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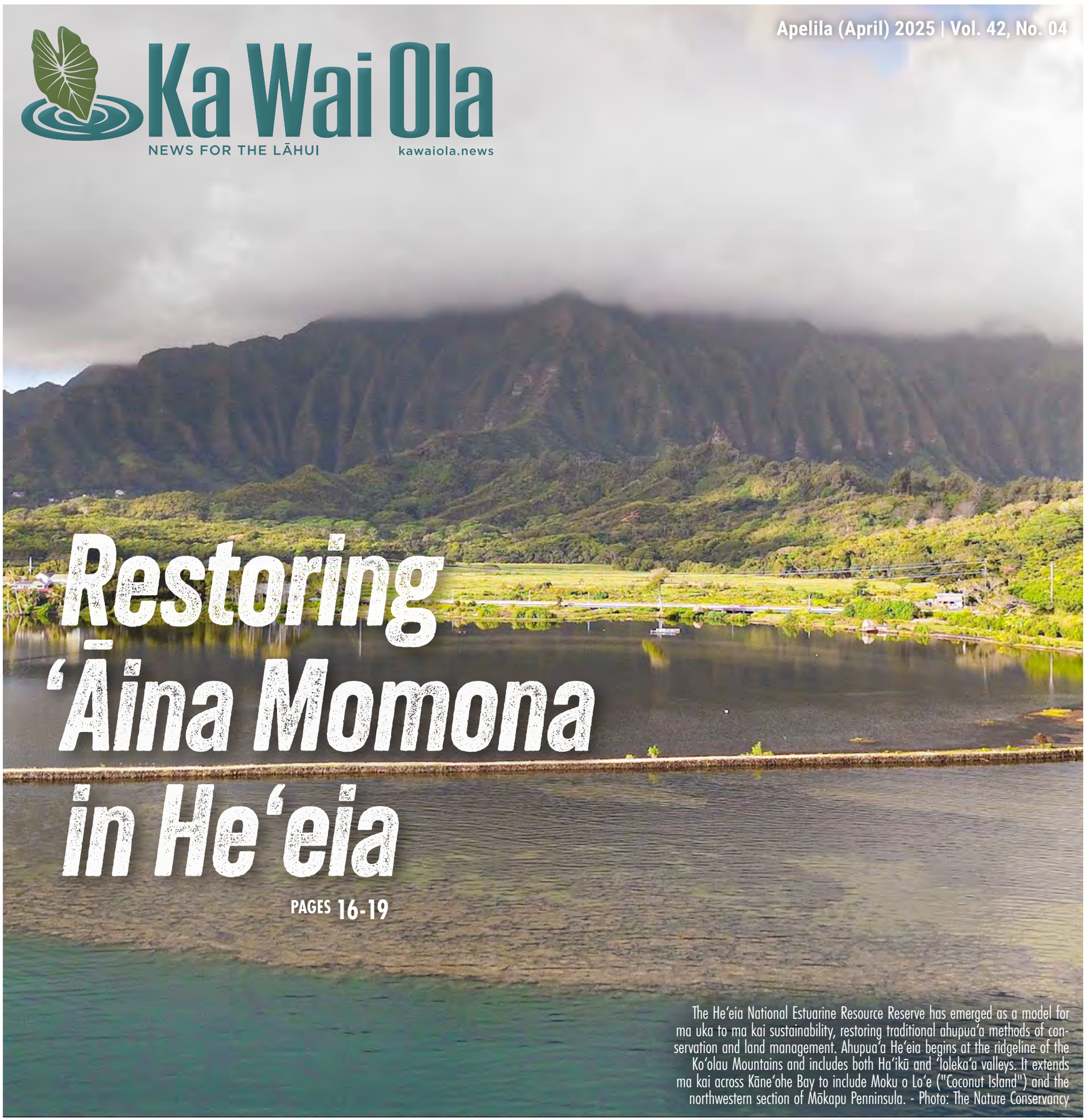
Ka Wai Ola
NEWS FOR THE LĀHUI
kawaiola.news

Restoring ʻĀina Momona in Heʻeia

PAGES 16-19



The He'eia National Estuarine Resource Reserve has emerged as a model for ma uka to ma kai sustainability, restoring traditional ahupua'a methods of conservation and land management. Ahupua'a He'eia begins at the ridgeline of the Ko'olau Mountains and includes both Ha'ikū and 'Ioleka'a valleys. It extends ma kai across Kāne'ohe Bay to include Moku o Lo'e ("Coconut Island") and the northwestern section of Mōkapu Penninsula. - Photo: The Nature Conservancy

ALOHA ʻĀINA
LEADER AWARDS
CLASS OF 2025

The Aloha ʻĀina Leader Awards honor the future of our lāhui by recognizing haumāna for their growing commitments to aloha ʻāina. These up and coming haumāna have accepted the kuleana to work for the benefit of all our communities. Aloha ʻāina has always been a traditional value passed down from older generation to younger, but it has become even more vital in this era of change. The Aloha ʻĀina Leader Awards affirm not only the importance of our cultural values in today's society, but also recognize the work of the many kumu and mākua who have supported these haumāna throughout the years.

Roy Maafala Jr
Waipahu, ʻEwa, Oʻahu
Saint Louis High School

Bella Kamakaliʻulani Kuailani
Kawaipapa, Hāna, Maui Hikina; ʻIao, Wailuku, Nā Wai ʻEhā, Maui Komohana
Kekaulike High School

Kamakanikūhonua Pojas-Kapoi
Waiʻanae, Oʻahu
Ke Kula ʻo Ānuenue

Emilie-Mae Nanea Placencia
Honouliuli, ʻEwa, Oʻahu
Kamehameha Schools Kapālama

Davin Kānanaikawaiola Kelling
ʻIolekaʻa, Kāneʻohe, Koʻolaupoko, Oʻahu
Ke Kula ʻO Samuel M. Kamakau, LPCS

Lukela Landers
ʻAhualoa, Hawaiʻi
Kanu o ka ʻĀina

Kūhaʻo Regidor
Kūkaʻiau, Hāmākua, Honokaʻa
Kamehameha Schools Hawaiʻi

Emory Kaliko Haili
Keaukaha, Hilo, Hawaiʻi
Ka ʻUmeke Kāʻeo

Haven Lilinoe De Silva
Waiohuli, Kula
Kamehameha Schools Maui

Kaijah Ikaikaliʻiokalani Kalanipiʻo Nīʻau Kanahele-Nations
Līlīha, Oʻahu
Hālau Kū Māna

Titahni M. Kauʻionālani Ruano-Parada-Kaʻawaloa
Puna, Keahialaka
Ke Kula ʻO Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu

Samuel Kahanu
Kāneʻohe, Oʻahu
Hakipuʻu Academy

ʻŌhiʻa "Masina" Borden Philips
Hoʻolehua, Molokaʻi
O Hina I Ka Malama Kula Kiekie

Giovanni M. Kekauoha
Keaukaha, Hilo Moku
Ke Ana Laʻahana Public Charter School

Kūkawaiʻolu Hāmākua
Wahikuli, Lahaina, Maui
Kula Kaiapuni ʻo Lahainaluna

Jheyden Meinik-Piimauna
Waiʻanae, Hawaiʻi
Kamaile Academy PCS

Kealanaakala Puhi
Kailua-Kona, Hawaiʻi
Ke Kula ʻo ʻEhunuikaimalino

Kamahaʻo Kahoʻohalahala
Ahupuaʻa o Anahola Moku o Koʻolau
Kanuikapono Public Charter School

KANAEOKANA

kaiāulu

ʻO ke aloha ʻāina, ʻo ia ka ʻume mākēneki
i loko o ka puʻuwai o ka Lāhui.
–Joseph Nāwahī

OHA
OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

OHA’s AHO Program Opens Doors to Native Hawaiian Homeownership

Aloha mai kākou,

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), in partnership with American Savings Bank (ASB), is making homeownership more accessible for our Native Hawaiian ‘ohana through the new Access to Homeownership (AHO) program.

This is more than just a loan program – it’s about keeping our ‘ohana in Hawai‘i, ensuring they can build a future right here in our islands.

In traditional Hawaiian hale construction, aho (cordage) was intricately woven to secure a structure, holding together thatched roofing and walls, ensuring the home was strong and able to withstand the elements. In the same way, the AHO program aims to strengthen our ‘ohana by providing the financial foundation they need to secure a home.

With AHO, qualified applicants who find a home to buy can secure their mortgage through ASB with an OHA deposit-backed loan. That means ‘ohana can move forward with as little as 3% down and no mortgage insurance – a game-changer for so many who have struggled to break into Hawai‘i’s tough housing market.

The program is open to first-time homebuyers who will be owner-occupants of the home purchased. Program eligibility includes current Hawai‘i residency and ancestry verification through OHA’s Hawaiian Registry Program (www.oha.org/hawaiian-registry).

‘Ōiwi interested in applying start by contacting OHA. Our staff will verify eligibility (Hawai‘i residency and HRP registration). Once eligibility is verified, OHA will generate an official referral letter introducing the applicant to the ASB loan officer, and the loan officer will walk the applicant through ASB’s home loan pre-qualification process.

A beneficiary who recently applied for the AHO program shared the following heartfelt comment, “We are humbled and thankful for this opportunity to begin our journey to home ownership in Hawai‘i. Events were set in motion in January that requires us to leave the place we have been for the last 13 years (not by our choice) by next summer so finding your program is such a blessing and gives us much needed hope that we will be able to continue to raise our three keiki here.”

For far too long, Native Hawaiians have faced the heartbreaking reality of having to leave Hawai‘i for the continent just to find affordable housing. We know that home isn’t just a place, it’s our connection to ‘āina, our culture, and our kūpuna.

This program ties directly to OHA’s Mana i Mauli Ola strategic plan, which prioritizes housing and economic resilience for our people. Having a stable home means having a foundation to build wealth, strengthen ‘ohana, and pass down something tangible to future generations.

Homeownership isn’t just about property, it’s about permanence, security, and a thriving lāhui.

If you’ve been dreaming of homeownership but felt like it was out of reach, AHO could be the answer you’ve been waiting for. OHA is here to help you navigate the process and take that next step toward securing your home. Contact OHA for more information at 808-594-1835. ■

Me ka ha‘aha‘a,

Stacy Kealohalani Ferreira
Ka Pouhana | Chief Executive Officer

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Report on March Visit to Washington, D.C.

Advocating for Native Hawaiian Programs and Policies

By Kaialiʻi Kahele

Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) BOT Chairperson Kaialiʻi Kahele, Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement's (CNHA) CEO Kūhiō Lewis and Chief of Staff Nick Carroll, traveled to Washington, D.C., in March for a bipartisan, bicameral 48-hour engagement with federal leaders. The trip focused on assessing the impact of the new administration's policies on Native Hawaiian programs and ensuring continued advocacy for Native Hawaiian interests. This is a summary of their activities.

Key Meetings and Discussions

The delegation met with Sen. Brian Schatz, Sen. Mazie Hirono's office, Rep. Ed Case, Rep. Jill Tokuda, Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez (New Mexico) and Rep. Tracey Mann (Kansas), along with key officials from the Department of Defense and the National American Indian Housing Council. Discussions centered on Native Hawaiian engagement across the U.S., strengthening ties with Native American and Alaska Native communities, and addressing gaps in federal funding for the Native Hawaiian Education Act, Native Hawaiian Health Care Act, and the Native 8(a) Program.

Policy and Legislative Priorities

A primary focus was advocating for Native Hawaiian programs that risk being misclassified under Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) and Accessibility or Environmental Justice initiatives. The delegation assessed the Department of the Interior's (DOI) Secretarial Order 3416's traction in implementing presidential initiatives and explored allyship opportunities with Tribes and Alaska Natives to respond to executive orders affecting Indigenous communities.

Concerns were raised regarding U.S. Census data

(L-R) OHA BOT Chair Kaialiʻi Kahele, CNHA CEO Kūhiō Lewis, and CNHA Chief of Staff Nick Carroll in Washington, D.C., last month. - *Courtesy Photo*

changes that could impact OHA's research and advocacy efforts. The delegation urged continued support for Statistical Policy Directive No. 15 to ensure proper Native Hawaiian representation in federal data collection.

Economic and Military Concerns

Economic self-determination was emphasized, with discussions on CNHA's Kākoʻo Maui Recovery Program, which lost 17 employees due to federal funding cuts, affecting wildfire survivor assistance. Potential $30 million losses in federal funding for the Native American Resource Center Act and the Native Hawaiian Education Act were also highlighted. The delegation also addressed the impact of executive orders on the Native Hawaiian Organizations 8(a) program.

Military lease extension negotiations under the FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act were another key issue. OHA reaffirmed its role in representing Native Hawaiian interests regarding military-leased lands, environmental impact assessments, and any federal legislative actions regarding land exchanges or condemnation affecting ceded lands.

Legislative and Administrative Advocacy

Support was expressed for Sen. Hirono's Public Archives Resiliency Act to safeguard Hawaiʻi's historical records. The delegation also backed the BLUE Pacific Act to enhance Indo-Pacific media and workforce development. Concerns were raised over consultation policies for major federal contractors and the effects of executive orders ending DEI programs on Native Hawaiian-focused initiatives. Discussions also covered departmental policies affecting Native Hawaiian education, social services, and agriculture programs under the Administration for Native Americans and the USDA's Food & Nutrition Service.

The trip reinforced the urgency of proactive federal engagement to secure funding and policy support for Native Hawaiians. The delegation successfully highlighted critical issues and advocated for sustained collaboration with congressional allies, federal agencies, and Indigenous partners.

Moving forward, OHA and CNHA must continue to push for Native Hawaiian self-determination, economic stability, and legislative protections to ensure a stronger future for the Native Hawaiian community. ■

Strategic Thinking for a Thriving Future

By Elena Farden

"'A'ohe pu'u ki'eki'e ke ho'ā'o e pi'i; No cliff is so tall that it cannot be scaled."

(No problem is too great when we work strategically to solve it)

In our work at the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), we navigate a broad and ambitious horizon – 26 strategic outcomes in our Mana i Mauli Ola Strategic Plan designed to uplift our lāhui.

Some may view this as daunting; goals that seem impossible to achieve. But from a Hawaiian worldview, this perspective is not only limiting, it is foreign. Are we a people who fear challenges affecting the wellbeing of our communities? We descend from ali'i who envisioned and built thriving societies, from navigators who read the stars to traverse the Pacific, and from kūpuna whose 'ike continues to guide us in balancing complexity with clarity.

