Whale Details

Activity 3:
Ulana Launiu (Coconut Leaf Weaving)

Ancient Hawaiian people lived a lifestyle dependent on their surroundings. They understood that if they cared for the land and sea with the utmost respect then, in turn, the land and sea would provide all the resources needed to sustain their life. Living with this concept in mind, the Hawaiian people learned to master the advantages that nature provided.

One advantage provided by nature was the niu tree. Niu, commonly known as coconut, provided many invaluable resources for the Hawaiian community. In fact, every part of the tree was used. The base of the trunk was used to make drums. Its fruit provided food and water and the fibrous husk of the fruit was made into cordage. The leaves of the niu were used to thatch roofs and were woven into baskets.

Today, many people still use this plant for these purposes and have taken the art of ulana launiu (coconut leaf weaving) to a higher level. The leaves are creatively woven into hats, baskets, fish, birds and even whales! This activity introduces students to traditional Hawaiian cultural practices and challenges the students with hand-eye

Materials Needed

☐ Scissors
☐ 1 coconut leaf separated from main frond stem

Vocabulary

Lau - Leaf
Launiu - Coconut Leaf
Koholā - Whale
Niʻau - Midrib

Niu - Coconut
Puka - Hole, loop
Ulana - To weave
Activity 3 (continued):
Ulana Launio Coconut Leaf Weaving

1. Cut the launiu at its base to separate it from the main frond stem.

2. Separate each half of the launiu from the ni’au by forcing your thumb’s fingernail through the lau and sliding it along the ni’au. The separation should start at least 5” from the base of the leaf. (Hint: A scissors may be used if you are unable to separate the halves of the lau with your fingernail.)

3. Hold the base of the lau in your left hand. The two halves of the lau should be dangling freely and the ni’au should be on the top-side.

4. With your right hand, grab the right lau and make a loop. The loop is created by weaving the right lau under the ni’au then through the puka. Pull down firmly. Repeat on left side.

5. With the right side, fold the right lau up so that it is perpendicular to the ni’au. Then, create a diagonal fold by turning the lau so that it is parallel to the ni’au as shown. Repeat step 4 to lock the right lau in place. Repeat on left side.

6. Repeat step 5 until you have four or five folds on each side. (Hint: The tighter you pull the lau during the locking method, the neater your koholā will be.)

7. Trim the remaining leaves to form the pectoral fins and fluke of the koholā.

8. Have fun with your new koholā and the art of launiu!!