

Kuulei alo ka pō'inaole^{smith}
ELLEN PŪKA'IKAPUAOKALANI CASTILLO

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Ellen Pūka'ikapuaokalani Castillo has been teaching hula in Kailua, O'ahu since 1960. She is also a kupuna for the DOE Hawaiian Program.

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Pūka'ikapuaokalani is the name of my kupunahine on my father's side. She received rigorous training in hula, and danced only for a select audience. When I was three years old, as we were preparing to return to Honolulu from one of our visits to Tutu's Kaupō home, she decided she wanted me to stay. Although my mother and father were saddened by this separation, the family respected the Hawaiian tradition of hānai. So Tutu raised me in Maui speaking only Hawaiian, and shared with me her knowledge and love for our cultural arts, like lauhala weaving, which were a part of our daily routine. I try to instill in my students that love and respect for our language and culture. My Tutu Pūka'ikapuaokalani's name lives on through my hālau.

I studied hula with Aunty Bella Richards when I was nine years old. She had about thirty students, and we danced on her lawn on the side of her house. She emphasized hula 'auana, and later taught Tahitian dancing. Aunty Bella learned traditional hula from her *Posabella* kumu, Bella Kuamo'o, and from Mary Fujii, the mother of Aunty Edith Kanaka'ole.

I stayed with Aunty Bella for fifteen years. I served as her alaka'i, and taught with her for a couple of years as a requirement for my certificate. Aunty Bella wouldn't let her students teach without her first overseeing them. I graduated and received my certificate from her in 1958. ^P Between lessons from Aunty Bella, I received additional training in kahiko from Aunty Emma *Bishop* *Kahelelani* and later from Aunty *Lani* Kalama. who I *received* *uniki*.

Aunty Lani is a spiritual

Aunty Bella was with me during the first few hula lessons I taught. My initial teaching experience was at her home, where she made me teach a new class of thirty students. She also had private students, and I would go to their homes to give lessons. After teaching for her, I branched out on my own in 1959 or 1960, with her blessing.

I enjoy watching my students perform. As a kumu, you work hard with your students to achieve what you envision. People wonder why you keep entering competition after competition. When I see my students and the finished product presented on stage, I feel very fortunate to be able to perpetuate my culture and preserve the beauty of hula.

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'O ka hula ka'u makana na ku'u Tutu Pūka'ikapuaokalani.