Fear of failure is not rooted in our ancestral ways of thinking. It is a conditioned response, shaped by systems that encourage scarcity and fragmentation.

These limitations are deeply tied to the characteristics of white supremacy culture and keep us from embracing the expansive, adaptive, and relational ways of thinking that are natural to us as Kānaka.

Instead of seeing complexity as an obstacle, we can look to our cultural foundations to find tools to navigate it. David Kahalemaile, in his 1871 speech on ea for Lā Ho'iho'i Ea, articulated the responsibility of maintaining our sovereignty through strategic vision and active practice of our ancestral knowledge. Joseph Nāwahī, a loyal patriot of the Hawaiian Kingdom, dedicated his life to preserving our nation through governance, resistance, and the power of Hawaiian language newspapers, ensuring that knowledge was shared widely among our people.

Our kūpuna never shied away from what seemed insurmountable; they studied the path ahead, adapted as necessary, and held steadfast to their values.

Strategic thinking requires a mindset shift. The outcomes we pursue are interconnected pathways toward our collective ea (sovereignty) to shape our future and wellbeing. We do not have to accomplish everything at once; we can move with intention, guided by our values and the knowledge that success is built over time, through relationships and iterative progress.

Our ancestors understood the importance of multiple layers of meaning in a single concept. In the same way, we can hold multiple priorities without losing clarity. The key is alignment. When we anchor our work in 'ike kūpuna, we are not overwhelmed by the details because we see the larger framework at play. We do not prioritize based on external pressures, but on our ancestral understanding of pilina (relationships), lōkahi (harmony), and kuleana.

By embracing our Indigenous strategic mindset, we shift from fear-based thinking to an abundance-based approach. We do not ask, "Is this too much?" We ask, "What's possible now that wasn't possible before?"

We recognize that each step, no matter how small, is part of a broader movement toward lāhui wellbeing. Like our voyaging ancestors, we chart our course not by focusing on the waves immediately before us, but by reading the stars, aligning our work with our collective vision, and knowing that we have everything we need to reach our destination. ■

Keha Hawai'i

A Business Inspired by Hawaiian Culture, Values and Faith

Keha Hawai'i owner Ka'ano'i Akaka Ruth at a recent pop-up mākeke. - *Photo: Courtesy of INPEACE and DBEDT*

By Nathan Hokama

When Ka'ano'i Akaka Ruth was a little girl and people asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up, she would matter-of-factly answer, "An astronaut." Perhaps it was because she was immersed in a school astronomy project. Or perhaps it was because even at a young age she believed that "the sky was the limit" for her ambitions.

By the time she was 12, Akaka Ruth had modified her career goal, setting her heart on becoming a fashion designer. Today, she is living her dream and she still believes in thinking big.

In 2021, during the height of the pandemic, she founded Keha Hawai'i, her own clothing brand, as an exclusively online store. Akaka Ruth was intentional about her startup and products, and the result is a business model solidly aligned with her values.

Today, Keha Hawai'i is still primarily operating online, but Akaka Ruth also participates in pop-up mākeke at locations like the Kākoʻo Hawai'i Market (during the Merrie Monarch Festival), Hoʻomau Market, Pai Ka Leo, and the Made in Hawai'i Festival.

And she plans to unveil a new line of clothing at this year's Merrie Monarch Festival in Hilo (April 20-26) and at the Made in Hawai'i Festival at the Hawai'i Convention Center in Honolulu (August 15-27).

Akaka Ruth credits her mom as the source of her inspiration and the primary influence over her career choice. "My mom taught me how to sew and I was hooked," Akaka Ruth said. "It came naturally for me."

Akaka Ruth's older sister, Hōkū, was another influence. "She was so fashionable growing up, and I would always wear her clothes," she laughed.

Her 'ohana has a running joke that fashion runs in their family. "My grandmother, my father and I would all show up for church wearing clothes in the same shade of green," Akaka Ruth said. "We always laugh that fashion is in my genes."

Akaka Ruth grew up in Kāneʻohe, Oʻahu, and both of her parents were Hawaiian language teachers. She attended Ke Kula Kaiapuni ʻo Ānuenue, a Hawaiian language immersion school, before transferring to St. Andrew's Priory for ninth grade and then to Kamehameha Schools Kapālama in the 10th grade.

She earned a degree in Hawaiian Studies at UH Mānoa while completing fashion courses on the side. After graduating, she worked as a teacher at Royal Elementary School on Queen Emma Street in downtown Honolulu.

But at the urging of both her mom and her husband, Akaka Ruth eventually went back to school at Honolulu Community College (HCC) enrolling in the Fashion Technology program. At HCC, she was a student worker in the college's Native Hawaiian Center and continues to serve there today.

It was while she was attending UH, however, that her entrepreneurial spirit began to emerge. She started an accessory brand and became recognized for her turban-style headbands and beanie caps popular with cancer patients dealing with hair loss from chemotherapy. And because she was so adept at sewing, she also took on occasional projects, sewing special outfits for her friends, for hālau, and for various schools.

Akaka Ruth is proud to be a Native Hawaiian Christian, and seamlessly blends her cultural roots, values and faith to offer the best version of herself in her work and to those around her. There was a lot of thought, introspection and prayer to bring her business to fruition.

"Prayer is a big part of what guides me," she said. "I even questioned if fashion was what I should be doing as a Native Hawaiian. [But] I believe we need Native Hawaiians in all sectors."

There is a refreshing humility about Akaka Ruth, who emphasizes that she still has much to learn and accomplish in her chosen profession.

Growing up in Kāneʻohe Akaka Ruth was surrounded by richness and beauty of God's creation – which inspires the prints she designs for her clothing line. For example, Kāneʻohe is known for its puakenikeni - so one of her signature designs is a striking rendering of puakenikeni blossoms in vibrant orange and green.

Her fluency in ʻōlelo Hawai'i is also foundational to her approach to design.

With the help of an OHA Mālama Loan, Akaka Ruth is expanding her business and plans to incorporate accessories into her brand along with children's clothes.

But even as she grows her business, she is committed to continuing to design her fabrics herself and use local subcontractors for the sewing. And when smaller orders do not meet minimum volume requirements for the subcontractors, she will continue to do the sewing herself.

Akaka Ruth is just getting started and has big plans for the near future. She would eventually like to have a storefront with multiple locations in the next few years. And she would like to return to teaching someday and create a community gathering space to talk story; a space where people can meet and learn from one another.

"God has a plan, and we must be open to doing His will," Akaka Ruth reflected. "People have said that my prints bring back memories of their own childhoods. I'm just so honored to be able to express who I am through my designs." ■

The colors and patterns that Akaka Ruth uses in her designs are inspired by the natural beauty of Kāneʻohe, Oʻahu, where she was born and raised. - *Photos: Nick Smith of Content In Motion*

Celebrating ʻŌiwi Excellence

2025 Aloha ʻĀina Leader Award Recipients

By Manuwai Peters

Kanaeokana, the Kula Hawaiʻi Network, established the Aloha ʻĀina Leader Award in 2018, a unique award for graduating seniors from Kanaeokana Network schools that recognizes their demonstrated aloha ʻāina and community-centered values.

The awardees are selected from Hawaiian-focused charter schools, DOE kula kaiapuni, and independent schools. In 2025, Kanaeokana, Ke Kula ʻo Kamehameha, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) are celebrating 18 graduating seniors from the class of 2025 as Aloha ʻĀina Leaders. Hoʻomakaikaʻi! Congratulations to these deserving haumāna!

"A major part of Kanaeokana's vision is to bring into being 'a strengthened lāhui that grows and sustains future generations of aloha 'āina leaders,' and this award celebrates that vision," said Mahinapoepoe Paishon-Duarte, co-founder of The Waiwai Collective and member of Kanaeokana.

The graduating seniors receive a certificate honoring their achievement, a scholarship award, a Kanaeokana gift box, and recognition from their peers and communities for their achievements. This year, OHA provided a grant to support the awards and to make the scholarship award for each honoree possible.

"The Aloha ʻĀina Leader Award is a testament to the resilience and brilliance of our next generation, recognizing their dedication to our land, people, and cultural identity," said OHA CEO Stacy Ferreira. "OHA is honored to support this initiative, which uplifts and invests in young leaders who will carry forward the work of our kūpuna and shape a thriving future for Hawaiʻi. We celebrate these haumāna and their accomplishments, knowing they are the promise of tomorrow."■

The 18 Aloha ʻĀina Award Leadership Award recipients are featured on page 2. For more information go to kanaeokana.net/aala.

Ola Ka ʻĪ 2025: A Celebration of ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi

Throughout Mahina ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian Language Month), Hawaiian language echoed in public spaces from Moku o Keawe to Kauaʻi o Manokalanipō. Seven Ola Ka ʻĪ events, made possible through the collaboration of community organizations, public and private schools, local businesses, government partners, and ʻohana, brought Hawaiian language to the forefront. We look forward to more celebrations and events that uplift ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi throughout the year. Mahalo nui to Kanaeokana, Hawaiʻi Tourism Authority, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Hawaiʻinuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge, and the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs for their support in making these events a success. Visit mahinaolelohawaii.org to stay connected and continue celebrating Hawaiian language with us throughout the year!" - *Courtesy Photos*

Hauʻoli Lā Hānau e Hōkūleʻa!

Photo: Courtesy of the Polynesian Voyaging Society; Little Village

Fifty years ago, on March 8, 1975, the storied Hawaiian voyaging canoe Hōkūleʻa was launched for the first time at Kualoa, Oʻahu. On March 8, 2025, the community gathered at Kualoa to celebrate Hōkūleʻa's 50th birthday as part of the 16th Annual Kualoa/Hakipuʻu Canoe Festival. Hōkūleʻa herself sailed into Kāneʻohe Bay for the celebration which included pule, oli, hula, speeches and an ʻawa ceremony. The achievements of Hōkūleʻa, her crew members, esteemed navigators and the founders of the Polynesian Voyaging Society were recounted. Renowned navigator Mau Piailug of Satawal, Micronesia, was honored for his critical role in restoring the knowledge of traditional navigation to the Hawaiian people - knowledge that was lost hundreds of years ago. Today, Hōkūleʻa is a cultural icon and symbolic of the brilliance and courage of our kūpuna. Hauʻoli Lā Hānau e Hōkūleʻa! E ola mau a e holo mua! - Photos courtesy of the Polynesian Voyaging Society; Jonathan (Sav) Salvador

The Farm to School Movement

Getting Locally Grown Food into School Cafeterias

By Lisa Huynh Eller

Despite myriad challenges, advocates for Hawai'i's Farm to School movement continue to persevere, inspired by their belief that our keiki deserve to eat fresh food grown near their homes.

The Farm to School movement is a general term that describes wide-ranging actions to bring locally grown food into school cafeterias. More broadly, these efforts support local agriculture, increase Hawai'i's food independence and improve the overall health of our communities.

"It's about our ability to stand on our own two feet and provide the foods we need to survive outside of continental influence," said Kawika Kahiapo, program coordinator for Hawai'i Farm to School, a program of the Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HPHI). Kahiapo said that local food advocates have a strong drive to make Farm to School happen in Hawai'i, especially now given the instability of federal funding.

The movement officially organized in 2010 when HPHI set up the first state network of public-private partnerships to advance Farm to School. In 2015, the Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE) began purchasing locally sourced food for cafeterias, and schools started to plant their own gardens.

In Kohala, for example, the nonprofit organization Hawai'i Institute for Pacific (HIP) Agriculture and Kohala High School started a school garden in 2018 to provide food and learning. Students from the school's natural resource classes spend one to three days a week growing fruits and vegetables like kalo, 'uala (sweet potato), 'ulu, avocado and citrus.

Before the pandemic, students and faculty harvested the vegetables to cook in the school's cafeteria. But due to liability concerns, processing of the food was moved to the Kohala Food Hub.

"What's really beautiful about a local school garden is that there are ways, through Farm to School activities, that we can still have impact outside of the cafeteria where there are more barriers," said Erika Kuhr, co-founder, co-director and chef at HIP Agriculture.

Kohala High School haumāna with their "garden to cafeteria" lettuce harvest. - *Photo: Dean Snelling*

(L-R) Erika Kuhr of HIP Agriculture with Kohala High School haumāna Zanaiyah Muraii and Christian Matunda. The students present their own "farm to school" recipes as part of their Senior Capstone Project. - *Photo: Lucias Nicholas*

The DOE is mandated by state law to locally source 30% of its food by the end of this decade. But progress toward this goal has been lagging. Depending on who you ask, the reasons for this vary but include rising food costs, inflexible procurement rules, a lack of eligible vendors, and decreased farm productivity due to climate change.

According to DOE's January 2025 report, local food made up only 5.43% (about $4.5 million) of all food purchased by the department's School Food Services Branch. This is compared to the non-local food expenditures, which amounted to 94.57% (about $77 million) – thus, most of the money spent on food for our keiki is leaving Hawai'i instead of being reinvested into our local economy.

The DOE's local food purchases are composed of 1.83% local fresh fruit, 3% local meat, 0.51% local dairy, 0.06% local bottled water, and 0.03% poi.

Currently, food purchasing for schools happens at a statewide level. Changing the rules to allow procurement to occur at a smaller, more localized level would make a big positive difference, said Kuhr.

"Hawai'i is very complex and its harder to move forward on the dial because we have islands, and each island is individual," said Kuhr. "The type of coordination and farming needed to get to different sites varies." She added that training and equipping cafeteria staff and managers is greatly needed. Beyond that, Kuhr sees opportunity for innovation – to train and involve students in the preparation of their food.

Several pieces of legislation to remove systematic barriers for Farm to School or Farm to Home initiatives are currently under consideration by lawmakers. HB 1293, for example, seeks to temporarily adjust the DOE's small purchase procurement rules for local edible produce and packaged food products to make it easier for the department to buy these local goods.

Groups like the Hawai'i Food Youth Council are training and supporting high school students to learn about legislation and advocate for better local food policies. In March, the Council hosted the 10th annual We Grow Event at the Hawai'i State Capitol. Through the event Hawai'i youth connect with farmers, cooks and others involved in agriculture while also learning about the legislative process.

