



Students and VIPs pose with the jaki-ed at the Arno graduation. From left are Emien Jibae, National Training Council representative Tina Schmidt, Hannah William, Rolina Ben, Bebo Leto, Hamaka Kaneko, Kilen Kaneko, Fred Kattil, instructor Ashken Binat and Secretary of Internal Affairs Daisy Momotaro. Above, wonderful gifts from the people of Tinak for guests to their island. Photos: Tamara Greenstone Alefaio.

Arno guys 'n gals graduate

Bebo Leto and Fred Kattil are two special guys: They are the first males to take part in the ongoing jaki-ed revival program that has accomplished weaver apprenticeship workshops on six Marshall Islands atolls.

Even more unique is that Bebo's and Fred's wives were also apprentices in the Tinak program that was led by expert weaver Ashken Binat, who hails from the small island village in northern Arno.

Saturday morning saw 15 people clamber aboard PII's vessel Lele to attend the graduation of the workshop: "It was a beautiful day for the passage," said University of the South Pacific's Coordinator of Continuing and Community Education Tamara Greenstone Alefaio. "On board we were grateful to have Secretary of Internal Affairs Daisy Momotaro, all of Majuro's

'Important income generation'

Secretary of Internal Affairs Daisy Alik-Momotaro attended the Arno jaki-ed graduation and came away thoroughly impressed with the ongoing program: "I give full credit to USP's Irene Tafaaki, Maria Fowler, and Irioj Senator Mike Kabua for creating the jaki-ed revival program because it is highly important.

"Jaki-ed represents a big part of

Marshallese culture because these were not just jaki, but used to be our clothing.

"Secondly, weaving jaki-ed is totally different from weaving regular sleeping mats, thus I consider the more than 60 girls who already graduated from the weaving program to be very lucky, and I wish I could be one of them."

Daisy said she was very im-

pressed with the quality of the jaki-ed, especially those of the two young men who participated.

In her speech, she told them that she would try her best to assist in the selling and marketing of the jaki-ed.

"The graduates should consider weaving jaki-ed as an important income generation which will sustain the livelihoods of their families."

"Hmmm. They certainly are quite elaborate," Tamara said. "And I just think it's wonderful that they took part in the program. It follows what our patron, Iroij Mike Kabua, has to say about wanting everyone to have access to the knowledge of making jaki-ed."

And did anyone in the community think it was unusual that males were turning their hands to weaving? "On the contrary, everyone expressed the sentiment 'Sure, why not?' And each of the speakers, including Daisy and NTC's Tina Schmidt, made mention of how important their involvement was.

"Tinak should be very proud of this."

advanced weavers and expert weavers Susan Jieta and Patsy Hermon."

The Arno workshop, which like all the jaki-ed trainings was sponsored by the National Training Council, began in November. "I learned during a visit then that a number of the men on Tinak can make Kili bags and I remember thinking 'Wow!'," Tamara said.

"They obviously recognize the skill as an important source of income."

The entire Tinak community of about 50 turned out for the apprentices' graduation ceremony.

"They'd made a big welcome sign for us and as soon as we'd gone through the meet-and-greet line, because they knew that after our long journey we'd be

hungry, they had a table full of Marshallese food for us."

Next the group moved into the church, where the jaki-ed were strung from wall to wall. "The mats are

beautiful and I think many of the designs are really quite unique," Tamara said.

Do the guys' jaki-ed differ in any way from their female counterparts?



Arno's Rolina Ben gives husband Bebo Leto some tips on starting a jaki-ed while she holds their baby. Both graduated in the recent ceremony.

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