Malaki (March) 2025 | Vol. 42, No. 03

Ka Wai Ola

NEWS FOR THE LĀHUI

kawaiola.news

For seven straight years, Hawai'i's population has been declining and for Native Hawaiians and kama'āina it is primarily the lack of affordable housing combined with a high cost of living and low salaries that has driven them out. In our cover story, Kanaka 'Ōiwi data scientist Matt Jachowski and writer Marina Starleaf Riker, both from Maui, examine the affordable housing issue - and suggest solutions. - *Photo: Lahaina Community Land Trust*

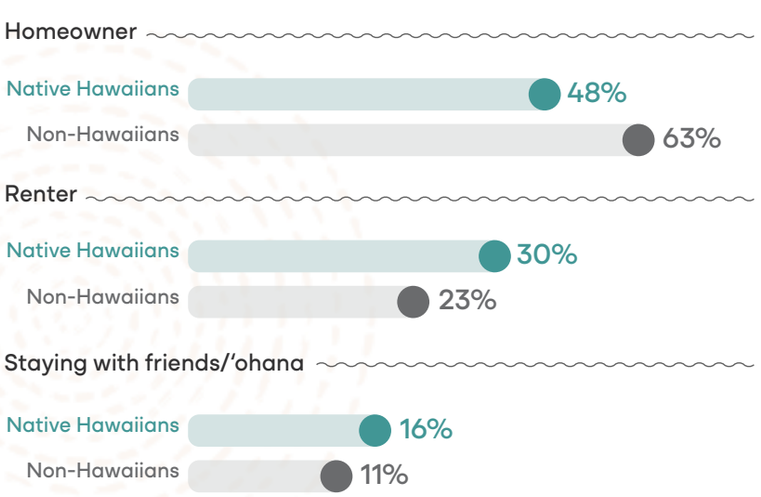
ʻImi Pono

Hawaiʻi Wellbeing Survey

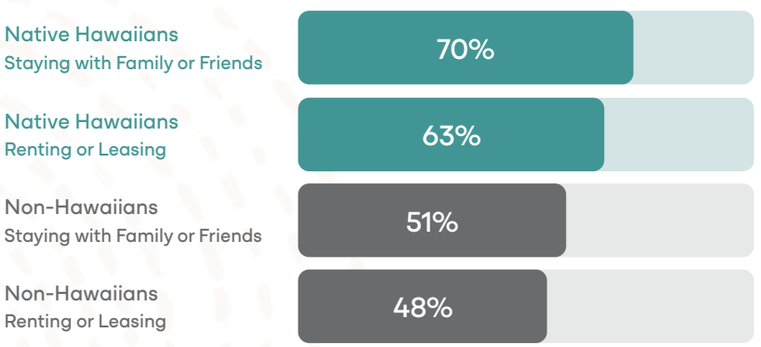
TAKE THE SURVEY

Native Hawaiians are *less likely* to own homes, and more likely to rent or stay with ʻohana as compared to non-Hawaiians. For renters and those living with ʻohana, concerns about housing affordability is much greater.

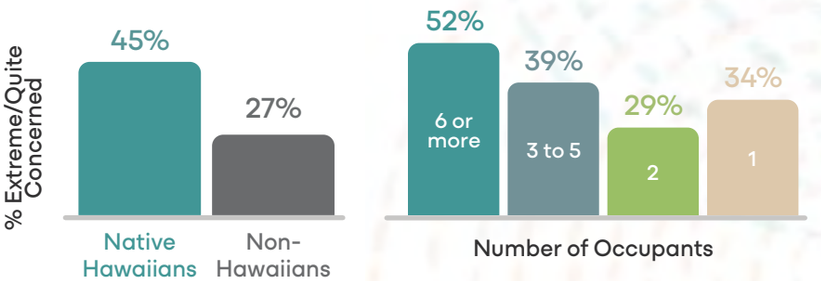
Housing status, by Native Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian



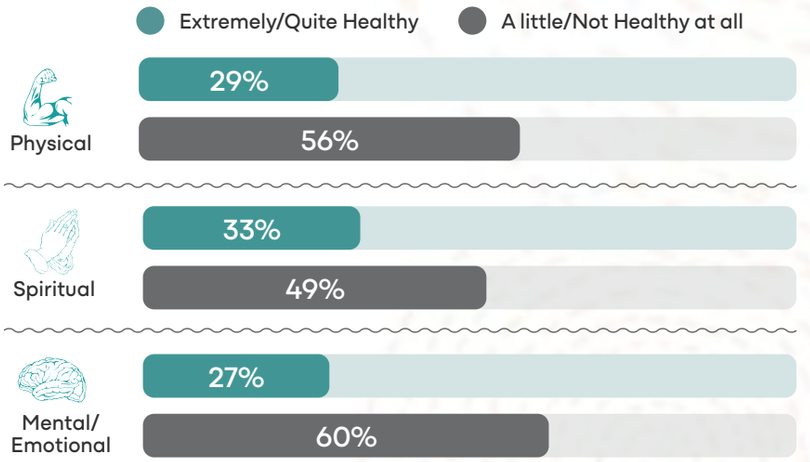
% Extremely/Quite Concerned about Housing Affordability



Native Hawaiians and residents with larger households (6 or more people) are *more worried* about affordable housing compared to non-Hawaiians or those living in homes with fewer occupants.



The resulting *anxiety over housing and finances* directly correlates to lower levels of physical, spiritual and mental/emotional health.



Despite experiencing greater housing stress than other Hawaiʻi residents, the survey also indicates that Native Hawaiians are more likely to provide financial or housing support to ʻohana and friends than non-Hawaiians.

Kamehameha Schools · OHA Office of Hawaiian Affairs · Liliʻuokalani Trust · Papa Ola Lōkahi · The Queen's Health Systems · Marzano Research

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SB 268 (Relating to Island Burial Councils): A Critical Step Toward Asserting Ea

Aloha mai kākou,

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) continues to champion the rights of Native Hawaiians, and Senate Bill 268 represents a significant step forward in the long struggle to restore and assert Ea – our sovereignty, self-determination, and ability to care for our own.

This bill is a powerful assertion of our inherent right to mālama our iwi kūpuna without interference from outside entities, including developers and landowners who have historically and until today, continue to disregard the sanctity of our ancestors.

Kanaka ‘Ōiwi, “native person” or “native descendant” emphasizes our ancestral ties to the ‘āina. ‘Ōiwi means “of the bone” or “of native birth,” reinforcing our deep genealogical and spiritual connection to Hawai‘i and our ancestors.

For generations, Kānaka ‘Ōiwi have fought to reclaim, repatriate and mālama our iwi kūpuna, recognizing that their remains are not mere artifacts, but beloved ancestors who continue to guide and connect us to our land and identity.

Key Provisions of SB 268:

- **Reduction in Council Size:** The bill proposes decreasing the number of members on each Island Burial Council from nine to seven. This change is intended to streamline operations and facilitate more efficient decision-making processes.
- **Elimination of Development Interests:** SB 268 seeks to remove the mandate that reserves seats for representatives of development and large landowner interests on the councils. Currently, up to three seats on the O‘ahu, Maui/Lāna‘i, Kaua‘i/Ni‘ihau, and Hawai‘i councils, and one seat on the Moloka‘i council, are designated for these representatives. The bill advocates that all seats be filled by individuals with cultural expertise and ancestral ties, ensuring that decisions are guided by Native Hawaiian perspectives.

SB 268 affirms our right to determine how best to mālama our kūpuna. It ensures that Native Hawaiians, through appropriate cultural and community oversight, will be the final authority in decisions regarding our iwi. This is “ea” – our ability to govern ourselves, to uphold our traditions, and to protect what is sacred without having to seek permission from institutions that do not share our values or respect our history.

Too often, landowners and developers have prioritized profit over cultural preservation, treating our ancestors’ final resting places as obstacles to be moved rather than revered sites deserving protection.

SB 268 is one way OHA is asserting and championing ea. It is a reminder that our sovereignty is not limited to political recognition – it is lived and expressed in the choices we make, in the kuleana we carry, and in the laws we shape to reflect our values. With this bill, we take another step toward the restoration of our rights as a people.

This is not just about legislation; it is about justice. It is about righting the wrongs of the past and ensuring that the remains of our ancestors will not be disturbed or desecrated. It is about setting a precedent: that when it comes to our culture, our traditions, and our kuleana, only we, the Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, have the right to decide. ■

Me ka ha‘aha‘a,

Stacy Kealohalani Ferreira
Ka Pouhana | Chief Executive Officer

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OHA Selects New Community Engagement Director

By Puanani Fernandez-Akamine

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) has named Lise Vaughan-Sekona, Esq., as OHA's Community Engagement Director, filling yet another key position on its leadership team. Vaughan-Sekona reports to OHA Chief Operating Officer Kēhaulani Pu'u.

"We are so pleased to have Lise join OHA's team," said Pu'u. "Her diverse background, experiences, and her heart for community, bring great value to this role and all that OHA Community Engagement encompasses. We look forward to strengthening our work with our beneficiaries under her leadership."

As Community Engagement Director, Vaughan-Sekona will oversee the development and implementation of community outreach initiatives for OHA to help inform, involve and engage the Native Hawaiian community, working closely with OHA's advocacy, communications, and land divisions. Vaughan-Sekona oversees a team of OHA beneficiary services agents located on five islands with kuleana to help identify high-priority needs, interests and initiatives within their respective communities and find ways for OHA to engage with and support them.

Prior to joining OHA's leadership team, Vaughan-Sekona was the program development and grant manager at EPIC (Effective Planning & Innovative Communication) 'Ohana, a Hawai'i nonprofit corporation devoted to family conferencing, facilitation, training and program development. She has also served as vice president of community services at the Domestic Violence Action Center,

Lise Vaughn-Sekona, Esq. - *Courtesy Photo*

and for 12 years was a private practice attorney focusing in the areas of contracts, mediation, Indigenous Peoples, Native Hawaiian rights, landlord/tenant, real property and administrative law.

"I am humbled to serve our lāhui as the director of community engagement," Vaughan-Sekona said. "I look forward to collaborating with the people and organizations that are doing the good work to improve the wellbeing of all Native Hawaiians. E ola mau!"

Vaughan-Sekona lives in Honolulu and is a graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama. She has bachelor's degrees in political science and economics from the University of Colorado, a master's degree in business administration from UH Mānoa's Shidler School of Business, a juris doctorate from UH Mānoa's William S. Richardson School of Law, and a Master of Laws degree in Indigenous Peoples law from the University of Oklahoma John B. Turner School of Law. ■

Sylva Named New OHA BOT Chief of Staff

By Bill Brennan

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) has appointed Summer Lee Haunani Sylva, Esq. as Chief of Staff for the OHA Board of Trustees. A highly respected attorney and Native Hawaiian advocate, Sylva brings a wealth of experience in governance, cultural stewardship, and advocacy for Native Hawaiian rights to this critical role.

Board Chair Kaialiʻi Kahele expressed his excitement about Sylva's appointment, saying, "Summer is a proven leader with a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the Hawaiian community. Her dedication to justice and her expertise in policy and advocacy will strengthen OHA's ability to fulfill its mission. I am confident she will serve as an invaluable partner to our board as we navigate this critical time for our lāhui."

Sylva most recently served as a senior advisor in the U.S. Department of the Interior under then-Secretary Deb Haaland where she played a key role in advancing Indigenous rights and addressing issues critical to Native Hawaiians and other Indigenous peoples.

Prior to her tenure in Washington, D.C., she led the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation as executive director, spearheading efforts to protect Native Hawaiian rights and natural resources. Sylva is also the former president of the Native Hawaiian Bar Association.

OHA CEO Stacy Ferreira welcomed Sylva to her new position, saying, "Summer's leadership and commitment to our lāhui are inspiring, and I look forward to collaborating with her as we work to advance our collective goals. Her ability to align strategy, policy, and action will undoubtedly enhance OHA's efforts to protect and uplift the Native Hawaiian people."

The appointment was also applauded by Haaland, who worked closely with Sylva during her time in Washington. "Summer Sylva was a powerful advocate for her community while we served together at the [U.S. Department of the] Interior. OHA will benefit from her skills

Summer Lee Haunani Sylva, Esq. - *Courtesy Photo*

and passion; her unwavering commitment to her land and people will have a lasting, positive impact on the Hawaiian community and all Indigenous peoples now and for the future," Haaland said.

A graduate of 'Iolani High School with a juris doctorate in public law from Cornell University School of Law, Sylva has devoted her career to empowering Hawaiian communities and championing equity and cultural preservation.

As chief of staff, Sylva will oversee the operations of the OHA Board of Trustees, manage strategic initiatives, and work closely with the board, the CEO, and stakeholders to drive OHA's mission to improve the wellbeing of Native Hawaiians.

"It is an honor to commit myself daily, as OHA has since 1978, to bettering the conditions of Native Hawaiians. OHA's establishment and service through the decades have been informed and inspired by our lāhui's collective social and cultural activism," Sylva said.

"I am humbled to be working with OHA's board and staff to carry forward the kuleana and legacy of advancing justice, promoting self-determination, and empowering our communities and organizations to thrive and grow next generation leaders who we hope will surpass us. I can think of few more meaningful or impactful missions to be a part of at this pivotal time." ■

Proposed Landfill Site is on Ag-Zoned Land Above an Aquifer

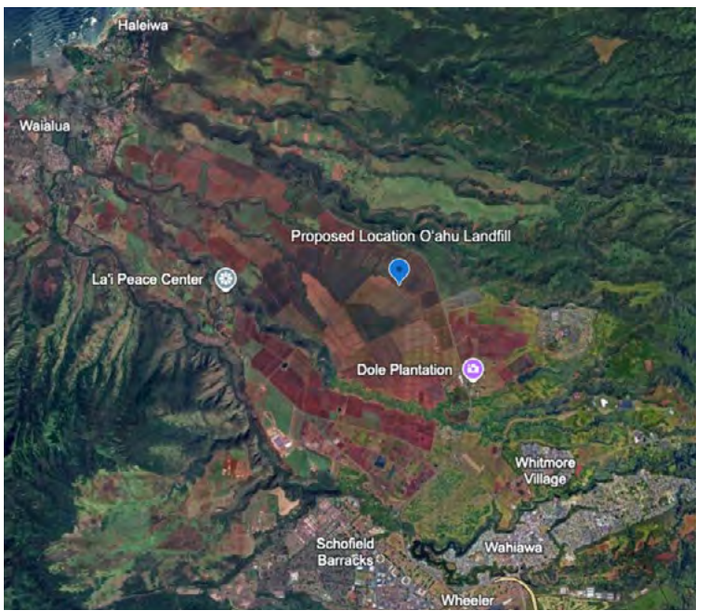
By Hannah Ka'iulani Coburn

Twenty miles from Honolulu, on O'ahu's cool central plain, the former plantation town of Wahiawā – best known for its fertile agricultural land – recently gained the dubious distinction as the site selected by the City & County of Honolulu for a new landfill.

Since the proposed site was announced last December, concerns have been raised about the location by residents, legislators and the Board of Water Supply.

In 2019, the State of Hawai'i Land Use Commission ordered the closure of Waimānalo Gulch Sanitary Landfill (WGSL) in West O'ahu by March 2, 2028, due to concerns about its environmental impact and the need to reduce waste diversion in the area – for decades, West O'ahu and the Wai'anae Coast have unfairly borne the brunt of O'ahu's waste management "strategy."

The selected 150-acre Wahiawā site is 800 feet above an aquifer. Those opposed to the site are concerned about the potential contamination of O'ahu's drinking water.



The city's proposed landfill site in Wahiawā is 150 acres of agriculturally zoned land 800 feet above an aquifer. - *Photo: Rep. Amy Perruso via IG/Google Earth*

"We are 100% dependent on groundwater or underground sources of fresh water to serve our need for drinking water," said Honolulu Board of Water Supply Manager and Chief Engineer Ernie Lau. "Groundwater and underground aquifers are vital to our survival."

Lau explained that leachate (contaminated water), generated by rain falling through waste in a landfill, is a huge concern.

"Leachate can leak out of the [landfill] containment systems," Lau said. "Landfills are permanent features, so once you put it there, fill it up, and cap it, it's there forever. [But a] containment system may not last forever. At some point, it may start to leak leachate. And as it leaks, gravity will pull it down and rainfall will help drive it further down, deeper underground, until it hits the underground aquifer."

Sharing this concern, some state lawmakers have introduced bills during this current legislative session to prevent landfills from being built over aquifers.

Councilmember Andria Tupola was shocked to hear the announcement and to have been excluded from discussions that led to the decision. "I think everybody was shocked that it was in Wahiawā and the second shock was when they specifically said they were going to put it on ag land," she said. "Third, it was a shock because we don't own the property. How in the world are you going to announce a site that we don't have jurisdiction over, and the landowner had not even been engaged yet?"

Contamination of O'ahu's precious fresh water reserves resulting from the Red Hill fuel spill in 2021 is still fresh in our collective memories so the location of the selected landfill site above the aquifer is especially concerning. The Hālawa Shaft, which provided 20% of O'ahu's drinking water, was shut down in 2023 due to contamination concerns and remains closed.

"Out of everything that needed to be considered for this landfill site, I thought that the first would be the aquifer," Tupola commented. "The whole thing about public hearings is that we would have been able to weigh out this decision, and to see the priority order and how the decision was made. We have a finite amount of land on this island, so it would have been cool to announce that there's an interim site but our push is going to be towards not landfilling anymore."

Lau said when making decisions like this we must look ahead 100 years or more.

"There's a saying about 'looking seven generations ahead' and that is what we need to consider because our decisions today can affect the lives of the people that haven't been born – and then they will have to deal with the problems," he said.

"This landfill is projected to have capacity for the next 20 or 30 years. So, then the question becomes, where do you place the next landfill? And the next?

"We can't keep putting landfills above our only source of fresh water. That's not sustainable," Lau reiterated. "The solution to how we manage our 'ōpala is not an easy problem [to solve]. And it's not just the city, the mayor, or the department of environmental services. We, as an entire community, have to be part of the solution."

O'ahu has a resident population of about one million and about 115,000 tourists roaming around on any given day. Already, 26% of the island's land is considered "urban" with only 33% zoned for agriculture and 41% for conservation. Thus, the appropriation of agricultural land located above an aquifer for a landfill that may or may not leak in 30 years is both reckless and short-sighted.

Given Hawai'i's finite land resources, 21st century solutions to waste management need to be adopted.

Solutions could include more aggressive recycling programs, organic waste composting on an industrial scale, or waste to energy incineration. How we manage our waste today needs to take future generations into consideration.

As a stop-gap solution, residents of Wahiawā and state officials have also proposed revisiting conversations with the U.S military to offer land currently under their jurisdiction instead of moving forward with the current proposal.

The next public meeting on this issue will be before the North Shore Neighborhood Board on March 25. ■

Hoʻokele Pololei iā Hōkūleʻa

Celebrating 50 Years of Traditional Voyaging

By Kalawaiʻa Nunies

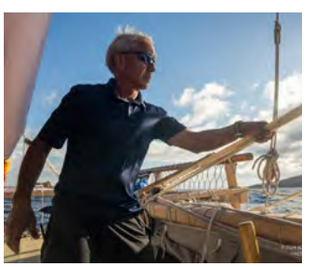
This month, *Hōkūleʻa* will celebrate 50 years of voyaging. The acclaimed Hawaiian voyaging canoe first launched from Kualoa, Oʻahu, in Kāneʻohe Bay, on March 8, 1975. *Hōkūleʻaʻs* first open ocean voyage took place just over a year later, when she departed Hawaiʻi on May 1, 1976, on her famous inaugural voyage, making landfall in Tahiti a month later on June 1.

As *Hōkūleʻa* sailed into Papeʻete Harbor she was greeted by a crowd of more than 17,000 – more than half of the island's residents turned out. There was good reason for the excitement that *Hōkūleʻaʻs* maiden voyage generated across Polynesia – it was the first traditional open-ocean voyage from Hawaiʻi in 600 years.

Hōkūleʻa was designed by artist and historian Herb Kawainui Kāne, one of the founders of the Polynesian Voyaging Society (PVS). Although the skill to build *Hōkūleʻa* was retained, the art and science of traditional navigation had been lost to our people.

So PVS looked outside of Polynesia and found a traditional navigator, the renowned Mau Piailug from the island of Satawal in Micronesia. Piailug navigated *Hōkūleʻa* to Tahiti in 1976 and then agreed to train young ʻŌiwi waterman Nainoa Thompson. In 1980, Thompson was able to replicate the 1976 voyage to Tahiti.

In 2007, Piailug inducted five Hawaiians into "Pwo" – the ninth of 15 degrees in Micronesia's Weriyeng School of Navigation. In addition to Thompson, the Pwo navigators included the late Chad Kālepa Baybayan, Milton "Shorty" Bertelmann, Bruce Blankenfelt, and Chadd ʻŌnohi Paishon. Piailug passed in 2010, but thanks to him, Hawaiʻi has reclaimed traditional navigational ʻike and is training new generations of Hawaiian navigators.



Nainoa Thompson, Pwo navigator and president of the Polynesian Voyaging Society's board of directors, was the first Native Hawaiian to navigate from Hawai'i to Tahiti and back using traditional methods learned from renowned Micronesian navigator Mau Piailug of Satawal. - *Photo: Polynesian Voyaging Society*

Hōkūleʻaʻs creation and inaugural voyage during the 1970s was a key part of the "Hawaiian Renaissance" – a time of renewal for Native Hawaiians and among the first steps taken to reclaim our history, culture, traditions, language and identity. Today, there are seven double-hulled Hawaiian open-ocean voyaging canoes in use across the pae ʻāina.