"We work with them to develop their own personal story related to local food, and they use that story as part of their testimony. Their relationship to the issue is what tears at the heart strings of legislators," said Kahiapo. He is currently working with 16 high-school-aged youth, each one following a different bill at the legislature.

One of those students is Vivienne Momo Hill. "There's such a want and demand for the Farm to School movement," said Hill who testified on behalf of HB 428, a bill to provide funding to Hawai'i's food banks to purchase, store, and transport Hawai'i grown or produced foods to food insecure communities.

"Our families often can't afford the locally grown produce because it's more expensive than what is coming in on the ships, which is ultimately what families can afford," Hill said. "There's something wrong with a system that makes shipping stuff from across the world more affordable than something grown like a couple miles away."

She said events like We Grow are important because they empower Hawai'i's youth to engage with local food issues. "Students took time off school to come to the Capitol and lobby their legislators. They realize, 'Oh my school lunch isn't great' and that it's not just a given – they can change it," Hill said. "Tapping into those voices and giving them space to share stories is so important." ■

Hoʻokua ʻāina in Maunawili

Sustaining Culture and Community Through Kalo

By Hannah Kaʻiulani Coburn

Maunawili Valley in the ahupuaʻa of Kailua was a land favored by Oʻahu's chiefs. Kakuhihewa, one of the island's most revered aliʻi, had a home there. And Maunawili was the birthplace of Chief Kualiʻi, who ruled Oʻahu in the 1700s.

The valley, just off of Pali Highway and hidden from view by the forest, was an ʻāina momona of almost 1,100 acres, with abundant water and fertile soil; at one time it was a thriving breadbasket for the kupa (natives) of Kailua.

Today, nonprofit Hoʻokuaʻāina is working to reclaim that legacy, managing 23 loʻi kalo on 3 acres of land in Maunawili at a site called Kapalai. Incredibly, Hoʻokuaʻāina currently produces around 30,000 pounds of kalo per year.

Hoʻokuaʻāina's farm in Maunawili has become a gathering place for people to grow in their connection to culture, place and one another. - *Courtesy Photos*

But growing kalo is so much more than just food production for the organization.

Dean and Michele Wilhelm are the founders and executive co-directors of Hoʻokuaʻāina. While they have been in the business of kalo cultivation since 2007, the roots of their organization are deeply embedded in Hawaiian culture, challenged youth, and community.

Before Hoʻokuaʻāina was born, Dean was a teacher at the Hawaiʻi Youth Correctional Facility while Michele managed their home and family. But the Wilhelm's desire to build something truly impactful for these youth, their families, and the community eventually grew into the framework for Hoʻokuaʻāina.

The organization's mission is to cultivate "a culture of individual wellbeing and community waiwai through aloha ʻāina." They are doing this by creating a gathering space for those who visit their Maunawili farm to grow in their connection to culture, place and one another.

Hoʻokuaʻāina, which translates to "backbone of the land," was the name given to Kapalai by Kumu Earl Kawaʻa in its early days. It refers to the people who actively live the Hawaiian culture to keep the spirit of the land alive.

Through tireless collaborative efforts with the community, the Wilhelms have transformed the overgrown Kapalai property into a gathering place where people of all ages and from all backgrounds come to take part in the reciprocal relationship of giving and receiving with the ʻāina.

Through various community programs, workdays and field trips, Hoʻokuaʻāina also offers participants several formats of mentorship via its pillars of keeping traditional values alive and ʻāina restoration.

"When we look at the word 'sustainability,' what does that actually mean for us as an organization? There are so many different factors to consider," reflected Hoʻokuaʻāina Operations Manager Kirsten Hollenbeck.

Thought leaders around the issue maintain that sustainability is crucial for ensuring long-term economic, environmental, and social wellbeing, for safeguarding resources for future generations, and for building resilient communities and economies.

Hoʻokuaʻāina is currently managing 23 loʻi kalo on 3 acres, producing about 30,000 lbs of kalo per year. They will soon become the stewards of another 116 acres of farmland in the valley.

"We are considering all these factors, not only for today but for future generations," said Hollenbeck. "I firmly believe that we have become a backbone of support in our community with the ability to bring so many varying facets of need and people together on many different levels. One of these important facets is education. We have students from kindergarten all the way through college that are interwoven into what we do on a daily basis."

Hoʻokuaʻāina's Ahupuaʻa Systems Apprenticeship (ASA) is one of their many unique programs. The ASA, a partnership with Windward Community College (WCC), offers a unique educational pathway immersed in ʻāina-based work for youth between the ages of 17-24 from the moku (district) of Koʻolaupoko.

Students receive college tuition to earn an associate's degree from WCC as well as a stipend for the work they perform at Hoʻokuaʻāina. The program includes mentorship, financial and community support, professional ʻāina experience, and participation in cultural practices. Partnerships have also been established with peer ʻāina organizations across Koʻolaupoko, helping students gain a comprehensive understanding of a sustainable ahupuaʻa system.

"All our ASA grads from the most recent cohort transitioned into four-year degree programs at the University of Hawaiʻi – which was so exciting to see the desire to continue their education," Hollenbeck said. "We're bringing on youth with all sorts of different backgrounds and pouring into them, mentoring them, and encouraging them in countless ways.

"Every single day that they keep showing up and keep striving in school and working hard in the loʻi they're fighting for all these things. It's changing the trajectory of their lives and it's so exciting to see!"

Hoʻokuaʻāina also regularly connects with local kūpuna, families, and the houseless community in Waimānalo. The thousands of pounds of poi and kalo that they donate annually is just another aspect of the way that the organization contributes to sustainability for the community.

Today, Hoʻokuaʻāina is in a period of development and restoration. Through a decades-long community-driven effort to ensure the preservation of Maunawili, Hoʻokuaʻāina will soon become the steward of an additional 116 acres in the heart of the valley.

Restoration will return these fertile lands back to food production, resuming its role as an ʻāina momona for Koʻolaupoko. Hoʻokuaʻāina will continue to care for the area's critical natural and cultural resources while increasing its programming and production capacity by 30 times (almost 3,000%) over the next 10 years.

As Hoʻokuaʻāina grows to meet the demands of the community, its kūleana remains very intentional.

"With so much growth and expansion, and as we consider all the aspects of sustainability that desperately need our attention, we still want to maintain our focus. We still want to be building relationships and caring for the needs of those around us. We still want to be pouring into each of these individual lives," said Hollenbeck.

"Dean and Michele do a really great job of keeping this incredible vision at the forefront of everything that they do. Always challenging us to remember 'what's our heart? What's our mission? And how are we cultivating this culture in our community and across our island?'" ■

For more information about Hoʻokuaʻāina visit hookuaaina.org.

Hoʻoulu ʻĀina:

Healing the Land is Healing the People

By Heidi Chang

"Hoʻoulu ʻĀina means to grow the land, to grow that which feeds, and to grow because of the land," explained Puni Jackson.

Jackson is the director of Hoʻoulu ʻĀina, a nature preserve nestled deep in Kalihi Valley on Oʻahu. She began working there as a volunteer coordinator in 2005.

Upon arriving at Hoʻoulu ʻĀina I was greeted with a blessing of rain, so we talked story inside Jackson's office. On one wall are some two dozen photographs of beloved kūpuna who have passed on, including Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell, Dr. Isabella Abbott, George Helm, Aunty Malia Craver, Papa Henry Auwae, and Dr. Carlos Andrade.

"We were taught by Carlos Andrade that the word ʻāina, the word that we use for land, includes more than land. It includes all that feeds, which includes the people, the birds, the ocean, every part of our ʻāina that is producing abundance is actually part of our family," Jackson said.

Puni Jackson, director of Hoʻoulu ʻĀina, talks about the lāʻau lapaʻau (medicinal plants) grown at the nature preserve.
- *Photos: Kaʻōhua Lucas*

Hoʻoulu ʻĀina is part of Kōkua Kalihi Valley (KKV), the only nonprofit community health center in the country that has a 100-acre nature preserve as a site for healing. Its programs bring people together around forestry, food, culture, spirituality, and healthy activities.

The decision to preserve the area as a public resource was made by the Honolulu City Council back in 1980 after the community united against a proposed residential development there.

Then in 2005, the Hawaiʻi Department of Land and Natural Resources granted KKV a 20-year lease to restore the land – and recently extended their lease for another 35 years. Today, Hoʻoulu ʻĀina is the only large-scale nature preserve within Honolulu's urban core.

"We perpetuate the values of our kūpuna through food production – farming and gardening, forestry and native reforestation. We practice lāʻau lapaʻau and grow lāʻau lapaʻau. We have lomilomi practitioners here and hold classes for birthing mothers and families welcoming their new babies into their homes," said Jackson. "We provision canoes, people, schools and communities."

Hoʻoulu ʻĀina also provides place-based learning programs for keiki that integrate culture and science. And everyone, from keiki to kūpuna can sign up online for free events or volunteer and engage in mālama ʻāina practices.

When the skies cleared, I went hiking in the forest with "Uncle Scotty" Garlough. He started as a volunteer there in 2010 and is now Hoʻoulu ʻĀina's operations manager.

"I think what's special to me and why I enjoy working here is that Kōkua Kalihi Valley believes that the life of the land and the life of the people are the same. And so, if we have healthy land, then we have healthy people," said Garlough, as we hiked deeper into the forest past koa and hala trees and ʻawa plants. Other than our footsteps, the only sound was the excited chirping of birds in the canopy above us.

The land of Hoʻoulu ʻĀina was once a center for agriculture, as evidenced by the agricultural terraces and irrigation channels on the property. However, the terraces needed to be restored, so Garlough learned how to do that – as well as rock wall and hale building. Today he teaches those skills to others.

He was also mentored by many cultural practitioners in hoʻoponopono, including Aunty Lynette Paglinawan, and is now dedicated to helping people overcome trauma.

Born at Tripler Army Medical Center, Garlough never knew his father. Like so many others who have come to Hoʻoulu ʻĀina, he has personally experienced the healing that this land provides.

"I grew up with a younger brother and a single mom, who at an early age was incarcerated. So, having no family, we lived with her girlfriends, sometimes around the KPT (Kūhiō Park Terrace public housing project) area and within KPT. When she got out of prison, she was diagnosed with cancer and given less than a year to live. So, our journey was really about becoming adults at a young age. That's what led me to self-medicating and fooling around with hard drugs and being homeless and things like that."

He added, "Just overcoming all those obstacles puts me in a position where I can deal with the kids in Kalihi."

Looking back, Garlough has seen a transformation in both the people who come here and the ʻāina itself. "When we first came here, the place was full of pain, it didn't feel safe. The land was overgrown, people came to the back of the valley to trash the land, to do drugs."

These days, he maintains, "We're here to restore the land. And we're here to heal the land and the community, and the easiest way to do that is with the help of the community. We don't do the healing. The land does the healing. And just by having people come on the land, they soon realize that. All we do is provide a safe space."

Garlough believes "that in holding our aloha circles and having people bring someone that they love, that creates a happy spot. And hopefully, when you came to this land, you didn't feel pain. You felt the wonder, the joy, the love."

A young volunteer helps to harvest ʻōlena (turmeric) which will be shared as medicine for the community.

Preparing vegetable garden beds for a community workday at Hoʻoulu ʻĀina in Kalihi Valley on Oʻahu.

Everyone can experience that wonder when they visit Hoʻoulu ʻĀina's garden. That's where they grow kalo, ti-leaves, ʻōlena (turmeric), lāʻau lapaʻau plants, kale, papaya, arugula, bananas, peppers, chard, lettuces and a wide variety of flowers that invite the presence of butterflies.

Each year, Hoʻoulu ʻĀina engages over 5,000 volunteers through four interwoven program areas: Koa ʻĀina (Native Reforestation), Hoa ʻĀina (Community Access), Mahi ʻĀina (Community Food Production) and Lohe ʻĀina (Cultural Preservation). Hoʻoulu ʻĀina will accept payments to schedule and design a workday tailored for individual groups. For more info visit hoouluaina.org.

All of the food grown at Hoʻoulu ʻĀina is organic and provided to the community through the Roots Café and Food Hub located at Kōkua Kalihi Valley at 2229 N. School St. in Honolulu. Call 808-791-9432 or visit rootskalihi.com.

Go Farm!

Cultivating Local Farmers to Enhance Food Security

By Cheryl Chee Tsutsumi

Hawai'i is the most isolated populated place on Earth; the nearest major landmass is the U.S. continent, 2,400 miles away. It's estimated that 85% to 90% of Hawai'i's food is imported, making food security a critical concern.

In 2003, the Agribusiness Incubator Program (AIP) was established under the umbrella of the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (now Resilience) to assist agriculture businesses statewide in the areas of finance, marketing and business planning.

AIP launched GoFarm Hawai'i, a beginning farmer training program, in 2012 in response to burgeoning interest from people who wanted to operate a successful farm but lacked the production skills and business experience to do it on their own.

Today, Laura Ediger (who holds a doctorate in ecology) and Janel Yamamoto (a finance and human resource management executive) lead GoFarm as co-directors.

"GoFarm's mission is to enhance Hawai'i's food security and economy by increasing the number of local agricultural producers," said Ediger. "We're accomplishing this by giving individuals who are seriously considering a career in commercial farming a leg up through a series of programs designed to be completed sequentially.

"The first three phases require an eight-month commitment during which we provide hands-on experience, a solid foundation about soil-based sustainable farming practices, and connections with key people in the agriculture industry."

According to Ediger, GoFarm participants range in age from 18 to 75, but the average age is 40. Some have studied or worked in fields related to agriculture, but most of them have not; for example, she noted a recent cohort included a realtor, archaeologist, pastry chef, nuclear engineer and English teacher.

AgCurious, GoFarm's first phase, is free and open to everyone. During this two-hour Zoom session, participants learn about the organization's history and its five training sites: Pūlehunui (near Pu'unēnē) on Maui, Līhu'e on Kaua'i, Hilo on Hawai'i Island, and Waialua and Waimānalo on O'ahu, each of which is overseen by a coach. AgCurious attendees also meet GoFarm alumni and a site coach.

"Our staff has extensive experience in farming and business," said Ediger. "Some of them own and operate farms, so they have valuable insights to share."

