

Heritage Center Keeps History Alive

by Kathy Best, Castle & Cooke Community Relations Manager

Step into the Lana'i Culture & Heritage Center and you may well find yourself swept away on the lyrical harmony of traditional Hawaiian instruments or transformed by the experience of Hawaiian history told in traditional chants.

"The visitor experience is always tailored to encouraging questions and conversations," says Executive Director Kepa Maly. "We want to make sure that when people leave, they feel like they take with them a very special and personal experience."

Curious about music? Kepa can play you a song on the Hawaiian nose flute, and let you know that the Hawaiian name for it is 'ohe hano ihu.' Literally, the name translates to "bamboo played by breath of nose." And the sound, says Kepa "almost transports you back to a forest of another time and place."

Kepa can also make ancient Hawaiian history come to life through traditional mele or chants.

"I was fortunate to be raised for part of my life with people who practice traditional chants," says Kepa, who grew up on Lana'i. "Living on Lana'i opened the door for me to be educated by our kupuna and those that carry on many of the traditions of our ancestors."

Through the Center, that is a heritage that Kepa and a small staff of volunteers work to preserve and pass on. They have the backing and support of the Lana'i Archaeological Committee, 'Ahaui 'Imi Pono o Lana'i (formerly Hui Malama Pono o Lana'i), community members, and Castle & Cooke Resorts. Castle & Cooke also provides space for the Center in the old Dole administration building,



Onaona and her mom Irmalee Kamakao naona Pomroy are serenaded by the melodic sounds of the Hawaiian nose flute played by Kepa Maly, Executive Director of the Lana'i Culture & Heritage Center.

as well as financial support and the professional assistance that established the Center as an independent, charitable organization.

More than 2,300 people visited the Lana'i Culture & Heritage Center since it re-opened as an independent cultural center in October, 2007. More than one third of those have been Lana'i residents, a fact that Kepa finds important to the mission of the Center.

"We don't want to just put history in a box," Kepa says. "The Center tries to offer a program that creates and enriches continuity in our family lives. The only way this program will succeed is if our community gets involved by coming in, sharing history and living history."

The Center includes artifacts of Hawaiian origin collected through archaeological investigations, and by plantation employees over the years found while working the fields with plow and hoe. In addition, the

Center features many artifacts reflecting the full cultural heritage of the island.

Take a virtual tour of the Center at www.lanaichc.org. But don't miss

the real thing! The center, located in the old Dole administration building, is open Monday-Friday, 9am-3pm. Weekend group tours are available by request.



Families, kupuna, along with visiting guests, enjoy the exhibits that show Lana'i's unique history and fosters a special sense of place.

The Lana'i Culture & Heritage Center has thousands of artifacts and records in its collection, only a fraction of which are on display. These include:

- A collection of native Hawaiian artifacts from Lana'i that are on long-term loan from the Bishop Museum
- Lana'i artifacts that are "coming home" thanks to donations from families and museums around the world

- A growing collection of oral histories that reflects the diverse personal histories of Lana'i
- Historical and cultural records donated by community families that tell the stories of Lana'i people and culture, such as how the trees came to be planted, how businesses grew, and other "slice of life" records