Hōkūleʻa has not only inspired generations of Native Hawaiians; over the years she has inspired other Indigenous Pacific peoples to reclaim their own voyaging traditions. Each voyage of *Hōkūleʻa* has brought new insights and revelations about the voyaging traditions of our ancestors. It is an understatement to describe her impact as profound.

Since she first touched the ocean in 1975, *Hōkūleʻa* has sailed more than 250,000 nautical miles. This includes her notable Mālama Honua Voyage (2013-2017) a circumnavigation of the planet. On this epic journey she logged 47,000 nautical miles and connected with people in 18 nations and hundreds of port around the world, sailing from Moananuiākea (the Pacific Ocean) to the Indian Ocean, around the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa), across the Atlantic Ocean into the Caribbean, then through the Panama Canal and back to Moananuiākea.

In June 2023, *Hōkūleʻa*, along with sister canoe *Hikianalia*, began her 15th major voyage: Moananuiākea. The ambitious, four-year expedition will include some 400 crew members and sail an estimated 43,000 nautical miles around the Pacific stopping at 345 ports in 36 countries. However, the journey was paused out of respect for the ʻohana at home affected by the Maui wildfires and the the canoes returned to Hawaiʻi in December 2023. For the past year, *Hōkūleʻa* and *Hikianalia* have sailed around the pae ʻāina to help educate, inspire and heal our community.

The Moananuiākea Voyage is set to resume this month after *Hōkūleʻaʻs* 50th anniversary celebration concludes.

Join in Celebrating Hōkūleʻa's 50th Anniversary!

Hōkūleʻa's 50th Birthday Commemoration
Saturday, March 8, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Kualoa Regional Park

This free, family-friendly event at the 16th Annual Kualoa/Hakipuʻu Canoe Festival will commemorate Hōkūleʻa's historic launch on March 8, 1975, at the very same site where she was first assembled, blessed, and entered the ocean.

Hōkūleʻa Dockside Canoe Tours
Monday March 10, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Hawaiʻi Convention Center

The public is invited to step aboard Hōkūleʻa and hear from young crew members and navigators who are training to take leadership roles in the next chapters of the Moananuiākea Voyage.

Hōkūleʻa's 50th Birthday: E Ola Mau (Public Event)
Friday March 14, 5:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Bishop Museum After-Hours Celebration

The Bishop Museum will host an after-hours event that will pay tribute to the canoe's origins and legacy with special exhibits and programming dedicated to the history of traditional Polynesian voyaging. Tickets are $10 - $15. For program details or to purchase tickets go to: www.bishopmuseum.org/exhibits-and-programs.

Polynesion Voyaging Society (PVS) invites the public to participate in these events and to submit their pictures, videos and memories to their website. To learn more, visit PVS's website at:
hokulea.com

Makali‘i’s 30th Birthday - A Look Back and a Look Forward

Thirty years ago, on Feb. 4, 1995, the double-hulled voyaging canoe, Makali‘i, was born and, just 24 days later, she set off on her maiden voyage to Tahiti. Makali‘i was built especially for the people of Hawai‘i Island by brothers Clay and "Shorty" Bertelmann, along with Tiger Espere - all three of whom are Hōkūle‘a crewmembers. - *Photo: Nā Kālai Wa‘a*

By Christine Hitt

Thirty years ago, the Hawai‘i Island voyaging canoe *Makali‘i* launched from Kawaihae. A younger sibling to *Hōkūle‘a* and *Hawai‘iloa*, the wa‘a kaulua was built to give voyagers and their students a way to continue the cultural practice on the island.

Since then, *Makali‘i* has engaged with the community, teaching generations of voyagers. It’s also traveled to Tahiti, Satawal and Mokumanamana in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

This year, Hawai‘i Island and the wa‘a community celebrated *Makali‘i’s* birthday and all that it has accomplished at the Mālama Makali‘i Ocean Festival. The event, led by Nā Maka Onaona, Kawaihae Canoe Club and Nā Kālai Wa‘a, was filled with music, locally sourced food and included 25 different organizations sharing their missions with festival attendees.

“It was a day to celebrate all the great work that our community is doing and *Makali‘i* gets to be a part of, and you know, for people to understand that what we do from the deck of the voyaging canoe really is because of the support of our community,” said Chadd Paishon, Pwo navigator and executive director of the nonprofit Nā Kālai Wa‘a. “All the things that we’re able to do in voyaging, it starts from the island.”

The first Mālama Makali‘i Ocean Festival was held in 2012, and the last festival was 10 years ago in 2015. Paishon said that after seeing the overwhelming success of the event, they want to throw another one next year.

Makali‘i is born

Nā Kālai Wa‘a, which means “canoe builders,” was founded by Clay Bertelmann, who voyaged on *Hōkūle‘a* and trained under Micronesian master navigator Mau Piailug.

Bertelmann dreamed of a voyaging canoe for Hawai‘i Island, and so he and fellow *Hōkūle‘a* crewmembers Tiger Espere and Pwo navigator Milton “Shorty” Bertelmann, who is Clay’s brother, started the grassroots project with the help of volunteers and contributions from businesses and community organizations.

For nine months, they worked at Parker Ranch inside a quonset hut until the voyaging canoe was finished. This would become the second canoe Nā Kālai Wa‘a built. The first was *Mauloa*, a single-hull traditional sailing canoe, completed two years earlier.

Named after the navigator in the legend of Hawai‘i Loa and Nā Huihui o Makali‘i (the constellation also known as Pleiades), the 54-foot double-hulled voyaging canoe, *Makali‘i*, was born on Feb. 4, 1995. She set off on her maiden voyage just 24 days later, meeting up with *Hōkūle‘a* and *Hawai‘iloa* in Tahiti.

The next pivotal moment for *Makali‘i* came in 1999. “We sailed Papa Mau home to Satawal to his home island to thank him in front of his people for all that he’s done for us in Hawai‘i and through voyaging,” Paishon said.

At the time, Clay asked Mau what they could give him as a gift in return. Mau responded: a canoe. Clay thought he was referring to a Micronesian canoe but that was not the case.

“They said, no, he wants a Hawaiian voyaging canoe so that when the people in his home island see the canoe they’ll always remember about Hawai‘i and the connection that we share,” Paishon recalled.

Nā Kālai Wa‘a built a second voyaging canoe, *Alingano Maisu*, and sailed it to Micronesia with *Hōkūle‘a* in 2007.

In between trips, Nā Kālai Wa‘a focuses on educational programs, introducing students to voyaging and wayfinding. The organization also worked with Hawai‘i Land Trust to save the lands of Mahukona in North Kohala from future development. Mahukona is a training ground for navigators and holds many historic cultural sites, including Ko‘a Heiau Holomoana, one of the rare heiau dedicated to voyaging.

“The last voyage that we did aboard *Makali‘i*, back in 2019, was out to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands to make the connection between Mahukona and the island of Mokumanamana because of the navigational heiau that is here in Mahukona,” Paishon said.

Future plans

Makali‘i’s next voyage will be its longest, taking about two years to complete.

“We’re looking to do another, probably within the next two or three years, to return back to Tahiti and to make that connection again, but then also to continue through the South Pacific, down to the Cook Islands to Samoa, Tonga, into New Zealand,” said Paishon. They would also like to sail through Micronesia to visit Mau’s home in Satawal before returning to Hawai‘i.

Until then, Nā Kālai Wa‘a is training the crew and preparing the canoe. “It will be our community that will be helping us to do all those things,” he said, “so that when we leave, we’ll be able to be successful.” ■

The celebration of Makali‘i's 30th birthday at the Mālama Makali‘i Ocean Festival was a day filled with music, laughter, cultural activities and locally sourced food. - *Photos: ‘Āina Paikai*

Hae Hawai‘i Bill a Catalyst for Civic Engagement

Marchers proudly fly the Hae Hawai'i at the 'Onipa'a Peace March on Jan. 17, 2025, to mark the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom. - *Photo: Kalawai'a Nunies*

By Amee Hi‘ilawe Neves

One bill introduced early in this legislative session caused a big stir in the islands, sparking passionate conversations all over social media about the Hae Hawai‘i (Hawaiian flag).

HB 1385, introduced by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, aimed to create a commission to redesign the Hawai‘i State flag. Garrett's intention was to allow the Hae Hawai‘i to only represent the Kingdom of Hawai‘i and not the State of Hawai‘i.

“I saw this as a social justice issue, and I was trying to show my support for the flag remaining in the exclusive domain of the Hawaiian Kingdom,” Garret said. “That was the only discussion I was trying to raise.”

However, many people interpreted the bill in ways that Garrett did not intend. Some viewed it as a distraction from more important issues facing Native Hawaiians. Others saw it as an attempt to erase the Hae Hawai‘i along with its rich history and symbolism.

The earliest Hae Hawai‘i was adopted in 1816 by Kamehameha I. It had the British Union Jack in the top left corner and nine stripes (three sets of red, white and blue). Its design was influenced by the flag of the British East India Company – whose members were regular visitors to Hawai‘i at the time.

During the reign of Kamehameha III, the flag was modified to include just eight stripes with a white stripe on top followed by the sequence red, blue, white, red, blue, white, red. The new flag was officially unfurled on May 25, 1845, at the opening of the kingdom's legislative council and it is the same Hae Hawai‘i that endured through the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, the “Republic” of Hawai‘i, the “Territory” of Hawai‘i, and, now, the State of Hawai‘i.

For Native Hawaiians, our Hae Hawai‘i is an abiding symbol of Hawaiian sovereignty and a source of tremendous pride – hence the overwhelming negative community response when HB 1385 was introduced.

Community advocate Kainoa Azama felt the backlash was reminiscent of the resistance seen across the pae ‘āina following the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i. “Following the overthrow, there was [an effort] to change Hawai‘i's anthem (*Hawai‘i Pono‘ī*) because the insurgents didn't want any remnants of the kingdom. But the people refused. They were still very much aligned to the kingdom,” said Azama.

“Even though that happened over 100 years ago – the resistance is still here, because we know who we are. We know where we come from. And no, I'm sorry. We have different ideas about what needs to change.”

Garrett did not anticipate this response but has come to understand it by listening to the community.

“I regret how this has played out, because it was not my intention again to try to erase the deep symbolism and the meaning behind Hae Hawai‘i,” said Garrett.

The bill officially died on February 14 at Garrett's request.

The demise of HB 1385 is an example of how our civic engagement can impact outcomes at the legislature. When community members call their representatives and senators about issues that are important to them, it opens space for discussion and allows for different perspectives and solutions to be considered.

“I learned a very valuable lesson. I did reach out to [representatives of] the Native Hawaiian community. It's obviously a very complex and deeply sensitive issue,” Garrett reflected.

“It really demonstrates the power of our community when we all come together,” Azama remarked. “How we, as a people, can come together to effect change. It's a good reminder of what people can accomplish when we organize effectively.”

Although HB 1385 has died, there are dozens of other bills introduced during this current legislative session that deserve our attention. It is as good a time as any to get involved.

“I think one of the big things is recognizing the importance of working together,” Azama said. “As they say, ‘if you want to go fast, go alone.’ But if you want to go far and you want to make the distance, then work together.”

Civic engagement doesn't just happen at the legislature, it can start in your own backyard – from community service activities to participation on your local neighborhood board. From our individual communities to our pae ‘āina to the rest of the world, if we want to see positive change, we need to be actively engaged in advocating for equity, justice and peace – for people and the ‘āina – not just now, but for the generations that follow.

“Civic engagement is about being an agent of change. It is important that we leave this world dramatically better than it was when we entered it,” Azama said. ■

Kalaniana‘ole Development

It’s About Building Our Future

By Cheryl Chee Tsutsumi

When Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole began serving as a delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1903, the Hawaiian nation was in peril. Queen Lili‘uokalani had been deposed, the population was declining, the Hawaiian language and culture were fading, and Hawaiian land was being seized and controlled by foreigners.

Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole - *Courtesy Photo*

Often called Ke Ali‘i Maka‘āinana (The People’s Prince), Kūhiō was beloved for his efforts to support and empower the Hawaiian people. He believed that with land, Hawaiians could achieve economic self-sufficiency, preserve their culture, and ultimately rebuild the lāhui. To that end, he championed the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA), which Congress passed and President Warren Harding signed into law in 1921.

The HHCA set aside some 200,000 acres throughout Hawai‘i where individuals with at least 50% Hawaiian blood could live, farm and ranch. It guaranteed that those lands would be held in trust for their and their heirs’ use in perpetuity, and the annual fee for 99-year leases would be just $1. When Hawai‘i became a state in 1959, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) was established to administer these trust lands.

Patti Tancayo’s great-grandfather received a Hawaiian Home Lands lease for a 40-acre homestead in Ho‘olehua, Moloka‘i, in the early 1930s. When he died in 1969, her father inherited it. She considers it a blessing to have grown up there, so she could experience firsthand how a house is more than shelter; it is the foundation for familial, cultural and economic stability.

“The Hawaiian values I learned being raised on the homestead weren’t just taught, they were lived,” Tancayo said. “When I visited my cousin’s house, he didn’t just let me play with his toys, he gave me his best ones. When guests stayed with us, my parents offered their bedroom to them. Giving from the heart without hesitation was our way of life.”

Tancayo also recalled the many large gatherings at her ‘ohana’s homestead weren’t only about good food. Family and friends hunted, fished and cooked for those parties side by side. It was laulima, many hands working as one. “That sense of togetherness – of knowing you were part of something greater than yourself – made it special,” she said. “No one was just an observer; we all contributed.”

Aloha, laulima and ‘ohana, she asserts, lie at the heart of the HHCA. “Prince Kūhiō knew it was not just about land; it was about restoring Hawaiian traditions, strengthening family ties and ensuring future generations always have a place to call home,” Tancayo said. “The homesteads were where Hawaiian values – among them, respect, generosity and aloha ‘āina – could endure.”

Rendering of the Pālamanui Community Center near Kailua-Kona, part of an affordable housing project that Kalaniana‘ole Development is working on. - *Courtesy of Design Partners Incorporated*

Patti Tancayo (third from left) with members of her development team, Korean architects, and a few residents from the already completed phase of the Villages of La‘i‘ōpua. - *Photo: Courtesy of Patti Tancayo*

Inspired by the legacy of Prince Kūhiō and her happy, close-knit upbringing, Tancayo founded Kalaniana‘ole Development in 2023 to create innovative, culturally rooted, financially attainable housing solutions for Hawaiian families, especially those with the most need.

The company’s philosophy is based on the HHCA’s core principles: self-determination, economic development, cultural preservation and homesteading. As president and chief executive officer, Tancayo makes certain those concepts guide Kalaniana‘ole Development’s approach to every project.

She has more than 35 years of experience in affordable housing development. Her team of experts in construction, finance, law and large-scale development includes board chairman Nan Chul Shin, founder of Nan, Inc., Hawai‘i’s largest locally owned and operated construction firm. In 2023, Shin acquired Grace Pacific, one of the state’s largest asphalt paving contractors.

“We are actively pursuing DHHL commercial, industrial, infrastructure and residential contracts, all of which are critical to building vibrant Hawaiian communities,” Tancayo said. “I bring a unique perspective to the table because I grew up on a Hawaiian Home Lands homestead. Like thousands of other Hawaiians, I have waited years to obtain one myself, and I understand the challenges and frustrations that come with that process.”

This is why she is leading several transformative housing projects, including work at the Villages of La‘i‘ōpua, a 980-acre master-planned community in Kealakehe, on Hawai‘i island’s west side.

DHHL has been developing five villages on 572 of those acres; the first, Village 3, was completed in 2000. Villages 4, ‘Ākau (Phase 1) and 5 are partially completed. Kalaniana‘ole Development was awarded the contract for a water system, infrastructure, and turn-key and rent-to-own houses for 400 lots in Villages 1 and 2, which will start coming to fruition in 2027. It will also be constructing 125 homes in Village 4, Hema (Phase 2); completion of that is targeted for 2027.

In addition, the company is developing affordable housing at Pālamanui, a 725-acre master-planned, mixed-use community in nearby Kailua-Kona. Anticipated to be completed in 2026, that project will include 132 single-family, multi-family and kūpuna homes thanks to an 18-acre land donation that Shin made to DHHL.

Tancayo is also collaborating with the King Lunalilo Trust (lunalilo.org) and the Kalama‘ula Homesteaders Association (kalamaula.com) on Moloka‘i to develop the state’s first homestead-driven kūpuna housing project. Kalaniana‘ole Development recently received DHHL approval to conduct a feasibility study for it; financing is expected to be finalized in 2026.

Beyond housing, community spaces are key aspects of all of Kalaniana‘ole Development’s projects. “These are gathering places where Hawaiian traditions, values and teachings can be perpetuated, where knowledge can be passed down to the next generation,” Tancayo said. “In this way, our culture is lived, celebrated and preserved.”

Every March 26, Hawai‘i observes Prince Kūhiō Day as a state holiday honoring the visionary ali‘i who saw land as the Hawaiians’ salvation.

“To us, land is not just property,” Tancayo said. “It connects us to our ancestors, our culture and our identity. Without land and safe, secure housing, it’s difficult for us to maintain traditions, be on solid ground financially, remain rooted in our communities and thrive, not just survive.

“Kalaniana‘ole Development is committed to strengthening the lāhui and upholding Hawaiian values. Our work is about building more than housing; it’s about building our future.” ■

E Kūkulu i ke Kahua

Building Housing Strategies for a Strong Lāhui

By Holo Hoʻopai and Lindsay Kukona Pakele

Holo Hoʻopai and Lindsay Kukona Pakele - *Photo: Joshua Koh*

In the pursuit of sustainable and multigenerational community resilience, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' (OHA) Mana i Mauli Ola (MiMO) Strategic Plan outlines a vision for quality housing that prioritizes the wellbeing and vitality of our lāhui.

As Native Hawaiians face increasingly difficult challenges related to housing accessibility, retention, and maintenance, OHA is targeting strategies to help ensure that we are focusing our resources, connections and expertise to meet the current needs of our lāhui while also building a strong foundation for our keiki and moʻopuna.

Our housing team – part of OHA's new Strategy and Innovation Division – has been tasked to develop bold and innovative approaches to improve housing opportunities for our lāhui by leveraging our collective ʻike in fair housing and housing law and policy, project management, and advocacy to design meaningful, impact-driven housing solutions. Our work is grounded in the need for kānaka to have viable opportunities to live full, rich lives here in Hawaiʻi nei, connected to our ʻāina, culture and lāhui.

Mana i Mauli Ola: Guideposts toward ea

MiMO sets a high bar for our housing team to dream, ideate, and plan projects and programs that are impactful, transformative, and tailored to the unique needs of our lāhui.

MiMO "Quality Housing" Strategy 5 is to "advance policies, programs and practices that strengthen Hawaiian resource management knowledge and skills to meet the housing needs of their ʻohana."

Strategic outcomes include increasing the number of Hawaiians who rent or own homes that meet their financial and wellbeing needs, and increasing the safety, stability, social support networks, and cultural connection in Native Hawaiian communities. Assisting beneficiaries to develop resource management knowledge and skills is a key component to increasing the number of Native Hawaiians renting and owning homes.

MiMO "Quality Housing" Strategy 6 is to "support the implementation of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act and other efforts to meet the housing needs of ʻohana."

Here, our strategic outcomes include increasing affordable non-traditional housing options (e.g., accessory dwelling units/tiny houses), increasing housing supply on Hawaiian Home Lands, and decreasing Native Hawaiian out-of-state migration.

To chart a path forward, our team has identified three tactical approaches we believe will improve access to information and empower our lāhui with options to make informed choices about their housing priorities. These tactics should also yield data useful to continue improving, innovating, and advocating for our beneficiaries, with an end goal of Hawaiian self-governance.

Tactic 1: Mālama Honua – provide funding for home improvements/renovations prioritizing homeowners with significant health, safety and financial challenges.

Tactic 2: Mālama Kānaka – provide funding for tiny homes, accessory dwelling units, etc. in rural communities and other areas where affordable housing is insufficient/absent.

Tactic 3: Mālama ʻIke – develop and maintain a repository of housing resources available to help beneficiaries navigate the rental and home buying processes.

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) is an important partner in this effort, as OHA and DHHL share beneficiaries and have complementary missions. Our goal is to foster meaningful, targeted collaborations and share information, resources and capacity to identify gaps in DHHL services that OHA can help to fill. It's a unique opportunity for our agencies to work together with shared purpose and vision.

The current state of housing for Native Hawaiians

Housing issues for Hawaiians are multi-faceted, but there are three common themes: few affordable housing options, inadequate financing, and a lack of access to priority housing exclusively for Hawaiians.

Median rent in Hawaiʻi is the second highest in the nation The national median rent is $1,300 while the median rent in Hawaiʻi is $1,813 - 39% higher.

On average, Hawaiian households are larger than non-Hawaiian households for both homeowners and renters, and total household income for Hawaiians lags behind the overall state population ($89,322 versus $92,458). And 54% of Native Hawaiians households spend more than 30% of their income on housing.

Additionally, for years Native Hawaiians have represented about 40% of the houseless population on Oʻahu, despite being less than 20% of the general population.

Exacerbating the lack of housing availability, between 2018-2023, DHHL leases (residential, agricultural, and pastoral) flatlined, growing by just over 1% while the number of applicants on the waitlist rose about 3.5% (from 28,306 to 29,296).

According to a 2020 study, the number of DHHL applicants earning less than 80% of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) area median income (AMI) increased to 51%, meaning more than half of DHHL's waitlist may not qualify for a turnkey housing unit.