Those who want to proceed to the next phase, AgXposure, must apply for a spot; typically, only 20 people are accepted. This program runs five weeks, including Saturdays and one online weeknight class. Students network with farm and food business owners, visit a variety of farms, and work on projects at host farms such as clearing fields, weeding, planting and harvesting. The fee is $50 per person and two people can enroll as partners who are both responsible for attending classes, completing assignments and meeting goals.

An AgXcel cohort plants a communal crop at GoFarm's training site near Hilo on Hawai'i Island. - *Photos: Courtesy of GoFarm*

GoFarm students grow a variety of crops including (l-r): bravo radish; dragon tongue beans; and white and purple cauliflower.

Ten to 12 slots are open for fledgling farmers who want to progress to AgXcel, the 27-week third phase. Participants must attend one online weeknight class and in-person training every Saturday.

Topics include irrigation, pest control, post-harvest storage and marketing strategies, and they'll meet support professionals such as loan officers, soil analysis experts and agricultural extension agents. AgXcelers must also commit to a minimum of 20 hours per week maintaining a 2,500-square-foot plot of diversified vegetables. The fee is $500 for individuals, $700 for partnerships.

"AgXposure and AgXcel classes are intensive and fast-paced," Ediger said. "There are lectures and homework. Students are expected to keep accurate records and be willing to get dirty and do the hard manual labor of farming."

About 25% of AgXcel graduates continue to AgIncubator, where they can stay for up to three years. During this program, they'll develop their own farming business literally from the ground up at one of GoFarm's training sites. Monthly leases start at $75 for 1/8-acre parcels and increase from there, depending on the plot size.

"AgIncubators must create and execute a plan: decide what they're going to grow; plant, care for and harvest their crops; and meet production, marketing and financial goals," Ediger said. "They have access to GoFarm's equipment, facilities and guidance from coaches, but the idea is for them to eventually transition off-site and be totally independent."

Currently available once a year for a fee of $200, AgOrchard is another option for additional training. Although completion of AgXcel is not a prerequisite, that is encouraged as it provides a beneficial foundation.

On O'ahu, AgOrchard runs for 10 weeks. It's based at GoFarm's Waialua site but also includes weekly weeknight classes and Saturday tours of various orchards. AgOrchard on Hawai'i Island comprises visits to 10 different orchards over the course of six months. Mirroring O'ahu's program, AgOrchard on Maui is set to start in June.

Although GoFarm's participants do not all wind up farming commercially, Ediger points out that the knowledge they gain and the connections they make are invaluable.

She herself tends herbs, greens, ti plants, fruit trees and lei flowers in the backyard of her Kailua home, and she's grateful for the opportunities Go Farm provides to network with like-minded people.

"It's satisfying, humbling and inspiring to work with both longtime farmers and newcomers who want to help grow Hawai'i's agriculture industry," she said. "We share a deep love for the 'āina and tremendous appreciation for where the food on our plates comes from."■

Visit gofarmhawaii.org and follow GoFarm on Instagram and Facebook for more information about its programs and special events, including free open houses. GoFarm welcomes tax-deductible donations: go to uhfoundation.org/SupportGoFarmHawaii.

MA ʻO Organic Farm

Taking Care of Crops; Taking Care of People

By Donalyn Dela Cruz

An unfamiliar vine had appeared on one of the field areas at MAʻO Organic Farms and it excited the director of farm operations, Cheryse Kauikeolani Sana.

"It's a beautiful plant and it started being our ground cover and helping with weed suppression," said Sana.

The vine was later identified as pāʻūohiʻiaka. It is said to have grown to protect the goddess Hiʻiaka from the sun.

"It was like wow, it just makes so much sense, because Hiʻiaka actually came in through Lualualei in the story of Hiʻiakaikapoliopele."

At that moment, Sana realized that what was long ago is still showing itself. Specifically, the moʻolelo of Hiʻiaka traveling through Waiʻanae and Mākaha on her journey to retrieve Lohiʻau (Pele's paramour) from Kauaʻi.

(L-R): MA'O Organic Farm Co-Founder Kukui Maunakea-Forth and Farm Operations Director Cheryse Kauikeolani Sana.

"It's not gone; all the ʻike. Maybe we've lost some ʻike, but it's not truly lost because it was always learned through the practice of kilo," she said.

Kilo, keen observation, has always been a primary resource in the educational work that defines MAʻO.

Twenty-five years ago, Kukui Maunakea-Forth and her husband, Gary, founded MAʻO in Lualualei Valley as a farm enterprise where youth are trained and mentored as interns and apprentices to become entrepreneurial community leaders. MAʻO stands for Mala ʻAi ʻŌpio, which translates to "youth food garden."

"Our youth programs were essentially workforce development programs," Maunakea-Forth said.

The youth cohorts co-manage the farm, growing and processing more than 50 different organic vegetables and fruits that are sold at farmer's markets, grocers, restaurants, and through a community-supported agriculture (CSA) subscription service.

With MAʻO's support, cohort graduates go on to achieve certifications or degrees. To date, MAʻO has had 19.5 cohorts, and 511 interns participate in its Youth Leadership Training Program. MAʻO also offers high school and workforce development internships, educational programs, and serves as a catalyst to higher education.

After graduating from Waiʻanae High School, Sana joined the second cohort of MAʻO's Youth Leadership Training Program. She received a certificate in Sustainable Community Food Systems from Leeward Community College and went on to graduate from UH Mānoa with a degree in Hawaiian Studies.

Today, she is one of the farm's 37 employees and a key mentor who leads the farm operations. Sana has witnessed the farm's growth from 5 to 281 acres, as well as the expansion of its educational programs.

At minimum, MAʻO produces a ton of food a week. The average age of their farmers is 28 years old – 30 years younger than the average age of farm producers across the continent, according to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

A majority of MAʻO's interns and employees have grown up in or around Waiʻanae with little to no knowledge about the historical agricultural landscape of their moku (district). Over half the interns and staff are Kānaka.

"[Working on the farm] is what got me more interested in understanding how we manage our resources and [to] train our people to care for those resources to come back and to be refilled," said Sana.

Maunakea-Forth describes it as fostering "pilina with soil."

"Our mission is really about growing young people to have a relationship with their ʻāina," explained Maunakea-Forth. "What we know, essentially, is that we are bringing relationship of people to the soil through aloha ʻāina."

For decades, land in Waiʻanae and Lualualei Valley was used for some mixed farming but much of the land was uncultivated.

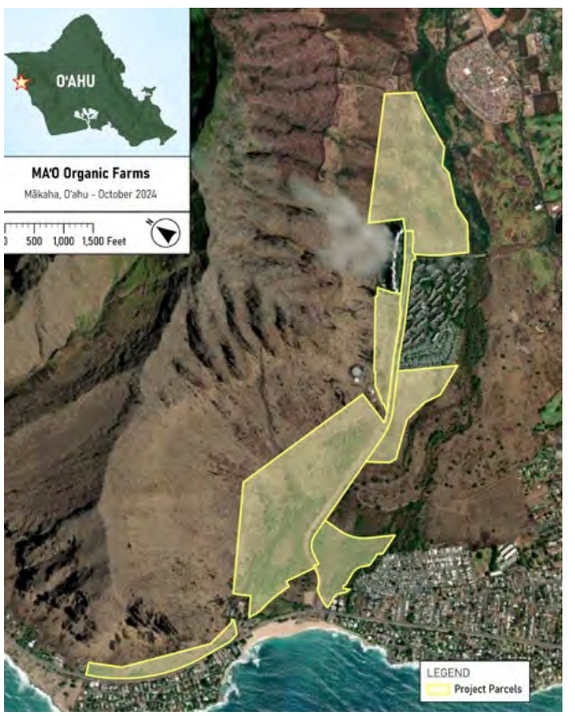
"It was an unsustainable system of agriculture that was so far removed from ʻike, the values, that our kūpuna had," said Maunakea-Forth. "So, we have had the privilege of being able to reimagine and do exactly as our kūpuna have done. We're taking care of crops; we're taking care of the community."

Anyone involved with MAʻO, whether as an intern, employee or board member, accepts the kuleana to care for ʻāina and people for the long-term. It is one of the reasons MAʻO was chosen to steward an additional 249 acres in Mākaha – a mix of agricultural and residential zoned land that was recently gifted to the farm from The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation.

Over the next decade, their vision for the allotted acreage will take shape, including plans for housing.

Having more land to manage presents an opportunity for community redevelopment. Land surveys are currently underway to inform on its condition. However, what's ultimately to come will be determined through kilo, establishing pilina with ʻāina, listening to the community, and being flexible.

"We need to be impactful in the systems and places where our young people go," Maunakea-Forth said using water as an analogy. "You can take care of water in one place but it's still going to go somewhere [else]. So, you want to be able to go to that other place and nourish the other parts of our landscape."



MA'O Organic Farms was recently gifted 249 acres in Mākaha Valley to steward by the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. Above is a map showing the location of the land parcels, and below is a view of the land looking makai. - *Photos & Images Courtesy of MA'O Farms*

These places and systems include food, education, health, workforce, and housing. MAʻO's ability to shift these systems are evident by its influence in movements such as farm-to-school, organic gardening, food-systems curriculums, and more. MAʻO has also incorporated Indigenous agroforestry and biocultural restoration into its framework with the intent to build a workforce in these professional fields.

"It's not about doing things from scratch – it's about amplifying the voice of ʻāina," said Sana. "It is highlighting the abundance of knowledge and excellence that our kūpuna understood and tying that into how it will work with the resources and technologies that we have today."

As MAʻO continues to nurture connections between people and ʻāina, it will be inspiring to see how ʻike kūpuna and moʻolelo unfold to help shape the decade ahead. ■

Revolutionizing Hawai‘i’s Food System

By Christine Hitt

Hawai‘i has a long way to go in addressing food insecurity. Currently, one-third of Hawai‘i households — roughly 450,000 people — struggle with concerns about running out of food. Not only that, but health and wellness are directly linked to access to food – so food insecurity often means higher rates of chronic illness. And, because Hawai‘i is dependent on imports for 85-90% of its food, we are poorly prepared for natural disasters.

These are issues that the initiative “Transforming Hawai‘i’s Food System Together” (THFST) is trying to correct by engaging directly in food system planning.

“Our findings show that only 12% of Hawai‘i’s population has an emergency supply of food and, in the case of a significant natural disaster, the state does not have the capacity to support all of the people who will fall into significant deprivation,” said Albie Miles, an associate professor of Sustainable Community Food Systems at UH West O‘ahu and the co-director of the UH’s Ke Ō Mau Center for Sustainable Island Food Systems.

Miles formed the THFST initiative with nonprofit Hawai‘i Public Health Institute to bring together key partners who want to work toward the common goal of creating a sustainable, equitable and resilient food system — an all-encompassing socio-ecological system that involves food producers, distributors, consumers and its intersection with health, culture and environment.

“As a food system scholar, I felt like we needed to start coming together and start pulling together in a common direction so that we can achieve some larger structural wins on some of this stuff,” Miles said.

“The idea behind the initiative was to really convene stakeholders across the agriculture and food system landscapes in Hawai‘i; to begin physically convening people to talk about the legislation that’s in front of our state legislature and begin constructing a common vision for food system change in Hawai‘i.”

THFST has several objectives and a long list of hopes, first of which is “to reduce or eliminate hunger in Hawai‘i,” Miles said.

Other objectives include: promoting public health and nutrition; building food system resilience and equity; amplifying or scaling bio-cultural restoration efforts in Hawai‘i; supporting greater biosecurity measures to mitigate the number of invasive exotic species coming into the state; and promoting local agriculture and the economic viability of our local producers.

Since it began in 2020, the initiative has partnered with dozens of local organizations. The Hawai‘i Public Health Institute serves as the backbone organization, managing logistics and coordination. Community partners include the Hawai‘i Department of Health, the Hawai‘i Farm Bureau, MA‘O Organic Farms, ‘Ulupono Initiative, the University of Hawai‘i, and Kamehameha Schools, among others.

The goal is not just to influence policy, but to advance the idea that it should be done collaboratively.

“One of our major initiatives was to craft the first Integrated State Food Policy Framework. If the food system is creating all these challenges or limitations in terms of public health and nutrition, household food insecurity, climate preparedness, etc., we need to be thinking about these things in concert,” said Miles.

The Integrated State Food Policy Framework, which covers everything from public health and nutrition to biocultural restoration to disaster preparedness was developed by subject matter experts and underwent a peer-review process. Each element is detailed with information on its status, policy and investment recommendations, and indicators and metrics for tracking progress. The framework is reviewed and updated every year.

The THFST’s annual Hawai‘i Food System Summit is another way stakeholders stay informed. During the summit, Miles explained that its network of stakeholders spend time talking about what can be done at the state or county level to reduce barriers and implement needed infrastructure. They also review legislative bills that have been advancing.

“There’s quite a number of bills introduced by our stakeholders that have been a part of the Transforming Hawaii’s Food System initiative,” Miles noted.

One bill he’s currently watching is Senate Bill 1186, which would establish a statewide interagency food systems coordinator and working group. “That’s what we hope will serve as this hub of this work, to pull these different agencies together with resources and a coordinator to work on these issues more,” he continued.

“I think we have had some positive influence in shaping the conversation around the need for food system change and what that might look like,” Miles said. ■

Restoring the ʻĀina Momona of Heʻeia

By Puanani Fernandez-Akamine

"Our people planned for seven generations ahead of us," said Leialoha "Aunty Rocky" Kaluhiwa.

"We are living the dream that was here for us when our kūpuna made the loʻi. And we're supposed to take care of it; it's up to us to restore it. Because the past is here now."

The ahupuaʻa (land division) of Heʻeia is in the moku (district) of Koʻolaupoko on Oʻahu between the ahupuaʻa of Kāneʻohe and Kahaluʻu.

Kaluhiwa is a lineal descendant of Heʻeia whose ancestors were konohiki (land managers) for the region. She joyfully refers to herself as an "ʻāina advocate."

Now in her 80s, Kaluhiwa, the first vice president of Koʻolaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club, is a respected kūpuna and community leader who has been on the frontlines of efforts to protect Heʻeia for six decades - and she is still actively working on behalf of her community as a board member of the Heʻeia National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR).

Established in 2017, the Heʻeia NERR has emerged as a model for ma uka to ma kai sustainability, effectively reviving and restoring traditional ahupuaʻa methods of conservation and land management with practical application for the 21st century.

But its success story really begins in the 1960s.

