



# LEARNING FROM OUR *KŪPUNA*

How do *mo'olelo* (stories), *mele* (songs), and talks with our *kūpuna* (grandparents) help us to understand the place where we live?

## HAWAII DOE STANDARD BENCHMARKS

### Social Studies 7: Geography: WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS

- **SS.3.7.4** Examine the ways in which people modify the physical environment and the effects of these changes.

### Language Arts 6: Oral Communication: CONVENTIONS AND SKILLS

- **LA.3.6.1** Use oral language to obtain information, complete a task, and share ideas and personal opinions with others.

### Language Arts 2: Reading: READING COMPREHENSION

- **LA.3.2.3** Identify the main idea or problem and solution in a text.

### NĀ HONUA MAULI OLA

- **NHMO 8-10** Acquire in-depth cultural knowledge through active participation and meaningful interaction with *kūpuna* (elders).

### KEY CONCEPTS

- *Mo'olelo*, *mele*, and knowledge shared by *kūpuna* help us to better understand the place where we live and how it has changed over time.
- Cultural beliefs shared in *mo'olelo* and stories from *kūpuna* reveal values and knowledge that we can apply to our lives today.

### ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

Students listen to a *mo'olelo* about Mōkapu and practice taking notes of main ideas. They interview *kūpuna* (grandparents, elders) to learn more about ways that people have changed wetlands in the community over time.

### ASSESSMENT

Students:

- Use their notes to write a summary about the main points of the *mo'olelo* they hear in class.
- Use their notes from talks with *kūpuna* to explain how people have changed local wetland environments and the effects of these changes.
- Explain what they learned about Hawaiian cultural beliefs and the place where they live through *mo'olelo*, *mele*, and talks with *kūpuna*.
- Write a thank you note to the *kupuna* or *kūpuna* (if more than one) they interview.

### TIME

3 class periods





## SKILLS

reading comprehension, listening, synthesizing, generalizing

## MATERIALS

### Provided:

- ✓ *Mo'olelo*: "Mo'okapu – The Sacred Land" and "Kaulu and the *Lepo 'Ai Ia*"
- ✓ Learning Log 6

### Needed:

- ✓ large sheets of paper (11" x 17") one sheet per student
- ✓ colored felt tip markers

## VOCABULARY

- 'iwa* – frigate bird
- kia'i* – guard, watchman, caretaker
- koholā* – whale
- kūkulu* – pillar or foundation
- Kumu-honua – ancient ancestor
- kupua* – supernatural guardian or someone with magical powers
- kupuna* – grandparent, elder, or ancestor
- kūpuna* – plural of *kupuna*
- lepo 'ai ia* – edible mud
- mālama* – to care for

## TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

1. Discuss ways that we can learn more about our *wahi pana* (place) by reading books, listening to *mele* (songs), *mo'olelo* (stories), interviewing a *kupuna*.
  - Write the name "Mōkapu" on the board and discuss what it means.
  - Ask students if anyone knows why this area is referred to as a sacred land.
2. Discuss strategies for comprehending text such as predicting, visualizing, questioning, and determining importance.
  - Have students prepare to take notes as you read one of the *mo'olelo* provided with this lesson aloud to them.

*mele* – songs

Mo'okapu – ancient name for Mōkapu

*mo'olelo* – story

*na'au* – soul or intuitive center

*na'ia* – porpoise

*nānā* – lookout

*pōhaku* – stone / s

*pueo* – Hawaiian short-eared owl

*wahi pana* – place

*wahi* – place

## ADVANCE PREPARATION

- Make a copy of the Learning Log for each student.
- Contact a local nursing home and ask if students could visit with residents and talk story about the past. Explain that you will submit students' questions to the residents before the students visit.





**3. Read the story and discuss it.**

- Pause in a few places to ask questions and prompt students to listen for and record the main points of the story.
- Explain how to take notes using key phrases instead of complete sentences.
- Discuss what students learned from the story.

Discussion Questions for Mo'okapu

- Why is Mo'okapu considered a sacred site?
- Kumu-honua was given three special gifts. What were they?
- How would you use these gifts to *mālama* the place where you live?
- What message(s) does this story provide? What cultural beliefs does the story teach us?
- What are the best ways to listen for key ideas and write them down?
- Stories are an important way to learn about the history of people and places. How else can we learn about our place?

Discussion Questions about Kaulu

- Who was Kaulu and what is special about his story?
- What is *lepo 'ai ia*?
- Where do legends say *lepo 'ai ia* is found?