A 2017 HUD report found that, "overall, the Native Hawaiian population faces greater levels of disadvantage than the residents of Hawaiʻi population, and HHCA [Hawaiian Homes Commission Act] beneficiary households on the waiting list...face even larger challenges. By contrast, Hawaiians currently living on the Hawaiian home lands have higher incomes and face housing affordability issues less often."

The report noted that Hawaiians living on DHHL lands are better off financially than other Hawaiians, and that Hawaiians on DHHL's waiting list struggle the most with affordability problems, suggesting that this difference could be due to the ability of more financially secure beneficiaries to obtain housing loans and assume homestead leases, versus those who cannot obtain housing loans and thus languish on the waiting list.

Nevertheless, the report confirmed the benefit of DHHL housing and "supports continuous and increased funding for infrastructure, housing development, and housing assistance for low-income HHCA beneficiaries."

Reframing the housing narrative from "how come?" to "how can?"

The needs of our beneficiaries are many, and OHA cannot achieve its vision of raising a beloved lāhui alone. OHA looks forward to working collaboratively with DHHL, with other partners in the housing community, and with our lāhui – with a focus on information sharing, capacity building and identifying gaps – to develop creative ways for OHA to help our beneficiaries to acquire secure, safe, and affordable housing. ■

OHA's Housing, Infrastructure and Sustainability team includes Interim Director Kūʻike Kamakea-ʻŌhelo and Strategy Consultants Holo Hoʻopai and Lindsay Kukona Pakele.

Lindsay Kukona Pakele, Esq. was born in Hilo, and split her childhood between Hawaiʻi and Connecticut. She has a bachelor's from Wesleyan University in Connecticut, a master's in education from Hunter College, and a J.D. from the William S. Richardson School of Law. She has a background in education and law and over the past decade, she has focused on Hawaiian and civil rights issues at OHA, the Legal Aid Society of Hawaiʻi, and most recently as a Hawaiʻi DOE Civil Rights Compliance Branch Equity Specialist. She returned to OHA in December 2024.

Holo Hoʻopai was born and raised in Hilo, Hawaiʻi and graduated from Ke Kula ʻo Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu. Prior to joining OHA, Holo worked at UH Hilo where he served as a special assistant to the chancellor and program coordinator. He has a bachelor's in history from Stanford University and a master's in Hawaiian language and literature from Ka Haka ʻUla o Keʻelikōlani at UH Hilo.

The Next 100 Years

DHHL Outlines Advancements in Addressing its Waitlist

Department aims to award more than 7,500 leases and develop 3,000 lots

By Diamond Badajos

"'A'ohe hana nui ke alu 'ia – no task is too big when done together by all"

This 'ōlelo no'eau captures the spirit of collective achievement. This saying also serves as a guiding principle for the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands' (DHHL) multi-pronged approach to alleviating the long-standing wait experienced by many beneficiaries hoping for a homestead.

"It's been more than a century since the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act was enacted, yet the department has awarded a dismal 10,000 leases," said DHHL Director Kali Watson. "With more than 29,000 of our people on the waitlist, it's crucial we take action. We need to get creative."

It is the department's objective to grant more than 7,500 project, residential, agricultural and pastoral leases in the next several years. With 28 active housing development projects across the pae 'āina, DHHL also aims to award more than 3,000 single-family homestead lots within the next five years.

Achieving this goal requires bold new strategies, collaborative partnerships, and the backing of our state and county leaders.

"Programs like those stewarded by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands need our state's full support," said Gov. Josh Green, M.D. "Investments in the Hawaiian community are investments in our entire state and this administration will work collaboratively with DHHL to ensure every beneficiary has a house to call home."

New and expanded homestead communities are being developed. These include:

- **O'ahu:** Ka'uluokaha'i, 700 units; Kaupe'a, 60 units; 'Ewa Beach 380 units; Maunalua (Hawai'i Kai), 80 units; Mā'ili, 350 units.
- **Maui:** Pu'uhona, 161 units; Honokōwai, 50 units; Leiali'i, 181 units; Wailuku, 207 units; Wai'ehu Mauka, 311 units; Kamalani, 400 units.
- **Hawai'i Island:** La'i'ōpua, 580 units; Honomū, 40 units; Kaumana, 168 units; Honoka'a, 296 units; Pālamanui, 40 units; Pana'ewa, 600 units.
- **Kaua'i:** Hanapēpē, 82 units; Anahola subsistence agricultural lots, 115 units; Līhu'e, 1,100 units.
- **Moloka'i:** Ho'olehua agricultural lots, 20 units; Nā'iwa agricultural lots, 16 units.
- **Lāna'i:** Lāna'i residential lots, 75 units.

In 2022, the department benefited from a vital allocation of $600 million in general funds from the Hawai'i State Legislature through the passing of Act 279. Known as the "Waitlist Reduction Act," Act 279 was specifically designed to support the development of a comprehensive strategy focused on reducing the DHHL waitlist.

The awarding of 25 pastoral lots in Kahikinui, Maui, in 2023 was the first such selection since 1999. - *Photos courtesy of DHHL*

Breaking ground for Hale Mō'ili'ili - DHHL's first high-rise rental apartments, in December 2024.

Leadership from DHHL and Dowling Company attend the Pu'uhonua lot orientation on Maui this past January.

But while $600 million is a good start, it falls short of what is truly needed.

"To successfully complete our current projects and provide homes to all those waiting we'd need an estimated $6 billion," Watson said. "The additional funds requested would help reduce the waitlist."

Legislation like House Bill 606, introduced by the Native Hawaiian caucus, seeks to secure funding and fulfill the department's promise to return Native Hawaiians to the land.

Since assuming leadership in March 2023, Watson has implemented history-making moves and revived initiatives that have been absent for decades.

In 2023, DHHL awarded 15 first-of-its-kind subsistence agricultural lots in Pana'ewa on Hawai'i Island in August. Four months later, 25 pastoral lots were awarded in Kahikinui, Maui, marking the department's first selection of pastoral lots since the program's inception in 1999.

Nearly a year after the devastating Maui wildfires, DHHL brought hope to 52 families in June 2024 with the island's first residential home offering in 17 years. In October, the department launched its first-ever in-house permitting program, streamlining the building permit process and allowing DHHL to advance on its projects. The following month, 68 agricultural lots were awarded on Hawai'i Island, representing the largest agricultural lot offering since the late-1980s.

And DHHL celebrated a landmark occasion this past December by breaking ground on its first high-rise rental apartment, the $155 million Hale Mō'ili'ili. The event was the start of a two-year development process to create the state's only affordable housing project exclusively serving DHHL beneficiaries.

This year marks the start of project leases – this administration's take on undivided interest lease awards last issued in the early 2000s. Project leases will connect waitlisters to a particular place or project and will be awarded before the development of a homestead community. This strategy will allow Native Hawaiian beneficiaries the opportunity to transfer their lease to an approved heir who meets the 25% blood quantum criteria.

The department is set to acquire, renovate and upgrade its first townhouse project, the Courtyards of Waipouli. The 82-unit condominium in Kapa'a, Kaua'i, will provide those on the waitlist with a chance to pay rents below market value with the option of purchasing the units after 10 or 15 years.

Additional efforts include documenting and clearing vacant homestead lots, programs for kūpuna and transitional housing, the utilization of low-income housing tax credits and the push for developers to design communities that align with the financial capabilities of lessees.

Creating a lasting future for a trust championed by a prince is a big task. Nonetheless, beneficiaries can expect a seismic shift in the program's direction as key components of Watson's vision come together.

"We're building a foundation for the next 100 years," Watson said. "Our 'āina is the backbone of the Hawaiian people, and it is our mission to ensure Hawaiians remain connected to the land for generations to come; just as Prince Kūhiō envisioned." ■

Housing the Hawaiian Way

Hui Mahi'ai 'Āina in Waimānalo is providing homes and a place to heal

By Donalyn Dela Cruz

Created to serve the houseless community, Hui Mahi'ai 'Āina currently has 82 residents and 59 livable structures on its land in Waimānalo. Residents live cooperatively, sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities, and grow their own fruit and vegetables in a 7.5-acre garden. Founder Blanche McMillan would like to see 300 or more tiny homes on the property and has plans to expand to Moloka'i, Maui and Hawai'i Island. - *Photos: Donalyn Dela Cruz*

Blanche McMillan looks across several acres of land in Waimānalo that have been cleared by family and friends. Piles of dirt and logs line the perimeter with the Koʻolau Mountains in the background. She envisions its future.

"I see housing for 300, maybe more," McMillan states.

Known as "Aunty Blanche," she will realize this vision just as she did with the nearby 14 acres of land managed by Hui Mahiʻai ʻĀina, a nonprofit that initially started as a foodbank and outreach center.

"This is my backyard. This is where I was raised all my 71 years," McMillan says with a chuckle as she thinks back to her childhood in the area where she played "cowboys and indians" with her 16 siblings. It is where she and her husband raised eight keiki, cared for 20 foster children, and hānai many others.

Aunty Blanche McMillan

The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) owns the land, which is behind her family homestead. However, McMillan can date the ʻāina back to her great-great-tūtū Rebecca Kahalewai, a high chiefess.

Waimānalo District Councilmember Esther Kiaʻāina, who was DLNR Deputy Director from 2012-2014, recalled McMillan's decades-long effort to lease the land for agricultural and educational purposes.

"It's by the grace of God that she's been on the property because she has no legal authority," said Kiaʻāina.

McMillan served at St. George Catholic Church as its outreach coordinator for the poor before she took on a greater calling to do more for her community. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, McMillan didn't wait for permission from the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) to build a place for the houseless. Instead, she got to work.

Fourteen houseless people from Waimānalo beach who she had been caring for through outreach over the years, went with her to the overgrown DLNR area where she told them, "We're gonna move here, you guys coming home."

They, along with McMillan's family members, cleared the land. "We worked hard. Everything we did, we did it by hand in the beginning, then the neighbors heard about it. The ones who had trucks, machines – they brought the machines in."

Trees that were cut down and chopped were turned into mulch for future use. Donors came forward with materials and in one month the first nine small structures were up.

"When I put up these homes here, that was during the COVID time and they didn't give me the lease. I said, forget it. I'm going to save my people and I don't need the state, city or federal [government] to give me funding. From then on, I had zero, everything that I asked, the Lord provided it."

"Blue," a Hui Mahiʻai ʻĀina resident in her home with her little dog. Private living spaces have enough room for beds and storage and are pet friendly.

Residents at Hui Mahiʻai ʻĀina have private living spaces, but share a communal screened-in kitchen with nearby picnic tables under a large tent, portable toilets and an area for washing. McMillan runs the water from her home which fronts the property.

Today, there are 59 livable structures, a screened-in kitchen with nearby picnic tables under a large tent, portable toilets, and areas for washing. McMillan runs water from her home which fronts the gated parcel.

Eighty-two individuals are currently at Hui Mahiʻai ʻĀina: four of whom have cancer; 26 are keiki; 15 are kūpuna. The oldest resident is 93. Some residents have pets, which McMillan also welcomes.

"They say, Aunty, I finally got a home that I love and I want to die here. I take care all of them," said McMillan, whose love is infectious and whose strictness – that only a local aunty can weild – is respected.

Gavin Kalai has been staying at Hui Mahiʻai ʻĀina for four months and said the secure environment and mandatory work schedules have helped him. "This is a real positive place for people like me where I can make something of myself. This is a healing place and has helped me

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HOUSING THE HAWAIIAN WAY

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in many ways," he said.

"The challenges I come across, being here gives me the strength to rise above," added Clark Choy, another resident who has found inspiration and purpose to give back to the community.

"This is beyond saying, 'come, I will give you shelter.' You're giving them their identity," said McMillan. "When I decided to do this, I wanted to do it the old Hawaiian way. You bring them home, everybody has one big 'ohana. You love them and care for them and make sure they're all fine."

McMillan says providing only shelter without a support system and basic needs, such as food and clothing, won't work in helping the homeless. McMillan also conducts random drug tests to deter drug use in the community.

Many of McMillan's family members have a role in Hui Mahi'ai 'Āina. Her first cousin and longtime Waimānalo resident Mabel Keli'iho'omalu helps with fundraising.

"That lady right there and her family have the heart to serve people. This kind of homeless people need extra love, extra, extra, extra, and that one (pointing to McMillan) overflows. She touches everybody and we all get energized and swept up in her motion and we willing to follow her, no matter what," said Keli'iho'omalu.

Hui Mahi'ai 'Āina founder Blanche McMillan (center) with volunteer Kalei Hong (left) and her cousin Mabel Keli'iho'omalu (right) who helps with fundraising. - *Photo: Donalyn Dela Cruz*

This includes the mission to grow food for the Waimānalo community. Every second Saturday, residents are required to gather at 8:00 a.m. to work in the 7.5-acre garden that is filled with various plants, fruit trees, and kalo.

"I had to teach them what is [the] Hawaiian way. The old ways, they say, you take care the 'āina, the 'āina takes care of you. And that's exactly what the 'āina did, it's taking care of them," said McMillan. "Every time they put their hands into the soil, into the ground, everything changed their whole life afterwards. This is how it is. Their way of living has changed. They are no longer sad, they're happy."

McMillan also teaches residents about resiliency and preparing for disasters such as ensuring that there is an unobstructed ditch to prevent flooding during big rain events.

In addition to developing the acres in Waimānalo, McMillan has started plans to expand to Maui, Hawai'i Island and Moloka'i. She has garnered the support of Gov. Josh Green and respected business leader and aio founder Duane Kurisu to help with the building of future housing initiatives for those in need.

In the meantime, McMillan is getting support from aio to conduct a topographical survey of the area at Hui Mahi'ai 'Āina. BLNR has yet to grant her a lease due to flooding concerns. However, McMillan said she addressed the area of concern by digging a ditch to direct flowing water from the mountainside toward the bridge that leads to the ocean. When people heard about her plans, she said excavators came forward and tractors were donated.

"Might as well do it because they ain't gonna do nothing," she said referring to the government agencies.

For McMillan, digging a ditch is just another example of finding a way to care for the 'āina and her people.

"She has both the vision and the willpower to get things done for our community against the backdrop of having to navigate all of these bureaucracies," said Kia'āina. "And it's not easy. She's a doer." ■

The "State of Housing" in Hawai'i

By Lisa Huynh Eller

In May, the newest edition of the "Hawai'i Housing Factbook," a housing report published by the Economic Research Organization at the University of Hawai'i (UHERO), will be released.

An early look at the data suggests affordability for single family homes has gotten "marginally" worse. Most Hawai'i residents still cannot afford to buy a home, and market conditions - including low supply and high interest rates - remain unchanged.

Another factor likely to adversely impact the housing market is the Trump Administration's termination of thousands of federal jobs in February. These job cuts included positions at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which administers programs in Hawai'i such as the rental assistance program known as Section 8. HUD could not be reached for comment.

"Hawai'i's been in a bad place for housing affordability for a long time," said Justin Tyndall, an economics professor with UHERO and the UH Department of Economics. "Our first factbook (2023), pointed out that during the COVID era things got worse, in terms of prices going up quite a bit. Over the last couple years, we've been dealing with high interest rates. A very small portion of the population has sufficient income to afford a house, and that figure has gotten historically worse."

Currently, the median single-family home sells for about $1 million, though this figure varies widely between the islands with the highest median prices in Maui and Honolulu counties.

The condo market on O'ahu offers some "glimmers of hope," Tyndall said. New condo developments in Central Honolulu are being built and will become available soon. Condo prices are slightly down on all islands except Maui. According to the 2024 Factbook, the median condo price was $600,000.

But the immediate cause for the slight decrease in condo prices is the insurance market. "These condominium buildings are not able to get insurance because prices have gone up so much. Part of (the rise) is reckoning with climate change, but also a general unraveling of that insurance market. For most buildings, you can't get a federally insured mortgage if the building doesn't have full insurance," said Tyndall. Homeowners' association fees have gone up rapidly in response to the insurance crisis, and the increase in fees will likely negate any decrease in condo prices.

Affordability in the free market is unlikely to change significantly, at least not any time soon.

People at all levels of government and in the nonprofit sector are pushing for restricted-market housing solutions that can shelter everyone from the houseless to the middle class. A sustainable housing market needs to be permanently affordable, deed restricted to full-time residents, and subsidized said Kenna StormoGipson, Hawai'i Housing Policy Foundation executive director.

The Foundation wants to take practices and policies that have worked in other parts of the country and bring them here to Hawai'i. StormoGipson often points to Aspen, CO., as a model for what could be.

View of Honolulu's urban sprawl looking towards the Wai'anae Mountains. Nearly one million people live on O'ahu where housing inventory is low and the average sale price of a single-family home is over $1.3 million. - *Photo: City & County of Honolulu*

Of the total housing inventory in Aspen, 40% is permanently affordable through deed restrictions and is only for residents who live and work in Aspen full time. By contrast, only 6% of Hawai'i's housing market is similarly restricted. This leaves the remaining 94% of housing vulnerable to increasing rents that outpace wages or to being sold to buyers who do not live or work in Hawai'i.

"The most exciting things happening in housing across the country are happening at the city, county and state level. That's really the shift. The shift is thinking of housing as a local issue, and then setting local rules and local funding," said StormoGipson.

State and county elected officials have proposed and introduced measures to address both supply and affordability. But implementing such measures has proven challenging. Tyndall pointed out some examples of county level actions and public housing investments, such as the recently adopted ALOHA Homes legislation and the phasing out of the Minatoya List. "The bigger reason to be somewhat optimistic is there seems to be some political alignment or will to implement policies," said Tyndall.

Sponsored by Sen. Stanley Chang, the ALOHA Homes bill (SB 864), which became state law in 2023, establishes a 99-year leasehold program to make low-cost leasehold condos units available for Hawai'i residents on state-owned land near rail stations. According to Chang's website, the law would allow half of the units to be sold for up to 140% Annual Median Income (AMI) and no more than 33% to be sold on an income blind basis. AMI is an annual figure generated by HUD and has been criticized for not reflecting local wages. The 140% AMI for a 4-person family in Honolulu is about $183,400.

The "Minatoya List," created in 2001 by Richard Minatoya, Maui County deputy corporation counsel, allowed more than 7,000 apartment-zoned condos already used as vacation rentals to be permitted as short-term rentals.

In 2024, Maui County Mayor Richard Bissen submitted a proposal to phase out these short-term rentals. After being reviewed by the Maui, Moloka'i and Lāna'i planning commissions, Bissen's proposal was transmitted to the Maui County Council. Many of the short-term rentals impacted by this proposed legislation were initially built and designed for workforce housing, including in West Maui, where an existing housing shortage was exacerbated by the August 2023 wildfire.

"This is one potential solution to increase long-term housing capacity among many that we are pursuing to address our housing crisis," Bissen said. "We need to work together to do what's best for our people. Every day our people are leaving, and this is a consequence we cannot accept as a community."

Other state programs already in place to lift restrictions for developers seem to be popular, said Tyndall. Examples of these include the Rental Housing Revolving Fund and the 201H Program in Honolulu, which grants permitting or regulatory waivers for projects aimed at creating "affordable housing." Tyndall questions whether this is the right approach to creating more housing supply.

"We spend a lot of effort making it very difficult to build housing, and then we spend a lot of money to subsidize developers so they can overcome these barriers," Tyndall said. "The counties and state put up those barriers, and then they have programs to overcome those barriers. It's a bit inefficient. A bigger supply of housing would come from making it easier for developers to build housing." ■

Faces of the Diaspora

Bridging the Gap Between Hawai‘i and its Diaspora

By Megan Ulu-Lani Boyanton

Kuuipoikaheepueone “Ipo” Wright has struggled with racial and cultural imposter syndrome since before she knew the terminology for it.

“It’s still there,” Wright, 36, said. “I hate to admit it, but to be honest, it is a lifelong struggle. And I know that I’m not alone.”

Born in Honolulu and raised in California, Wright stayed rooted in her Hawaiian culture through hula and family ties.

But she felt that she didn’t look the part, and non-islander peers didn’t know what to make of her – a light-skinned girl performing Polynesian dance routines at the school talent show. So, she’d work on her tan and wear hair extensions with flower accessories.

“I felt like I was living a split life,” Wright said.

This emotional crisis eventually sparked the idea for Hawaiian Diaspora, an organization she founded in 2024 to provide cultural education and mental health support to those struggling with their identities. The Seattle resident wants to create both virtual spaces and in-person workshops for Kānaka ʻŌiwi on the continent.

Eventually, she aims to create a resource network for Hawaiians who plan to return to the ʻāina. “We need to support our Hawaiians living away from Hawai‘i in so many different ways,” Wright said.

In Hawai‘i, Wright’s early years were largely spent with her tūtū wahine on Kaua‘i or her babysitter in Kāneʻohe. The ʻohana resided in the family dormitories at Brigham Young University - Lā‘ie while Wright’s mom, Dawnyl, finished college and her dad, Bob, worked.

A Kaua‘i native, Dawnyl was the first in her ʻohana to raise her family away from Hawai‘i. Bob hailed from Mississippi and the pair met at a Tennessee amusement park where Bob worked training dolphins and Dawnyl took a part-time job while dancing with a touring hālau.

Hula runs deep in Wright’s family. Both her grandmother and great-grandmother were kumu hula and her mother danced at the Polynesian Cultural Center.

“I have early memories of just hanging around while my mom was dancing hula or working on a costume,” Wright recalled.

When her father secured a military job in San Diego,

Ipo Wright, husband Dihan, and son Qasim on a visit home to Hawai‘i. - *Courtesy Photo*

Wright and her siblings were uprooted from Hawai‘i to grow up in Southern California. The local Pacific Islander community there helped Hawaiian culture feel close at hand: Wright’s mother enrolled her in a hālau, and they took part in weekend lū‘au.

