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HAWAI'I ARTS OF LIFE 2009

The Tracking Project Hawai'i Mentor Program (TTPHI/NTR)

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In 2009, we decided to use the image of the wave as the theme for our work in Hawai'i and French Polynesia. On our computer, we changed our screensaver to the well-known picture of big wave rider Laird Hamilton on the incredible break at Teahupo'o, Tahiti Iti. Brother Noland likes to use surfing as an example of localized "indigenous brilliance." "They've got waves all over the world," he'll say. "Brazil, Australia, Africa, North America. Everywhere there is a coastline, there are waves. So, why is it that only the Hawaiians looked out at the waves and thought to themselves—*I wonder if I can ride 'em?* And now, surfing is known around the world."



Jade throwing her net at La'au Point, Molokai, June 2009. Photo by Julie Rogers.

Our Hawaiian programs caught a big wave last year. Over a series of four separate visits—February, March, June and October—we expanded our Hawaiian **Arts of Life** programs to include hundreds more children, and we embarked on the second year of **The Tracking Project Hawai'i Mentor Program (TTPHI/NTR)**, which will train a group of 15 new artist/educators for Hawai'i.

Funding for these visits was provided by a growing and diverse group of foundations and sponsors. We extend our gratitude to everyone who is taking part in this successful program—participants, staff, and mentors— with special aloha to: Chieko Steele & **Na Lei Aloha Foundation**; Herb Lee & the **Pacific American Foundation**; the **Aurora Foundation**; George Macricostas & **Raging Wire, Inc.**; Ricky Kurihara & **Elite Security Systems**; Ed Saunders & the **Pagoda Hotel**; Henk and Akemi Rogers; Duane Kurisu and all our 'ohana in Hawai'i.

From our first visits to the Hawaiian Islands in 1985, our work has been guided by our Hawaiian advisors Mililani Trask, Yuklin Aluli, Toshiko Takaezu, Walter Ritte, Miki Maeshiro and others. In 2003, we connected with musician Brother Noland Conjugacion and his wife, Heidi, and since that time we have continued to deepen our friendship and work in Hawai'i and on the mainland.

Soon after we began to work together, Noland asked me, "How many times a year do you want to come down here?" We decided that we would need four visits each year in order to have the time for the school visits, leadership camps, mentor trainings, concerts and special events that arise each year. Noland's curriculum— **Hawaiian Inside**—is a perfect match for our programs, "Hawaiian Outside." Inside and outside, these are some of the highlights from our four visits in 2009:



Palakiko, Pomai and Mele practice archery at Ho'omaluhia, Kane'ohe, March 2009.
Photo by John Stokes.

February

✿ Joining Brother Noland to work with all the Grade 1 students from **Kamehameha Elementary School (KES)** on two separate days at Halona Point, east of Sandy Beach, as we took the skills of silent movement, tracking, nature awareness and meditation that we shared in the fall with the students and applied them to the shoreline. Over several years, we have formalized the curriculum for this “*mauka/ maka*” training: Noland opens the morning with the Thanksgiving Address and shares the names, meanings and history of the sites surrounding our “outdoor classroom.” After our workout and some awareness exercises, he demonstrates the art of *kiloi upena* (the throw net).

The students then learn the names of the most common fish near the shoreline and have time to explore the tide pools with their parents and teachers. These outings continue to be extremely popular with the parents. Thanks as always to the Grade 1 teachers.

Meeting with our mentors and the advisors of our **TTPHI/NTR** group at Kaka'ako Park for a potluck get-together in preparation for our training in March and our outing to Molokai in June.

Hiking the Upper Campus trail with 110 **Kamehameha Middle School** students and their teachers from **Pu'ulu 'Ohe**, one of the three Grade 7 teams, organized by our long-time associate Brad Cooper. Brother Noland joined Brad and The Tracking Project to present this program of nature awareness, historical awareness and sustainability. Thanks to Brad and the teachers of the 'Ohe team.

Working with the Grade 2 students at **KES**, playing traditional games of the Americas that draw on skills of silence and observation. These games, such as the blindfold stalking games “Rattlesnake” and “Steal the Firewood,” further the skills learned in Grade 1. Thanks to Joyce Ahuna and the Grade 2 teachers.

While a heavy storm battered the West End of O'ahu, we made a presentation on nature awareness and environmental education to the **Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA)**, organized by friend Mike McCartney, who was at that time the head of HSTA.