The fight to save Heʻeia

Statehood encouraged the rapid suburbanization of Koʻolaupoko, especially in Kāneʻohe and Kailua. New construction was rampant in the 1960s and 70s, with modern residential developments and their cookie-cutter houses, forever changing the rural character of these communities.

New subdivisions sprouted in Kāneʻohe like mushrooms and soon suburbia found its way to Heʻeia. Long-time residents were evicted from their homes – sometimes with only a few weeks notice – to make way for new subdivisions with fancy names like "Aliʻi Bluffs" and "Crown Terrace."

But in 1965 when the Hawaiian Electric Company (HECO) proposed building a power plant in Heʻeia to support the influx of new housing, the community banded together in staunch opposition to the plan.

Empowered by the burgeoning Hawaiian "renaissance," the community resisted all attempts at any further development in Heʻeia – which, in addition to a power plant, included plans for a marina, a golf course,

SEE **ʻĀINA MOMONA OF HEʻEIA** ON **PAGE 17**


Leialoha "Aunty Rocky" Kaluhiwa


Māhealani Cypher


Hiʻilei Kawelo


Keliʻi Kotubetey


Kānekoa Kūkea-Shultz


Kawika Winter


Nonprofit Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi has kuleana for 405 acres in Heʻeia that includes some 300 acres of wetland and about 100 acres of hillside. So far, about 60 acres of wetland have been cleared with 12 acres of loʻi in active production. - *Photo: Jason Lees*

ʻĀINA MOMONA OF HEʻEIA

Continued from page 16

and thousands more homes. For decades, community advocates spent countless hours organizing, protesting, and sitting in courtrooms.

"We had to fight – and we fought hard," Kaluhiwa recalled. "We went through so many courts, so many years. It cost us. We had legal aid, but all the other small stuff we had to pay out of our pockets. We lost a lot of money. But it was worth it. If I had to do it again, I'd do it again."

Their fight is a David and Goliath story of tenacity, courage and sacrifice by people like Kaluhiwa and her late husband, Jerry, Aunty Alice Hewett, and so many others.

Their resistence paid off.

In 1991, a land swap deal was brokered between Heʻeia landowner Kamehameha Schools (KS) and the State of Hawaiʻi: the state traded a 3-acre parcel of land in Kakaʻako for KS' 420-acre Heʻeia wetlands. Oversight of the wetlands went to the state's Hawaiʻi Community Development Authority (HCDA). The community could finally breathe a sigh of relief.

A shift from development to conservation

During the 1990 legislative session, a Kāneʻohe Bay Master Planning Task Force was established to develop a comprehensive master plan for the bay.

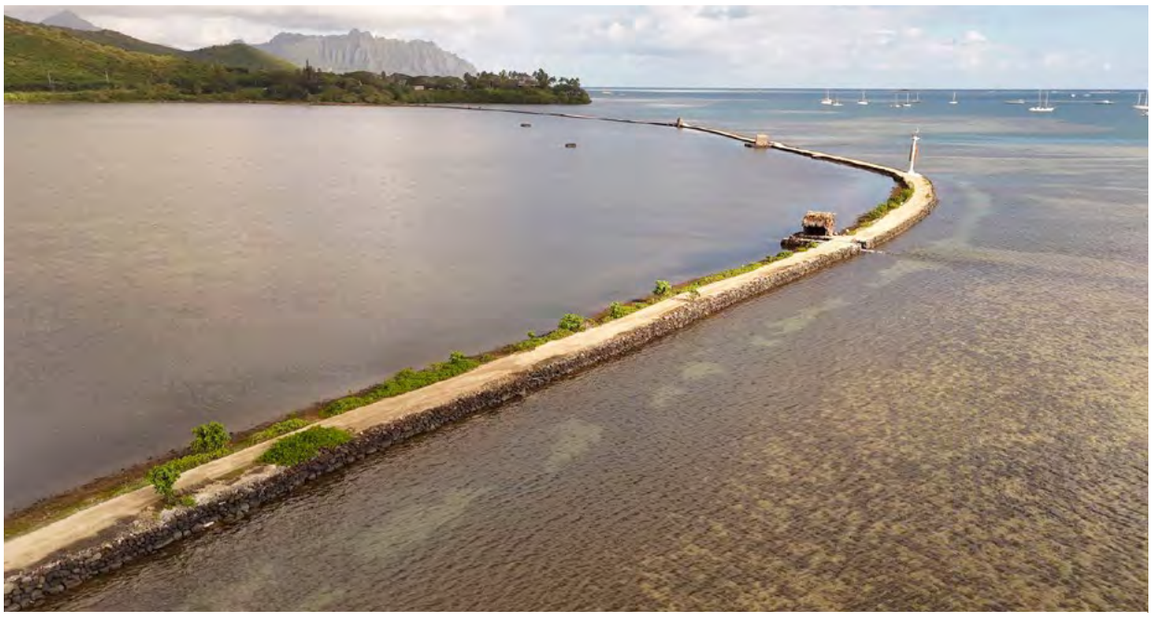
Completed in 1992, the plan focused on sustainable use of the bay's resources and balancing ecological integrity, cultural preservation, aesthetics and economic use. It also recommended the creation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR).

In 1993, the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council was established. It includes neighborhood board representatives, the Hawaiʻi Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB), fishers and other commercial interests operating in the bay, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. Among other things, the council is tasked to facilitate implementation of the master plan.

In 2001, Paepae o Heʻeia was founded by a group of eight young Hawaiians with a vision to restore and maintain Heʻeia Fishpond to feed the community. They established a partnership with landowner Kamehameha Schools to manage the loko iʻa.

Then in 2010, HCDA signed a 38-year lease with community nonprofit Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi to restore the Heʻeia wetlands. The following year, Act 210 was signed into law creating the Heʻeia Community Development District to facilitate culturally appropriate agriculture, education and natural resource restoration and management of the wetlands.

And 25 years after the Kāneʻohe Bay Master Plan was completed, on President Barack Obama's last day in office on Jan. 17, 2017, and with the support of Congress, he signed the presidential designation that established the Heʻeia National Estuarine Research Reserve.



The 88-acre Heʻeia Fishpond is the second largest active fishpond remaining in Kāneʻohe Bay. For the past 25 years, nonprofit Paepae o Heʻeia has been working to repair and rebuild the fishpond's 1.3 miles of wall with a lot of help from volunteers. - *Photo: The Nature Conservancy*

A new co-management model

The National Estuarine Research Reserve system is a federally funded program through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that functions as a collaborative management agreement between the federal government and states with NERR designated areas; the feds fund the research, stewardship and educational programs while states are responsible for operations, implementation and outcomes.

Managed by HIMB, Heʻeia NERR was the 29th such reserve designated – the only one in Hawaiʻi – and the first to include its region's Indigenous community.

When HIMB began planning for Heʻeia NERR about 15 years ago, four Native Hawaiian organizations active in Heʻeia – Koʻolaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club, the Koʻolau Foundation, Paepae o Heʻeia, and Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi – were consulted. Once Heʻeia NERR was formally established, leaders from these organizations became members of the NERR's Reserve Advisory Board.

Their participation was key to incorporation of the ahupuaʻa concept of stewarding ʻāina from the mountains to the sea into the Heʻeia NERR management plan – an element unique in the NERR system which heretofore focused exclusively on coastal areas.

Heʻeia NERR is also set apart by its integration of Indigenous knowledge and western science in its stewardship practices to nourish healthy and resilient ecosystems, economies and communities.

Speaking to the advantage of this collaboration, Dr. Kawika Winter, director of Heʻeia NERR said, "These community organizations are [each] focused on their own missions and don't have limitless bandwidth. But together we are helping bring ahupuaʻa stewardship back to Heʻeia.

"The long-term vision is food security. But we also have a lot of endangered species around here, endangered waterbirds. Those need to be abundant again. Our forests and streams need to be healthier. Reefs need to be full of fish. My vision is ʻāina momona. It will help us create the world we need to live in."

Getting the giant to lift stones

In 2018, Winter, a biocultural ecologist, had been working as the director of Limahuli Garden and Preserve in Hāʻena, Kauaʻi, for more than 13 years when he had to move back to Oʻahu for family reasons.

That same year the job for director of the Heʻeia NERR was posted. It was a faculty position through HIMB located at Moku o Loʻe ("Coconut Island") in Kāneʻohe Bay.

Born and raised in Ahupuaʻa Waiʻalae on Oʻahu, Winter lists his tūtū hoʻokama – his adoptive grandfather Eddie Kaanaana, and his kumu hula John Kaʻimikaua as key influences in his life.

So as perfect as the position with NERR sounded, Winter had reservations about applying. "I was an activist and I spent a lot of time fighting the presence of the federal government here in Hawaiʻi," he said. "So when this job came up I was thinking, wow, running a federally funded research program in a Native Hawaiian community sounds like career suicide. Why would I ever do that?"

Involvement with the state or federal government has usually resulted in loss for Native Hawaiians; it's a legacy of intergenerational trauma. "Not everyone is comfortable with the idea of co-managing – or doing anything – with the state or federal government," Winter said.

But as he looked at the genesis of the movement to save Heʻeia, and all that was accomplished, "the lesson I learned from the kūpuna in this community is ʻdon't let the sins of the system get in the way of figuring out how

SEE **ʻĀINA MOMONA OF HEʻEIA** ON **PAGE 18**

Harvesting kalo at Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi. The farm employs about 40 staff but values the contributions of volunteers. In the background are Haʻikū and ʻIolekaʻa valleys, where the ahupuaʻa of Heʻeia begins. - *Photo: Jason Lees*

ʻĀINA MOMONA OF HEʻEIA

Continued from page 17

to get the system to work for you.'

"Maybe if we talk to the giant, we can get it to lift stones for us and help us rebuild our walls."

From the mountains...

Koʻolau Foundation President Māhealani Cypher has always lived in Koʻolaupoko. A former editor with the *Windward Sun Press*, her community advocacy began with the Stop H-3 Association in the 1970s.

After the H-3 freeway was opened, the association reinvented itself as the Koʻolau Foundation, a community organization affiliated with Koʻolaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club dedicated to the preservation of historic sites and cultural properties.

For decades they have been working deep in Haʻikū Valley, where Ahupuaʻa Heʻeia begins, to restore the native forest and sacred cultural sites in the valley affected by construction of the H-3. "The cultural complex in the valley was never recognized by the State of Hawaiʻi or the Bishop Museum when they did the research for H-3," said Cypher noting that impacts of the freeway on cultural sites in Haʻikū were never mitigated.

"There are at least three heiau: Kāne a me Kanaloa, then Kānehekili at the top. The three flow into the piko (center) of the valley, which forms an amphitheater. So we invite people up there to work on the ʻāina and strengthen their mana through that work," Cypher shared.

Koʻolau Foundation works in concert with two other Hawaiian organizations active in the valley that are important contributors to the restoration of Ahupuaʻa Heʻeia: nonprofit Papahana Kuaola, a mālama ʻāina-based education organization focused on economic sustainability and environmental health, and for-profit Hui Kū Maoli Ola, the premiere native Hawaiian plant nursery that also specializes in natural habitat restoration. The organizations were co-founded and are co-owned by ʻŌiwi ʻāina advocates Rick Barboza and Kapalikū Schirman.

Cypher is optimistic that, with all the nonprofits involved in ʻāina work ma uka to ma kai in Ahupuaʻa Heʻeia, someday soon there will be greater capacity to feed the community.

"NERR is a really important collaboration of public and private organizations coming together," Cypher added. "Their research in this ahupuaʻa on the health of the ʻāina is very important. What I'm hoping is that we have an ahupuaʻa that is vitally alive and flourishing and able to do much good, not just for the future, but for current generations."

Restoring Heʻeia's breadbasket

"Our people were amazing scientists," said Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi Executive Director Kānekoa Kūkea-Shultz. He is talking about the way that our ancestors managed water flow in the loʻi kalo.

"It was just ingenious. When it flooded, the energy flow was dissipated throughout the entire system creating a sponge impact on our ma uka lands, which transferred to creating more loʻis and more springs – which meant more productivity in the ocean. More life. More momona. Ola ka wai – it's all there."

Born and raised in Waimalu, Oʻahu, Kūkea-Shultz's ʻohana are originally from Lahaina and Waikapū, Maui, and Kohala and Waimea on Hawaiʻi Island. A conservation scientist whose master's thesis was about limu, he is one of the eight young Hawaiians who helped found Paepae o Heʻeia in 2001.

He transitioned from loko iʻa to loʻi kalo after taking on the kuleana for Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi 15 years ago. The 405-acre parcel he manages includes 300 acres of wetland and 100 acres of hillside. His team is currently working to clear the invasive albizia trees that have taken over the hillside and so far about 60 acres of wetland have been cleared with 12 acres of loʻi in active production.

"If you look at the history of Heʻeia, there was a significant need to create a food supply, economic development and mālama ʻāina," Kūkea-Shultz reflected. "We felt that with the support of NERR, we had a chance to really make it momona again. If we can revisit those loʻi systems, we can hopefully activate and regenerate the waiwai (wealth) that comes with kalo."

One huge problem for Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi is water. "We don't have enough water here to cultivate 300 acres of land. We are owed a lot of water from the diversions. Red Hill shut down 25% of our water. It's not like our family on the other side don't deserve it. It's an island. Has to be pilina. But we need more water."

In addition to kalo, the farm currently produces ʻulu, banana, ʻōlena (turmeric) and mushrooms. "We tried a lot of different products but kalo is still king in terms of resilience to flooding," Kūkea-Shultz said. "Kalo can provide so many resources – habitat for endangered birds, habitat for endangered fish, habitat for endangered people. Our older brother is taking care of us."

With a commitment to provide the community with sustainably farmed fresh produce and poi, Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi has built a poi mill and certified kitchen and has a small store that is open on Fridays and Saturdays.

"The market was a way to start generating the economic systems that are needed to engage in that circular economy and have the ability to feed our families really good, locally grown organic food from Hawaiʻi so that multiplier impact stays within Hawaiʻi versus getting shipped away," Kūkea-Shultz explained.

The farm also includes a strong educational component and welcomes volunteer groups from schools and others from the community. With its small staff, Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi values the labor that volunteers contribute.

The farm currently employs about 40 people. Kūkea-Shultz said he needs twice that to achieve their vision.

