

Waan Aelon in Majel's new canoe team

ISAAC MARTY

Waan Aelon in Majel (WAM) canoe building training is moving forward working on new canoes with its new 25 trainees, including six females, and three new full-time canoe-building instructors. Instructors Bingham Henry, 73, Binton Daniel 52, and Linton Baso 23, are all from Ailinglaplap Atoll and are happy to share their skills and talent on building canoes.

Henry has been building canoes since he was a young man learning from his father and grandfathers who, according to him, were builders for the traditional chiefs of the Ralik Chain. He teaches traditional ways of building canoes, beginning with the first step by cutting down large trees. Earlier this month they were able to go to Laura and cut down some breadfruit trees that were donated by Jeirok Alab Laines Joseph.

In recent years, WAM has used modern materials such as plywood to construct canoes of traditional design. The new canoe building program with Henry is a return to a tradition and skills dating back many centuries. The first step in building a canoe is making the hull of the canoe which consists of two sections. The 'jouj' (bottom half of canoe's body) and 'mej en' (the upper half) are made from the center core of the tree. The 'kubaak' (outrigger) which comes next is also made from a tree's core. The canoe's hull is then connected to the outrigger with seven beams of which the two in the middle are called the 'kie' and it points out above the outrigger without touching it. And the other five are called 'apit' and they curve down and touch the outrigger. Traditional coconut sennit known as 'tokubaak' is used to lash things together.

A wood called 'mweuir lon' is lashed on top the beams less than halfway from outrigger and the 'mweuir lal' is put below the 'kie' and on the 'apit' close to the outrigger. More parts such as the 'batak', 'jirukli', 'baklap en', and others are then added for more strength, support, security and comfort. The last main parts are the 'wujle' (sail) and the 'kiju' (mast). "All the little parts in the canoe have important purposes," said Henry. "Iniwijet lökom-möñ meto means that if knots on the canoe are weak it would likely cause it to turn over."

Henry instructs the man-powered class where students get a turn at the ax. Meanwhile, Daniel and his assistant Baso conducts the class which, according to WAM trainees, is known as 'the plywood department' because the canoe building is based on plywood, lumber, nails and screws. "We like this training! We gain new skills! We know how to use tools," said WAM trainees.

WAM trainees are also learning how to do carvings, while improving math and English skills.

KEEPING OLD SKILLS ALIVE



Part of WAM's canoe building team from left: trainees Peter Lewis, Francis Nack, and Ranson Muller with instructor Bingham Henry.



The WAM team poses for the Journal: Robert Katlong, Kashuo Kejjo, Juda Ati, trainer Binton Daniel, Husaynali Tallur, Anderson Hampton, Peter Janer (in the back), and Ranson Miller.

SUDOKU

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LAST WEEK'S ANSWER

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