Wright graduated from Mount Miguel High School in 2006. She dreamed of becoming an actress, a writer or a comedian in Hollywood. At age 22, she moved to Los Angeles after falling for her now-husband, Dihan, who she met through a friend. With Dihan’s Filipino and Saudi Arabian heritage, he understood Wright’s multiracial experience.

They lived together in Hollywood and Wright started a new phase of life defined by self-expression: she replaced hula with comedy classes and Muay Thai martial arts.

After several years in Los Angeles, she and Dihan moved to Austin, TX., in 2014 for an adventure in a more affordable city. Wright was frustrated by Southern California’s job market, which proved difficult to break into without a college degree, and she wanted to focus on developing her career.

In Texas, Wright began working at Virgin America airline, which offered her flight benefits to visit family in California and Hawai‘i and to explore as far away as Asia.

“My whole world was different,” Wright said.

Dihan proposed to her on a trip to Montréal, Canada, and the pair wed at the courthouse in Austin.

But Wright felt the absence of other Pacific Islanders in Texas. She missed her culture and ʻohana and ended up taking hula classes held at an Austin ballet studio.

At Virgin America, Wright took a temporary assignment at its San Francisco Bay Area headquarters. She lived out of a hotel for about a year, and, after returning to Austin, she learned Alaska Airlines had acquired her employer.

After four years in Texas, Wright accepted position with Alaska Airlines based in Seattle. Eager to resettle on the West Coast, she and Dihan moved in 2018.

“As soon as we touched down, we could breathe again,” she said.

There, Wright began dancing with a Pacific Islander group. And one year later, she accepted a full-time job in Alaska Airlines’ corporate communications department. Then she joined the company’s Pacific Islander Alliance and in late 2020, she was asked to become the group’s co-chair.

Wright traveled with other leaders to Washington, D.C., to discuss Pacific Islander issues with lawmakers. The experience fanned the flames of her passion for the lāhui.

After participating in a cohort at Hawaiian nonprofit Purple Mai‘a Foundation, in 2023 she received a $2,500 grant from Kamehameha Schools for a research project. Originally conceived as an adult version of Kamehameha Schools’ Explorations Series programs, her “project” became a nonprofit.

Thus, “Hawaiian Diaspora” was born. And so was her son, Qasim Puakalehuaikawekiu, in January 2024.

Now, Wright is focused on making an impact: professionally at Alaska Airlines, culturally in her community, and personally on her firstborn. One day, Wright hopes to move back to the islands with Qasim and Dihan.

“As long as I get back to Hawai‘i at some point in my life, that’s all that matters,” she said. ■

To learn more about Ipo’s organization, Hawaiian Diaspora, go to: www.hawaiiandiaspora.org

Paele Kiakona and Mikey Burke mālama the first piece of ʻāina held in trust by the Lahaina Community Land Trust (LCLT), which was formed after the 2023 fires to keep Lahaina lands in Lahaina hands. Burke, who serves as LCLT Board President, lost her home in the fire and hopes to bring future stability to her community through her work with the land trust. - *Photo: Marina Starleaf Riker*

Homes for Whom?

It's Time to Act to Keep Hawai'i's Families Home

By Matt Jachowski and Marina Starleaf Riker

We all know the stories: The Lahaina ʻohana forced to shuffle between hotels and vacation rentals five different times after the fire, or the ones who crashed with cousins, making do by piling three or more into a room.

The naive often dismiss the latter as a matter of choice: our lāhui's cultural preference for multigenerational housing. But as kānaka and kamaʻāina raised in Hawai'i, we have yet to meet a Hawaiian family – or any kamaʻāina for that matter – who would rather crowd six or more people into a two-bedroom home if they could afford more space.

Crowding into housing has become a matter of survival, not only for our Lahaina ʻohana, but families across our pae ʻāina.

Most kamaʻāina are struggling, but the reality is that Native Hawaiians are facing the most acute barriers to remaining in their ancestral home, as Hawaiians only earn $0.84 for every $1 earned by everyone else in Hawai'i.

For many, the only way to remain in Hawai'i is to double up with mom, dad, and tūtū; in fact, in the state already home to the most crowded housing in the country, an analysis of census data shows Native Hawaiian households are crowded at twice the rate as everyone else.

For the last century, political leaders have searched for solutions to fix Hawai'i's housing shortage. But the data shows that the new homes being built are getting bigger and even more out of financial reach for our kānaka and kamaʻāina.

As a result, one in every four Native Hawaiians born in Hawai'i has moved away, and very few Hawaiians born on the continent move back. Today, there are more kānaka outside of Hawai'i than within the pae ʻāina.

On Maui, the 2023 fires only accelerated this diaspora, despite the hundreds of millions of dollars spent to prevent our families from leaving. There's no way of knowing exactly how many families have gone, but it's clear by the signs our kia'i carry at marches reading, "every day a local family moves away," that we have underestimated the magnitude of the exodus.

But to understand why so many are leaving, we must

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first understand that so much of Maui's housing – particularly the homes built recently – were never meant for us.

A century-old problem

One of the first front page headlines about Maui's housing shortage dates back a century when the *Maui News* covered the Maui Chamber of Commerce's 1921 probe into "a waiting list of more than a dozen families who are seeking homes."

The article began: "Maui has its housing problem just as has Honolulu and as have the cities of the mainland, the shortage being *felt most acutely in Wailuku and Lahaina*." More than a century later, Hawai'i is still in what the governor calls an "existential" crisis due to the lack of housing.

Throughout the decades, there have been emergency proclamations, task forces, millions of dollars spent on political lobbying, hundreds of campaign promises, and studies, studies, studies, and more studies examining Hawai'i's housing problem and how to fix it.

Yet 104 years after Maui's Chamber of Commerce first took up the issue, the shortage persists and is still being "felt most acutely" in Lahaina, where the fire incinerated roughly 30% of single-family homes across Maui Komohana (West Maui).

There is a sliver of truth in what pro-construction proponents say: The only way out of this crisis is to build. From 1970 through 2010, Maui built an average of about 600 new single-family homes each year, according to Maui County real property tax data.

But by the 2010s, new construction plunged by 60% to less than 240 homes per year and since 2020, has fallen again to just 71 homes per year. That's fewer homes per year than 80 years ago, when Maui's population was one-third of what it is today.

The last century of failed efforts, however, is evidence that building homes will never be enough when there is no assurance that the new homes will actually house the people working and raising families here.

Across West Maui, fewer than half of the new homes built since 2010 are housing full-time residents. And, overall, homes in West Maui sell for prices 21 times higher than the typical kama'āina household earns in a year.

But even if the influx of outside wealth suddenly vanished and luxury home development stopped, there's still the elephant in the room: new construction cannot ramp up fast enough to stem the out-migration.

A stark example are the Lahaina Surf and Front Street Apartments, two affordable housing complexes identified as top rebuilding priorities. Even with rare political and community consensus, their completion isn't expected until summer 2029 – six years after families' homes burned to the ground.

Where will Maui's 'ohana go?

In the year after the fire, the State of Hawai'i spent $357 million on hotels for fire survivors and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) spent another $295 million to temporarily rent homes and condominiums. Said differently, that's enough money to buy (or rebuild) 650 $1 million homes – more than 80% of the approximately 800 owner-occupied homes lost in Lahaina.

But temporary fixes, even with hundred-million-dollar price tags, only fix thing temporarily. And by next March, all that temporary federal rental relief will be gone. Which is why we must embrace solutions that can stem this tide by housing families. Immediately.

The only sure solution? Move into homes that already exist.

Only two-thirds of Maui's single-family homes house our residents; a third are mostly vacation homes that sit empty much of the year. The portion of condos with full-time residents is even smaller – fewer than 25%.

What is often missed in the articles spotlighting Hawai'i's housing shortage is the stockpile of units being used exclusively by the short-term rental market: 8% of housing on Hawai'i Island, 14% on Maui, and a staggering 17% on Kaua'i.

There is a reason, however, that so many of these condos do not house people who live here. Short-term rentals are so profitable, that almost none of their owners will voluntarily offer long term leases to residents.

Just six months after the wildfires, as the state and FEMA attempted to lure vacation rental owners with monthly rents up to $14,000 to shelter the more than 2,000 displaced families living in hotels, the number of active Maui vacation rental listings actually rose 2% higher than the year before.

Those property owners can remain blissfully unaware of local families' reality since over 90% of them don't live in Maui County, according to property tax data. And most of the money they earn from the short-term rental market doesn't stay here, either.

They defend their refusal to rent to local people by claiming that Maui families don't want to live in condos. True. Most local families would prefer to live in single-family homes. But, given the reality of limited inventory and high prices, most local families' true choices are overcrowding, moving away, or living in a condo (if one becomes available).

Compared to single-family homes, with median prices over 20 times more than median household incomes, condos sell for much less and are mostly located in communities where local housing inventory is most scarce: West Maui and South Maui.

Which is why some government leaders have proposed bold changes to upend this status quo, such as Mayor Richard Bissen's proposal to phase out the ability for over 7,000 properties to operate as short-term rentals in apartment-zoned districts.

A preliminary analysis of this proposal by the Economic Research Organization at the University of Hawai'i concluded, "it would increase Maui's long-term residential housing stock by 13%," and "a flood of converted vacation rental properties on the market would help push down housing costs across Maui."

Others have proposed alternate measures, ranging from Maui County buying those vacation rentals to house families – still less costly than FEMA's rental assistance – to a more targeted phase out of complexes considered most attainable for Maui families.

The Lahaina Community Land Trust gathered earlier this year with 'ohana, friends and supporters to bless the first parcel held in community ownership. It will be built out with a main house and two 'ohana units to house a Lahaina family. - *Photo: Marina Starleaf Riker*

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Maui County data show that as of Feb. 21, 2025, only five homes had completed construction in the burn zones in Lahaina and Kula. Pictured here is a home under construction in Lahaina. - *Photos: Marina Starleaf Riker*

Homes in West and South Maui, in particular, are priced well out of reach for local families. In this photo, luxury homes in Makena sit next to a golf course.

HOMES FOR WHOM?

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Regardless of the policy specifics, one thing is clear: We need immediate and decisive action, if we don't want headlines spotlighting Maui's housing shortage another century from now.

How far are we willing to go for our people?

In Spain, the prime minister announced an "unprecedented" plan to impose a "100% tax on the value of properties bought by non-residents." In other words, a non-resident buying a $1 million home would also pay a $1 million tax.

Other less dramatic solutions include the tax policy Honolulu County is considering that mirrors a solution implemented in Vancouver, Canada, where an empty homes tax of 3% per year correlated with a 54% reduction in empty homes.

Ironically, Maui County real property data shows Canadians already own 6% of Maui's condos and over 200 single-family homes. Maybe it's time to embrace the laws that Canadians use to protect their own neighborhoods?

History shows that Hawai'i's lack of progress can't be blamed on budget shortfalls. There is evidence of this, like the state's creative financing mechanism to cobble up $377 million for a brand-new rental car parking garage at Maui's airport, or the $68 million earmarked to give the reflecting pools at the Hawai'i State Capitol a makeover.

By comparison, research estimates that it would take around $360 million to buy up 20% of Lahaina's residential housing stock in the fire's aftermath.

Just imagine if, in the wildfires' immediate aftermath, the state had assisted survivors who qualify for a mortgage with a $365,000 down payment, instead of paying for a year in a hotel at $1,000 per night?

What we lack isn't financing, it's political will – and the courage to put our communities first, even against the wishes of the outside wealth that has for too long shaped our politics and neighborhoods.

We need to learn from other communities

Think Maui's $1.3 million home price is bad? The median single-family home price in Aspen, Colorado, in September 2024 was 10 times that: $13.5 million. After facing an existential crisis – make big changes or lose workers, shops, restaurants, schools, doctors' offices, etc. – the community invested in programs that now mean 70% of full-time occupied housing units in Aspen are deed restricted.

Aspen's affordable housing programs serve households earning up to $301,680 for a family of four — because even doctors and business executives can't afford the free market.

Hawai'i is just now starting to talk about these solutions, like the Kama'āina Homes Program being weighed by legislators, which is modeled off a program in Vail, Colorado, that provides funding to purchase deed restrictions requiring owners and renters to work locally.

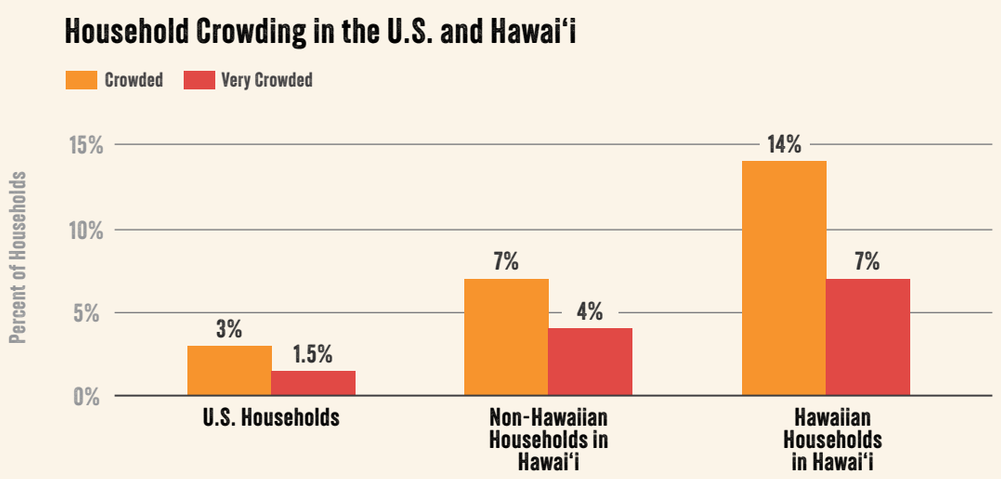
There are also similar home buyer assistance programs adopted by cities like Boulder, Colorado, that offers local residents a lump sum in exchange for placing deed restrictions on their property that forever protect against investor ownership.

There are community organizers already doing this work, like the Lahaina Community Land Trust, which is one of the few solutions that has emerged in the fire's aftermath to provide both disaster relief and permanent affordability.

From a fiduciary standpoint, this perpetual stewardship model also ensures that our public and private dollars must only be used once to subsidize housing — instead of having to repeat the cycle – which is the norm with Maui County programs that protect affordability for just five to 25 years.

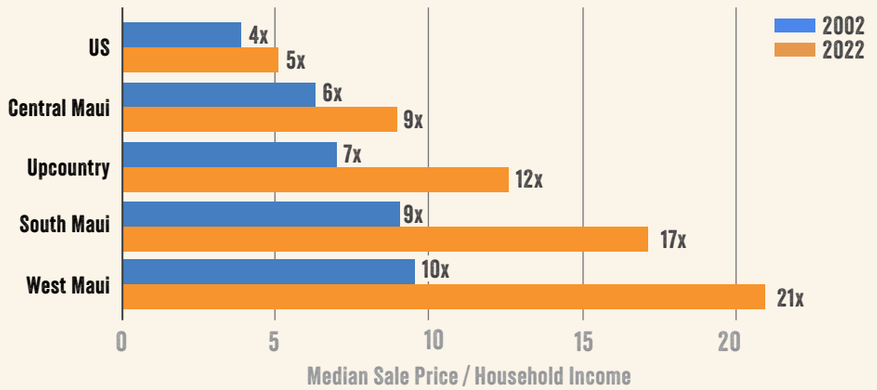
What our leaders across the pae 'āina must realize is these solutions aren't new. Politicians have been equipped for years with the tools to build us a brighter future, but they repeatedly fail to do so. And although Maui has rightfully garnered much of the recent media attention, the reality is that kānaka and kama'āina on O'ahu, Kaua'i and Hawai'i Island are also struggling to remain in Hawai'i.

The clock is ticking. How many more of our siblings, cousins, children, parents, and friends are we willing to lose? ■



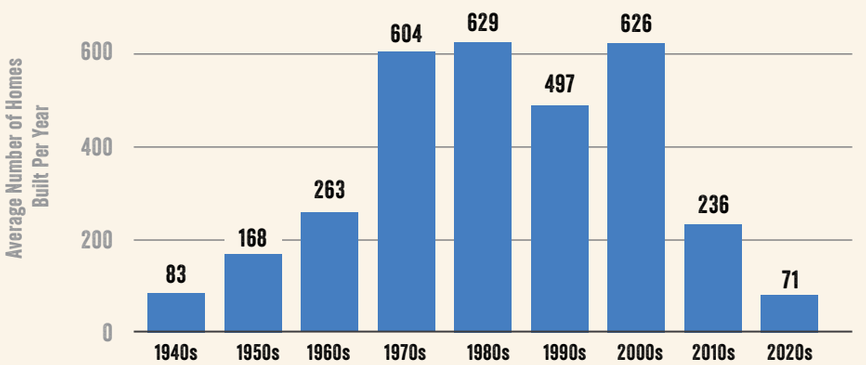
Native Hawaiian households in Hawai'i are twice as crowded as non-Hawaiian households and almost five times as crowded as the national average.

Single-Family Home *Unaffordability*: Median Home Price to Income Ratio



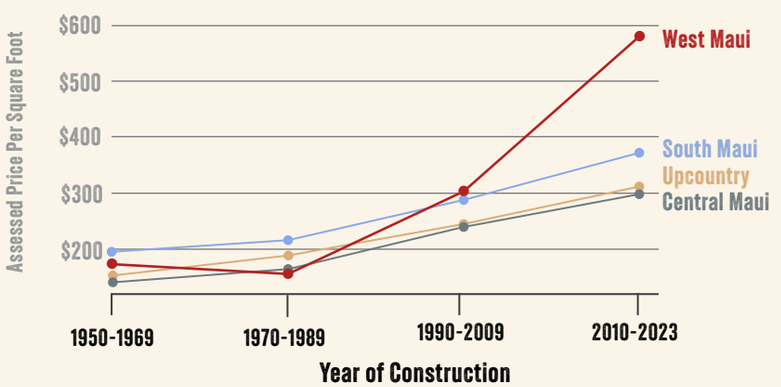
In the past two decades, single-family homes on Maui have become extremely unaffordable for local residents. West Maui is, by far, the least affordable region.

Maui Single-Family Home Construction



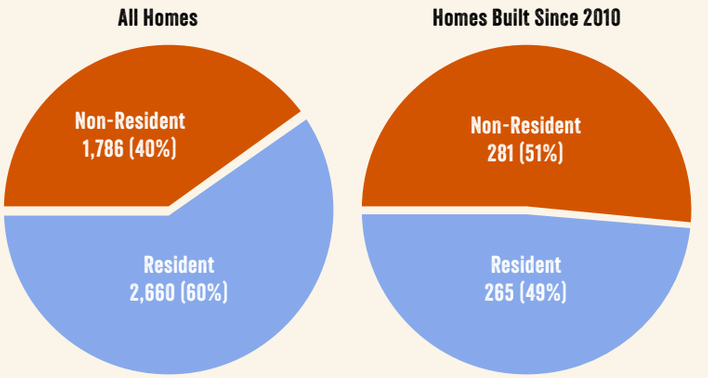
Maui is now building fewer homes than 80 years ago, in the 1940s, when its population was one-third what it is today.

Maui Single-Family Homes: Price Per Square Foot



West Maui single-family homes built since 2010 have dramatically higher prices per square foot than older homes, illustrating that a much larger percentage of these homes are luxury homes. More than half of these are owned by people who don't live in them full-time.

West Maui Single Family Homes



West Maui has the least amount of resident housing on the island. And the balance has only gotten worse, with over half of new single-family homes built since 2010 being used as vacation homes. Data: Maui County Real Property Assessment Division's (RPAD) full file extracts

About the Data

Besides laying bare our generations-long housing struggle, the 2023 Maui fires also threw into sharp focus the critical lack of rigorous and timely data analysis of Hawai'i's broader housing crisis – and in particular, the barriers disproportionately challenging Native Hawaiians. In the fires' aftermath, data scientist Matt Jachowski, a Maui native and proud Kānaka Maoli, spent hundreds of hours analyzing data to both shed light and provide public information to shape ongoing recovery decisions.

Many statistics cited in this article are derived from the following publicly available data sources: the 2022 American Community Survey 5-year Public Use Microdata Sample and Median Household Income in Hawai'i data from the U.S. Census Bureau; the IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System; the Maui County Real Property Assessment Division full file extracts; and the Consumer Price Index Database from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Analysis software written in Python amounted to nearly 20,000 lines of code and made heavy use of the open-source Polars library for data processing.

Matt hopes that other kānaka and kama'āina with a passion for Hawai'i and skills in data science will make similar contributions to push our leaders to make bold, data-driven policy decisions that truly make a difference.

Queen Kaʻahumanu's Birthday (Observed)
March 17, 1768

Kaʻahumanu was born in Hāna, Maui, to Nāmāhānaikaleleokalani, daughter of King Kekaulike. Her father was Keʻeaumoku, from Hawaiʻi Island. She was the third cousin of Kamehameha I. She was named Kaʻahumanu after her father's rival, Kahekilinuiʻahumanu because it was from him that her father was fleeing at the time. She married Kamehameha I when she was 13 and became his favorite wife. Upon his passing she became Kuhina Nui (regent) and co-ruled the islands, alongside Kamehameha II and III. Today, the Kaʻahumanu Society celebrates the birthday of its namesake on March 17, but the actual date and year of her birth is uncertain.

