



Exploring Kahuwai

With studies in history, culture, math and science, Hawai'i Campus seventh-graders learn ancient and modern lessons at Kahuwai Village

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It's one thing to talk to students about Hawaiian history and culture, or even have them read a book on the subject. It's quite another to have students literally walking in the footsteps of their ancestors.

That's a unique cultural experience, and so it was for the entire Kamehameha Schools Hawai'i Campus seventh grade when they spent a January day at Kahuwai Village.

Located in Puna on the northeast rift of Kilauea, Kahuwai Village is a cultural and educational resource of Kamehameha Schools and holds the remains of more than 200 acres of native Hawaiian settlement. Aside from the continuing encroachment of vegetation, the coastal area of Kahuwai is virtually undisturbed from the time it was last inhabited during the early 1900s.

The village offers a rich opportunity to experience and imagine many of the forces that shaped the lifestyle of pre-contact Hawai'i and provides a stage to teach and practice the skills



These rock walls once formed the foundation for canoe sheds at Kahuwai Village. The house in the upper right corner is used by village caretaker Keone Kalawe.

and traditions that shaped early life in the islands.

Hawai'i Campus seventh-grade teachers, led by **Ipolani Akao Wright '66**, took full advantage of what the site has to offer.

Wright became aware of the opportunities at Kahuwai after attending a June 2003 Hui Ho'ohawai'i retreat at the village sponsored by Kamehameha's Hawaiian Culture Center Project. Hui Ho'ohawai'i's goal is to find ways to foster a vibrant Hawaiian community inside and outside the school's walls.

"I was invited through the HCCP to come and learn about this place, and that's where we found the spirit to do this third quarter activity," Wright said. "We wanted to give our students a sense of what their ancestors did in the village, what it might have felt like to participate in *laulima*, or working together, and just how the Hawaiians survived in an area such as this one."

Wright's first step was to meet with Keone Kalawe, a caretaker of the village hired through Kamehameha's 'Āina Ulu program. Kalawe's family has deep roots in the *ahupua'a* of Kahuwai. His grandfather's grandmother was born at the site, raised there and is buried there as well.

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'Āina Ulu Program Exceeding Strategic Plan Target Goals

It's been described as the "fourth" Kamehameha Schools campus.

That campus would be Kamehameha Schools land, and since the establishment of the Land Assets Division's 'Āina Ulu land legacy education program in 2001, thousands of learners across the state have been served at program sites like Kahuwai Village.

"From Kaua'i to Hawai'i, there are more than 20 program sites providing opportunities for our students, families and communities to connect with Pauahi's land legacy," said Ulalia Woodside, 'Āina Ulu's land legacy resources manager.

There are currently 30 various program opportunities at the sites in varying stages of development. "Every place that we have lands, we know that they are a real magnet for research and learning opportunities," Woodside said.

The 'Āina Ulu program has already vastly surpassed target goals set for the first two years of Kamehameha's strategic plan. Initial projections called for serving 2,200 learners at a cost of \$3.3 million, but the program has already served more than 12,200 participants at less than half the expected cost.

The program has hosted state Department of Education, public charter school and private school students, Hawaiian language immersion preschool students, university-level learners, after-school and summer programs, as well as Kamehameha Schools students.

"We've been very excited in working with KS faculty and students to develop opportunities for them on KS properties which supplement their classroom experience and bring them in touch with Pauahi's land," Woodside said.

"On O'ahu, Kapālama Campus students have been able to apply skills and content learned in the classroom at He'eia Stream and Fishpond. The *ahupua'a* of Punalu'u is another place where KS program students, including high school character development, Kamehameha Scholars and the Alaka'i Project, engage in experiential learning at the *lo'i* or in the coastal waters," she said.

"On Kaua'i, students and families have gone out to the *ahupua'a* of Waipā, where we work with the Waipā Foundation. And on Hawai'i island, the vast environments really inspire our students' growth, from Ke'e in South Kona to Honohono-nui in Waiākea, where the Edith Kanaka'ole Foundation is helping us care for those lands."

Woodside is well aware of the program's long-term goal.

"We recognize that we are making an investment in our students," she said. "Our hope is that if we share the treasures of Pauahi's land legacy with them, their *na'au* attachment – or their connection to and *kuleana* for these places – will only increase.

"They can then take these learning experiences with them into their home communities, and hopefully carry those values regarding caring for the 'āina with them for the rest of their lives."

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Among Kalawe's duties has been an assignment to map the site. "There are farming areas located *ma uka* of the shoreline, but with all the *hau* and vegetation, it's hard to get to some of the areas and map them. We've found original planting areas, burial sites, animal pens, house sites and even two house sites that must have been for *ali'i*."

The most well-preserved area includes two rock wall canoe sheds located just above the shoreline of Kapele Bay.

"A lot of people look at the canoe sheds and say that they are too narrow for a canoe," Kalawe said. "But actually, when the Hawaiians came in from the ocean they'd disassemble the canoe and just put the hulls in the sheds. Then they'd reassemble the canoe when they went back out."