To the sea

Hiʻilei Kawelo and Keliʻi Kotubetey were in their early 20s when they helped to found the private nonprofit Paepae o Heʻeia 25 years ago. Their vision then – and now – was to restore and manage the 88-acre Heʻeia Fishpond, the second largest active loko iʻa remaining in Kāneʻohe Bay, and someday provide food for the community.

They were part of a hui of young people that also included Kalikolīhau Hannahs, brothers Kalā and Kawai Hoe, Kānekoa Kūkea-Shultz, Mahina Paishon and Ānuenue Punua. Neither Kawelo nor Kotubetey, now the nonprofit's executive director and assistant executive director, respectively, knew anything about managing a fishpond growing up.

Kawelo, who has a degree in zoology, was introduced to Heʻeia Fishpond in the late 90s. "There was a course at UH Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies called ʻmālama loko iʻa' and it was being taught by Mary Brooks, a previous lessee of the fishpond," she recalled. "My family is from Kahaluʻu and I grew up not knowing anything about this fishpond – and it was in our backyard."

Kotubetey was raised in the ahupuaʻa of Opana on the north shore of Oʻahu, but moved to Kailua as a teenager. He attended college on the continent earning degrees in economics and business management and, after returning home, he happened to be invited by the friend of a friend to come check out the fishpond.

"Us 20-somethings all came together around the same time," said Kotubetey. "So even though we found each other, the kūpuna and ʻaumākua found us as well."

In addition to community leaders and kūpuna, the hui was mentored by Kamehameha Schools staff like Ulalia Woodside who headed the schools' ʻĀina Ulu program, and Neil Hannahs who was director of the Land Assets Division. "Uncle Neil helped spark our organization," said Kotubetey. "He was a big part of our founding."

"I feel like Kamehameha Schools cultivated us to take on this kuleana," Kawelo added.

Heʻeia Fishpond is a loko kuapā, a fishpond completely encircled by about 1.3 miles of wall. So the first step in restoring the fishpond was removing the invasive mangrove that had overrun its wall. Mangrove was introduced to Oʻahu in 1922 by sugar planters to mitigate sediment runoff. Since 2001, with the help of thousands of volunteers, they have cleared over 10 acres of mangrove. The last 1.5 acres will be cleared this year.

As the mangrove trees were laboriously removed, and the 800-year-old fishpond wall became visible, it was slowly rebuilt. "The wall was in various stages of disrepair," said Kotubetey. "Some areas were quite good and we only needed one or two rocks. In other areas we had to repair 90% of the wall."

But repairing fishpond walls was a new skill set. They reached out to folks with experience in fishpond restoration like Joe Farber, Graydon "Buddy" Keala and Walter Ritte. "We asked for guidance from those who were building walls, and then we just had to do it. We had to learn our space. Ma ka hana ka ʻike all the way," Kotubetey recalled. "Loko iʻa are systems with similar elements but super unique and place-based."

Although Kawelo and Kotubetey initially had reservations about NERR because of the federal government's involvement, their views have since changed; under NERR there is access to funding for research, education programs and stewardship activities.

"Lines were drawn but boundaries weren't created," explained Kawelo. "We could rely on the strengths of others to handle the research – that was a weight off our plate because prior to the designation we had to juggle everything ourselves and it was overwhelming. The new model is 'work with others.'"

With the mangrove nearly gone, and most of the wall rebuilt, they are focusing more attention on fishpond production – and removing invasive fish and limu species. Currently, their number one priority is eliminating the invasive "upside-down" jellyfish. So fully restoring the health of the loko iʻa and its productivity is a long game.

"We're not selling fish because the pond is not ready yet," said Kawelo. "We're not harvesting or distributing but that's okay. One day we will."

An orientation to place precedes work for volunteers at Paepae o Heʻeia. Over the past 25 years, thousands of volunteers have helped the organization remove about 10 acres of invasive mangrove from the 800-year-old fishpond wall. - *Photo: Jason Lees*

Deep in Haʻikū Valley, in the ma uka portion of Ahupuaʻa Heʻeia, volunteers with Koʻolau Foundation are helping to restore the native forest and sacred cultural sites affected by the construction of the H-3 freeway. - *Photo Courtesy of Māhealani Cypher*

A vision of sustainability and ʻāina momona

"'Āina is a system that includes people," explained Winter. "If you look at the writings of [historian] David Malo in 1832, he said that ʻāina is a term for an island when there are people on it. If there are no people, it's called a moku. So ʻāina is a system that has people in it."

Winter says that the dominant western worldview that humans are separate from, and intrinsically bad for, nature is not the worldview of our kūpuna. He said people aren't the problem – their behaviors are.

"We know 150 years ago we had the same population in this area of Kāneʻohe Bay and in those days the streams were clean, the reefs were full of fish. What's the difference now? It's how we're acting. We're not caring for the land. We're viewing it as a commodity and focusing on its highest, best economic use versus looking at it as our relative. Because that's what it is. We are related to all of this. That's what the *Kumulipo* teaches; what science teaches."

Embracing the worldview of our kūpuna and applying their wisdom to address the sustainability, conservation and resource management issues affecting Hawaiʻi today inspires the work being accomplished in Heʻeia. And despite the challenges, there is optimism and a common vision.

"The work happening in Heʻeia is an ideal model for other ahupuaʻa to follow. The people of the ahupuaʻa were self-sustaining. That is what we are doing here – making the ahupuaʻa we live in productive. We want these areas to be producing food. That was our main goal with the loʻi kalo," Cypher emphasized. "But the research is also important. The spiritual renewal up ma uka is important. It all complements each other. People feel called to the land."

Kotubetey acknowledges that restoring fishponds to their historic production levels will be a challenge. "It's going to take more than just our organization working at our pond. But I think part of the 'feeding' we do here is getting people stoked about loko iʻa culture," he said. "Even if they're not eating fish from our pond every day they're going to become better consumers and better community members – more island-minded, more island focused."

"We can look at the mistakes made in Heʻeia by the development companies and learn from what happened," adds Kūkea-Shultz. "We're still growing, still learning and still making mistakes but hopefully we'll be able to build other programs to help other ʻāina and grow more types of food. We have amazing climates here where we can grow things like wheat and rice or plant vineyards."

The work of the Heʻeia NERR partners requires a different mindset. "Nowadays we think of economics and wealth as how many dollars are in your bank account. The Kānaka ʻŌiwi view of wealth is how much water you have on your ʻāina," Winters said.

"The amazing thing about this whole system of loʻi and loko iʻa is that it slows down the flow of water through the watershed and the ahupuaʻa. Water flows slowly from loʻi to loʻi, back to the auwai (irrigation channel), back to the loʻi to the stream and eventually to the fishpond. One way to look at a circular economy is that it's a water cycle. The kūpuna knew this. That's why the wealth, waiwai, of our whole economic system is in this cycle of water."

"We talk all the time about the fishpond, the loʻi, the water. But it's really about relationships," Kawelo reflected. "Pilina is really what makes the ahupuaʻa. Knowing your neighbor. Holding each other accountable. Relying on each other and being interdependent. I think that's the biggest lesson. We need to shift that conversation from dependency and value community. Then we're safe and we're food secure."

"I'm so proud of what this next generation is doing. It's going to take time and it's not going to finish in their generation. They're preparing it for the next generation. We had to fight and prove our ʻāina could be restored. This is the dream of our kūpuna," smiled Kaluhiwa. "This generation is doing a darned good job." ■

Faces of the Diaspora

Helping to Mālama Indigenous Land in California

By Megan Ulu-Lani Boyanton

On a farm on Northern Pomo tribal land – also known as Caspar, California – U'ilani Moore-Wesley grows kalo, sings, and plays ʻukulele. But the 6-acre parcel is more than a personal retreat.

It's also the site of Xa Kako Dile:, an Indigenous women-led nonprofit working toward healing the land and its people. Moore-Wesley asked the local Pomo elders for permission to name the organization in their Indigenous tongue. The phrase translates to "water through meadow."

Moore-Wesley, 52, made a promise to mālama the land after she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2012. Chemotherapy and radiation treatment made her feel worse, so she pivoted to nourishing herself with the fresh produce and cannabis grown at Fortunate Farm.

So when she beat cancer in 2018, the Oʻahu native was ready to return the favor. "It's more than just 'land back,'" she said.

Although she is now confident in her Indigenous identity, that wasn't always the case.

Moore-Wesley was raised as part of a blended family, with seven sisters and a brother. Several had Samoan and Filipino roots, and Moore-Wesley joked that they were "the Polynesian Brady Bunch."

But in her youth, Moore-Wesley felt that her large ʻohana was caught in the throes of colonization and religion, and her mother didn't share much about their Kānaka Maoli ancestry.

Reflecting on her childhood, "it really did affect us growing up," Moore-Wesley said. "We wanted to learn so much about our Kānaka ways."

Her grandmother was Chinese and Hawaiian. And her grandfather, Samuel Kalani Kaeo, wrote the beloved song, *Na Ka Pueo*. The musician, who played ʻukulele and upright bass, passed on the love of music to his descendants.

Moore-Wesley recalls the singing of her uncles and the ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi spoken by her tūtū wahine. Through her relatives and attending Kamehameha Schools' Explorations Program, she learned more about her culture.

Her father, who was of Scottish ancestry, made his way to Hawaiʻi via the military. But "he embraced the culture," Moore-Wesley added.

Growing up, she pictured herself as a nurse, particularly after her brother was hurt in an accident in high school and Moore-Wesley was by his side, packing his wounds.

U'ilani Moore-Wesley offers a prayer for medicine harvested at Xa Kako Dile:, an Indigenous women-led nonprofit on Pomo Tribal lands in Northern California. - *Photo: Marlena Sloss at Xa Kako Dile:*

She attended Kaiser High School in Hawaiʻi Kai but graduated early with a diploma from a continuation school in Kaimukī. Afterward, she worked several jobs and lived in a home of her own in Wahiawā.

Then, she met the military man who would become her first husband. At 20 years old, Moore-Wesley was pregnant with her daughter Azby Anela, who was born in 1992. Moore-Wesley made the move to Roanoke, Virginia, with her burgeoning family, residing there for four years.

However, the transition from the islands was difficult, and Moore-Wesley grew homesick. She took medical prerequisite courses at Virginia Tech, but her dyslexia and motherhood made the work more challenging.

When the marriage ended, Moore-Wesley and Azby left Virginia on a Greyhound bus and headed to Azusa, California, where her sister lived. After saving money for a year, the mother and daughter returned to Kaimukī.

Moore-Wesley met her current husband, Branch, when she was out dancing at a club with her friends. Stationed on Oʻahu, Branch hailed from St. Louis, Missouri.

Their relationship deepened when Moore-Wesley leaned on him as she grieved the loss of both her brother and father. He also encouraged her interest in exploring her heritage, particularly because his own recorded genealogy, as an African American, was tragically limited.

In 1999, the couple's daughter, Ananda Lehuanani, was born. And the next year, they ticked off two more major milestones: their marriage at Keaīwa Heiau State Recreation Area in ʻAiea, and the birth of their youngest child, Anyawu Kamealoha.

Moore-Wesley gave her girls Kānaka names as reminders of their Indigenous identities.

"I don't care if you 5%, 10%, 20%, 1% – you have Kanaka blood in you; you are Kanaka," she said.

But the ʻohana eventually faced trouble securing housing and employment on the island. They decided to move to Fort Bragg, California, in 2007, although the relocation was rocky for Moore-Wesley.

Still, she was determined to build community and find aloha, showing up to every social event in the hopes of meeting other Polynesian and Native peoples, "I had to create ʻohana," Moore-Wesley said.

She also earned a degree in early childhood education, taught at a local school, and received – and beat – her cancer diagnosis.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, the team at Fortunate Farm (where she had been purchasing her produce) extended Moore-Wesley the invitation to live there. Two years ago, she launched Xa Kako Dile: – initially paying the monthly lease of $2,500 out of her retirement before the organization began receiving grants.

The farm acts as a gathering place for Indigenous people with a "living medicine cabinet" growing on 1 acre. It hosts art markets, festivals, musical performances and workshops about hula, meditation and more. Xa Kako Dile: also operates a seasonal farm stand, offering up the same fruits and vegetables that nurtured Moore-Wesley in her time of need.

And she's forged the relationships she yearned for. Moore-Wesley has been adopted by a Yuki tribal elder and her daughter. "They were ʻohana since the day I met them," she said.

She also learned moʻolelo about Kānaka who traveled overseas to the California coast for work opportunities and intertwined with the Pomo population. "Some of them never went home," Moore-Wesley said.

But she plans to – one day.

"I have to finish giving back to this land here who brought me life," Moore-Wesley said. "And then, I'm going home." ■

Hawai'i Triennial 2025, ALOHA NŌ (HT25)
Now through May 4
O'ahu, Maui and Hawai'i Island

Hawai'i's largest thematic exhibition of contemporary art from Hawai'i, the Pacific, and beyond exhibited over a dozen sites. Exhibit programming is free unless otherwise noted on the schedule of events at www.hawaiicontemporary.org.

