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## Native Hawaiians gain Kapolei lots

### Construction of homes on the leased land will begin next month

*By Audrey McAvoy  
Associated Press*

Native Hawaiians yesterday took hold of more than 120 leased home lots at a new development in Kapolei.

The families weren't able to move in, though: The lots are empty, and construction won't begin until next month.

The lots were distributed under the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, a federal law enacted in 1921 that set aside for Native Hawaiians about 200,000 acres of land that belonged to Hawaiian royalty.

The law created a program of loans and long-term leases enabling Native Hawaiians to live on the land.

Any resident who is at least 50 percent Hawaiian is eligible to sign a 99-year lease for \$1 a year. These leases may be extended for another 100 years.

But the program has been plagued for years by backlogs. Some applicants have been on the waiting list for decades.

Lloyd Yonenaka, a Department of Hawaiian Home Lands spokesman, said some people were stuck on the waiting list because they couldn't qualify for a loan to build a house on a lot.

To fix that, the department recently created a program giving lease awardees about two years to improve their credit records before they're required to take out a mortgage.

The first lessees to take advantage of this program — called the Undivided Interest Awards program — will be moving into the Kapolei homes.

The department said one person who took advantage of the program only qualified for a \$118,000 loan two years ago — short of the amount she needed to build a house.

This year, after improving her credit score, the single mother qualified for a \$252,000 loan.

Micah Kane, department chairman, said he hopes to replicate the program on Kaua'i, Maui and the Big Island.

"It is exciting for them to realize a dream and exciting for us to build their new homes," Kane said in a statement.

Of the lots distributed yesterday, 111 will have homes built by Gentry Kapolei Development. Lessees of the other 10 lots plan to build their own homes.

Gentry Kapolei offered lessees five building options ranging in size from two to five bedrooms. Prices ranged from \$221,300 to \$295,300.

The subdivision has 403 lots altogether. The department expects to distribute the remaining lots in two phases.