



PRESS RELEASE

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Thatch Exhibit Ties Past to Present

A new National Museum multimedia exhibition on thatch plaiting is linking Cayman's past, present and future.

More than 1,100 people have visited the museum since *Past and Future Plaited Together* opened in November. Highlights of the exhibition include video clips of interviews with present-day practitioners and samples of their work. Visitors are also exposed to the history of thatch-work, including the names and uses of different styles of plaiting.

Collections Manager Debra Barnes-Tabora, who also co-ordinates the traditional thatch basket programme, says the exhibition seeks to establish plaiting as an art form by documenting the creative efforts required to produce items such as a basket or a hat.

"While it is important to preserve plaiting styles and techniques, we also believe it is essential to protect the raw material used by basket-makers and thatch crafters. This comes from the leaves of the silver thatch palm, our national tree."

The show also aims to promote the thatch basket programme Ms Barnes-Tabora says. Explaining that this initiative pairs practising masters with apprentices interested in learning the art, she notes: "At present there is only one master-apprentice pair still operating. Otherwise the masters, who are an increasingly elderly group, have no one to whom they can pass their skills."

Plaited Together features the work of some 14 master crafters including Rhodell Smith, Aletha Powery, Nell Smith, Rose May Ebanks, Miriam Muirhead, Kathleen Smith, Rosalind Ebanks, Carmen Conolly, Graciela Solomon, Coreen Gibson, Adelaide Ebanks, Coriel Bodden, Annielee Ebanks and Esther Ebanks. Samples of local thatch-work are also available in the museum's shop.

The exhibition continues through May 2002. Guided tours are available upon request. Persons interested in learning to plait or joining the thatch basket programme should contact the museum at 949-8368.

(GIS)

Captions:

- 1) Thatch hats and bags on display at the National Museum.

- 2) The traditional craft of thatch-plaiting can also produce some very modern-looking accessories, like this stylish hand-bag.