"The Return of Kapaemahu" Hula Performance
April 1, 10, 17 & 24, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Waikīkī, O'ahu

A re-telling through dance of the story of the Healer Stones of Kapaemahu by Kumu Hula Patrick Makuakāne. Every Wednesday evening, weather-permitting, at the Kūhiō Beach Hula mound. Free. www.queerhistoriesofhawaii.org/kapaemahushow

Waimea Valley Kama'āina FREE Admission
April 3, 10, 17 & 24, Noon - 3:00 p.m.
Waimea, O'ahu

Every Thursday, before the Hale'iwa Farmers Market begins in Pīkake Pavillion. www.waimeavalley.net

Royal Hawaiian Band Performances
April 4, 11, 18 & 25, Noon - 1:00 p.m.
Honolulu, O'ahu

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

Pu'uhonua Mākeke
April 5, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Waimānalo, O'ahu

A marketplace to showcase products, services, and businesses from Pu'uhonua across Hawai'i. Pu'uhonua o Waimānalo (Nation of Hawai'i), 41-1300 Waikupanaha St., in the Pavilion. FB/IG @puuhonuamakeke

Kapu'uola Hula Festival
April 6, 3:00 - 7:00 p.m. | Kapolei, O'ahu

Storytelling through mele and hula of the cultural and historic significance of Pu'uokapolei. Enjoy cultural workshops and more. www.uluae.org

Nānā i ke Kumu: Celebrating the Legacy of Mary Kawena Pukui
April 11, 5:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Kapālama, O'ahu

Celebrate the life, work and legacy of Mary Kawena Pukui After Hours at Bishop Museum. It will be an evening of tributes, mele, hula and more. www.bishopmuseum.org

Kama'āina Sunday
April 13, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Honolulu, O'ahu

Enjoy audio tours of 'Iolani Palace, 'ono food, lively entertainment, and shop local vendors. www.iolanipalace.org

1st Annual Education Workforce Development Fair
April 16, 3:00 - 5:30 p.m. | Anahola, Kaua'i

Explore career pathways in education. Connect with local and Native Hawaiian organizations, network, and take the next step toward a fulfilling career in education. www.kanuikapono.org

18th Annual Waimānalo Kanikapila
April 19, 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Waimānalo, O'ahu/FB Live

Nā'ālehu Theatre, Henry Kapono Foundation, OHA, HTA and Outrigger Resorts team up to present the largest gathering of Hawaiian musicians in the world. Waimānalo Beach Park or via livestream at: www.facebook.com/cyril.pahinui

The 62nd Annual Merrie Monarch Festival
April 20 - 26, | Hilo, Hawai'i Island

A week-long celebration of Hawaiian culture: hula competition, arts fair, and a grand parade. Watch the livestream on April 24 (Miss Aloha Hula), April 25 (Hula Kahiko), and April 26 (Hula 'Auana) in 'ōlelo Hawai'i or English at 6:00 p.m. each evening at www.merriemonarch.com.

Kanikapila Fridays!
April 25, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
Kaimukī, O'ahu

Bring your own instrument or use an 'ukulele provided by the library. Players of all skill levels are welcome. Register at the Kaimukī Public Library Reference Desk or call (808) 733-8422. www.librarieshawaii.org/event

Hybrid Composting Course
April 29, May 6 & 20, June 3, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. | Zoom

This six-week course will outline feedstock sourcing, composting techniques, cost tracking, and pest management strategies tailored to your farm's unique needs. Applications due April 18 by noon. www.gofarmhawaii.org

Talk Story: Sharing Gems of Kaimukī's Past!
Through April 30 | Kaimukī, O'ahu

Kaimukī Public Library is interviewing community members to create a living oral history of Kaimukī. Share your experiences and insights and enrich our understanding of Kaimukī's past. www.librarieshawaii.org/event

9th Annual Kaua'i Steel Guitar Festival
May 4, 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Līhu'e, Kaua'i

Featuring Hawaiian steel guitar masters and NextGen Steel Guitarists performing traditional and contemporary Hawaiian music at the Kukui Grove Center. www.kauaisteelguitarfestival.com

MĀLAMA 'ĀINA EVENTS

Lā Mālama ma Pu'uokapolei
April 5, 8:30 - 10:00 a.m.
Pu'uokapolei, O'ahu

Wear clothes that can get dirty, bring a water for hydration. Tools will be provided. www.uluae.org

NiU NOW!: Kūkaniloko Workday
April 9 & 23, 8:00 a.m. - Noon | Wahiawā

Growing food for a healthy society. Workdays every other Wednesday to care for the coconut grove and stave off the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle. www.puuhonua-society.org/niu-now

Mālama Hulē'ia Volunteer Day
April 19, 8:00 a.m. - Noon | Līhu'e, Kaua'i

Every third Saturday is a community workday at Alakoko fishpond. Sign up to volunteer: peleke@malamahuleia.org. www.malamahuleia.org

Mālama Hāmākua Maui Kōkua Days
April 26, 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Hāmākua, Maui

Plant, weed, mulch, compost and operate power tools. Tools and lunch provided. Meet at the Hahana Rd. entrance of the Hāmākualoa Open Space Preserve. www.malamahamakuamaui.com

Waipā Community Workday
April 26, 9:00 a.m. - Noon | Waipā, Kaua'i

On the fourth Saturday each month check in at the old Waipā poi garage before 9:00 a.m. Bring closed-toe shoes, a water bottle, gloves, hat, rain gear, a towel, a change of clothes, snacks and/or lunch. Lunch is provided if you RSVP in advance to emma@waipafoundation.org.

The Health Cost of Imported Diets: Hawai‘i Must Invest in Local Food

By Annika Lee

For generations the land was our provider, offering fresh fish, taro, ‘ulu, and coconut that fueled Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) communities. These foods weren't just nourishment – they represented our culture and identity.

However, colonization disrupted this way of life, replacing our Indigenous knowledge with industrialized food systems. Over time, traditional diets were replaced by fast food, canned meats, and sugary drinks, contributing to Hawai‘i having one of the highest type 2 diabetes rates in the country.

As this crisis escalates, could reclaiming ancestral food traditions help heal our communities?

Hawai‘i's NHPI population has a 20-25% prevalence of type 2 diabetes. This crisis stems from colonization which replaced nutrient-rich traditional foods with processed, high-fat, high-sugar diets. Food insecurity is a major factor: 42% of NHPI households in Hawai‘i struggle to access healthy meals, compared to 33% of all Hawai‘i residents. With 85% of food imported, NHPI families must rely on expensive processed foods or go hungry.

The lack of investment in local agriculture and dependence on imports has weakened Hawai‘i's ability to feed itself, perpetuating health disparities in NHPI communities. To address type 2 diabetes, solutions must target systemic barriers and strengthen local food systems.

Expanding community agriculture programs that restore native food sources, such as Hui Mālama Ola nā ‘Ōiwi, is crucial. This initiative integrates traditional Hawaiian food production, such as taro farming and local fisheries, into public health strategies. The government must support similar community-led initiatives to reduce reliance on unhealthy imports.

Policy changes are necessary to support these efforts. Redirecting government subsidies from multinational food corporations to NHPI farmers would ensure traditional crops remain accessible and affordable. Expanding Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to cover fresh, locally grown food and offering tax incentives for grocery stores that stock traditional NHPI foods would improve food security.

Additionally, State of Hawai‘i food procurement policies should require schools, public institutions, and hospitals to source a percentage of food from NHPI farmers.

This would create a sustainable market for local producers while increasing access to culturally relevant food. Currently, only 6.2% of food purchases are sourced locally. Raising this to 30% could generate $15-$20 million annually for local farmers. Farm-to-school initiatives can supply students with fresh, traditional foods while teaching the value of Indigenous diets. Hospitals should integrate locally grown produce into their meal plans, reinforcing nutrition's role in disease prevention.

Type 2 diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the U.S., responsible for nearly 90,000 deaths annually. This isn't just a health crisis, it's a systemic failure. We must advocate for policies that restore traditional food systems and make nutritious, affordable foods accessible. Breaking the cycle of diet-related illnesses like type 2 diabetes requires more than awareness – it demands decisive action to protect NHPI communities in Hawai‘i. ■

Annika Lee is currently a global public health student at the University of Washington in Seattle. She is from Hilo, Hawai‘i Island, and graduated from Hilo High School.

ʻAno Nui Pū Naʻe nā Mea Iki Loa

Even the Smallest Things Matter

By Bobby Camara

Appearing to grow out of a bed of mosses, kihi delights in the rainforest. - *Photo: Earthpedia*

In its rainforest habitat, kihi grows on tree trunks. - *Photo: Kew Science*

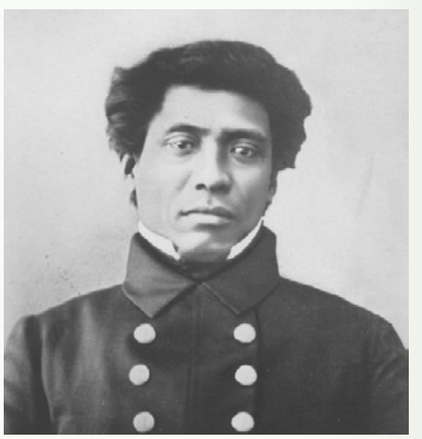
Some are are attracted to big, showy, flashy things: complex constructions, granite countertops, walk-in closets, and en suite bathrooms. Some prefer the muted, the relatively insignificant, mea (objects) that can disappear into the background: single-walled cottages with rickety steps, fading paint, and formica countertops.

This month's meakanu ʻāpaʻakuma is the latter. Easy to overlook. Just another greenish thing growing on a tree trunk in a wet forest along with mosses, other ferns, lichens, liverworts – all also mostly small, but ecologically important.

In 1840-41, the United States Exploring Expedition, commanded by Charles Wilkes, visited Kauaʻi, Oʻahu, and Hawaiʻi, where they surveyed Mokuʻāweoweo atop Maunaloa.

During their visit to Kīlauea, they noted, and collected, a small fern, about 4 inches long, growing on tree trunks. The same fern, kihi (*Adenophorus haalilioanum*), was also found on Kauaʻi and on Oʻahu.

It was a new species, and was named "In memory of M. (sic) Haalilio, an intelligent chief of the Sandwich Islands, who visited this country (America) a few years ago, and died soon after his return to his native country." Timoteo Haʻalilio was on a diplomatic mission for Kauikeaouli, and died at sea, off the east coast.



Timoteo Haʻalilio - *Courtesy Photo*

As with many endemic plants, we don't know of a particular use, or even the specific name of this kihi. Sadly, so much information has been lost, making it all the more important for all of us to noho i waho, a maliu. Be outside. Pay attention. ■

Nou e Graham.

Hoʻomana: A Transformative Cohort for Entrepreneurs

By Andrew Rosen

The Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce (NHCC) is proud to announce the launch of Hoʻomana, a one-of-a-kind cohort program designed to equip Native Hawaiian micro and small business owners with the fundamental skills and strategic insights needed for long-term success.

With laser focus on brand identity, marketing, and business planning, Hoʻomana ensures that entrepreneurs gain the tools to secure financing and build thriving businesses that reflect their unique values and vision.

Unlike other excellent cohorts in Hawaiʻi, Hoʻomana provides a comprehensive yet time-efficient learning experience tailored to the realities of micro and small business owners.

Over the course of just 36 hours across three months, participants will engage in an intensive, hands-on curriculum taught by professors from the Shidler College of Business at UH Mānoa, receiving world-class business instruction while benefiting from the cultural grounding and mentorship of the NHCC network.

What You'll Gain:

1. **Brand Identity & Development:** Define your brand's purpose, mission, and market position to stand out in your industry.
2. **Marketing Strategy & Execution:** Understand who your real core consumer is and learn how to reach them effectively and efficiently.
3. **Business Plan Enhancement:** Develop a stronger, more compelling business plan to increase your chances of securing funding and investment.

Upon completing the program, participants will receive a certificate from the Shidler College of Business, a prestigious recognition that adds credibility and value to their entrepreneurial journey.

Graduates will have an exclusive opportunity to compete at a national pitch event. Ten finalists from across the country will present directly to Walmart and Sam's Club buyers. This unparalleled opportunity could open doors to major retail partnerships and national distribution – a game-changer for product-based businesses.

We understand that time is the most valuable resources. That's why Hoʻomana is designed for busy entrepreneurs and structured as a manageable, high-impact program that can fit into most schedules:

- Mon.-Wed., 7:30 – 9:30 a.m.
- Three modules over three months (with breaks between modules)
- Total time commitment: 36 hours

This strategic format ensures that participants can immediately apply their learning to their businesses while in class without disrupting daily operations and time with ʻohana.

At Hoʻomana, we believe that true success is more than profits. It's about community, sustainability, and cultural integrity. Rooted in Hawaiian values, Hoʻomana integrates values-based learning to help entrepreneurs align their business growth with their personal and cultural identity to uplift themselves and the broader Native Hawaiian community.

Registration is now open. If you are a Native Hawaiian entrepreneur ready to take your business to the next level, now is the time to act. The cohort is limited to 25 participants, so don't miss this opportunity to elevate your business with Hoʻomana! We look forward to welcoming you to the next generation of Native Hawaiian business leaders. ■

Apply online at nativehawaiianchamberofcommerce.org

For more information or questions email Andrew@nativehawaiianchamberofcommerce.org or call 808-208-5816.

Nā Manu i ka Wao Kele; Akamai i ka Hana Pūnana

By Lisa Kapono Mason

A new palila hatchling in nest with egg. Cup lined with ʻumi koa. - *Photo: Mauna Kea Forest Restoration Project*

The month of April marks peak breeding season (nest building and incubation) for many Hawaiian forest birds.

Courtship and pair-bonding can begin as early as September, like the Maui ʻākohekohe, while the Maui ʻalauahio sometimes wait to start pairing as late as March. A pair's decision to nest greatly depends on environmental conditions like mate selection, and resources like food availability. Not all birds breed annually.

Once bonded, pairs quickly begin nest-building, with females usually leading the design and work. Construction takes about one to two weeks, after which the first egg could be laid immediately – or after about a week for ʻiʻiwi and ʻōmaʻo.

Some species nest in tree cavities. Hawaiʻi ʻākepa tuck into the scars and crevices of large koa trees, and sometimes ʻōmaʻo will find themselves in the soft pockets of hāpuʻu. Many small birds build open-top cup nests lined with soft materials, typically oval, and suspended among dense forest branches. The inner cup, just large enough to hold a golf ball, is woven tightly to protect its valuable assets.

Nest materials vary by species. Some recycle sticks and fibers from old nests. Palila and ʻapapane sometimes reuse old nests of neighboring ʻamakihi and ʻōmaʻo, respectively. Kauaʻi ʻakekeʻe use many layers of soft mosses and lichens, while ʻākohekohe and ʻapapane build high in the ʻōhiʻa canopy, weaving in ʻōhiʻa twigs, lehua stamens, pūkiawe sprigs, fern rootlets, ʻōlapa stems, a variety of grasses and sedges, and much more.

Females lay about 1-2 eggs per clutch, each tiny – weighing about 1-2 grams – in shades of speckled cream and hazy gray. Both parents usually feed and care for the hatchlings even after they fledge, or leave the nest, at around three weeks. ■

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

A Gathering Place for Hawaiians Abroad

By Moana Alo

For generations, Native Hawaiians have thrived, both in their homeland and across the diaspora. ʻAhahui Kīwila Hawaiʻi o San Diego (AKHSD) is a testament to that resilience, uplifting community, cultural preservation, and civic engagement for Kānaka living in the diaspora.