Prince Kūhiō's Birthday
March 26, 1871

Jonah Kūhiō Kalanianaʻole was born in Kōloa, Kauaʻi, to Victoria Kekaulike and David Piʻikoi. He was named after his maternal grandfather Kūhiō Kalanianaʻole, a high chief of Hilo, and his paternal grandfather Jonah Piʻikoi, a high chief of Kauaʻi. He was a prince of the Kingdom of Hawaiʻi until the 1893 overthrow. He became the delegate of the Territory of Hawaiʻi to the U.S. Congress, from 1903 until his passing in 1922. He was called "Ke Aliʻi Makaʻāinana" (The People's Prince) and was the architect behind the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921. He founded the first Hawaiian Civic Club in 1918, and was an advocate for women's suffrage (voting rights).

17th Annual Mālama Hāloa Kalo Festival & Symposium
March 2, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Kapālama, Oʻahu

Speakers, music, activity booths, food tasting, and conversation with farmers, artists, cultural practitioners, and scientists. Free admission with online preregistration. www.bishopmuseum.org

Waimea Valley Kamaʻāina FREE Admission
March 6, 13, 20, & 27, Noon - 3:00 p.m. | Waimea, Oʻahu

Every Thursday, before the Haleʻiwa Farmers Market begins in Pīkake Pavillion. www.waimeavalley.net

Royal Hawaiian Band Performances
March 7, 14, 21 & 28, Noon - 1:00 p.m. | Honolulu, Oʻahu

The Royal Hawaiian Band holds free concerts on the ʻIolani Palace Grounds most Fridays. www.rhb-music.com

Puʻuhonua Mākeke
March 8, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Waimānalo, Oʻahu

A marketplace to showcase products, services, and businesses from Puʻuhonua across Hawaiʻi. 41-1300 Waikupanaha St., in the Pavilion. FB/IG @puuhonuamakeke

Papakōlea ʻOhana Health Fair 2025
March 8, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Papakōlea, Oʻahu

Health vendors, healthcare providers, nonprofits, and state/local social service agencies at Lincoln Elementary School. www.kula-papakolea.com

Celebrate Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalanianaʻole
March 8, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Līhuʻe, Kauaʻi

Enjoy mele, hula, and moʻolelo in the Kauaʻi Museum Courtyard. Contact education@kauaimuseum.org or call 1-808-245-6931. www.kauaimuseum.org

Kamaʻāina Sunday
March 9, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Honolulu, Oʻahu

Enjoy audio tours of ʻIolani Palace, ʻono food, lively entertainment, and shop local vendors. www.iolanipalace.org

105th Annual Kamehameha Schools Song Contest
March 14, 7:00 - 10:00 p.m.
Honolulu, Oʻahu

Live broadcast on K5, livestream at www.ksbe.edu/song-contest.

Queen Kaʻahumanu Aliʻi Sunday at Kawaiahaʻo Church
March 16, 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.
Honolulu, Oʻahu

Part of the series of celebrations honoring our aliʻi. https://kawaiahaochurch.com

Keauhou: A New Time Gallery Talk with Al Lagunero
March 16, 11:00 a.m. - Noon
Honolulu, Oʻahu

ʻŌiwi artist Al Lagunero shares work inspired by his great-grandmother, reflecting the legacy of healing passed down through generations. www.honolulumuseum.org

Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame Concert
March 21, Noon
Honolulu, Oʻahu

Enjoy a free lunchtime concert by some of Hawaiʻi's finest performers on-stage at Nā Lama Kukui, second floor outside the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Prince Kūhiō Celebration & Hoʻolauleʻa
March 22, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. | Kualapuʻu, Molokaʻi

Hosted by the Hoʻolehua Homesteaders Association at the Kualapuʻu Recreation Center. Contact Lu Ann Lankford-Faborito: kaluhiokalanik@aol.com.

KEY Project Kalo Fest
March 22, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Kahaluʻu, Oʻahu

Kuʻi kalo, workshops, music, local vendors, food trucks and more. Fun for the whole ʻohana, keiki to kūpuna. www.keyproject.org

Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalanianaʻole Aliʻi Sunday at Kawaihaʻo Church
March 23, 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.
Honolulu, Oʻahu

Part of the series of celebrations honoring our aliʻi. www.kawaiahaochurch.com

Kanikapila Fridays!
March 28, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
Kaimukī, Oʻahu

Kanikapila sessions held the last Friday of each month for musicians age 10+ at Kaimukī Public Library. All skill levels welcomed! Bring your own instrument or borrow an ʻukulele from the library! www.librarieshawaii.org/event/kanikapila-fridays/2025-02-28/

Prince Kūhiō Maui Hoʻolauleʻa
March 28, 4:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Kahului, Maui

Queen Kaʻahumanu Center www.lahainahcc.com www.facebook.com/princekuhiomaui

Prince Kūhiō Celebration
March 29, 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Kaunakakai, Molokaʻi

At Kiowea Park hosted by Kalamaʻula Homesteaders Association. Contact Lehua Kauka lehuakauka@gmail.com.

Kapolei Prince Kūhiō Parade
March 29, 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Kapolei, Oʻahu

Kapolei Parkway (Kapolei Hale to Ka Makana Aliʻi) presented by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs. www.aohcc.org

Hawaiʻi Triennial 2025, ALOHA NŌ (HT25)
February 15 - May 4
Oʻahu, Maui and Hawaiʻi Island

Hawaiʻi's largest thematic exhibition of contemporary art from Hawaiʻi, the Pacific, and beyond exhibited over a dozen sites. Free unless otherwise noted on the schedule of events at www.hawaiicontemporary.org. ■

SCHHA is Working to Address the Affordable Housing Crisis

By KipuKai Kuali'i

The Sovereign Council of Hawaiian Homestead Association (SCHHA) is working to help address the state's affordable housing crisis. At our Homesteader Relief Roundtable in October of 2023, we debuted our Permanently Affordable Rental Unit Strategy (PARUS). We highlighted the early successes of that strategy at our Annual Leadership Conference a few months later in January 2024 where U.S. Rep. Jill Tokuda praised our progress and encouraged us to do more.

PARUS was created as a tool for our homestead leaders to play a meaningful role in the long-term recovery of families displaced by the Maui wildfires and to help address the ongoing affordable housing crisis. PARUS has been our approach to acquiring existing residential properties on a regular basis, for dedication to permanent affordability.

We've done this by leveraging capital from banks and other lenders: the government and philanthropic funders. Through our Homestead Community Development Corporation (HCDC) nonprofit development arm, we have purchased numerous rental properties across the state, including six units on Kaua'i and eight units on Maui. So far, a total of 14 units owned and operated by homesteaders have been rented out affordably.

Hawai'i has been, and will probably always be, a high value residential property state, attracting investors and property owners seeking to maximize rental income. PARUS helps us to disrupt this cycle with SCHHA acquiring residential properties that would otherwise be purchased by investors solely interested in maximizing their profits.

Through PARUS, we have been inserting ourselves into the marketplace as a nonprofit buyer, acquiring rental properties by leveraging three different sources of capital to purchase them: conventional loans or debt; government subsidies; and philanthropic subsidies.

In short, we have been utilizing subsidies to buy down the purchase price to a level where affordable rental income can cover the cost of the loan over time.

Because of inflationary interest rates, we have been limited to taking on conventional loans or debt up to 40% of purchase price – meaning the subsidies part of our capital stack would need to include 30% each from both government and philanthropic sources (60% altogether) to ensure the rents are no more than the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) allowable 80% Area Median Income (AMI).

In 2020, SCHHA also founded its own Hawaiian Lending & Investment (HLI) community development financial institution to deliver financial services and capital to residents, farms, ranches and mercantile businesses on or near Hawaiian Home Lands.

We know having access to capital facilitates economic prosperity in our homestead communities so we're delivering financial assessments and trainings to homesteaders and investing in their capacity. We're also delivering grants as they become available from funding partners improving homesteaders financial stability. These grants may be for down payment assistance on home purchases and/or new construction.

Finally, through HLI, we're originating consumer, housing, agricultural, and clean energy loans. Please contact us at hli@hawaiianhomesteads.org for more information. ■

Founded in 1987, the Sovereign Council of Hawaiian Homestead Associations (SCHHA) is the oldest and largest governing homestead association registered with the Department of Interior, exercising sovereignty on the trust lands established under the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920. For information contact policy@hawaiianhomesteads.org.

Collaborating to Support Mental Wellbeing on Maui

By Papa Ola Lōkahi

In the aftermath of the tragic wildfires, the Maui community experienced a significant increase in mental health crises, including heightened anxiety, depression, trauma, and grief – common emotional responses following natural disasters.

To respond to these urgent needs, the Hawai'i Department of Health secured the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Emergency Response Grant (SERG) and hired Papa Ola Lōkahi as the intermediary. Together, we focused on delivering culturally appropriate support that aligns with the values and needs of the community.

The goal of the SAMHSA SERG program is to build a sustainable continuum of care that offers culturally grounded interventions to wildfire survivors. In the first year, the SERG grant profoundly impacted the recovery efforts for our ʻohana on Maui. The objectives for Year 1 included crisis counseling, behavioral health support, community outreach, and providing programs and services that promote healing and resilience, particularly from cultural and holistic perspectives.

MauiSERG has empowered local organizations to model community-driven, culturally sensitive disaster recovery. We are committed to building upon this momentum, addressing unmet needs, and fostering resilience to sustain the community's long-term recovery. Building on insights gathered from both survivors and practitioners, we have identified areas for growth in Year 2.

Learn more about our partners at polhi.org/MauiSERG. ■

Year 1 Partners included:

- Aloha House
- Collaborative Support Services, Inc.
- Ethnic Education Hawai'i
- Guardian Revival
- Hawai'i Center for Children and Families
- Hawai'i Psychological Association
- Hoʻaka Mana
- I Ola Lāhui
- Kula No Nā Poʻe Hawai'i (KULA)
- Maui Family Support Services
- Mindful Living Group
- Pacific Counseling Group, LLC
- The Queen's Medical Center
- YMCA of Honolulu

Current SERG Partners for Year 2 include:

- Aloha House
- BluePaz
- Collaborative Support Services
- Guardian Revival
- Hawai'i Behavioral Health Connection
- Hawai'i Center for Children and Families
- Hoʻaka Mana
- I Ola Lāhui
- LOILOA
- Maui Family Support Services
- Maui Roots Reborn
- Native Hawaiian Education Association
- Pacific Counseling Group
- Pacific Island Consulting - Mindful Living Group
- PIHA Wellness
- Project Vision Hawai'i
- The Queen's Medical Center
- YMCA of Honolulu

MauiSERG accomplishments, February to September 2024: Community Served - 7,298 families and 20,413 individuals; Clinical Care - 8,152 urgent trauma and mental health clinical appointments; Community Outreach - 452 events and 2,133 non-clinical appointments; Workforce Development - 94 training sessions attended by 2,229 local professionals and; Collaborative Engagement - Strong partnerships with 14 local organizations ensured tailored and effective services, especially for under-served populations.

E Aʻo Pū Kākou e Pili ana i nā Manu

By Lisa Kapono Mason

Manu-o-kū (white fairy terns) don't mind the hustle and bustle of Honolulu city life. Be a part of the science, report new nests and eggs to Hui Manu-O-Kū at www.whiteterns.org/citizenscience. - *Photo: Ann Tanimoto Johnson*

Hawai'i is home to an incredible variety of birds, from the vibrant honeycreepers of upland forests to migrating shorebirds who visit our inviting coastlines. Learning to identify them is easy and fun! Start by noticing their unique colors, sizes, feather patterns, and songs. Two great resources to start birding are the free Merlin Bird ID app (download the Hawai'i Bird Pack) and eBird app by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Birds in Hawai'i thrive in diverse environments. Forests shelter rare songbirds like the vibrant red ʻapapane, while wetlands, including loʻi, host elegant aeʻo (Hawaiian stilts) and ʻalae ʻula (Hawaiian moorhens). Shorelines bustle with hunakai (sanderlings) chasing the tides, while scrappy mynas, golden saffron finches, and zebra doves fill urban landscapes.

Some birds, like the ʻamakihi, are endemic to Hawai'i, meaning they are found nowhere else in the world. Others were introduced by humans from other lands, like the Java sparrow that is native to Indonesia. Wherever you are, take a moment to slow down, watch and listen, and enjoy Hawai'i's feathered friends! ■

Lisa Kapono Mason was raised in Hilo and happily resides in Keaʻau on the island of Hawai'i. She is a community educator, conservation researcher, and native bird enthusiast with a passion to help strengthen relationships between our manu and lāhui.

A Successful 2nd Annual Hoʻokipa Hawai'i Weekend!

By Mālia Sanders

On behalf of the Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association (NaHHA), we extend our deepest gratitude to the Native Hawaiian community, the public and the visitor industry for their support and participation in the 2nd Annual Hoʻokipa Hawai'i Weekend, a two-day community and culture event.

Thousands of people - both kamaʻāina and malihini - gathered in Waikīkī for the 2nd Annual Hoʻokipa Hawai'i Weekend event. Here, dancers perform at the Royal Grove at Helumoa at the Royal Hawaiian Center. - *Photo: Courtesy of NaHHA*

We mahalo the Office of Native Hawaiian Relations, the Royal Hawaiian Center, and all of our incredible partners and sponsors who helped to uplift this gathering of more than 100 Kānaka Maoli entrepreneurs, cultural practitioners, demonstrators, speakers, haumāna, artisans, crafters, keiki, and logistics support services. NaHHA is also a proud recipient of an Office of Hawaiian Affairs' Hoʻākoakoa Lāhui event sponsorship.

This year, we focused on continuous engagement on two stages and activated three floors leveraging Native Hawaiian partnerships with other nonprofit organizations such as INPEACE and their Kaulele Exhibit, with opportunities for sharing by 15 cultural practitioners in the Royal Grove at Helumoa, while growing circular economy best practices by showcasing over 60 Native Hawaiian-owned small businesses.

This event supports opportunities for the Native Hawaiian community to actively participate in tourism in ways that are beneficial to them, all while supporting a regenerative methodology mindset and best practices guided by the value of mālama and driving economic development for Native Hawaiians which reinforce our deep connections to our ʻohana, moʻomeheu, and ʻāina.

Hoʻokipa Hawai'i Weekend serves as a platform for cultural expression and preservation – ensuring that our practices, traditions, and values continue to thrive in spaces like Waikīkī, where our aliʻi envisioned Native Hawaiians as active participants in the evolving world, ensuring that we engage meaningfully with both malihini and kamaʻāina while maintaining the integrity of our Native Hawaiian cultural identity.

We know that our founders, Dr. George Kanahele and Sen. Kenny Brown, would have been proud to see visitors and kamaʻāina alike return to Waikīkī to experience Hawaiian culture in a safe, inclusive space – one that uplifts Native Hawaiians socially and economically. Through this event, NaHHA was able to demonstrate how cultural tourism can be a force for good ensuring economic empowerment, creating pathways for economic and community resilience, cultural sustainability, and social justice.

As we look ahead to hosting Hoʻokipa Hawai'i Weekend again in February 2026, we want to thank our community for continuing to participate in the important conversations that take place when one or more Kānaka gather! A heartfelt mahalo to everyone who came out to share their support, shop and enjoy company amongst friends and ʻohana.

Mahalo nui to our community members, cultural practitioners, Native Hawaiian small businesses, vendors, nonprofit partners and the entire logistics team who helped bring NaHHA's vision to life. Our aloha is with every single one of you!

Mahalo, mahalo, mahalo from Team NaHHA. ■

To view highlights from Hoʻokipa Hawai'i Weekend 2025, visit www.nahha.com

Event Partners & Sponsors: Office of Native Hawaiian Relations, Royal Hawaiian Center, JSS By Design, Office of Hawiian Affairs, Southwest Airlines, First Hawaiian Bank, The Ritz-Carlton – Oʻahu Turtle Bay, Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau, Waimea Valley – Hiʻipaka LLC, Kualoa Ranch, Maui Hotel & Lodging Association, NMG Network, INPEACE, Monkeypod Kitchen, Aulani – A Disney Resort & Spa, Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce, Elite Parking, Outrigger Resorts & Hotels, Highgate, The Kālaimoku Group, The Gay Agenda Collective, and ʻŌiwi TV.

Ua Hoʻi i ka Mole

By Hina Keala

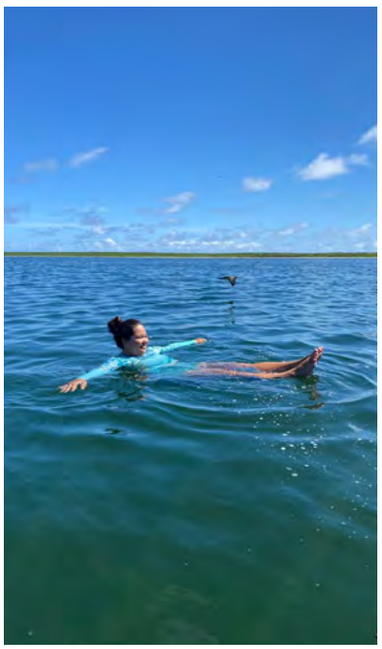
In the summer of 2014, I was a young, freshly graduated 18-year-old with the opportunity to enter the Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Monument under the Kānehūnāmoku Voyaging Academy (KVA) led by Captain Bonnie Kahapeʻa-Tanner. This was the first time in recent history that a group this young was taken into the monument. That experience forever changed me and since then has been a mole (source) of inspiration, reverence, and guidance for me.

I can confidently say that almost every important decision I've made since can be traced back to that 2014 voyage to Papahānaumokuākea, in which kūpuna of all shapes and forms guided me from adolescence into womanhood. We don't call them the "kūpuna islands" for nothing.

It was so crucial to be in this space as a young Hawaiian because all the stories of our kūpuna became real. I learned to trust and have "faith in the knowledge of my ancestors," as Papa Mau said – a skill that went beyond the deck of that ship and has stuck with me since.

As a member of the Papahānaumokuākea Cultural Working Group (CWG), in 2023 I was honored to receive the kāhea to return to Papahānaumokuākea almost 10 years later to serve as a cultural liaison for a joint science research trip with USFWS, NOAA, and USGS to Kamole Atoll, formerly known as Laysan Island. Kamole is the second largest landmass in Papahānaumokuākea, approximately 1 mile wide by 1.5 miles long, with a hypersaline lake in the middle that is home to the world's rarest duck, the endangered koloa pōhaka (Laysan duck)

On this trip, we reaped the benefits of decades of work to rid Kamole of *Cenchrus echinatus*, an invasive weed that has wreaked havoc on the island since 1961. We planned to continue removal, but after hours of searching we could not find a single plant! Hulō! We also observed a large colony of ʻewaʻewa (sooty tern) prospecting and selecting nesting locations. In the middle of the trip, they began to lay



Floating in the hypersaline lake at Kamole (Laysan) in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. - *Photo: Hina Keala*

eggs. Ola!

Goals for the trip included *Cenchrus* removal, counting koloa pōhaka, surveying and tagging monk seals and honu, and installing weather stations. A main objective was to collect sediment samples from the center of the lake. We had the opportunity to jump in to the water, but due to its hypersalinity, it was nearly impossible to sink.

The team of scientists, many of whom have never participated in Hawaiian protocol before, were very receptive to learning oli. We focused our energies on the intention of the huakaʻi and reverence for Papahānaumokuākea. This resulted in a very smooth and efficient trip. Hopefully, we can see more cultural liaison positions in future research trips as both perspectives of stewardship are vital for the future of our kūpuna islands.

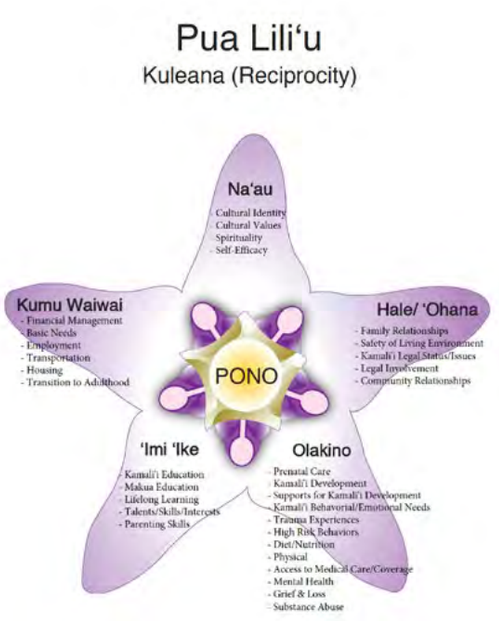
To Kahaz, Kalā, Aunty Pua, Keanaliʻiomanaʻe, Leiʻohu, and my KVA ʻohana, mahalo palena ʻole for dreaming so that we could live it and dream of further horizons. E ola i ke au a Kanaloa! Mahalo nui to the CWG for granting me this opportunity to hoʻi i ka mole. ■

Pua Liliʻu Wellbeing Framework

By Melinda Lloyd, LT Senior Manager, Research & Evaluation

In 1909, Queen Liliʻuokalani wrote a deed of trust that would lay the groundwork for a lasting legacy, a commitment to the wellbeing of orphaned and destitute Hawaiian kamaliʻi (children). Today, more than a century later, Liliʻuokalani Trust (LT) honors the Queen's mission by providing programs and services for Hawaiian kamaliʻi and ʻōpio (youth) across the pae ʻāina.

To support kamaliʻi, LT has created the Pua Liliʻu Wellbeing Framework, a holistic assessment that focuses on restoration of balance and harmony, while drawing inspiration from ʻike kūpuna (ancestral knowledge).



The Pua Liliʻu flower represents a holistic model of wellbeing.

The Pua Liliʻu Wellbeing Framework uses a metaphor of a pua (flower). Just as a flower requires sunlight, water, and care to bloom, so do kamaliʻi. This imagery emphasizes the importance of providing aloha and mālama, for kamaliʻi to thrive in all aspects of life.

