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July 8, 2011 - 10:08pm

### KEIKI LEARN ABOUT HAWAIIAN FISHING TECHNIQUES AT SUMMER CAMP

BY CAROLYN LUCAS-ZENK | WEST HAWAII TODAY

At age 18, kahu and Hawaiian historian Danny Akaka Jr. learned how to throw net along the shoreline fronting Eva Parker Woods Cottage at Mauna Lani Resort.

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Everywhere Akaka looked, he saw rainbow-colored waves full of fish. It was the 1970s, a time when Akaka said he could throw net once, eyes closed, and still bring home plenty of fish for his family, friends and neighbors.

Times have changed.

"Fishermen are fishing more, longer and going great distances, but catching less fish," he said. "One must be more of a hunter, seek out fish and be grateful for whatever gifts you receive -- fish or no fish."

There were no fish Thursday, just Hawaiian fishing traditions, techniques and stories accumulated over the generations by kupuna, cultural practitioners and marine biologists. Their knowledge flowed freely to 30 Big Island children and their parents participating in the second annual Lawaia Ohana Camp, ending today.

Standing near where he threw his first net, Akaka explained the tool's components and demonstrated each step for projecting it. Crouching and twisting his body, he cast the net twice with poise and ease, evoking oohs and aahs from the crowd. He assured it was easy and moved among the groups of campers, reviewing the steps.

Growing up in Hawaii and having many beach days, Kailua-Kona resident Candace Kow always thought she would learn how to throw net. At age 44, she finally did Thursday.

Lawaia Ohana Camp is the first summer camp Candace and her husband, Cliff, have ever attended. They initially had reservations, but their doubts disappeared the first day.

The couple said they have enjoyed spending time with their youngest child, 11-year-old Caleb; learning new skills together; expanding their cultural awareness; exchanging stories; and making new friends.

Sam Kama was 6 years old when his father took him to a small pond abundant with fish on Oahu's Waianae Coast. There, he learned to throw net by "keeping eyes open, the mouth shut and the hands busy." He also learned patience, to be observant and the willingness to try and try again. But before he got there, Kama first learned how to patch and care for his net, which meant lots of sewing and avoidance of chores.

For 55 years, Kama, a cultural teacher at The Kohala Center and Mauna Lani Resort, has been throwing net, an art he said teaches perseverance and integrity.

Asked what he hoped campers take away, Kama responded, "The ocean is a big community icebox. If you know how to care for it and take from it responsibly, you'll always have food and medicine."

Organized by The Kohala Center and Hawaii Fish Trust, the free camp taught families fish anatomy and identification, how to make and use a throw net, prepare and rig a bamboo pole, monitor water quality, clean and cook fish, as well as practice sustainable approaches to preserving and managing Hawaii's marine life.

For four days, they camped at Kaupulehu Interpretive Center. They learned about salt pans at Kalaemano. They explored Kalahuipuaa, the ancient grounds and fish ponds where Mauna Lani Resort is. During the resort tour, Akaka urged campers to find a balance between the old and new, past and present, which he

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Big-Fish List

viewed as crucial to propelling Hawaii forward and preserving it for future generations.

"There's no other camp like this. Here, we have elders teaching the younger generation who are learning alongside their parents and siblings. It's really multigenerational," said Kehau Tom Springer, Hawaii Fish Trust community fisheries specialist. "We're instilling what we know -- the knowledge, culture, science -- into the family core. The hope is participants will go on in life, perpetuate what they have learned and share it with others."

"Summer camp" were two words 15-year-old Daniel Trevithick of Kailua-Kona was not thrilled about. He attended Lawaia Ohana Camp because his mom, Mary Katherine, made him. But by Thursday, he gushed about the camp.

"It's been fun learning how to fish better, and I really like throwing net," Daniel said. "It's good to know these skills, and it's important to pass them on generation to generation."

Mary Katherine has lived here for more than 20 years. This camp expanded her knowledge and deepened her appreciation for Hawaiian culture. She expressed admiration for the traditional Hawaiian systems that sustained the fish, reefs, ocean and land. She also appreciated what the camp's experts did, continue and now pass on.

"This experience has been wonderful," she said. "Learning these skills and connecting to the Hawaiian culture in this way is invaluable."

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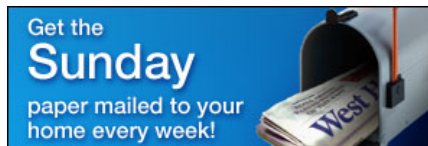
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