



## Learning From Our Kūpuna

## Student Reading

### *Kaiakea and the 'Alae*

In the very beginning, Hina gave birth to Molokaʻi and watched over her beloved child, *keiki moku* (island child). We are Molokaʻi nui a Hina (Great Molokaʻi, land of Hina). Molokaʻi nui a Hina is a traditional legend of origin establishes that the island of Molokaʻi, like a child, is small and fragile – unlike a large continent. The resources of an island are finite, and these finite resources need to be nurtured by the island’s “family” if the people are to grow strong, healthy, and prosper (Molokai Community Service Council, 2007).

Imagine Molokai during the time when the Hawaiian Islands were ruled by kings and chiefs. Kaiakea lived in Kalaʻe. Although he was important and respected, he was known as a man without a god. One day, he prepared all kinds of food, such as poi, pig, *ʻawa*, bananas, fish, and everything else necessary for a “house-warming”. As he greeted his friends and *ʻohana*, the women went to the *hale noa* (the common house) and Kaiakea, the men, and servers went to the *hale mua* (the men’s house).

The *hale mua* was surrounded by a lanai where Kaiakea was standing in the doorway when he saw a long procession of women coming over the plains of Hoʻolehua to Palaʻau. They were dressed in yellow *tapa* (bark cloth) skirts, yellow shoulder coverings, and crowning their heads were leis of *maʻo* and *ʻilima*. There was one man among them. The procession went down to the Piliwale spring, where they left a *puniu hulihuli* (coconut-shell container) and the women’s *ʻalae* (mudhen) bodies. As they approached the lanai, the beautiful women attracted Kaiakea’s attention and he called to them to come in on the lanai, but they remained outside. Only the man approached and stood at the door of Kaiakea’s house. Kaiakea offered them food, but the spirit man said that they would not eat his food unless a *hale lau* (leaf-thatched house) was built for them. He revealed that they were not humans, but “angels”. Pua was his name and Kapo was the chiefess who led the procession. They would become Kaiakea’s gods if the *hale lau* was finished that day; the *puniu hulihuli* containing the necessary things to do their work and the *ʻalae*, would be his. The beings then vanished after revealing these things to Kaiakea.

Kaiakea went to the spring to look for the *puniu* and got it as the *ʻalae* were resting in the cool waters of the spring. That very day, Kaiakea built the *hale lau* and filled it with poi, *ʻawa*, bananas, and *tapa* to honor the *ʻalae* gods. That evening, it was dedicated and the gods were comfortable and content.