



The *Ahupua'a* System and Education

Eric Enos, Cultural Learning Center at Ka'ala

'*Ano 'ai, aloha*. We all contribute something to the whole, to the concept of what the *ahupua'a* is; every one of us in this conference has one part of the solution. I think that the biggest issue, the biggest challenge, is how to look at it holistically. We have scientists, we have landowners, we have conservationists, and we all have to live in this *ahupua'a* together, so the challenge is before us.

We have to bring it back to the community and the general public, so that we're not isolationists, not elitists, not a large landowner just dealing with my little *kuleana*. Your *kuleana* affects the *kuleana* of all the people that live in this *ahupua'a*. What you do up in the forests affects what happens to the people who gather at the reefs. Some say, "Well, this is the job of government," but as we all know, we cannot leave it to government, because it is of the people and all of us.

So, that comes right back down to the communities, and it comes back down to the idea of education. It has got to happen in the schools, and if these curriculums and these ideas are not being developed in the schools, then we do not have a public that is educated about the conservation of our whole ecosystem. If it's not integrated into our science and biology and botany and these things that happen in the classrooms, then where are our decision makers going to come from? The future really is in the aspect of getting it into our schools.

Let me give you a couple of examples of what we're trying to do to rebuild and restore the *ahupua'a*, a modern-day *ahupua'a*. I'm going to describe our community in Wai'anae. We have a project in the mountains, about 97 acres. It once was the "poi bowl" of the entire Wai'anae coast. We've gone up there and brought some water down and restored some taro terraces, but in the process, we have had to take a look at the whole watershed itself and to begin to look at how do we culturally, spiritually, economically, physically, and biologically understand the process of rebuilding this watershed. It has to include from our *kupuna* all the way down to those yet unborn generations to come.

This whole concept becomes integrated into the educational curriculum itself; and then we have to go into our schools. We just started a Hawaiian studies program at Wai'anae High School. That's a first. We have a community of 40,000 people, half of it is Hawaiian, half of the population is 25 years old or younger, and there was no Hawaiian studies program at all. So, how do we as citizens of Hawai'i understand this concept that we're talking about, the *ahupua'a*? Where do we learn these things? Where do we learn about responsibilities? We can throw up rights all we like but if we don't understand the role of the forest and the responsibilities we have in that forest, the idea that if we gather we have to be able to put back two-fold. And where are these things taught?

It's very important for us in developing a curriculum. We are doing that now, right in the schools in our Hawaiian studies program that we just started. We include archaeology; our students are going out into the field, into the *lo'i* itself, into the agriculture complex. We're not doing it in front of a bulldozer. We have to learn our history. The students themselves are involved in recovering their past, the richness of their past. I think most of our sites have already been destroyed.

We're going into resource areas like Ka'ena Point Reserve, the Reserve at Pahole. We're dropping in behind Makua. We're starting programs of partnership with different trusts and foundations. For example, Sam Cook has donated some money for us to help us shuttle the kids back and forth; that's very important. We're working with Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center and we're starting programs of backyard nurseries of native plants to reforest and to use as native plants in the landscape, so there is an economic arm to it, and a spiritual arm to it. By growing these plants and collecting the seeds, we can reforest our dry forest in Wai'anae.

It's a two-fold thing: putting back and making it to come forth in the land itself. In that is values, the values of the earth, the values of families working together. And this ties in to a program we're doing with backyard



aquaculture. We have 25 families raising fish in their backyards. It's all part of the whole communal aspect of working cooperatively, finding consensus, developing partnerships with business, with government, with the whole aspect of what a community is. And it's part of developing strong communities that are educated and tied back into a spirituality of the earth.

These values are universal values, they're not just Hawaiian values. They're values that tell us that the earth is a very special place. We cannot just view forest as an economic resource. It's a biological resource, it's a spiritual resource, it's the home of our gods and our ancestors. All of us, all of our common ancestors share this. It's not only the forest, it's the understory that we gather from, and they are rich resources for economic uses; the gathering of the *palapalai*, the gathering of the different kinds of trees that grow with the koa, and the role of the birds and all those things that live in it. This is the education we are working toward.

I'd like to credit to Mike Buck and the DLNR for supporting us on the backyard nursery project and working in Wai'anae on community conservation issues. We're in the process of developing these cultural access issues

Additional remarks by Kealii Pang

Our organization, 'Ahahui Malama i ka Lōkahi, has been involved in dialogue between government agencies, the Hawaiian community, and landowners in trying to promote educational awareness of Hawaiian conservation values and how they can still be applied today by many of us in protection of our natural resources. We held a hula conference last year and another one will be held in February. We brought forth for the first time, the hula community, the people that use the forest resources for hula as well as conservationists and other Hawaiian organizations to talk together about this forest that is under great stress. We are responsible for part of that stress. What are we going to do about it? We looked at ways of developing gardens, of putting these halau in contact with botanical gardens. We are looking at current forested lands, forest reserves, taking plots and seeing if halau can plant and maintain their own plots. Other user groups include the laau lapa au, the medicinal practitioners, as well as an upcoming group, the Hawaiian martial art of lua. These people are interested in some of our very special native hardwoods, many of which are endangered. We are trying to take

responsibility to dialogue and network with these Hawaiian user groups to look at how these resources can be correctly utilized. As Pua Kanahale said at the conference, "If you don't know how to pick from the forest, stay out." This came from a very respected kumu hula which took some people aback. But we feel the forests are very special but we can still practice the hula using backyards. We can also use alien plants. We're slowly working up towards working some plots of land. We appreciate all of your help in being involved.

Questions for the panel

Q: I come from Hāna, Māui, and just in the last few months we've had native Hawaiians arrested for exercising their traditional access rights. We've had blockage of traditional access trails intentionally by developers. We've had desecration or burials. I believe the ahupua'a system would help in resolving these issues. My question for you is, can you put forward some ideas how we can have this ahupua'a system and the konohiki system incorporated into our Western thinking so it can work with the government we have now?

Nahoa Lucas: I don't have an answer for you off the top of my head. When those kind of claims are made, usually we are right there defending the native Hawaiian and getting right of access. I think they need to be looked at in a more holistic perspective. A lot of that's going to depend on the landowner. What I've always advocated is that there needs to be some sort of traditional code instead of regulations, whether it be private or public, which sets it out in the regulatory framework, which allows people to see that these are the responsibilities. There were responsibilities for the konohiki as well, and they all have to be brought out. We can't just keep talking about them in general terms. People have got to see how they operate.

Q: Nahoa, would you care to speculate when Judge Amano may come to a decision?

Lucas: Your answer is, I don't know. We've even stopped calling her. I don't know if it's her caseload or other reasons. Both myself and the Campbell Estate's attorney, we don't know what we're doing, we're kind of at an impasse right now. Hopefully, we'll get something out of it soon. She did indicate to us in January this year that she was going to rule, and we did submit proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law, and we're still waiting.