening 4/07	50.00
- Awareness Vutia on 20/06/07	50.00
Telephone recharge card	15.00
Cassettes and Batteries for recording	13.58
Yaqona - Sevusevu - Official Opening	20.00
Sevusevu & ITatau –Closing of Wkshp 6/7	40.00
Awareness – Vugalei Workshop	20.00
Awareness – Vutia 4/06	30.00
Stationeries	80.00
Vakavinavinaka – Meke Closing of Workshop	80.00
Raw Material – 2 rolls of black voivoi	100.00
Overtime & meal allowance for Staff:-	487.00
Attended 3 Awareness Programmes	
Opening & Closing of Workshop	
Staffs co-ordinating the 4 days workshop – IFLC & DCH	
Visits during the Workshop	
Office Taxi runs	37.80
Transport cost for Staff – Closing of Workshop	140.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,850.38</b>