

The Garden Island

Kekaha boy awarded Mellon-Hawai'i Fellowship

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KAMUELA, Hawai'i — Keao NeSmith has been selected as a 2010 Mellon-Hawai'i Doctoral Fellow in recognition of his commitment to the advancement of scholarship on Hawaiian cultural and natural environments, Hawaiian language, history, politics and society, a press release states.

A 1984 graduate of Kamehameha Schools, NeSmith was born in Waimea and raised in Kekaha. He attended Kekaha, Waimea Canyon and Waimea High schools.

He is currently a doctoral candidate in applied linguistics at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand.

NeSmith earned a bachelor's degree in Hawaiian studies with an emphasis on language at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and a master's degree in Pacific Islands studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. His area of interest is Hawaiian-language continuity in the era of Hawaiian-language revitalization.

"The most driving thought of mine as I pursue my Ph.D. is how exactly I can support my home community in Kekaha, Kaua'i, and help ensure that the language of native speakers of Hawaiian continues in as true a form to the original as possible as it is taught to Hawaiian-language learners," NeSmith said.

His doctoral dissertation is "The teaching and learning of Hawaiian language and culture in public high schools and tertiary-level schools in Hawai'i: Issues relating to linguistic and cultural continuity and discontinuity."

The main question driving his doctoral thesis is "How is Hawaiian being taught in classrooms today and what are the best methods for teaching additional languages?"

The fellowship program provides scholars the opportunity to complete their dissertations or to publish original research. Postdoctoral fellowships amount to \$50,000 each, and doctoral fellowships \$40,000.

"The Mellon-Hawai'i Fellows are outstanding for their influence on our understanding of Hawai'i and how language, culture and politics shape world history," said Dr. Shawn Kana'iaupuni of Kamehameha Schools and member of the selection committee. "These individuals are unique for their ability to bridge cultural perspectives and participate in a global knowledge network, but also as individuals who make solid contributions as leaders in our Native Hawaiian communities."

NeSmith is the second scholar with Kaua'i roots to receive the fellowship. Dr. B. Kamanamaikalani Beamer received a postdoctoral fellowship in 2008.

"Our knowledge of Hawaiian history and culture is shifting radically because of the rigorous work of NeSmith and other talented scholars and because they operate from an indigenous point of view," said Matt Hamabata, executive director of The Kohala Center.