An extensive rock trail system winds its way through the village as well, and formerly connected with the walking trail that once encircled the entire island.

"In the 1800s, this trail was used mainly for trading with whaling ships that would be outside Kapele Bay," Kalawe said. "The trail also connected to other villages along the coast. Those villages didn't have access to the ocean because they are located along cliffs."

In fact, literally translated Kahuwai means "water tender."

After meeting with Kalawe, the Hawai'i teachers came up with an "explorations" theme with a major goal of learning from the past and using that knowledge to understand present day issues and problems.

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Ipolani Wright '66



Keone Kalawe

Photos on opposite page – Clockwise from top left: Literally walking in the footsteps of their ancestors, Hawai'i Campus students follow a rocky trail through Kahuwai Village. This aerial shot shows Kahuwai's location along the rugged Puna coastline. Students determine the weight of a rock, part of an exercise to help develop an appreciation of the complexity of ancient Hawaiian rock wall construction. The rocky shoreline of Kapele Bay was used as a canoe launching area by early Hawaiians.



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– IPOLANI AKAO WRIGHT '66



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Six stations were set up during the visit with students spending time at each location throughout the day. The stations included a tour of the site; a canoe building and canoe shed presentation; a study of the site's rock walls; a discussion of native plants and medicinal uses; a lesson in land stewardship; and instruction on how to craft an *'ahu ua*, or Hawaiian cape or raincoat made of dried *ti* leaves.

Modern day interdisciplinary learning activities were also included.

One math assignment involved measuring the length, width and height of the rock walls on site, weighing sample rocks, and then calculating the volume and weight of the rock walls. Wright said instructors wanted students to develop an understanding of the hard work their ancestors put in when constructing the rock walls found throughout pre-contact Hawai'i.

"We wanted each student to have a meaningful experience at each station," Wright said. "We also wanted them to appreciate our culture more deeply. We want them to know the *kaona* (hidden meaning) of what being Hawaiian means. We don't want them to just say 'I'm Hawaiian,' but to know that being Hawaiian is more about the inner soul and spirit."

"This is the first large scale use of this site, and we really want this to work for our teachers," said Kamehameha land manager Jeff Melrose. Melrose said Kamehameha maintains the caretaker's house on site, has helped clear the area of *kamani* trees and has also held community work days involving land stewardship.

"Our goal is to preserve the ruin, and create program spaces in the village that can be used to teach a whole range of things," he said. "It's also a spiritual setting where people can practice their culture and dance and chant. The spirit of the old is still alive here, and it's important that we cherish and nurse that and find ways to respond to that with our educational agenda."

Photos on opposite page – Clockwise from top left: Kahuwai caretaker Keone Kalawe points out a house site to KS Hawai'i Campus students. Students calculate the volume of rock walls located on-site. Cultural practitioner Kini Burke leads students in a lesson on the making of a Hawaiian raincoat.

"There are many advantages to getting the kids out here on the land," Wright added. "Our hope is that they will see the opportunities for their own personal growth and learning, and come back in their years after high school and college to *mālama* our land and see what they can do themselves to perpetuate our Hawaiian culture. That's the big dream we have."

The Ahupua'a of Kahuwai

At the time of the Mahele in 1848, the *ahupua'a* of Kahuwai was granted to Victoria Kamāmalu, the daughter of Kīna'u and Kekūānā'o. Kamāmalu inherited the lands of her mother Kīna'u and Ka'ahumanu.

Kamāmalu's lands were the inheritance of the *kuhina nui* and were part of the largest single award of lands at the Mahele. Upon Victoria's death in 1866, the lands were passed to her brother Lot Kamehameha and then to Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani in 1872.

Upon Princess Ruth's death in 1883, Kahuwai was passed to Bernice Pauahi Bishop and became part of her perpetual estate in 1887. Today, the land is managed by the Kamehameha Schools, Land Assets Division.

The village settlement at Kapele Bay evolved over hundreds of years of continuous occupation. Little is known of its early history. The rocky bay provided coastal access and may have served as a place to launch and land canoes used to fish the rich windward shoreline.

Early settlement may have evolved around the bay and expanded inland with a mix of house sites, agricultural fields, trails, *heiau*, burials and other sites.

It is clear from the density of sites and structures that Kahuwai was well populated and that both *lawai'a* (fishing) and *mahi'ai* (farming) were important parts of daily life. The large size of some walls and trails may also indicate an *ali'i* presence in the village that could direct the building of large structures.

The first written accounts of life at Kahuwai come from the Rev. William Ellis, who traveled around the island in 1823. His journal indicates that 150 people gathered to hear him speak at Kahuwai. Subsequent research in tax records show 17 households paying taxes from Kahuwai in 1863. Twenty years later in 1882 only two households were reported. Permanent residency at Kahuwai may have ended in the early 1900s.