

**Women United Together Marshall Islands  
(WUTMI)**

**The Past Weaving the Future Project:  
Passing on Traditional Knowledge throughout the  
Republic of the Marshall Islands**



PO BOX 195  
Majuro, Marshall Islands 96960  
Email: [wutmi26@gmail.com](mailto:wutmi26@gmail.com)  
[www.rmiwutmi.org](http://www.rmiwutmi.org)

**Marshallese Canoe Sail (*Wōjā*) Toolkit**

Women United Together Marshall Islands  
(WUTMI)

**The Past Weaving the Future Project:  
Passing on Traditional Knowledge throughout the  
Republic of the Marshall Islands**

---

**Marshallese Canoe Sail (*Wōjjā*) Toolkit**

**Summary:** The HPO and WUTMI's Weaving Project consisted of four components: 1) Locate Master Weavers; 2) Conduct a Workshop on Traditional Weaving; 3) Train participants to become "Skill Docents"; 4) Development of Weaving Portfolios. WUTMI first identified two Master Weavers, Mrs. Kiop Leon of Arno Atoll and Mrs. Belleri Annam of Mejit Island, who then led two weaving workshops at WUTMI's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting in 2007. One Workshop focused on making a type of Marshallese sitting mat called a *Tōlao*, and the other workshop focused on making baskets, or *Iep*. The workshops were one week long, and each participant learned how to weave and finish the product taught in the workshop. As the participants of the workshops continue to practice and build their weaving skills, WUTMI hopes that they become "Skills Docents" to their communities. After these workshops, two manuals, or "Toolkits," were created, listing the materials used to make these products (one Toolkit is for making *Tōlao*, and the other is for making *Iep*), as well as providing step-by-step instructions on how to weave them.

In addition to the workshops and Toolkits produced for the *Tōlao* and *Iep*, WUTMI staff worked with trainees at Wa in Aelon in Majel (WAM) to create an additional tool kit providing the steps and materials necessary to produce a Marshallese canoe sail, or *Wōjjā*. All of these Toolkits—for *Tōlao*, *Iep*, and *Wōjjā*—will be duplicated and distributed as the final part of this project.

**Statement of Intention:** This toolkit is intended for use by Marshall Islanders to guide them in their learning of how to weave to these items. Some prior knowledge of weaving is presumed, as is the availability of knowledgeable people who can help if questions arise (In the Marshall Islands today, many older women still know these skills and are willing to help teach them when asked). Not all of the materials used in this toolkit are traditional, but they are rather a combination of traditional and modern materials. In the case of the *Wōjjā*, the sail being assembled in the Toolkit is for a model canoe, but the steps are the same for making a life-size canoe sail. In terms of materials, most of the materials are the same, except that for a real sail, they would be used on a larger scale (for example, the strips of pandanus used for weaving would be wider).