The Pua Liliʻu Wellbeing Framework was introduced in 2012 as Pua Lōkahi, inspired by Kamehameha Schools' (KS) Lōkahi Wheel and their Wellbeing Pua Model. Over time, it evolved into a holistic model emphasizing five wellbeing domains:

- **Naʻau:** Cultural and Spiritual Connection
- **Hale/ʻOhana:** Family and Community Relationships
- **Olakino:** Physical and Emotional Health
- **ʻImi ʻIke:** Learning and Education
- **Kumu Waiwai:** Resources

These domains are not hierarchical. They work in harmony, emphasizing the belief that each domain must be nurtured for kamaliʻi to thrive.

On the individual level, the Pua Liliʻu can also be used for personal growth and learning. Each petal on the flower encourages striving for pono in every aspect of life — from emotional health to relationships. When struggles arise, hoʻopono provides a path to realign and heal. Meanwhile, mālama pono reminds us of our responsibility to care for ourselves and others with respect and mindfulness.

The Pua Liliʻu is used in various LT programs and services across the pae ʻāina including at: LT Ranch on Hawaiʻi Island, where kamaliʻi can heal through art, ʻāina, and animal-assisted therapy; Lydia House in downtown Honolulu, a safe place for ʻōpio who have experienced child welfare and juvenile justice systems; various kīpuka and sites that offer youth programs and services and; The Early Childhood Initiative for keiki ages 5 and younger.

The Pua Liliʻu recognizes and promotes an overall sense of physical, spiritual, and emotional health, whereby kamaliʻi and ʻōpio can appreciate their heritage, build resilience, and navigate life's challenges. Queen Liliʻuokalani's vision continues to thrive, as future generations are empowered to ʻonipaʻa, grow, heal, and flourish.■

E NINAU IĀ NHLC
ASK THE NATIVE HAWAIIAN LEGAL CORPORATION

E NHLC...

E NHLC, how can I obtain government records about a project that affects my community?

By Ashley K. Obrey, Esq.
NHLC Senior Staff Attorney

Access to public records is essential to holding government officials accountable and protecting the interests of the public, including those related to ʻāina and traditional and customary practices. Obtaining information about a government action undoubtedly puts you in a better position to ensure that your rights are protected.

The legislature acknowledged this by enacting Hawaiʻi's Uniform Information Practice Act (UIPA), noting that "opening up the government processes to public scrutiny and participation is the only viable and reasonable method of protecting the public's interest."

If a project is on your radar because it is on an agency's meeting agenda, some relevant documents should be available on the agency's website. But you are not limited only to what the agency posts online. Every person has the right to inspect or copy public records that may not otherwise be readily accessible.

A public record is anything – written, auditory, visual, electronic, or physical – made or received in connection with the discussions, deliberations, decisions, and actions of government agencies. Agencies are defined broadly to include all state and county government units but specifically excludes the nonadministrative functions of the Judiciary (obtaining court records is governed by court rules). Generally, if it pertains to the official business of an agency, it is a public record subject to disclosure with limited exceptions.

Requesting public records is fairly straightforward. Requests must be in writing and include a reasonable description of the requested records, how you would like to receive the records (mail, e-mail, pick up, copy), and your contact information.

UIPA requests are subject to processing fees; however, fee waivers are available if the records pertaining to the operations/activities of an agency are not readily available in the public domain and you have the intention and ability to disseminate information to the public at large.

A request form is available on the Office of Information Practices' (OIP) website (https://files.hawaii.gov/oip/request-access.pdf). Contact information related to the submission of UIPA requests can usually be found on the individual agency's website.

By rule, disclosure is required within a reasonable time (not to exceed 10 business days from the date of your request). In extenuating circumstances, the agency may provide a written acknowledgement within 10 business days and disclose the records within a reasonable time not to exceed 20 business days from the date of the request.

Despite the policy of transparency, government agencies could deny disclosure of a public record if it would harm an interest protected by an exemption – including personal privacy, ongoing litigation, or frustration of a legitimate government function – or if disclosure is prohibited by law. Drafts of legislative documents may also be withheld.

Given the state's policy of promoting the public interest in disclosure, the record will typically be released unless there is a compelling reason to withhold it. However, in the event that you disagree with the withholding of records, you have the right to appeal to the circuit court within two years after the request is denied. For more information go to: https://oip.hawaii.gov/. ■

E Nīnau iā NHLC provides general information about the law. ***E Nīnau iā NHLC is not legal advice****. You can contact NHLC about your legal needs by calling NHLC's offices at 808-521-2302. You can also learn more about NHLC at nativehawaiianlegalcorp.org.*

The Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation (NHLC) is a nonprofit law firm dedicated to the advancement and protection of Native Hawaiian identity and culture. Each month, NHLC attorneys will answer questions about legal issues relating to Native Hawaiian rights and protections, including issues regarding housing, land, water, and traditional and cultural practice. You can submit questions at NinauNHLC@nhlchi.org.

KA NAʻAUAO O NĀ KŪPUNA
THE WISDOM OF THE KŪPUNA

Nā Hale o Ruta Keʻelikōlani

Na Kalani Akana, Ph.D.

Ua hanohano ʻo Keōua Hale ma Kaʻaʻōpua, Honolulu ke ʻike aku. Ua kūkulu ʻia kēlā hale aliʻi no Ruta Keʻelikōlani ma kāhi o ke kula waena i kapa hou ʻia ma kona inoa ʻo ia ʻo Princess Ruth Keʻelikōlani Middle School ma 1302 Alanui Mōʻīwahine ʻEma.

Keōua Hale ma Kaʻaʻōpua. Ua kūkula ʻia kēlā hale aliʻi no Ruta Keʻelikōlani. Akā, ʻaʻole i noho iki ʻo ia ma Keōua Hale no ka mea ua hāʻule ʻo ia i ka maʻi a ua hele i Kona no ka hoʻopolapola kino ʻana. Ua hala ʻana ʻo ia ma Mei o 1883. - *Courtesy photo*

Ua pau ke kūkulu ʻana o ka hale aliʻi ma ka makahiki 1883 a ʻoi aku kona nui i ko ka Hale Aliʻi ʻo ʻIolani i kūkulu pau ʻia ma 1882. ʻOiai ua mālama ʻia kekahi ʻahaʻaina nui ma laila ma ka pau ʻana o ka hale, ʻaʻole i noho iki ke aliʻi wahine ma Keōua Hale no ka mea ua hāʻule ʻo ia i ka maʻi ma hope o ka ʻahaʻaina, alaila ua hele i Kona no ka hoʻopolapola kino ʻana. Aloha paumākō nō naʻe kona hala ʻana ma Mei o 1883. Ua mālama ʻia kona ʻuaki (kiaʻi kupapaʻu) ma Keōua Hale a lilo ka hale nui i kona hoahānau ʻo Pauahi. Ma ka makahiki 1884, ua hala ke kamāliʻiwahine ʻo Pauahi ma Keōua Hale. Aloha nō.

I ka manawa a Keʻelikōlani i noho ai ma Kona, e like me kona wā noho kiaʻāina ʻana ma ka mokupuni o Hawaiʻi, ua noho ʻo ia ma ka hale aliʻi ʻo Hulihe'e. He hale lāʻau papahele ʻelua ʻo Hulihe'e i kūkulu ʻia e J. A. Kuakini a i hoʻoili ʻia iā Wiliama Pitt Leleiohoku, ke kāne a Keʻelikōlani. Pēlā i ili ai iā Ruta. Ma kona noho ʻana ma Hulihe'e, ua puni naʻe ʻo ia e moe ma kekahi hale pili ma ke kihi o ke kahua hale.

I ka wā a Keʻelikōlani i noho ai ma Honolulu a i ka manawa āna e kali ana i ke kūkulu ʻana o Keōua Hale, ua noho ʻo ia ma Pālama ma kona hale ʻo Mauna Kamala. Aia ka hale ma waena o Asylum Road (Pālama Street) ma ke komohana, Alanui Mōʻīkāne ma ka hema, a me Alanui Liliha ma ka hikina. Ua noho ʻo Mauna Kamala ma luna pono o ke alanui Kanoa o kēia wā a kū ʻo ia ma mua o ke kumu lāʻau baniana nui i wāwahi ʻia i mau makahiki aku nei. No laila, ma hope a kokoke i ka hale pule ʻo Kaumakapili o kēia wā nō ʻo Mauna Kamala.

E like me Keōua Hale, ua ili ʻo Mauna Kamala iā Pauahi ma ko Ruta hala ʻana. Ma hope o ka hala ʻana o Pauahi, ua hoʻolimalima nā kahu mālama waiwai a Pauahi i ka hale iā Joseph Nawahī, ke aloha ʻāina no Puna a he ʻelele o Hilo ma ka ʻAhaʻōlelo o ke Aupuni o Hawaiʻi.

Ma hope o ke kāhuli aupuni, ua pākaha ʻia kona hale e nā kipi paokeʻe a Kalekona mā a lawe hewa ʻia ʻo Nāwahī i ka hale paʻahao ma Iwilei i kapa ʻia, ʻo ia ke Kākela Haole. Ma laila i loaʻa ai ka maʻiʻaiake iā Nāwahī.

Minamina loa no ka mea ʻaʻohe ona hewa iki. Ua hele ʻo Nāwahī i Kapalakiko e hoʻopolapola akā ʻaʻole i kanaaho mai kona maʻi a hala ʻo ia. Ma kona hoʻolewa ma ke kahua o Mauna Kamala, ua hū ka lehulehu o nā kānaka i aloha nui i ua aloha ʻāina la. Ua lawe kona kino kupapaʻu i kona ʻāina aloha o Hilo.

Ma kēia pukana aʻe, e heluhelu ana kākou e pili ana i nā hale o Liliʻuokalani. Mahalo i ka heluhelu ʻana i kēia kolamu nūpepa. E ola ka inoa ʻo Ruta Keʻelikōlani. ■

Kalani Akana, Ph.D., is a kumu of hula, oli and ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. He has authored numerous articles on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.

To read the English translation go to kawaiola.news

Wai: The Foundation of Health and Justice

By Jodi Leslie Matsuo, DrPH

Water, or wai, is the foundation of health and wellbeing. It is recognized as a fundamental human right, meant to be sufficient, safe, acceptable, accessible, and affordable for personal and domestic use. In Native Hawaiian culture, wai is more than just a resource – it is life-giving, as reflected in the word "waiwai," meaning "wealth."

Hydration is vital, as water makes up 60% of the human body and supports digestion, circulation, temperature regulation, and detoxification. Even mild dehydration can cause fatigue, headaches, poor concentration, and added strain on the heart and kidneys.

Over time, chronic dehydration increases the risk of kidney disease, high blood pressure, and cognitive decline, and in severe cases, can be life-threatening. A 1-2% loss of body water can impair memory, problem-solving, and increase anxiety, fatigue, and irritability.

While the CDC provides no specific daily water intake recommendations, a common guideline suggests drinking half of one's body weight (in pounds) in ounces of water daily, up to 120 ounces. For example, a 200-pound person should aim for 100 ounces per day.

However, hydration needs vary based on activity level, climate, and health conditions. In Hawai'i's hot and humid environment, or for those who exercise frequently, fluid needs may be higher, while individuals with congestive heart failure or kidney disease may require less.

Despite the importance of clean water, Native Hawaiians and other communities continue to struggle with water access due to contamination, privatization, and mismanagement. The Red Hill Water Crisis and Maui water rights disputes – which contributed to the West Maui wildfire disaster – are among the most well-known conflicts.

A lesser-known but equally urgent crisis is unfolding at Saguaro Correctional Center in Eloy, Arizona, which houses nearly 1,000 inmates from Hawai'i.

In October 2024, the ACLU of Hawai'i issued a demand letter calling for an immediate investigation into unsafe drinking water conditions at Saguaro Correctional Center. Their investigation found that inmates reported the water was "greasy, viscous," left an awful aftertaste, and smelled like "chlorine," "chemicals," "metallic rust," and "bug spray."

Consumption reportedly caused burning eyes, cracked skin, gastrointestinal issues, and other health concerns.

Long-term exposure to chemical contaminants, bacteria, heavy metals, and excessive chlorine can lead to chronic kidney and liver disease, neurological damage, respiratory issues, gastrointestinal disorders, skin conditions, weakened immunity, and an increased risk of cancer and cognitive decline.

Saguaro prison staff drink bottled water while inmates must drink contaminated tap water or purchase overpriced bottled water at $15 per case – three times the outside price. With prison wages at just 25 cents per hour, many cannot afford enough water for daily hydration.

The ACLU has demanded an independent water quality investigation, free access to safe drinking water, and transparency in commissary pricing, arguing that conditions at Saguaro may violate constitutional rights, federal disability laws, and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

To date, no official actions or public statements have confirmed whether these demands have been addressed. Ensuring safe, equitable water access for all, including incarcerated Native Hawaiians, is essential for protecting health, dignity, and justice. ■

Born and raised in Kona, Hawai'i, Dr. Jodi Leslie Matsuo is a Native Hawaiian registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator, with training in integrative and functional nutrition. Follow her on Facebook @DrJodiLeslieMatsuo, Instagram @drlesliematsuo and on Twitter @DrLeslieMatsuo.

Hawaiians in Utah

By Charlene Vincent Lui

In 1990, five clubs established the Mainland Council Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs (MCAHCC) at the 31st Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs (AHCC) Convention, which included Hui Hawai'i o Utah.

Then in 1993, Kauwahi Anaina Hawai'i Hawaiian Civic Club (KAHHCC) was chartered and become a part of the MCAHCC. The presence of both clubs in Utah contributes to the Hawaiian community by promoting Hawaiian culture, language, and civic involvement, as both clubs continue to be active in preserving Hawaiian culture and identity outside of Hawai'i.

Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole aimed for Hawaiians to engage with government and the community at large, fostering civic responsibility essential to the development of Hawai'i and its people. In Utah, several civic club members are actively involved in local and state government, fulfilling this vision.

During the 2024 Utah General Legislative Session, a resolution was passed titled "Honoring Utah's Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Cultures and Communities" which acknowledges NHPI contributions to the state's prosperity.

The resolution helped to spearhead three projects in Utah that illuminate the presence and contributions of Native Hawaiians in Utah. These include an oral history project, inclusion of Native Hawaiians in the state's K-12 social studies curriculum, and the dedication of a park to commemorate the first Hawaiians living in Warm Springs.

The first project aims to broaden Utah's history by including stories from underrepresented communities in Utah's Historical Society's collections. The oral history interviews include several of our Native Hawaiian kūpuna and longtime residents of Utah.

The K-12 social studies curriculum includes the history of Iosepa, a colony established in 1889 for the benefit of Hawaiian members of the LDS Church who came to Utah to assist in the work to build the Salt Lake Temple. The church helped them settle in Iosepa, located in Skull Valley about 75 miles from Salt Lake City.

The church purchased the John T. Rich Ranch. Members of the colony ranged from nearly 50 at its inception to about 226 just before Iosepa closed. The community thrived for 28 years until the building of the Lā'ie Temple was announced in 1915 and Iosepa was abandoned as the Hawaiian saints returned home to help build the temple there.

The Iosepa Historical Association continues to maintain the property through grants and private donations, and they invite everyone to attend the annual Memorial Weekend Celebration to honor the faith and sacrifice of our kūpuna who lived here long ago.

Finally, the Warm Springs Park project is currently being designed and includes several Native Hawaiian committee members. This space will provide an opportunity for visitors to see where and how Native Hawaiians lived in 1873.

Although we are not home in Hawai'i, we cherish our Native Hawaiian culture. We strive to embrace our homeland and share the aloha spirit with others on the continent, especially as Hawaiians in Utah. ■

Advancing Hawaiian Education

By the Hoʻokaʻa ʻIke Team



"ʻO Hawaiʻi ke kahua o ka hoʻonaʻauao – Hawaiʻi is the foundation of our learning."
– ʻŌlelo Noʻeau #1993

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) is pleased to introduce Hoʻokaʻa ʻIke, the education and culture-based learning team within our new Strategy and Implementation Paia (department).

Grounded in the ʻōlelo noʻeau shared above, our team is developing tactics and strategies to support OHA's enactment of its Mana i Mauli Ola Strategic Plan and the mandates of HRS Chapter 10, with Kānaka ʻŌiwi values and worldviews as the foundation. Our core beliefs include:

- The historical foundations of success and excellence of Kānaka ʻŌiwi in education
- The importance of ʻohana, community, and ʻāina as our keiki's first kumu
- The critical need for culturally sustaining, lifelong education opportunities that strengthen and heal our lāhui

Our goal is to create systemic change. To meet the needs of our beneficiaries, the Hoʻokaʻa ʻIke team is focused on:

- Leveraging OHA's kuleana to create systemic change that values Kānaka ʻŌiwi definitions of success
- Collaborating with state and other education agencies to strengthen impact
- Building relationships with our kaiāulu to ensure community voices are heard

A key tactic is our ongoing support for Hawaiian-Focused Charter Schools and Hawaiian Language Medium Schools. Founded by grassroots community advocacy, our language- and culture-based schools are models for high quality education. OHA has provided funding and advocacy support for years, and can now offer even more kōkua with this new team.

Additionally, Hoʻokaʻa ʻIke will support Native Hawaiian students within the Department of Education (DOE) system. OHA recognizes that most Native Hawaiian students are in the DOE, and seeks to create opportunities and pathways to culture and readiness.

The team also emphasizes advocacy and community engagement, working with local communities, schools, and policymakers to promote sustainable futures for Native Hawaiians. OHA encourages collaboration to ensure that Native Hawaiian culture remains vibrant and integrated into modern life, creating opportunities for Native Hawaiians to thrive both culturally and professionally.

Our team brings a deep commitment to this work and our collective experience and networks span Hawaiian-focused charter and immersion, higher education, community partners, and cultural practitioners, offering perspectives based on lived experience, not just formal credentials. Over the last eight months, the team has collaborated with leadership from the Office of Hawaiian Education, Kamehameha Schools, the DOE, the UH system, the State Public Charter School Commission, Hawaiian-focused charter schools, ʻAha Kau Leo, and other groups to align efforts and strategize.

In the upcoming months, the team will be working hard to generate educational resources grounded in ʻike Hawaiʻi and ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, pilot programs that incorporate culture-based learning and workforce development, and shift policy and practice to move toward ea (self-determination). ■

For more information, reach out to our Hoʻokaʻa ʻIke team: Director Kuʻuleianuhea Awo-Chun (kuuleianuheaa@oha.org); Strategy Consultant Makiʻilei Ishihara (makiileii@oha.org); Strategy Consultant Chantelle Kapua Belay (chantellekb@oha.org) or email education@oha.org.

Field Experience in Kahaluʻu

By Kamakanaokealoha M. Aquino

Last month, students from the Planning 310 "Introduction to Planning" course at UH Mānoa traveled to Kona, Hawaiʻi Island, for a field experience.

Their instructor, Kepoʻo Keliʻipaʻakaua, is a doctoral student in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning who has been collaborating with the community-based organization Kahaluʻu Kūāhewa, located in Kahaluʻu within part of the Kona Field System. Jesse Kekoa and Kimberly Kahoʻonei are the limahana (employees) of this organization and envision the revitalization of the wahi kūpuna Kahaluʻu field systems as a traditional Hawaiian agricultural landscape, reconnecting kānaka to ʻāina.

Undergraduate students from different majors enroll in this course because of its writing-intensive designation. It is an introductory course covering urban and regional planning and contemporary planning practice.

Undergraduate students from UH Mānoa's "Introduction to Planning" course help transport mulch to a dry taro bed at Kahalu'u within the Kona Field System on Hawai'i Island. - *Courtesy photo*

Its primary objective is to provide an understanding of the context within which urban planning emerged, the different planning approaches, and the role of planners in envisioning the future of neighborhoods, cities, and regions. Major themes and case studies span different subfields of planning, such as land use, transportation, housing, community and economic development, environment and sustainability, smart growth, preservation, and urban design to understand why we plan, who plans, and how and what we plan.

This particular course includes perspectives and approaches from Indigenous planning that will be woven into the curriculum. It examines course content through Hawaiʻi-specific planning issues and includes a visit to a community-led ʻāina restoration site.

Students had a brief introduction to the limahana and the ʻāina before doing some hana (work). They began with protocol to ask permission to enter and walked a little further into the area where they were asked to kōkua. While learning about the future plans for this area, students transported mulch to one of the taro beds and helped clear logs.

This particular ʻāina is owned by Kamehameha Schools. It is agriculturally zoned land from Kailua-Kona to Kahaluʻu, Keauhou, and even as far as Kainālilu, Kona. For many of the students, it was their first trip to Hawaiʻi Island and, in particular, to the Kona area.

The students were very engaged and hands-on as well as quite inquisitive regarding current challenges and future planning considerations for this ahupuaʻa. Another visit is scheduled in May for the students to share their planning ideas and recommendations.

To learn more about the Kahaluʻu Kūāhewa go to: www.kahaluukuahewa.org/. To learn more about the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, visit durp.manoa.hawaii.edu. ■

Kamakanaokealoha "Kamakana" M. Aquino is from Waimānalo, Oʻahu, and leads Hui ʻĀina Pilipili, the Native Hawaiian Initiative in the College of Social Sciences at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa.

Maʻo Hawaiʻi
He Huikau no nā Maʻo

By Bobby Camara

Smaller bolls (capsules) and short tan fibers characterize maʻo Hawaiʻi. - *Photo: L. Schattenburg*

Freshly dyed with dry mature pua and ash, damp kapa can be vibrant ʻōmaʻo (green). - *Photo: L. Schattenburg*

Cotton. These days, many are striving to forsake "plastic" clothing; that made of byproducts of petroleum and other chemical processes, including polyesters. Linen, silk, and cotton are fabrics that are viewed as "natural," and can be manufactured and dyed with relative ease.