**4. Collect and review students' notes and comment on their note-taking skills.** Return their notes for use with the assessment activity and for later use in the culminating activity.

**5. Explain that students will be taking a trip to a nursing home where they will have a chance to "talk story" with *kūpuna* about what their community was like in the past.** Alternatively, ask students to interview an elder friend or relative of the family.

- Distribute **Learning Log 6** and review it with students.
- Discuss protocol and techniques for interviewing others.
  - Introduce yourself and ask the person's name and write it down.
  - Ask permission before the interview. Ask, "May I ask you a question?"
  - Ask questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" response.
  - Be courteous and thank the *kūpuna* for their time.
- Have students role play and practice these skills.

**6. After completing their interviews, have students share what they learned with the class.**


- Have students take notes of the main points as they listen to their classmates.
- Ask students to write thank you notes to the *kūpuna*.



7. Develop individual "Past", "Present", and "Future" charts for students to summarize what they have learned about the changes to the wetlands in their community over time.

- Distribute a large sheet of paper to each student.
- Have them fold their sheet of paper into thirds.
- Label the three columns "Past", "Present", and "Future."
- Students should refer to their notes from the story they heard in class and from their interviews with *kūpuna* to complete drawings as described below.



PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
Draw a picture of what the wetlands in your community might have looked like in the past.	 Draw a picture of what the wetlands look like now.	Draw a picture of what the wetlands might look like in the future.

**ADAPTATION/EXTENSION**

Have a class celebration of cultures with stories gathered by students during this activity. Invite *kūpuna* and other elders that students interviewed and have music and food to share.

**REFERENCE**

Paki, Pilahi and Francis Haar. 1972. *Legends of Hawai'i: Oahu's yesterday*. Victoria Publishing, Honolulu, HI.



*kia'i*



## LEARNING FROM OUR *KŪPUNA*

## *MO'OLELO*

### Mo'okapu, the Sacred Land

Imagine a time long, long ago, before there were cars and houses, and shopping malls on every corner; long before our *kūpuna* (ancestors) used horses to go from one end of the island to the next; long before there were even people. Our islands were rich with creatures like birds, fish, colorful flowers, and trees so tall that your neck would stretch trying to see the very top. This was a time when no humans lived in Hawai'i.



The creatures that settled here lived in harmony with each other. Birds, like the brilliant red *'apapane* and *'i'iwi*, sang beautiful songs in the forests. They sipped sweet nectar from the *lehua* flowers. Colorful land snails, the *kāhuli*, were like tiny jewels glistening on the leaves of the trees. The *makani* (wind) and *ua* (rain) would bless the plants and creatures with cleansing breezes and life-giving water, and they would grow.

There were so many trees. The big trees protected the small trees and the small trees protected the little tiny plants. And all the plants protected the *'āina* (land) and created a beautiful green carpet that soaked up the *ua* (rain) and made the islands rich and healthy.

One magical day, man was created. He was born on a sacred beach on O'ahu where rich brown sand is found. The place is called Kaha-kaha-ke-ea at Mo'okapu, or as we know it today, Mōkapu. Mo'okapu translates the "birth place of man."

One day, the ancient Hawaiian gods, Kū and Lono, formed the body of man from the sands of Kaha-kaha-ke-ea. Kāne, their brother, waited patiently in a cave in the hills of Kapa'a.

When the body was completed, Kāne joined his brothers and breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of the man that had been created from earth and sand. The image stood up and became a living being. He was tall and brown and handsome and strong. His

