

## Hawaiian FestPac delegation wows in Agat

By Tihu Lujan For the Post Updated 10 hrs ago



Tihu Lujan/For the Post

HULA: Members of the Hawaiian delegation to the 12th Festival of Pacific Arts perform a traditional hula dance at Sagan Bisita in Agat on Thursday, May 26. Tihu Lujan/For the Post

The 12th Festival of Pacific Arts continued with a lineup of several cultural dance performances from different visiting Pacific nations yesterday at Agat's Sagan Bisita. Starting mid-afternoon and continuing into the night, the southern culture center drew hundreds of island residents throughout the day to witness true cultural representations from Hawaii, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Kosrae, Nauru, New Zealand and the Solomon Islands.

First up were dancers from the Hawaiian delegation, who brought about 35 delegates to Guam along with demonstrations of traditional Hawaiian disciplines in cording or "taga" - a cultural necklace-making tradition - floral lei creation, kapa-making (Hawaiian fabric or cloth), weaving, carving and printing.

Most familiar and famous, however, is the traditional discipline of hula dancing. In the heat of the mid-afternoon sun, Hawaii's hula dancing delegates put on an impressive show for the hundreds in attendance.

A delegate pair sat on the stage, giving background and history to native Hawaii and the meanings behind the variety of dances performed, most of which date back centuries to pre-colonial times.

### **Hula dancer**

Ka'iulani Takamori, a member of the Hawaiian delegation, began hula dancing as an 18-years-old after completing high school. Attending her first hula class at the Leeward Community College in Pearl City, she said her master hula teacher is the reason she's danced for so long. Her teacher is also an organizer for the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts, to be held in Hawaii in 2020.

“My teacher was like, ‘You should come to my hula class.’ That was about 12 years ago and I’ve never left her,” said Takamori.

Proud of her Hawaiian culture, Takamori has always been inspired by native traditions and her own cultural experience. Having danced hula for 12 years, she said it connects her to Hawaiian culture and is a part of who she is.

“I think the thing that spoke the most to me (about hula) was that it actually gave me a cultural grounding into who I am. It kind of taught me who I am as a Hawaiian. It gave me a sense of self,” she said.

This being her first FestPac, Takamori said she enjoys the gathering and embraces other visitors, along with being a visiting delegate herself.

“What I love about FestPac is that we can just integrate with all the different cultures of the Pacific. It’s about being in this space and learning, that’s what I love the most about this,” she said.

On her experience in Guam, she said it’s just like being home, but the experience is one of a kind. Her favorite experience so far involved food.

“Of course it’s a food experience, I love to learn about cultures through food. So we tried empanadas the other day and I’m in love,” she said.

Aside from the great experience of visiting delegates, Guam residents are also out and about enjoying what’s being offered right at home.

Longtime Agat resident Sylvina Taumomoa has attended the FestPac festivities at Sagan Bisita every day since the opening ceremony Sunday, and plans to keep coming until the end.

“It’s wonderful to have all the nations coming together, but most of all I’m glad that it’s all based on their real ancestry, their real traditions, their real values, and their affinity with the sea, the land, and everything in nature. All of them expressed it in one way or another – in songs, dances and in chants,” Taumomoa said.

### **Grateful**

Grateful for the true representation of their native culture, Taumomoa praised the authenticity of the Hawaiian delegation’s performance and historical recall. A proponent of cultural sustainability and native rights, she was overwhelmed by the sincerity of their dancing and language.

“I’m very happy that they are so rooted in tradition and that they represent themselves as indigenous people with aspirations for the future that are rooted in the past,” she said. “I almost cried when they expressed that in a language; they expressed that in a dance.”