But in the case of cottons, not all are equal. Our shrubby maʻo Hawaiʻi (*Gossypium tomentosum*), whose fibers are too short, cannot be spun into thread, and, curiously, is found naturally throughout our fair isles, except on Hawaiʻi. Taller maʻo haole, with its fluffy white fiber, has been grown in Hawaiʻi since the early 1800s, and still survives, especially on dry leeward slopes.

Our endemic maʻo is processed into dye for kapa, though different archival references share different information. Lau? Pua? Yellow? Green? Light? Dark? Fugitive (short-lived)? Long lasting? What additives? Experimentation and record-keeping are critical in sorting out confusions.

A good thing is that maʻo is easy to grow, and, with its bright, yellow pua, grey-green leaves, and smallish footprint, it makes an attractive addition to gardens, especially in droughty lee areas. ■

Brilliant yellow pua complement grey-green kukui-ish lau. - *Photo: B Camara*

Fluffy white "lint" of maʻo haole, a reminder of an industry in Hawaiʻi a century ago. - *Photo: thedreamstress.com*

NHCC 2024 Survey Offers Insights

By Andrew Rosen

The Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce (NHCC) conducted its Q4 and Year-End 2024 Economic Survey to assess business sentiment, workforce challenges, access to capital, and AI adoption among its members. This article examines key trends, providing insights into the economic conditions faced by Native Hawaiian businesses in 2024. The results shed light on ongoing challenges, emerging opportunities, and the overall outlook for the coming year.

Economic Sentiment in Q4

As we closed out 2024, NHCC members reported a mixed economic outlook for the fourth quarter. Nearly half (46.2%) stated that the economy remained the same as in 2023, while 23.1% believed the economy was stable but stronger than in 2019. However, concerns remain, with 30.8% of respondents saying the economy worsened compared to previous years.

Overall Economic Sentiment for 2024

Looking at 2024 as a whole, members remained divided in their assessment of the economy. While 38.5% believed the economy was on par with 2023 but stronger than 2019, another 38.5% reported no change compared to 2023. And 23.1% felt the economy worsened. These findings suggest a period of economic stagnation, with businesses neither experiencing significant growth nor severe decline.

Workforce Challenges: Finding Talent in a Tight Labor Market

One of the most pressing issues reported was the difficulty in finding qualified employees. Nearly 54% of businesses struggled to find qualified candidates, a consistent trend. Only a small percentage of businesses reported finding some qualified candidates in 2024. This labor shortage underscores the need for workforce development programs and better job training opportunities for Native Hawaiians.

Access to Capital: A Continuing Challenge

Securing funding remained difficult for many Native Hawaiian businesses. In 2024 overall, 23.1% of respondents found gaining access to capital more difficult but in Q4 alone, it was 30.8%. This is a concerning trend, as capital access is critical for small businesses looking to expand, invest in technology, or hire new employees – suggesting that many businesses are self-sustaining or not actively seeking loans or investments.

AI Adoption: A Growing Trend?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption among Native Hawaiian businesses showed mixed results. In Q4, 46.2% of businesses incorporated AI into their operations, indicating a growing interest in automation and data-driven decision-making. However, by the end of 2024, this number dropped to 30.8%, showing a slowdown in AI adoption. This suggests that while businesses are interested in AI, barriers such as cost (AI is free, $20 month or $200 month depending on need). I believe, however, that it is more likely a lack of awareness or resistance to change which may be slowing full implementation.

Conclusion

The findings from NHCC's Q4 and Year-End 2024 Economic Survey reveal both stability and persistent challenges within the Native Hawaiian business community. While the economy remained relatively stable, businesses continue to face workforce shortages, capital access constraints, and hurdles in AI adoption. Moving forward, NHCC will use this data to continue to provide better workforce training, increased funding opportunities, and AI education resources to support our members' success through our initiative, Project Hoʻomana. Here's to a strong 2025! ■

If you have question, please email: andrew@nativehawaiianchamberofcommerce.org.

Andrew Rosen is executive director for the Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce and a long time member. Contact Andrew at andrew@nativehawaiianchamberofcommerce.org.

A Hawaiian Philosophical Practice

By Kalei Nuʻuhiwa, Ph.D.

Aloha kākou e nā hoa makamaka. Howzit Gang. We happened to be at Kūʻīlioloa Heiau in Waiʻanae the other week when we came upon a rock that had a lot of different types of limu (seaweed) growing on it. The ones I could identify looked like limu kala and limu pālahalaha.

My mind started thinking about all the other limu that was once abundant along our island shorelines, which then lead me to thinking about Native Hawaiian philosophical practices connected to limu.

Philosophical practices explain relationships between people, organisms, and natural phenomena in the environment that were observed, experienced, and then recorded in poetic compositions that were filled with vivid imagery to transfer environmental experience or empirical knowledge from one generation to the next generation.

Here's a Hawaiian philosophical practice that is specific to limu. This column's practice describes a ritual using seaweed for protection. We start with a description of the philosophy and end with the featured seaweed's connection to the practice.

ʻOiʻo: Pronounced "Oy!–oh"

An ʻoiʻo is a procession of ghosts of a departed chief and his retinue, more commonly called huakaʻi pō in stories. Growing up, we were generally told if you happen to come upon a parade of ʻoiʻo you're not supposed to engage with them, or they will take you with them. As kids, we'd often hear stories told by the uncles or aunties about the ʻoiʻo – which always kept us close to the adults when fishing.

Flash forward to today. While doing some research, I came across a tiny blurb about limu kohu and ʻoiʻo. It said that limu kohu (*Asparagopsis taxiformis*) was used to keep the ʻoiʻo moving along their pathway without disturbing people. If a person were to unexpectedly encounter the ʻoiʻo along the beach, a sprig of limu kohu was quickly plucked and the following words were uttered as a form of protection:

"Eia koʻu lauʻoio a me ka limu kohu, e hala aʻe ana ia manawa. He kama au na (inoa)." - H. Smith, Kauaʻi, 1911

Paraphrase:

"Here's my sprig and my seaweed, continue on right now. I am a descendant of (insert the name of an ancestor)."

The word kohu means to "resemble" or have an acceptable similarity to something or someone. It was believed that the ancestor's name would be recognized and so the person would not be bothered by the passing procession.

Limu kohu, in my opinion, is one of the best edible seaweeds in Hawaiʻi. In the old days, patches were cared for by families and communities so everyone could enjoy eating it. It was gathered, cleaned, and preserved in balls for easy access when needed. Limu kohu has a very distinct crunch and umami flavor. It is often eaten as a relish with a favorite fish and sometimes added to stews.

That's the Hawaiian philosophical practice for the column. A hui hou kākou. ■

Wilhelm Named CEO of Nia Tero

ʻAulani Wilhelm - *Photo: Nia Tero*

ʻAulani Wilhelm has been named CEO of Nia Tero, a Seattle-based nonprofit that works in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and movements worldwide.

For the past year, Wilhelm, who is based in Honolulu, has served as Nia Tero's chief strategy and external relations officer. Previously, she was assistant director for Ocean Conservation, Climate and Equity at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and has served as senior vice president for oceans at Conservation International. She also played a key role in shaping the large-scale ocean conservation movement which led to the establishment of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and founded Big Ocean, a network of the world's largest marine managed areas.

Wilhelm graduated from Kamehameha Schools Kapālama and has a B.A. degree from the University of Southern California, and an M.S. degree from Stanford University. She is a Mellon Distinguished Scholar at Arizona State University and a social innovation fellow at Stanford University.

Nia Tero provides direct funding via grants and contracts to Indigenous People's organizations, focusing on Amazonia, North America and the Pacific. Since 2017, it has distributed more than $85 million in grants and helped to protect more than 316 million acres of lands and waters.

191st Birthday of Kamehameha IV Observed

The 191st birthday of King Alexander Liholiho ʻIolani Kamehameha IV was observed on February 10 at a commemoration ceremony at Mauna'ala (the Royal Mausoleum). The commemoration was held by The Queen's Health System to honor Kamehameha IV who, along with his wife, Queen Emma, established The Queen's Hospital in 1859. Born on Feb. 9, 1834, Kamehameha IV was a steadfast advocate for the health and prosperity of the Hawaiian people. During his lifetime, he saw the decimation of his race from foreign diseases and recognized the urgent need for health care to ensure the wellbeing of his people. His advocacy extended to advancing education and public health measures. The king and queen also founded ʻIolani School. Kamehameha IV passed away on Nov. 30, 1863 at age 29. Pictured here with a portrait of the king are The Queen's Health System President and CEO Jason Chang and Office of Hawaiian Affairs CEO Stacy Ferreira. – *Courtesy Photo*

CHNA Names Arce New COO

Kauʻilani Arce - *Courtesy Photo*

Kauʻilani Arce has been appointed chief operating officer (COO) of the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA). As COO, Arce will oversee daily operations at CNHA to ensure that the organizations initiatives, programs and partnerships align with its mission to uplift and empower the Native Hawaiian community.

Prior to her promotion, Arce served as destination stewardship director for Kilohana, CNHA's tourism division. Before joining CNHA, she held positions at nonprofit Hoʻōla Nā Pua and at Liliʻuokalani Trust and was a social worker with the Hawaiʻi Department of Human Services.

She also serves on the advisory committee for the Waiʻanae Sustainable Communities Plan and for INPEACE's Kaulele project, and is a member of the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association.

Arce was born and raised in

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Nānākuli and currently resides in Mākaha. She has a B.A. degree in communications and a master of social work degree, both from UH Mānoa.

"Kauʻi is a testament to the strength and vision emerging from our communities. Her roots in Nānākuli and deep dedication to the lāhui have shaped her into a leader who understands both the challenges and opportunities we face," said CNHA CEO Kūhiō Lewis.

ʻImi Hoʻōla Classroom Dedicated to Program Founder

Dr. Benjamin Young - *Courtesy Photo*

Dr. Benjamin Young, the first Native Hawaiian psychiatrist and founder of John A. Burns School of Medicine's (JABSOM) ʻImi Hoʻōla Post-Baccalaureate Program, was honored at the program's 50th anniversary celebration in December when JABSOM's ʻImi Hoʻōla classroom was officially renamed the Dr. Benjamin Young Classroom.

A plaque is featured in the classroom with the phrase "Ua kanu ʻia nʻanoʻano; ke mōhala mai nei nā pua" (the seeds have been planted; the flowers now bloom) – a testament to the generational impact of Young's work and legacy.

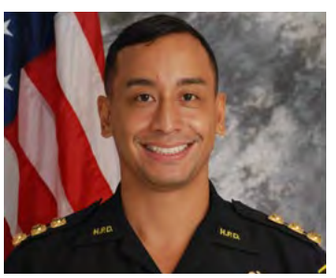
Now in his mid-80s, Young is a graduate of Roosevelt High School. He has a B.A. in English literature but, after graduating, pivoted to a career in medicine. He attended Howard Medical School specializing in psychiatry. After medical school he came home and completed his residency at JABSOM in 1972 – at the time there were fewer than 10 Native Hawaiian physicians.

After completing his residency, JABSOM hired Young specifically to increase the number of Hawaiians pursuing careers in medicine. Thanks to his ʻImi Hoʻōla program, today there are more than 400 Native Hawaiian physicians. In addition to his private practice, Young also served as JABSOM Dean of Students. He was a physician on *Hōkūleʻa's* inaugural voyage in 1976 and over the years has received numerous awards and accolades.

Hawai'i-Tahiti Sign Agreement to Strengthen Relationships

On January 29, representatives from Kamehameha Schools (KS) and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) signed a Cultural Heritage, Education and Community Exchange Charter and Agreement with the mayors of Taputapuātea, Tumaraʻa and Uturoa from the island of Raʻiātea in Māʻohi Nui (French Polynesia). The charter signing, hosted by Kamehameha Schools Kapālama at its Kaiwakīloumoku Hawaiian Cultural Center, represents the final connection in the Polynesian Triangle, with agreements already signed with Rapa Nui (Easter Island) and Aotearoa (New Zealand). The agreements join our ʻohana across the Polynesian Triangle as one, strengthening relationships and creating opportunities to perpetuate culture and tradition, share knowledge, and initiate educational, sports and artistic exchange opportunities. Participants included a delegation of more than 25 from Raʻiātea, as well as representatives from KS, OHA, the Polynesian Voyaging Society, and KS haumāna. Rooted in cultural protocol, the ceremony included pule, oli, hula, mele and an ʻawa ceremony. - *Photo: Jason Lees*

Lambert Named Director of the State DLE



Major Mike Lambert - *Courtesy Photo*

Major Mike Lambert, a distinguished veteran of the Honolulu Police Department was recently named director of the Hawai'i State Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) by Gov. Josh Green. He began his new role at the DLE on February 1.

Lambert has more than 22 years of experience in law enforcement, having served with distinction in the Honolulu Police Department where he worked his way up from patrol to several key leadership positions including narcotics investigations and community outreach and the successful HONU program for the houseless community. He most recently served in the Narcotics Vice Division.

"Mike Lambert has dedicated his career to protecting and serving the people of Hawai'i with integrity and commitment," said Green. "His deep understanding of public safety, combined with his ability to lead with compassion and innovation, makes him the ideal choice to lead DLE."

Lambert, a graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama, has a bachelor's degree in public administration with a justice concentration from UH West Oʻahu. In 2018, he was named to Pacific Business News' prestigious "40 Under 40" by the International Association of Chiefs of Police for his leadership and innovation in law enforcement.

Kūkini Featured at Smithsonian Festival

Kūkini, a film written by Paula Fuga (executive producer) and Mitchel Merrick (director), was featured at the Smithsonian National Museum's 10th Annual Mother Tongue Film Festival. The festival took place at various venues in Washington, D.C., February 20-23, and virtually February 24 – March 1.

Presented in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi,

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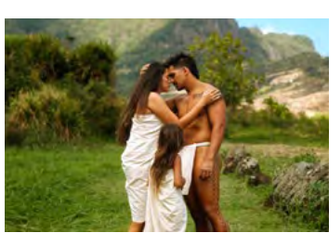
Kūkini premiered in 2022 at the Hawai'i Film Festival and has been making the rounds in the film festival circuit. In May 2024 it received a Special Recognition award at the Video Communications Film Fest in Los Angeles. The film fest jury noted that *Kūkini* has the makings of a blockbuster saying, "we were dazzled by this action thriller, and our curiosities were heightened to learn more about Hawaiian history."

Kūkini takes place in 1790 Hawai'i and tells the story of an elite warrior sent on a deadly mission to report on the bloody war being waged by Kamehameha I on Maui. The 26-minute film features an extensive line-up of 'Ōiwi talent both in front of the camera and behind the scenes. The cast features Ioane Goodhue, Moses Goods, Kaui Kauhi, Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, and Danielle Zalopany. Fuga and Merrick also appear in the film.



In this still from the film, Pohaikealoha (Danielle Zalopany) and Hau'oli (Ioane Goodhue) say farewell. - *Courtesy Photo*

This year, the Mother Tongue Film Festival included films in over 25 languages. Since its inception, it has showcased the work of over 300 directors in languages from nearly every continent. For more information go to: mothertongue.si.edu.

Haumāna from Hawai'i School for Deaf and Blind Represent Hawai'i at National Math Competition

A team of DDH (deaf hard of hearing) middle school students from Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind were selected to represent Hawai'i at a national math competition in Oregon February 7-9. It is the first time a team from the school has placed in the top 10 of the western region competition, giving them an opportunity to go through the semifinals and compete for a spot in the finals. The team finished 7th (out of 14) but only the top six teams continued to the finals. Regardless, it was a huge win for Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind as the students prevailed against so many larger, better resourced schools. Credit for this goes to math teacher DeWayne Berg who poured himself into helping the children succeed. The team included 'Ōiwi student Caleb Kepo'o whose sister provided the inspiration for a team shirt with the wording "Ake i ka 'Ike" (eager for knowledge). Caleb's mom, Nikki Kepo'o traveled with the team along with media teacher Lauren Hostovsky. E ho'omaika'i to the team for their hard work and success! Holo mua! (L-R) Zoe Kim, Mohney Lyne Acido, Caleb Kepo'o and KJ Kellum. - *Courtesy Photo*

The Story of Kapaemahu Told Through Dance

The story of Kapaemahu has inspired a hula production created by noted Kumu Hula Patrick Makuakāne. The production, "The Return of Kapaemahu," premiered in January.

Based on a handwritten 19th century manuscript first published in 1907, "Ka Pōhaku Kahuna Kapaemahu," is the mo'olelo of four healers who voyaged from Tahiti to Hawai'i in the 15th century and settled in Waikīkī. The healers were māhū – neither male nor female, but a mixture of both. When the healers departed Hawai'i, they transferred their names and healing powers into four great stones.

Kumu Hula Patrick Makuakāne - *Courtesy Photo*

Today, those stones are a monument and wahi pana in the heart of Waikīkī, adjacent to the Kūhiō Beach hula mound where Makuakāne's production will be performed.

The mo'olelo was first retold as an animated short film created by Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, Dean Hamer and Joe Wilson, and animator Daniel Sousa. The resulting short film, *Kapaemahu*, was nominated for an academy award. A children's book and Bishop Museum exhibit followed.

Makuakāne, the first Native Hawaiian recipient of the prestigious MacArthur Foundation Genius Award, is a dynamic kumu hula based in San Francisco. He is known for infusing traditional hula with contemporary interpretations in his efforts to transmit and preserve Hawaiian culture. He both composed and directed "The Return of Kapaemahu."

Sponsored by Lei Pua 'Ala Queer Histories of Hawai'i, the free, one-hour show will be performed every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m., weather permitting, throughout 2025.

Nu'uhiwa Campbell Promoted at Cades Schutte

Pōhai Nu'uhiwa Campbell - *Courtesy Photo*

Pōhai Nu'uhiwa Campbell, Esq. has been promoted to partner at Cades Schutte LLP in its Trusts & Estates Department. She is the firm's first female Kānaka 'Ōiwi partner. Her Cades Schutte colleagues Jarrett Dempsey and Lindsay McAneeley were promoted at the same time.

At Cades Schutte, Nu'uhiwa Campbell focuses her law practice on estate planning, probate and trust administration, and trust and estate disputes. Her professional recognitions include the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement's E OLA, Best Lawyers' Ones to Watch, and Pacific Business News' "40 Under 40."

Nu'uhiwa Campbell also does pro bono work for nonprofit organizations serving our 'āina and the Native Hawaiian community and she operates Kaleimamo Hawai'i, an 'ohana-owned business that creates reusable cloth diapers and accessories that feature designs inspired by Hawaiian culture and mo'olelo.

Nu'uhiwa Campbell is a Punahou graduate with a bachelor's degree in early childhood educa-

SEE **NEWS BRIEFS** ON **PAGE 31**

Maunalua Bay Designated a Fisheries Management Area

On January 24, the Board of Land and Natural Resources approved a proposal to designate Maunalua Bay a Fisheries Management Area (FMA). This is the outcome of seven years of advocacy from the community. The new designation includes a ban on nighttime spearfishing and a ban on the take of several invertebrate species. Actions are currently being undertaken to increase rule compliance and enforcement, compile more comprehensive fish population data, and establish more localized oversight and management of the area. – Photo: Mālama Maunalua

NEWS BRIEFS

Continued from page 30

tion and teaching from Winthrop University, and a juris doctorate from UH Mānoa's William S. Richardson School of Law. She was a law clerk in the State of Hawai'i Judiciary for Judge Gary W.B. Chang and Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald. She has been with Cades Schutte for more than seven years.

Pe'a Wins Fourth Grammy Award

Singer-songwriter Kalani Pe'a took home his fourth Grammy at the 67th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on February 2. He was named the winner of the Best Regional Roots Music Album for his album, *Kuini*, during the non-televised portion of the awards program.

Kalani Pe'a - *Courtesy Photo*

His previous Grammy Awards – all in the same category – were for *E Walea*, in 2017, *No 'Ane'i*, in 2019, and *Kau Ka Pe'a*, in 2022.

Between 2005-2011 Hawaiian music had its own Grammy category. The category was eliminated, however, when the recording academy decreased the overall number of categories. Hawaiian music is now part of the "regional roots" music category which also includes Native American, Cajun and zydeco, among others musical genres.

A graduate of Ke Kula o Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u and fluent in 'ōlelo Hawai'i, Pe'a has a degree in mass communications from Colorado Mesa University. In addition to pursuing his musical career, Pe'a worked for a time at Kamehameha Schools Maui creating Hawaiian language and culture-based curriculum. Pe'a has performed at New York City's Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall and has received multiple awards and recognition for his music.

Ching a Champion of Change

Joshua Ching - *Courtesy Photo*

Joshua Ching was named a 2025 "Champion for Change" by the Center for Native American Youth (CNAY) at the Aspen Institute. The 2025 cohort includes five Indigenous youth who are leading impactful change in their communities.

This cohort reflects the diverse cultures and resiliency of Indigenous Peoples in the U.S. Their focus areas include increased access to justice resources in Native communities; improving Indigenous healthcare systems; environmental rights; tribal recognition; and art, literacy and cultural representation.

Ching is a 2022 graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama and a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow at Yale University where he is studying political science and ethnicity, race and migration. He currently interns at the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation and has already amassed an impressive resume of leadership and community service.

Launched in 2013, Champions for Change is a Native youth leadership initiative. Each year, CNAY selects five inspirational youth (ages 14-24) to serve as "Champs," supporting their development through experience-based learning and tailored advocacy training.

Along with Ching, the 2025 cohort includes Miyuraq Jones (Unalakleet), Katie Lynch (Potawatomi Nation), Lily Painter (Kiowa/Winnebago), and Lourdes Pereira (Hia-Ced O'odham/Tohono O'odham).