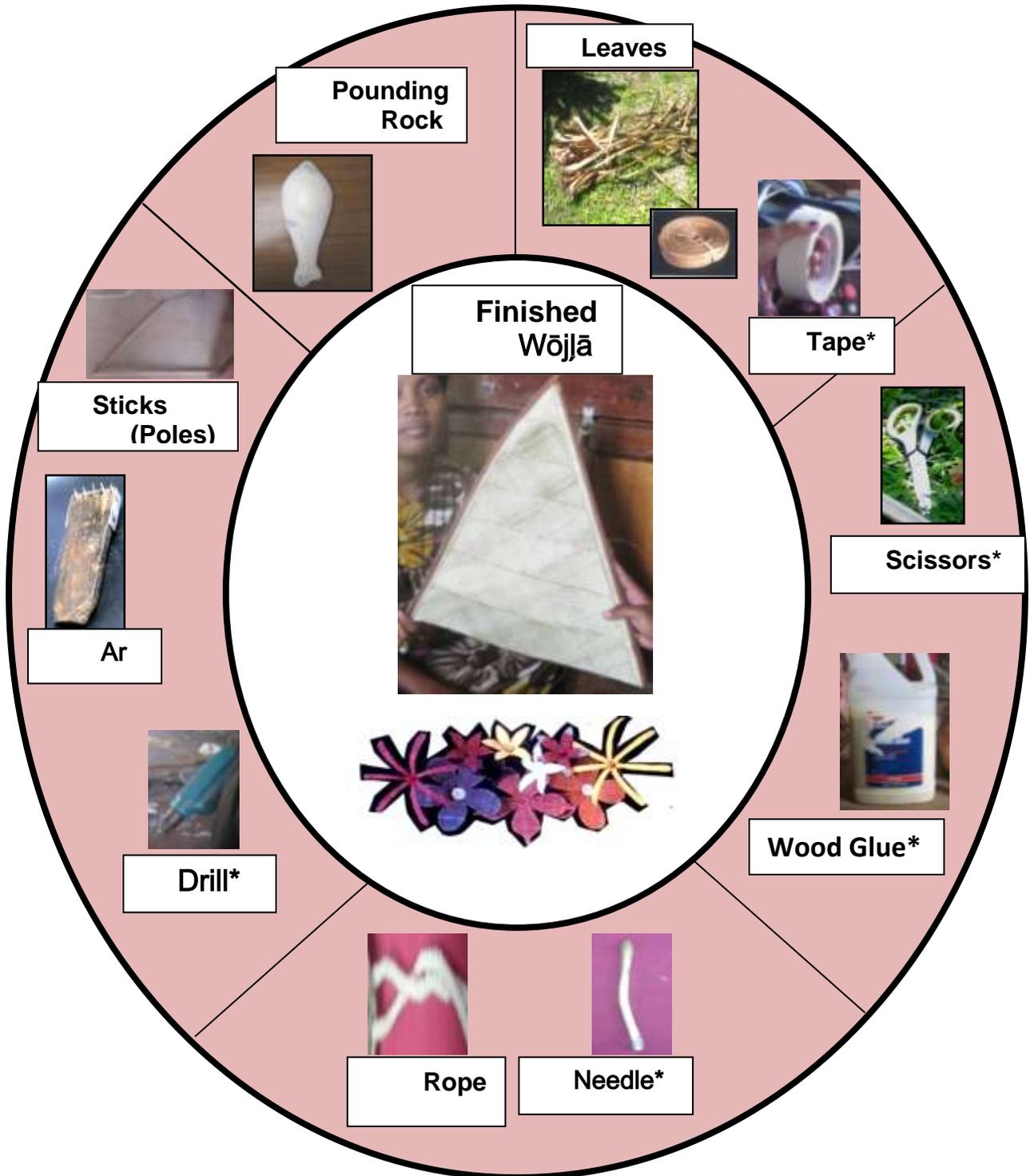
**This toolkit has been financed in full with Historic Preservation Funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.**

**The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of the Interior.**

**This program received Federal funds from the U.S. National Park Service. Regulations of the U.S. Department of Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental Federally Assisted Programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-71.**

# Materials used for making a Wōjlā:\*

(Note: The wojla shown being made in this toolkit is for a model canoe; however, the steps are the same for making a life-size wojla (sail), as are the materials being used. The only difference is that some of the materials used for a life-sized wojla would be used on a larger scale (for example, the poles would be much larger, as would the strips of pandanus that are being woven).)



\*Some materials used in the making of this *Wōjlā* are modern materials.

Three types of leaves that are use in making wōjlā:



1. Maañ pel – brown leaves that can be picked from the pandanus tree or the ones that have fallen from the tree.



2. Maañ rar – green live pandanus leaves picked from the tree and then put on the fire to soften.



3. Maañ kōjeje – Alive green pandanus leaves that are put under the sun.

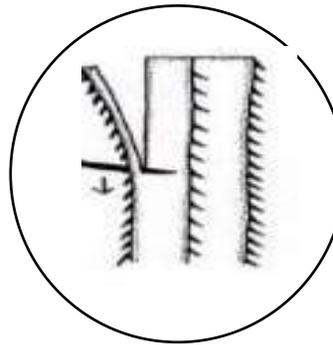
## Steps in making a Wōjlā:



Pick brown pandanus leaves (maañ) from the tree or pick up fallen brown leaves from the ground.