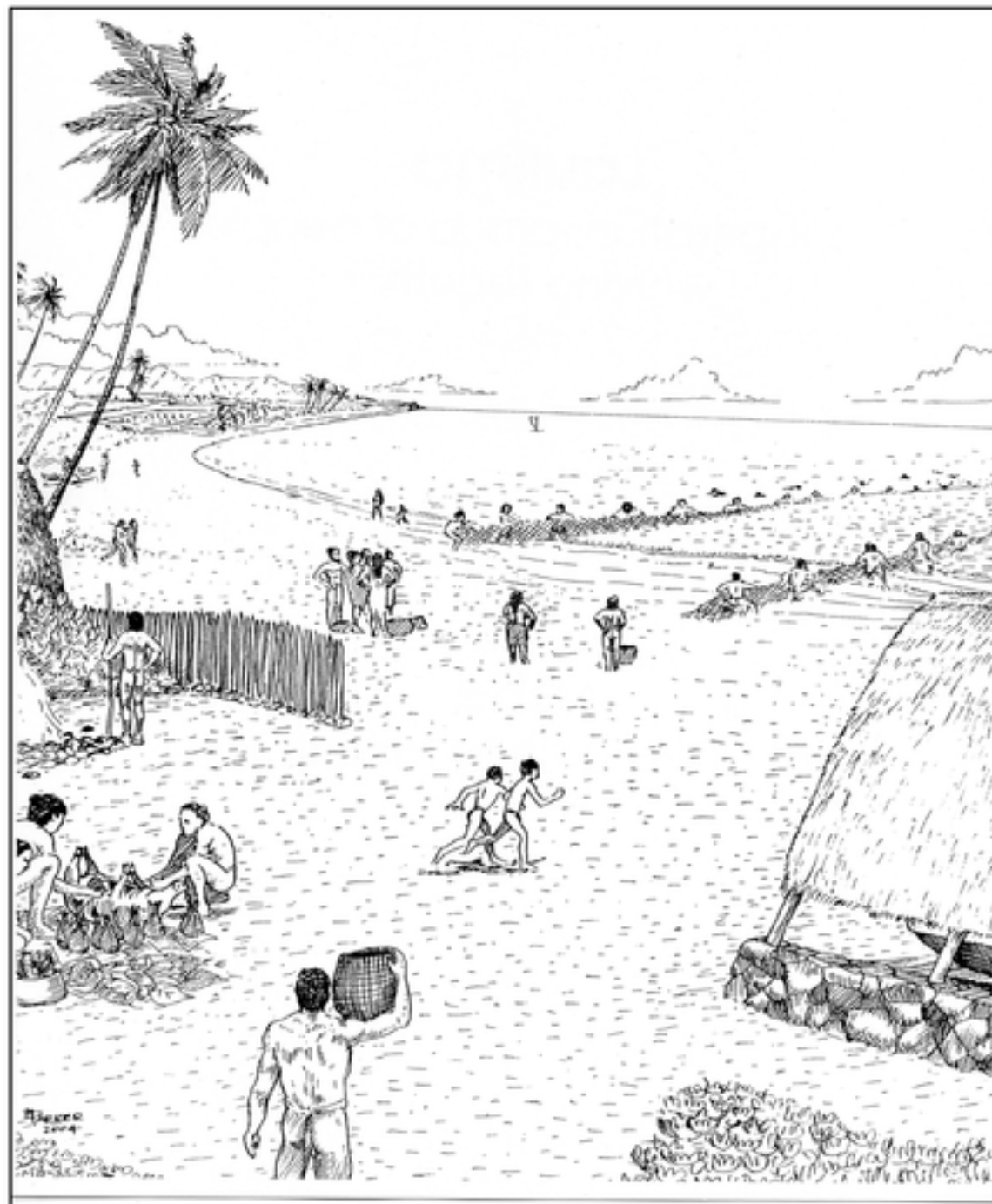


name was Kumu-honua, which means source of life. He represented the creation of the entire human race.

Three vital powers were given to Kumu-honua; they were the special gifts of mind, heart and expression. What this meant was that unlike all other living creatures man was given the power of imagination, the power of love and emotion, and the power of expression.

Since Kumu-honua was given these special gifts, it was his *kuleana* (responsibility) to care for the earth. From this day forward, it has always been the responsibility of all generations to *aloha* (love) and *mālama* (care for) the 'āina. It was Kumu-honua's *kuleana*. Let it be ours as well!

(Adapted from: Paki and Haar. 1972. *Legends of Hawai'i: Oahu's yesterday*)





## LEARNING FROM OUR KŪPUNA

## MO'OLELO

### Kaulu and the *Lepo 'Ai Ia*

*O Kailua, nui kuapapa*  
 O Kailua, great is your legacy  
*Ke pala mai ka hala*  
 When the *hala* blossoms  
*'Ula no ka a'i*  
 Red *lei* for the neck  
*Aia I Kahiki, Kaulu-a-kalana*  
 There, in Kahiki, Kaulu-son-of-Kalana  
*Nānā I Kiwa'a*  
 Eyes fixed on Kiwa'a  
*I ka lepo 'ai ia*  
 There, the *lepo 'ai*

