



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*)

