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Bishop Museum Hosts First Statewide Kōnane Tournament in Modern History

*The Ka Makou Kōnane Invitational Tournament Finals will be held on
Friday, Feb. 13, 2026 from 4-10 p.m. in historic Hawaiian Hall.*

Honolulu, Hawai‘i — [Bishop Museum](#), the State of Hawai‘i Museum of Natural and Cultural History, is hosting the first statewide kōnane tournament in modern history. The inaugural Ka Makou Kōnane Invitational Tournament Finals will be held on the first floor of the Museum’s historic Hawaiian Hall from 4-10 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 13, 2026, and will feature representatives from Hawai‘i Island, Kaua‘i, Moloka‘i, and O‘ahu. The Tournament is a partnership between the Museum, Pā Kōnane, Ka Hale Hoaka, Ka‘ūpūlehu Cultural Center, HawaiianCheckers.com, and Akau Boards, and uplifts a resurgence of interest in the Native Hawaiian game of strategy.

“Kōnane is one of the greatest achievements of our kūpuna (ancestors),” said Kapena Baptista, founder of Pā Kōnane, a kōnane advocacy and players association, and one of the principal organizers of the Tournament. “To me, it’s more than a game, it’s a teaching tool, a mindset, a portal into the world of our ancestors.”

Baptista shares that the rules of kōnane — played on stone or wooden boards with black lava and white coral pieces — are simple: Set up the board in alternating black and white pieces, then remove the two pieces from the very center of the board. Starting with black, each color will then jump over their opponent into an empty square until one of the colors is not able to jump anymore. If one color can no longer jump, or ‘ai (eat) another piece, they lose.

Multiple jumps are allowed but only in one direction, and taking multiple pieces is not obligatory.

“Take only what you need, and you’ll likely win. Take too much, and you may lose, said Baptista.

“Kōnane is one of the most accessible aspects of our Hawaiian culture due to how easy it is to learn how to play, but so profoundly deep that it would take a lifetime to become a true master. On its surface it’s a game, but below that is a whole ocean of meaning, philosophy, and mathematical complexity.”

Qualifying matches have been held across the islands over the past month. During the Finals, the eight winning competitors from around the state (first and second from each representing island) will play in single-elimination matches until the final two are determined. For the championship match, the

competitors will play on an historic kūpuna papamū (board) made of koa wood from Bishop Museum's cultural collection. This board was donated to the Museum by Princess Elizabeth Kahanu, wife of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole, as part of the Kalaniana'ole-Kapi'olani Collection. Its connection to the Kalākaua family is notable; according to former Bishop Museum Director William Tufts Brigham, both Queen Kapi'olani and King Kalākaua were expert players of kōnane.

"It's unknown when the kūpuna papamū was last played before its accession into our collection in 1923," said Kayla Fernandez, Bishop Museum Ethnology collection manager. "The Ka Makou Kōnane Invitational Tournament will mark the first time this board has been played on in more than 100 years, a revival meant to inspire a new generation."

The final two competitors will not only add to kōnane's history by being the first to play on the revered kūpuna papamū in more than a century, but the winner — the Tournament's Grand Champion — will be awarded a hand-crafted replica of the board, gifted by Akau Boards — also historic in that it will be the first replica of its kind.

"What makes Hawai'i unique among places is our connection to culture passed down from countless generations," shares Baptista. "For a very lucky few, this means interacting directly with mea (objects) that are of kūpuna make and origin. It's a huge privilege and an honor for the two players that make it to the very top. Getting to that point isn't easy and being able to touch and play on the same board as our kūpuna, is something profoundly meaningful to us as Hawaiians. The fact that the kūpuna papamū hasn't been played on in over 100 years means that it deserves a beautiful awakening with a game between two highly skilled players. I think the board would enjoy that very much."

Ka Makou Kōnane Invitational Tournament Finals

- Friday, Feb. 13, 2026
- During Museum After Hours, 4-10 p.m.
- Bishop Museum | Hawaiian Hall First Floor
- \$10 pre-sale, \$15 at door; free for Bishop Museum Members
- Purchase tickets, view schedule, and learn more at BishopMuseum.org/Konane2026.

News Media

- Please access photos and video clips of tournament finalists, and the kūpuna papamū, in this Box folder: <https://bishopmuseum-public.box.com/s/5v8o4qxaxw73o3743xalavjto1vrs9hl>
- Competitors:
 - Moloka'i:
 - Hanohano Naehu
 - Kenny Adachi
 - Kaua'i:
 - Billy Kinney
 - Kimo Chun
 - Hawai'i Island:
 - Jonathan Jay
 - Yuna Inoue
 - O'ahu:
 - Kapena Baptista
 - Kahekili Yung
- Media are invited to cover the Tournament Finals with access to the playing floor as well as a specially cordoned-off area on the second floor of Hawaiian Hall, providing birds-eye coverage of the Final Match on the kūpuna papamū. Please RSVP with Krislyn Hashimoto via the contact information above.

