

# Te Mana O te Vaka

## Project Update - Phase 1



Te Mana o te Vaka

Kia ora uatu rai te peu tupuna

### Gathering and preparing rau ara to dry

Rau ara, also known as Pandanus, are a palm like tropical tree. In Nukutere (Cook Islands) rau ara is used for weaving moenga (mats), kete (bags) and also kei (sail) which is what we will be using the rau ara for in the Te Mana O te Vaka project.



On July 21st a group of the project team from Gallery Tavioni and CIVS went up to one of the voyagers houses to look at his rau ara. It was the perfect type, with no prickles on the edge, which makes it easy for handling and cutting.



Papa Mike showed us how to harvest the rau correctly, being mindful to the mother plant, not to harvest from the central leaves and only pick from the outside bottom ones which are the oldest leaves. We used bush knives to cleanly cut them from the mother plant and we tried best we could to not waste any of the leaves, saving any of the shorter ones for drying too.



As the rau ara was being harvested, Mama Awhitia taught us how to braid them along the top edge so that they can be hung for drying. There are different methods of drying the ara. Braiding and then hanging was the method familiar to Mama Awhitia and Papa Mike as this is the way they were taught to do it in their youth, so we followed this traditional method. Other methods include bundling them in bunches and tying them together to dry without hanging them.

We gathered up truck loads and took them back to Gallery Tavioni to braid and then hang in the shade. The plan is to leave them hanging and drying until they are dry enough to start the next process of stretching and rolling the ara readying to weave.