Konia Named Director of Capitol Modern

Kamakani Konia - *Courtesy Photo*

The Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA) has announced the appointment of Kamakani Konia as its Art in Public Places Program Director and Director of Capitol Modern (the Hawai'i State Art Museum).

Established in 1965, SFCA is Hawai'i's state government arts agency. Konia's work at SFCA promotes access to all forms of creative expression from communities throughout the pae 'āina.

"The State Art Museum is a 'third space' – a setting for public life, like public parks and libraries. It's a place for community building," Konia said. "I'm looking forward to expanding on the extraordinary work that the public art programs have been doing. Art is a public resource, and I want to make it more accessible for everyone to participate in."

Konia has been with SFCA for eight years, initially as an exhibits specialist, then later as an Art in Public Places project manager. In 2021, he was accepted into the Western States Arts Federation's Emerging Leaders of Color program. Born and raised on O'ahu, Konia is a graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama. He has a bachelor's in fine arts degree from UH Mānoa and is currently pursuing a master's degree in public administration also from UH Mānoa.

Pukui Honored on $1 Coin

The Native American $1 Coin Program, developed by the United States Mint, was established to honor and recognize the important contributions made by Indigenous People.

The 2025 coin features noted Native Hawaiian scholar Mary Kawena Pukui holding a kukui nut lei (symbolizing knowledge and enlightenment) with the words "nānā i ke kumu" alongside her image. "Nānā i ke kumu" means "look to the source" and is also the title of the book series that Pukui helped produce with Lili'uokalani Trust.

The opposite side of the coin features Sacagawea carrying her infant son, Jean-Baptiste. Sacagawea was a Lemhi Shoshone woman, kidnapped during a Hidatsa raid on her village at age 12 and sold into marriage at age 13 to a trapper from Quebec. She is credited as a guide to explorers Lewis and Clark. ■

OHA's Workforce Housing Initiative in Kakaʻako Makai

Kaialiʻi Kahele
CHAIR
Trustee, Hawaiʻi Island

The struggle for affordable and accessible housing in Hawai'i has been ongoing, particularly for Native Hawaiians facing systemic barriers to homeownership and rental stability.

Recognizing this, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) has taken significant steps to address these disparities through its workforce housing initiative in Kakaʻako Makai. This development aims to provide housing opportunities for Native Hawaiians employed in critical industries while fostering economic stability.

Hawai'i's cost of living is among the highest in the nation, and housing affordability remains a pressing concern. According to economic data, Native Hawaiians represent 20.8% of the workforce across six key industries identified by OHA: healthcare, hospitality, education, law enforcement, civil service, and construction. These industries sustain the state's economy and require a stable workforce. However, many Native Hawaiian workers struggle to find affordable housing near their workplaces.

A closer look at the data reveals that Native Hawaiians are overrepresented in construction (29.8%), law enforcement (28.2%), and education (21%). Despite strong participation, median incomes for Native Hawaiians often fall below statewide averages.

The median household income for Native Hawaiians is $83,317, approximately 94.6% of the overall state median, while the median family income is $93,214, or 89.9% of the state average. Lower income levels make homeownership difficult, with 54.7% of households reporting no more than $75,000 available for a down payment.

The mean annual salaries for these industries range from $44,850 in hospitality to $88,900 in healthcare. Despite significant Native Hawaiian representation, wage disparities persist, limiting access to homeownership. For example:

Healthcare: Native Hawaiians make up 16.1% of the workforce, with an average salary of $88,900. Registered nurses earn an average of $119,710, while home health and personal care aides earn significantly less at $35,100.

Hospitality: Native Hawaiians comprise 18.5% of the industry, with an average salary of $44,850. Positions such as fast-food workers earn $30,990, while office clerks make approximately $44,600.

Education: Native Hawaiians make up 21% of employees, with a mean salary of $59,670. K-12 teachers earn $60,940, whereas teaching assistants earn $36,130.

Law Enforcement: With 28.2% Native Hawaiian participation, law enforcement professionals earn a mean salary of $59,620. Police officers earn approximately $89,850 annually.

Civil Service: Native Hawaiians represent 14.2% of this sector, earning an average salary of $53,420. Social service assistants make $41,020, while clerks earn around $44,600.

Construction: The highest percentage of Native Hawaiian workers (29.8%), with an average salary of $79,770. Carpenters make $83,250, while construction laborers earn $65,570.

Despite being gainfully employed, high housing costs remain a barrier for Hawaiians. Nearly 45% of Hawaiians surveyed have considered leaving Hawai'i due to the lack of affordable housing. Housing projections indicate that approximately 14,407 units will be needed for Hawaiian households by 2025, with 57% required for households earning below 80% of the area median income (AMI).

OHA's vision for Kakaʻako Makai includes workforce housing tailored to Native Hawaiians working in essential industries. By providing affordable ownership opportunities, OHA aims to create a stable community where Native Hawaiians can live and work without excessive housing costs.

The planned housing development aligns with city affordable housing guidelines, ensuring units remain accessible to families earning less than 140% of AMI. These homes will help alleviate economic pressures, as nearly half of Hawaiian households cannot afford mortgage payments higher than $2,000 per month.

OHA's workforce housing initiative is a critical step in addressing systemic housing challenges faced by Native Hawaiians. Prioritizing affordability and accessibility, this development can serve as a model for future projects. Ensuring Hawaiians have stable, affordable homes will strengthen the workforce and help preserve Hawai'i's cultural and economic vitality for generations to come. ■

Stand Tall for Charter Schools Funding

Keoni Souza

VICE CHAIR
Trustee,
At-Large

Kū haʻaheo e kuʻu Hawaiʻi
Māmakakaua o kuʻu ʻāina
ʻO ke ʻehu kakahiaka o nā ʻŌiwi o Hawaiʻi nei
No kuʻu lāhui e hāʻawi pau a i ola mau

Stand tall my Hawaiʻi
Band of warriors of my land
The new dawn for our people of Hawaiʻi is upon us
For my nation I give my all so that our legacy lives on

-From "Kū Haʻaheo e Kuʻu Hawaiʻi" by Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu

Our charter schools are more than just places of learning – they are sanctuaries where our keiki reconnect with their roots, embrace mālama ʻāina, and strengthen their identity as Native Hawaiians.

These schools rely on federal funding to continue their vital work, yet proposed policy shifts threaten their future. Now is the time to advocate for our keiki and ensure these schools receive the resources they need to flourish.

Trustee Keoni Souza on a recent visit to Mālama Honua Public Charter School. Pictured (l-r) Denise Espania, Jazmin Beebe, Trustee Souza, Lei-Ann Durant, Jace Inagaki, Mailani Smith, Kase Joseph, and Lawaiʻa Ah Sam. - *Courtesy Photo*

Students from Hālau Kū Māna in Honolulu wrote to me with deep concerns over potential funding cuts, sharing how federal support provides hands-on learning experiences that connect them to their culture and ʻāina – from restoring fishponds to learning ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. These opportunities are essential to their education, shaping their growth and preparing them for the future.

Their concerns echo those of students across other Native Hawaiian focused charter schools, which depend on federal funding to sustain similar programs. Without these resources, students could lose not only access to school supplies and meals, but also the immersive experiences that connect them to their ʻāina and kūpuna.

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) recognizes the critical role of these programs and remains committed to advocating for their preservation and expansion. Our Mana i Mauli Ola Strategic Plan supports education through Hawaiian language medium and focused Charter Schools.

Over the past two fiscal years, OHA has distributed $6 million in grants to support the 17 Native Hawaiian charter schools across Hawaiʻi, reinforcing our shared commitment to Native Hawaiian education.

For decades, programs like the Native Hawaiian Education Act (NHEA) have ensured that our keiki receive an education that honors our culture. Federal grants support curriculum development, teacher training, huakaʻi, and essential services that allow our schools to thrive. Without these resources, many haumāna would be deprived of the culturally grounded education they need and deserve.

The new federal administration has signaled potential reductions in funding and a shift in priorities, including a freeze on financial assistance under Executive Memo M-25-13. These changes put vital programs at risk including: Administration for Native Americans; Bay-Watershed Education and Training Program; Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and; Department of the Interior – Kapapahuliau Grant Program.

If these programs are reduced or eliminated, Native Hawaiian charter schools will struggle to sustain the critical work they do in educating our keiki in a way that is relevant to their lives and culture. Let's unite as a community and make our voices heard. Native Hawaiian charter schools are essential to our keiki's success and cultural connection.

OHA remains committed to advocating for their future, but we cannot do this alone. It will take all of us – families, educators, and leaders – to protect these vital schools. This is a fight for our culture, our identity, and the future of our lāhui. Kū Haʻaheo E Kuʻu Hawaiʻi. ■

Spreading Aloha Through Saying Goodbye

Keliʻi Akina, Ph.D.

Trustee,
At-Large

In 2023, Hawaiʻi Public Radio (HPR) published an article entitled "More Native Hawaiians flock to mainland cities and leave Hawaiʻi, citing high costs."

Like a growing number of similar articles in Hawaiʻi media, the HPR piece told stories of Hawaiians who have moved away from the islands for economic reasons. This includes Lindsay Villarimo who says she could stretch her paycheck farther in Las Vegas with cheaper rent and groceries and no state income tax. And Terry Nacion who "left Hawaiʻi for Las Vegas in 2003 because homeownership felt unattainable."

There's a bittersweet story about Hawaiians leaving their homeland. While many feel the pain of displacement, we can also look at it in a different way – focusing on their strength and ability to adapt, which has been part of Hawaiian history for centuries. Instead of seeing their move to the mainland as a loss, we can see it as a sign of adaptability and their ability to carry the aloha spirit wherever they go.

As more Hawaiians move to the continent to achieve financial goals, they're not abandoning their homeland – they're sharing their culture, values, and unique perspective with new communities. Take the many hula hālau in cities like Las Vegas, for example! The migration of Hawaiians is really the spread of aloha – bringing warmth, compassion, and love wherever they go. They remind us all of the importance of connection and respect for the land.

For Hawaiians, moving to the continent also brings opportunities to build generational wealth. With more affordable real estate options, families are able to provide a home for their extended relatives and future descendants.

Take, for example, Johnette Faagale, a former Waialua resident, who dreamed of owning a home but saw her parents struggle to do so. She knew that dream wouldn't become a reality in Hawaiʻi, so she moved to Washington State for better opportunities. In June 2020, she and her family finally bought a home in Vancouver, WA.

Hawaiians have always found ways to thrive and build community, no matter where they are.

The history of Hawaiians is one of incredible resilience and strength. Our ancestors were skilled navigators, sailing across vast, treacherous oceans to reach the Hawaiian Islands, thousands of miles from other lands. These journeys were driven not just by need, but by a deep desire to explore, adapt, and thrive. This spirit of exploration and determination has defined Hawaiians for generations and continues today.

The Hawaiian diaspora is not about defeat, but transformation and growth. It's a story of the spreading of the aloha spirit. Furthermore, adaptability is necessary for a nation to continue to exist and prosper. Hawaiians leaving the islands continues a rich legacy of exploration, strength, and cultural exchange. They show the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity and thrive anywhere, sharing aloha's values of love, respect, and unity with the world.

Trustee Akina with the Farias ʻohana. Many members of the Farias family have migrated from the Waiʻanae Coast to the Washington, D.C., area bringing the aloha spirit with them. - *Courtesy Photo*

E hana kākou! (Let's work together!) ■

Trustee Akina welcomes your questions, comments, and feedback. He can be reached at TrusteeAkina@oha.org or (808) 594-1976.

Kalima Lawsuit Settlement Update: March 2025

By Thomas Grande, esq. and Carl Varady, esq.

Settlement Payments to Deceased Class Members' Heirs

Probate Special Master Emily Kawashima and Probate Special Counsel Scott Suzuki continue to carry out the court-approved Probate Plan, which entails petitioning the Probate Court to seek instructions about disbursing settlement payments to the heirs and devisees of Deceased Class Members.

As of February 14, 18 petitions were filed with the Probate Court, addressing the estates of approximately 500 Deceased Class Members.

Filed petitions are available on the www.kalima-lawsuit.com website under the "Documents" link. Information on hearing dates and the Deceased Class Members addressed in a particular petition is on the website and will be published in the Legal Notices section of the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*.

Probate Process

This Probate Process is expected to take about two years to complete. This process is intended to help assure that the settlement proceeds get to the correct people in the most efficient way possible.

It is time consuming because of the enormous amount of information needed and care required by the Probate Special Master, Probate Special Counsel, Probate Court, Circuit Court, Claims Administrator, Trustee, Special Master and Class Counsel. This is a unique service in a class action lawsuit and all reasonable efforts are being made to expedite payments. Please be patient.

More information about the probate process and how Deceased Class Members' claims will be handled can be found on the website.

If You Have Questions

As a courtesy, Probate Special Master Emily Kawashima and Probate Special Counsel Scott Suzuki will be conducting a Talk Story to answer questions about the probate process on Monday, April 14, 2025, from 5:00-6:00 p.m. Please visit www.kalima-lawsuit.com for information on how to join the discussion by Zoom or telephone.

Questions regarding the contents of a Petition or Order should be addressed to your own attorney (if you have one), or to either the Probate Special Counsel or Probate Special Master.

If you have general questions (including payment status) contact the Claims Administrator at info@kalima-lawsuit.com or at 1-808-650-5551 or 1-833-639-1308 (Toll-Free). If you are only available at specific times, please include that information in your message. ■

CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: THE PROPOSED FARRINGTON HIGHWAY WIDENING PROJECT

On behalf of WSP USA, Inc., ASM Affiliates is preparing a Cultural Impact Assessment to inform an HRS, Chapter 343 Environmental Assessment being prepared for the Proposed Farrington Highway Widening project. The project is in Nānākuli, Lualualei Ahupuaʻa, Waiʻanae District, Island of Oʻahu. The proposed project seeks to widen a 1.4-mile stretch of Farrington Highway between Ulehawa Stream and Nānākuli Avenue. It is expected widening may impact the O.R.&L. right-of-way as well as informal beach parking.

ASM is seeking kamaʻāina familiar with the area's cultural resources, customs, and practices. We also seek input regarding strategies to prevent or mitigate impacts on culturally valued resources or traditional customary practices. If you know of such information, contact Keely Toledo, ktoledo@asmaffiliates.com, (808) 766-4996.

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT SECTION 106

The State of Hawai'i HDOT and the Federal Highway Administration have developed a programmatic agreement to streamline 106 reviews of repair and maintenance to historic bridges. These projects will have no effect or no adverse effect to the historic property. There are several upcoming opportunities to participate.

1) Review the Documents and Provide Comments

The final draft has been merged into one document which can be downloaded from the SharePoint site: https://consorengcom.sharepoint.com/sites/HBPA. The documents are in the folder: Documents for Review and Comments/PA 4nd Draft (Jan2025)/. To download, register at the project website by scanning the QR code or clicking the hyperlink below:

Once registered, you will receive a link to access the site. If you have any questions regarding this site, email info@consoreng.com for assistance.

2) Participate in the Public Meetings

HDOT and the FHWA will hold two public meetings on Thursday, March 13 at 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Additionally, we will participate in the County Cultural Resource Commission meetings over the next two months (February and March) to present the final draft of the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for Hawai'i Historic Bridge Program. Check the County Cultural Resource Commission websites for an agenda and information on how to join the meetings.

March 13, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.

March 13, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Pua Aiu at pua.aiu@hawaii.gov or 808-271-1605. ■

HOʻOHUI ʻOHANA
FAMILY REUNIONS

E nā ʻohana Hawaiʻi: If you are planning a reunion or looking for genealogical information, *Ka Wai Ola* will print your listing at no charge on a space-available basis. Listings should not exceed 200 words. OHA reserves the right to edit all submissions for length. Listings will run for three months from submission, unless specified. Send your information by mail, or e-mail kwo@OHA.org. E ola nā mamo a Hāloa!

SEARCH

AEA-ANDERSON REUNION - Descendants of Carrie Kahunui Aea and Francis Halupo Anderson and their children Winifred, Dorcas, Arnold, Carrie, Kawai Cockett, Francis, Andrew, Manly and Melvin Mahuiki invite ʻohana to join in planning or two reunions: October 2025 in California and Summer 2026 on Oʻahu. For more info and to be added to the mailing list, provide your name, phone number (include area code), email, and how you are related to L. Reyes at (916) 606-8405 or email aeaandersonreunion@gmail.com.

KAMAHELE: E nā mamo o Kamahelenui lāua ʻo Anne Nuu Kapahu! From our roots in Kahuwai in the 1800s now is the time to reconnect, share our stories, and celebrate our heritage. The Kamahele Family Reunion will be held on Hawai'i Island from October 3–7, 2025, including our Hōʻike Lūʻau on October 4! This lūʻau is our time to gather, honor our ancestors, and celebrate our shared history with food, music, and hula. Seating is limited to 500, so we encourage early participation. For updates or to help with planning, contact Paula Okamoto: 808-382-2607 or email kamahelefamilyreunion@gmail.com. ■

Classified ads only $12.50 - Type or clearly write your ad of no more than 175 characters (including spaces and punctuation) and mail, along with a check for $12.50, to: *Ka Wai Ola* Classifieds, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 560 N. Nimitz Hwy., Suite 200, Honolulu, HI 96817. Make check payable to OHA. (We cannot accept credit cards.) Ads and payment must be received by the 15th for the next month's edition of *Ka Wai Ola*. Send your information by mail, or e-mail kwo@oha.org with the subject "Makeke/Classified." OHA reserves the right to refuse any advertisement, for any reason, at our discretion.

AINA REALTOR - New Year - New Goals - Lets make a plan to get into the real estate industry this year!! Call me to talk story and we can plan together to make owning a reality. If you have questions, I can help you get the answers you are looking for. I help with both Hawaiian Homestead as well as residential properties on all islands. One of my missions as a Realtor is to keep native Hawaiian Families in Hawaii. Let's work together to find housing solutions and build a better future for our younger generations. Please call me with your ideas and questions and we can figure out a way. Jordan Aina - RS-85780 Cell: (808) 276-0880 - Locations Hawaii LLC, RB-17095

AINA REALTOR - Real Estate Seminars - Oahu - A great way to start learning about Real Estate is to come and attend one of Locations Educational Seminars. We offer seminars that cover topics such as First Time Home Buying, Investing and Senior Real Estate Planning. Call me to reserve a spot for the next one. Spots are limited. Don't wait. Jordan Aina - RS-85780 Cell: (808) 276-0880 - Locations Hawaii LLC, RB-17095

DHHL RESIDENTIAL LEASE AVAILABLE - Punchbowl, O'ahu. Must be qualified DHHL beneficiary. See link for Information: http://interestedparty.byethost24.com/

FINANCE WITH ALOHA – LEARN HOW TO STOP PAYING RENT! Special Event: April 26th, 2PM. Info/RSVP: Kui.Meyer@SNMC.com | 808-723-4430. SecurityNational Mortgage (NMLS#3116/314203).

HOMES WITH ALOHA-Paukukalo, Waiehu, Maui -Single level 4 bed/ 2 baths. Renovations throughout the home includes kitchen, bath. $625,000 This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303.

HOMES WITH ALOHA-Papakolea/Kewalo-Single level ADA 3 bedrooms/ 2 bath 12,676 sf lot $650,000 This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303.

HOMES WITH ALOHA-Nanakuli (Valley)-Single level 4 bedrooms/ 2 bath 7,500 sf lot in a Cul-desac $650,000 This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303.

HOMES WITH ALOHA-Nanakuli 4 bedrooms/ 3 bath 10,280 sf lot $599,000 Directly across beautiful sandy beaches.This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303.

HOMES WITH ALOHA-Waianae 3 bedrooms/ 1.5 bath $510,000 Move in ready.Beautiful landscaped yard fully fenced. This is a leasehold property – Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303.

SEEKING A PROFESSIONAL TO HELP GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE REAL ESTATE PROCESS? Buying, selling or investing call Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) 808.295.4474 RB-15598 Homes with Aloha - Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303.

THINKING OF BUYING OR SELLING A HOME? CALL THE EXPERT. Call Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (R) 295- 4474 RB-15998. Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303. To view current listings, go to my website HomeswithAloha.com. Call, Text or email Charmaine@HomeswithAloha.com to make an appointment to learn more about homeownership. Mahalo nui! Specialize in Fee Simple & Homestead Properties for over 38 years. ■

OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Office hours for all locations are 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday thru Friday.

All Offices are closed on State holidays

Main Phone (all islands):
808.594.1835
Email:
info@oha.org

HONOLULU
560 N. Nimitz Hwy., Ste. 200,
Honolulu, HI 96817
Phone: 808.594.1888

EAST HAWAI'I (HILO)
2100 Kanoelehua Ave.,
Unit 9 & 10
Hilo, HI 96720
Phone: 808.204.2391

WEST HAWAI'I (KONA)
75-1000 Henry St., Ste. 205
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
Phone: 808.327.9525

MOLOKA'I / LĀNA'I
(Temporarily closed until further notice)
Kūlana 'Ōiwi, P.O. Box 1717
Kaunakakai, HI 96748
Phone: 808.553.4640

KAUA'I / NI'IHAU
4405 Kukui Grove St., Ste. 103
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2025 Prince Kūhiō Parade

Saturday, March 29, 5:00 PM
Parade Route along Kapolei Parkway
From Kapolei Hale to
Ka Makana Ali'i Shopping Center

Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs
aohcc.org @hawaiiancivicclubs

Presented By:
Hawai'i Tourism Authority
hawaiitourismauthority.org @hawaiihta

Join the Celebration!
Scan here to participate in the Prince Kūhiō Parade
Entry deadline: March 15, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. HST