Remove the needles



Needles



Midrib

Remove the needles and the midrib.



Roll the pandanus leaves.



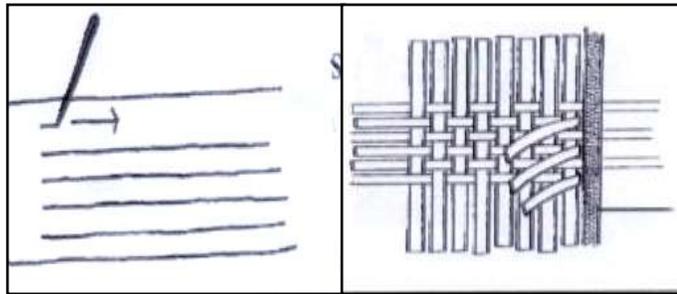
If you plan to weave a wōjlā with the light brownish leaves, then you need to put the green leaves on the fire, and then afterward, roll them up and put them under the sun for 2 days more.



Pound the leaves that were rolled up in a bundle.



Measure the leaves and cut them according to the size of the wōjlā to be woven.



Then use the ar (jebod) to separate the leaves into narrower strips.

When the materials are prepared, now begin to weave the wōjlā (sail):



Start weaving the strips (baki) that will be combined to form the sail.



Once a strip is finished, tape the sides so the weaving won't loosen.



Divide another piece of maañ into smaller strips to use to weave the top part of the sail.



Weave the top part of the sail. The weaving is more fine.



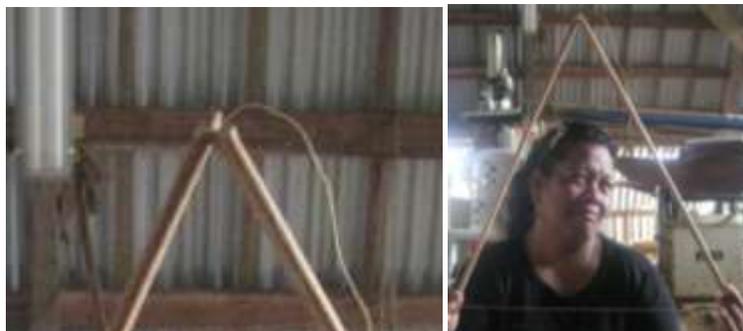
Prepare the sticks that will be used for the sides of the sail. Cut them to the size that you want for your sail.



Drill holes into the sticks where the sail will be attached.



Drill holes into the sticks where the sticks will be attached together (at the top) and where a rope will be attached that connects the two sticks at the bottom.



Make two ropes. These ropes will attach the sticks together at their tops and form the bottom of the sail. Attach the ropes to the sticks.



Place the finished woven strips under the sticks and mark the sticks where the strips will lie to form the sail.



Place the strips under the sticks according to the marks made on the sticks. Cut the strips so that they will fit between the sticks.



Write numbers on the strips so that it will be easy to put them in order.



Tape the edges of the woven strips that were cut.



Sew the strips together.



Prepare two strips of maañ that will be glued to the left and right edges of the sail (one strip for the left and one for the right). This will make the sail edges firm and easier to attach to the sticks.



Apply wood glue to the maañ strips and attach the strips to the edges of the sail.



Place heavy objects on the newly-glued maañ so that the glue will stick.



Wait over night or until the glue hardens and the maañ is firmly attached to the sail.



Sew the sticks to the sail.



Sew the rope at the bottom onto the sail.



Now the sail (wōjġā) is finished and ready to attach to the canoe.



Attach the sail to the canoe.



The finished sail (wōjlā) and the finished canoe.

