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Explain the impact that Udaleku has had on your identity as a Basque teenager

I am Basque. My grandfather comes from Saint-Michel, a little village, not quite unlike most other towns in the Basque Country. He immigrated from the Basque Country to the United States and established a new life in north-eastern Montana with help from some of his family who had immigrated as well. Eventually, he married my grandmother and had a family of his own which ultimately resulted in my existence. It is obvious that because of this, I am hereditarily Basque. However, this alone does not mean that I have a connection with the Basque culture. Sure, my genealogy states that I am Basque, but that itself does not form my identity as a Basque individual. Udaleku is a summer camp program which is designed for the Basque youth. The camp itself aims to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Basque culture, language, and traditions. Udaleku has had a great deal of influence in establishing my personal identity as a Basque teenager in a number of different ways. When identifying with a certain group or idea, it always first comes from the knowledge of what that group or idea really is. As I have attended Udaleku, I have found that the camp has been especially successful in educating and immersing me into the culture itself. Because of Udaleku, I was able to gain insight and respect for all Basque traditions whether it be song and dance, playing cards, pelota, txistu, or history. One great aspect of all traditions that Udaleku has taught me in particular would be with food. Here in America, it is rare that we sit down for hours and just talk and eat. American eating habits are usually more rushed and without thought. In addition, it is also found that because of how Udaleku is set up, and how information at the camp is presented, it is more enjoyable and exciting when traveling to the homeland. You find yourself appreciating the cuisine, all the quaint villages (even if they are the ones that party the hardest), and the area in general. Most importantly, you gain understanding of the culture.

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I find that Udaleku is not just about the education of the culture, but also about building connections with those who are just like you. Udaleku has helped me build connections and relationships with other Basque youth. Because of this camp, I have developed many new friends as well as stories and memories with them. The camp has allowed me to come out of my own social bubble. I remember well the fear I had of staying with new people I did not know. I would be living in an unfamiliar environment for almost two whole weeks. There was nothing that I would have experienced quite like it. Then, I met my group and my host family. A wave of relief washed over me as I came to realize how kind and sociable the people were around me. These people had the same interests as me, enjoyed the same games, and appreciated the same foods as I did.

In addition to the connections that I had made with those of my age group Udaleku has allowed me intergenerational connection. This connection is especially important in any culture or group. The ability to build relationships with the generations that came before simply because of what we had learned at Udaleku is astonishing. I found that Mus was especially helpful in creating and strengthening these types of relationships. For instance, I couldn't really connect personally with my aitaxi. He lived in an incredibly rural place and I lived in Modesto. Despite

this, I was able to eventually connect with him the next time I came from Udaleku to Montana. This was of course because I had just learned to play Mus. Even though he had annihilated me in the game, we still had built a great connection.

All in all, the impact and influence that Udaleku has had on me is remarkable. I have learned to be open to trying new and seemingly daunting experiences. I never regret and will never regret attending Udaleku. It has allowed me to embrace part of who I am. The Basque culture is rich in its history and tradition, Udaleku has shown me this and much more. It has been my experience that the camp has made me more confident in participating in club events and experiencing more. These experiences from Udaleku have had a tremendous effect on my identity and have helped me realize that I truly am Basque.