- Event Program Highlights:
 - 5:30 p.m.: Top 8 Competitors Play
 - 7 p.m.: Top 4 Competitors Play
 - 8:30 p.m.: 2 Finalists Play
 - 10 p.m.: Champion Announced

About Kōnane

(contributed by Kapena Baptista and Museum staff)

Kōnane was once so commonplace in Hawaiian society, few took the time to write about it in detail. While kōnane exists in various mo‘olelo (stories, history) of ali‘i (chiefs) playing to at least the 15th century, the earliest written account of kōnane actually comes from a man named James King, a crew member aboard Capt. James Cook’s final voyage in 1776. He wrote:

“[The Hawaiians] have a game very much like our draughts [checkers]; but, if one may judge from the number of squares, it is much more intricate. The board is about two feet long, and it is divided into two hundred and thirty-eight squares, of which there are fourteen in a row (i.e., 14×17), and they make use of black and white pebbles, which they move from square to square.”

This is the very first comparison of kōnane to European checkers, and “checkers” has remained a comparative label meant to make the game more understandable from a Western perspective ever since.

Unfortunately, this has had consequences on the way people make, play, and understand kōnane itself. Kōnane has been referred to as “Hawaiian Checkers” for so long that kōnane boards are often made like square checkers boards. Home kōnane boards may be square 6×6 , 8×8 , or 10×10 , similar to a European-style checkers board.

In a survey conducted of all six existing wooden kūpuna kōnane boards and more than a dozen stone boards along the Kona coast of Hawai‘i Island, all traditional kōnane boards consisted of an even number and an odd number (i.e., 6×7 , 8×11 , 12×15 , or 14×17). Not a single board was a square.

This finding is significant as it represents a fundamental difference between how our kūpuna played kōnane and how it is played today. In a correctly configured Even x Odd board, two fundamentally Hawaiian concepts emerge on the board itself. The first is the “piko,” or the center of the board. On an Even x Odd board, there are true piko for both black and white pieces, and in most historical boards, this part was inlaid with precious material such as shell or a human tooth.

The other concept that emerges on an Even x Odd board are the Hawaiian cardinal directions. In kōnane, the black pieces are made from basaltic lava, the very same lava that form the Hawaiian Islands, and the white pieces are made from coral found in the ocean. The odd side of the kōnane board will have its corner pieces be of the same color, revealing the “ma uka” or upland-side of the board, and the “ma kai” or ocean-side of the board. Traditionally, players would sit on the corresponding ma uka or ma kai side depending on the color they are playing.

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About Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the State of Hawai‘i Museum of Natural and Cultural History:

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum’s mission is to inspire our community and visitors through the exploration, celebration, and perpetuation of the extraordinary history, culture, and environment of Hawai‘i and the Pacific. The Museum was founded in 1889 by Charles Reed Bishop in memory of his wife Bernice Pauahi Bishop, a royal descendant of King Kamehameha I. Today, the Museum thrives as an educational center for

the community and is widely regarded as the world's premier institution for Hawaiian and Pacific content.

Bishop Museum's vast collections of more than 25 million objects and specimens represent nine disciplines and include more than 22 million biological specimens, over 2 million cultural objects, 115,000 historical publications, and 1 million photographs, films, works of art, audio recordings, and manuscripts. These collections tell the stories of the cultures and biodiversity of Hawai'i and the Pacific as well as the proud legacy of scholarly research spanning 130 years.

Bishop Museum proudly serves more than 200,000 visitors each year, including 20,000 children on school visits. Guests are encouraged to pre-plan their trip to #HawaiiisMuseum with its [free digital guide](#), available through Bloomberg Connects.

To learn more about the Museum's research, collections, exhibits, and programs, visit [BishopMuseum.org](https://www.bishopmuseum.org), follow @BishopMuseum on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), visit Bishop Museum's [YouTube](#) channel, or call (808) 847-3511. Bishop Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Bishop Museum is proud to be an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer, and welcomes applicants from the military, veterans, and those with disabilities. Learn about careers at Bishop Museum at [BishopMuseum.org/Careers](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/Careers) and on its [LinkedIn](#) page.

[Bishop Museum Press](#) is Hawai'i's oldest book publisher and one of the first scholarly publishers in the Western Hemisphere, and has published over 1,200 titles and distributed over 1 million books in 72 countries worldwide. Bishop Museum hosts a restaurant and gift shop on campus, [Tūtū's Place by Highway Inn](#) and [Shop Pacifica by Nā Mea Hawai'i](#).

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