(Words by Kihei DeSilva for the song "Ka 'Ulu Hala"; Musical Album "Keale: Wehekeala - The Way is Open" by Walt Keale, 2006)

If you've ever taken a drive down the short road between the Pali highway and Mōkapu Boulevard (some call it "dump road") in Kailua on the windward side of O'ahu, you may have noticed the massive *pōhaku* (stones) on the slopes of the *pu'u* (hill or mountain) overlooking the present-day Kawai Nui Marsh. These stones are another story for another time. However, long before the marsh thickened with the silt of mountain run-off and long before it was a swamp...even before it was a large network of *loko i'a* (fishponds) and *lo'i* (farming terraces), the ocean lapped gently against its shores. Here it was that Kaulu began to discover his *kuleana* or destiny.

Kaulu lived in Kailua just a few hundred years after the first arrivals of Polynesians to these islands. Yet the stories passed down through the ages tell us it had been long enough for those early inhabitants to lose touch with parts of their culture such as navigating by the stars. In fact, during the time Kaulu lived, Hawaiians then looked up at the night sky and saw only constellations where once their ancestors had seen maps and star trails! On the day he decided to rediscover those trails, many people then living in Kailua privately laughed and ridiculed the young chief. And with no knowledge of star navigation it would have been certain death to travel very far by sea.



Still Kaulu looked fearlessly out on the horizon from the massive *pōhaku* of Kawai Nui (the big water). On the first day he sailed in the direction of Hawai'i Island. Not far along the coastline of O'ahu he spotted Moloka'i, then Lāna'i, and headed for what he saw. As the islands grew on the horizon he passed one, then another until finally, there was nothing to head toward except the open sea between here and the pillars of Kahiki (*kūkulu o Kahiki*).

On the first night, Kaulu dropped his sails and just sat in his canoe. Looking up at the night sky, he drew lines in his head from star to star. Yet nowhere did he find a star



map for the next day's journey. Finally he drifted off to sleep. That night he dreamed of terrifying, dark storms on an open sea and hanging on for his life with no idea of where and when it would all end! Then out of nowhere a dream took him into a deep forest where, seated on a *lau hala* (woven pandanus leaf) mat, he gazed up at a cloudless sky full of stars. Five stars came spiraling down only to become birds, four *pueo* then finally, one giant, white 'iwa bird that was strong and fierce. All of them came to perch in the *kukui* forest surrounding him but the white 'iwa sat right in front of the young chief. Strangely, he felt no fear in the forest of dreams.

When he awoke the stars still shined faintly. At the dawning of first light on the horizon Kaulu looked up. His breath caught in his throat; for right in front of the *wa'a* (canoe), hanging in the air, was the fierce, giant 'iwa from his dream! It seemed to be waiting for him to hoist the sail. In a flurry, the *wa'a* raced to follow the bird.

Day after day, Kiwa'a, a canoe-leading *kupua* (supernatural guardian) led the way. And night after night, Kaulu would chart the journey, carving the long forgotten trails into the front of his *wa'a*.

Stories of the many exploits of the great chief Kaulu and his journeys to the pillars of Kahiki (*kūkulu o Kahiki*) were passed down by the generations that followed him. We can say for sure that the return voyage of Kaulu in the *wa'a* was full of danger. Some days the *nai'a* (porpoises) rode the currents indicating the journey would be easy. On other days, the *koholā* (whales) swam on the surface of the water signaling stormy and dangerous travel ahead.

When the day finally dawned for his arrival, Kaulu set his foot upon the highest *pōhaku* (stone) overlooking the shore of Kawai Nui. From this *wahi nānā* (sighting place) Kaulu





looked out on the sea feeling the deep knowledge of his *kūpuna* (ancestors) in his *na'au* (soul).

Nevertheless, the people of Kailua doubted it had happened at all. After his return, they said, "He's only been to Moloka'i hiding out all these years!" and to Kaulu they said, "Prove to us that you really have traveled beyond the horizon." Kaulu then reached into his belongings and pulled out a large *'umeke* (wooden bowl). In it was a strange substance they say was the consistency of *haupia* (coconut pudding) but it tasted better and brought the best of health! Legends tell of the *lepo 'ai ia* (edible mud) found only in Kahiki when the star trails had been lost. After sharing some with the people of Kailua, they also said that it was hidden in Kawai Nui only to be brought out in time of the people's greatest need.

*(Mo'olelo provided by Walt Keale, September 2006, for Project Aloha 'Āina)*