Later that same day, we joined Noland and many of our mentors to present a program for a sustainability summit meeting at the Island Insurance building

which was attended by 43 diverse personalities, including state senators, judges, filmmakers and members of local sustainability groups. This meeting was also organized by Mike McCartney.



Our finished kama'a la'i (ti leaf sandals) made from the dried twisted leaves of the ti plant (*cordyline terminalis*).

Photo by John Stokes.

March

✿ Joining Noland, Heidi, Miki Maeshiro and the mentor group for a three-day training at Ho'omaluhia Botanical Gardens in Kane'ohe.

June

✿ For the second year of the **TTPHI/NTR** mentor program, we traveled with our group of young mentors to the island of Molokai and set up camp on the south shore at the Keawanui learning center managed by Walter Ritte. As with our other NTR trainings, participants were immersed in the key areas of our curriculum: **Thanksgiving, Traditional Tracking & Survival Skills, Nature Awareness, Peacemaking, Cultural Awareness, The Arts of Life, Personal Development, Community Education, International Community, Ceremony, Leadership and Renewal.**

Each day our talks and notebook work were balanced with activities, including: the **Thanksgiving Address**, our **Secrets of Natural Movement** workout, firemaking, archery, work in the fishpond.... As a special project, each participant brought with them 60 dried ti leaves and we all made a pair of *kama'a la'i* (ti leaf sandals). A good way to appreciate the brilliance of traditional people is to engage in the making of traditional objects. How many people these days can make a pair of shoes for themselves?

On Wednesday we set off to the west end of the island for a two-day outing with minimal gear and little to no food or water. The first night we slept on the beach at Kaupoa and in the morning hiked on to La'au Point where we made a second camp. Our presence on the beach at La'au was quickly noted by a group of monk seals. When Noland led some of our young people to the shoreline to gather fish for our dinner, the monk seals rushed them from the ocean, driving the fishermen back from the holes that teemed with fish. That night we pooled all the food we had into what has come to be known as the "**#52 La'au Special**" —four little fish, a crab, and some opihi with Vienna Sausage and Sugar Smacks. Though we were hungry and thirsty, we spent a lively night around the fire and woke early on Friday to hike back to Dixie Beach and drive to Kaunakakai.

Before returning to camp, we visited the Trees of Peace at the Community Center, which had been planted by Chief Jake Swamp and John Stokes at the Makahiki games in 1992, and related the story of the Great Peacemaker of the Haudenosaunee.

Back at Keawanui when we had all washed up from the outing, there was a completely new feeling in camp. To Noland's eye, it seemed as if "everyone's spirit had arrived." And it was a good reminder that with a true tracking and survival outing, the less you put in, the more you get out!

Special thanks to all our friends on Molokai—Walter, Kalaniua, Hanohano, Kaulana, Moku, Laurie, Raymond and his family for the malasadas and shrimp chips—and all of our funders.



The fishpond at Keawanui, Molokai June 2009. Photo by John Stokes.

October

✿ Expanding our work with Grade 7 at the **Kamehameha Middle School** to include a day's hike with each of the three teams—'Ohe, Koa and Lehua—330 students in all. Each day we hiked with approximately 110 students and their teachers on the trail above the upper campus. Our focus was **Sustainability**.

While Brad took half the group up the trail overlooking the Pali to tell them the story of the Battle of Nu'uaniu, Brother Noland spoke to the group about what traditional Hawaiian people must have known to be able to live sustainably in the Hawaiian islands, while John Stokes spoke about "cultivating an eye for sustainability" and demonstrated various survival skills. Special thanks to Brad,

the teachers of the teams and to Pua Ka'ai, Middle School administrator, who believes in what we do and makes these outings possible.

Gathering the mentor group for a pot-luck dinner and Hinano archery tournament in Pupukea at the home of Palakiko & Jenny Yagodich. *Mahalo.*

Land and sea, land and life. Since our early work in the 1980's with cultural activists, land issues and the sovereignty movement, our Hawaiian programs have continued to evolve and adapt to island life. We have put together a package of survival/awareness skills that appeal to the youth, training their senses to experience the natural world in a way that cultivates connection, understanding and empathy with the remarkable environment of the Hawaiian Islands. Now, like a cresting wave, our projects from the past keep curling back on themselves, creating a spiral of new possibilities. We send our finest thoughts and our deepest *aloha* to the Hawaiian people for their strength, ingenuity and hospitality.

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