Established in 1993, AKHSD continues Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalanianaʻole's legacy of improving the lives of Native Hawaiians through education, advocacy, and leadership development.

Kūhiō envisioned a future where Native Hawaiians remained politically engaged while staying paʻa to their traditions, even as colonization reshaped their land. As a U.S. congressional delegate from 1902-1922, he fought tirelessly for Native Hawaiian rights. He also founded the first Hawaiian Civic Club in 1918 to promote civic participation, cultural pride, and collective action.

AKHSD embodies this vision today. Though distant from Hawaiʻi, we remain connected to our kuleana to uplift our lāhui. Through civic engagement, cultural workshops, and advocacy, we ensure that the voices of Hawaiians abroad contribute to the collective movement of Native Hawaiians everywhere.

A core part of our work includes direct engagement with political leaders. Each year, AKHSD members travel to the California State Capitol to meet with elected officials and advocatec for legislation affecting our communities. We also participate in candidate roundtables, providing a space for our nā ʻōpio (youth) to engage with local leaders. These efforts amplify the Native Hawaiian voice in civic spaces and reinforce our presence in policy discussions that shape our future.

Our ʻōpio are the future of our lāhui, and AKHSD is committed to supporting them. Following Kūhiō's example, we advocate for education and leadership development, offering cultural and educational scholarships to ensure our keiki remain connected to their heritage. Through mentorship and civic engagement, we help ʻōpio cultivate a strong Hawaiian identity and active community participation.

We create spaces and partner with other organizations so our keiki can learn moʻolelo, hula, language, and traditional arts, reinforcing the values of aloha, kuleana, and lōkahi. By supporting their growth, we empower them to become the next generation of Hawaiian leaders, whether in San Diego, in Hawaiʻi, or beyond.

Cultural preservation is central to AKHSD's mission. We provide workshops to learn lei hulu, lau hala weaving, haku lei-making, ipu-crafting, and ʻulana lau niu. Cultural practitioners share their ʻike, helping our members remain rooted in tradition while fostering a thriving community.

AKHSD is more than a civic club – it is a gathering place for Hawaiians abroad. We participate in cultural festivals, collaborate with Pacific Islander communities, and acknowledge our shared history with other Indigenous peoples. By remembering Kūhiō, we remain dedicated to our people, culture, and future. E mau ke ea o ka ʻāina i ka pono – may the life of the land be perpetuated in righteousness. ■

Hoʻokahi ka ʻilau like ana – strength in unity! AKHSD representing our lāhui at convention, carrying Kūhiō's legacy forward. - *Photo: Courtesy of ʻAhahui Kīwila Hawaiʻi O San Diego (AKHSD) Archives*

Moana Alo is president of ʻAhahui Kīwila Hawaiʻi o San Diego, a dedicated advocate for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) communities, and a community services commissioner for the City of La Mesa. A Ph.D. student focused on community-based organizations, she works to uplift Indigenous voices through civic engagement, policy advocacy, and cultural preservation. Committed to servant leadership, Moana strives to empower nā ʻōpio and strengthen NHPI visibility in spaces where their presence is often overlooked.

Huakaʻi ka Mauli i ke Kai Uli

By Mahinalani Cavalieri

It is a pilgrimage to venture into the depths of Moananuiākea. A world of ancestral wisdom that lies under the wake, in the expansive horizon, and observed through the patterns of nature. Thoughts of my kūpuna, their hardships and triumphs, ran through my mind as I prepared to depart. As Kānaka ʻŌiwi, voyaging is our history, our heritage. We enter the realm of Pō receptive to the lessons and hōʻailona (symbols) that will be presented.

Papahānaumokuākea is a powerful and sacred realm considered to be ʻāina akua, a place where our gods, deities, and ancestors dwell. As Kānaka ʻŌiwi, we trace our origin and emergence into this life and consciousness from these ocean depths.

There is a profoundness of knowledge here that should be matched with utmost reverence for seen and unseen phenomenon. Respect and awareness of these genealogical relations and hōʻailona are rooted within Kānaka epistemology. The manifestation of kūpuna and gods are seen and felt through signs in nature. This framework of philosophy and etiquette has transcended generations of Kānaka.

I hadn't envisioned myself accessing this culturally and spiritually significant space – especially not aboard a Western exploration vessel (E/V). However, a partnership between the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, and the Ocean Exploration Trust provided me the opportunity to journey into this ʻāina akua aboard the E/V *Nautilus*.

The 2023 Ala ʻAumoana Kai Uli (Path of the Deep Sea Traveler) Expedition was a profound experience. As a volunteer crew member with the Polynesian Voyaging Society, all my prior sailing experience was on waʻa kaulua (double-hulled canoes).

During my 28-day expedition aboard *Nautilus*, I reflected on the contrast of seafaring between my voyaging kūpuna and modern maritime researchers. Various forms of academic exclusion and dismissal of Indigenous knowledge systems remain prevalent today, though hope and resolution can be found through multi-agency collaborations that provide opportunities for Kānaka.

It was an unfamiliar space: a foreign ship carrying me into an ancestral domain to inquire and investigate lessons my kūpuna have uncovered and perpetuated through oral histories; to define skills my relatives possessed from an intrinsic relationship and careful observation of the environment; to uphold behaviors of stewardship and reciprocity rather than be educated within the walls of institutions that diminish Indigenous knowledge systems.

This ʻike kūpuna (ancestral knowledge) predates the technology aboard *Nautilus* and empowered Pacific peoples to traverse the high seas and settle the islands of Moananuiākea.

This reckoning of ideologies was an awakening to the ingenious, brilliant minds of our people; an uplifting sense of pride and empowerment through ʻike kūpuna. And the privilege of these opportunities comes with the kuleana to serve for all who heed the kāhea. ■

Mahinalani Cavalieri is a haumāna of Indigenous politics at UH Mānoa and a data and research specialist for Papa Ola Lōkahi. She has a deep affinity and reverence for the kai uli (deep blue sea) and the ʻike kūpuna and hōʻailona that can be revealed within these sacred spaces.

(L-R) Jacob Wessling, Mahinalani Cavalieri, Kukui Gavagan, Jaina Galves, Malia K. Evans, and Daniel Kinzer with ROV "Hercules" onboard Nautilus in September 2023. - *Photo: Megan Cook*

Embracing Health Through Hawaiʻi's Heritage

Kawehilani Kahanaoi, Health Enhancement Program Manager, Hui Mālama Ola Nā ʻŌiwi

For Native Hawaiians, health and wellbeing are deeply woven into our identity, cultural values, traditions, and natural environment. From infancy to elderhood, our experiences shape our perspectives and guide our actions. While learning differs among individuals, the foundational teachings of our Kūpuna (ancestors) remain constant, naturally woven into our daily lives and identities. Values such as ola (life), mālama (to care), lōkahi (unity), ʻohana (family), and pono (justice, excellence) are deeply embedded in cultural practices, shaping daily life and relationships. These embedded values ensure that forests are cared for, gardens thrive abundantly, and stars brilliantly guide travelers across the seas.

The skills central to cultural practices also foster Native Hawaiian health and wellbeing. Activities such as physical movement, mindful eating, and intentional routines contribute to reducing chronic diseases prevalent in many Hawaiian homes today. Hui Mālama Ola Nā ʻŌiwi supports this connection between culture and health by offering medical care, health education, and wellness programs tailored to the needs of the Native Hawaiian community. Through services like nutrition counseling, chronic disease management, and fitness classes, they empower individuals and families to lead healthier lives.

Kilo (observation) allows the mind to focus while the heart settles and discovers the tapestry of the world. Ulana (weaving) may offer a weaver the imagination of new patterns guiding the hands and brain to liven new pathways. Kaula (cordage) making requires continuous discipline and muscle dexterity to reliably secure parts of one's vessel or home. Lawaiʻa (fishing) requests patience and alertness to decipher the language of Hawaiʻi's natural elements simultaneously. Mahiʻai (farming) relies on patience and memory of seasonal changes while awaiting a healthy harvest.

Hawaii's last reigning monarch, King David Kalākaua, once said, "Hula is the language of the heart and therefore the heartbeat of the Hawaiian people." This sentiment underscores the deep connection between health, heritage and the Hawaiian spirit. During the renowned Merrie Monarch Festival, Native Hawaiian health and wellness comes to life. It is evident in the disciplined protocols, the graceful yet rigorous movements, the rhythmic storytelling of chanters, pahu drummers, and dancers, and the meticulous care given to crafting implements and adornments from nature's gifts. There is a lei of gratitude that extends globally for communities involved in putting together this prestigious celebration of hula.

The health and wellbeing of Native Hawaiians thrive alongside Hawaiʻi's esteemed and beloved cultural heritage. By embracing lifestyles that reflect our ancestors' wisdom, we honor both them and our home. Hui Mālama Ola Nā ʻŌiwi remains committed to supporting this journey by ensuring that Native Hawaiians have access to the care, knowledge, and resources needed to live healthier lives.

E Ola Hawaiʻi! ■

Kawehilani Kahanaoi is the health enhancement program manager at Hui Mālama Ola Nā ʻŌiwi.

Nā Home o Lili‘uokalani

Na Kalani Akana, Ph.D.

Ua nui nā home a Lili‘uokalani i noho ai. ‘A‘ole ‘o Wākinekona Hale wale nō – ‘o ia ka hale āna i noho ai ma kona wā male me Keoni Dominisi a ma hope o ka a ho‘okāhuli aupuni.

Ma kona wā kamaiki, ua lawe hānai ‘ia ‘o ia i Hale‘ākala e kona mau mākua hānai ‘o Konia me Pākī. Akā, mai kona piha makahiki ‘ehā ā hiki i kona piha makahiki 12, ua noho na‘e ‘o ia ma ka hale moe o Ke Kula Kamāli‘i Ali‘i ma lalo o Pūowaina ma ke alanui Kuini ‘Ema. Ua kokoke ke kula lā a Amosa Kuke i ka hale pili o kona kupunakāne ‘o ‘Aikanaka, kāhi i hānau ai ‘o Keohokalole iā Lili‘u.

Ma 1868, ka piha makahiki ‘eono o kāna male ‘ana iā Keoni Dominisi, ua ili mai iā Lili‘uokalani kekahi mau ‘eka ‘āina ma ka ‘ili ‘āina ‘o Hamohamo. Aia ma laila ‘elua hale: ho‘okahi ‘o Paoakalani a me ka mea ‘ē a‘e ‘o Ke‘alohilani, ‘o ia ka mea kokoke i ke kahakai a ‘o ia ka hale a Lili‘uokalani i noho ai ma kona ho‘omaha ‘ana ma Waikīkī.

No kona aloha nui i ka limu huluhuluwaena, ua lawe mai ‘o Lili‘uokalani i ka limu mai Lahaina mai a kanu ‘o ia ia ma Waikīkī i mua o Ke‘alohilani. ‘Oiai ‘a‘ole i noho ‘o Lili‘u ma Paoakalani, he hale no kona mau ukali ia, ua hele a kaulana ka hale ma muli o ke mele, *Ku‘u Pua i Paoakalani*. Inā kipa ‘oe iā Hamohamo, Waikīkī, mau nō kēia mau inoa ‘o Paoakalani (he alanui) a me Ke‘alohilani (he hōkele).

‘O kekahi hale ‘ē a‘e i ho‘okaulana ‘ia ai e ka mele ‘o *Nohea i Mu‘olaulani*. Ua ho‘okuhihewa ‘ia nā po‘e i heluhelu iā *Hawai‘i Place Names*, aia ‘o Mu‘olaulani ma kāhi o ke Kikowaena no nā Kamali‘i a Lili‘uokalani ma ke Alanui Hālona, akā ‘a‘ole kā.

Aia ‘o Mu‘olaulani ma kāhi o ke Kauhale a Meia Wright, ma nā alanaui Mō‘īkāne me Liliha. Ua kū‘ai ‘o Lili‘uokalani i ka hale, iā ia he kamāli‘iwahine o ke Aupuni Hawai‘i, mai Simon Ka‘ai, kekahi ‘elele no Kona ma ka ‘aha ‘ōlelo.

Ua no‘ono‘o ‘ia e kekahi, no Ruta Ke‘elikōlani kēia inoa ‘o Mu‘olaulani, no ka mea aia ko Ruta Hale ‘o Mauna Kamala kokoke nō i Mu‘olaulani. Aia kēia inoa i ke mele *He Inoa No Ka Haku o Hawai‘i*. ‘O Ruta ‘o Mu‘olaulani ma ke mele me kona mau pōki‘i ‘o Kapuāiwa, ‘Iolani, me Lohelani (Kamāmalu).

“Nohea i Mu‘olaulani ka beauty he mau ia no nā kau a kau...” - Lili‘uokalani, 1885

Ke‘alohilani ma Hamohamo, Waikīkī. - *Archival Photos*

Paoakalani ma Hamohamo, Waikīkī.

Hale‘ākala, ka home a Lili‘u hānai ‘ia ai. - *Painting by D. Howard Hitchcock, 1899*

Kalani Akana, Ph.D., is a kumu of hula, oli and ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. He has authored numerous articles on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.

To read the English translation go to kawaiola.news

Missile Debris Removed from DHHL Kaua‘i Lands

By Diamond Badajos

Some 800 feet above sea level, two dozen volunteers embarked on a nearly 24-mile trek by all-terrain vehicle to clear debris left behind by an inert testing missile that crashed on a Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) parcel atop the Niu Valley Ridge in Waimea, Kaua‘i, more than 60 years ago as part of “Operation Regulus.”

On Dec. 19, 2024, an estimated 2,300 lbs of debris were collected and airlifted out of the area to be recycled at Resource Recovery Solutions in Līhu‘e.

Discovered in 2022 by a DHHL lessee exploring the region, the debris was in an area used for grazing by a herd of feral goats. The debris field was examined by the Kaua‘i Police Department and Navy Security and Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasures personnel who determined it did not pose a threat to the environment. Further investigation by unexploded ordnance crews found no explosives in the area and deemed it acceptable to keep the debris in place.

For Thomas Nizo removing the debris wasn’t just a task, it was his kuleana, regardless of the findings. “If can, can; if no can, how can? Getting to a ‘yes’ response is the goal,” said Nizo.

Nizo, an Anahola residential lessee, serves as Pacific Missile Range Facility Barking Sands’ (PMRF) deputy of public works and stewardship officer and is the first Native Hawaiian to hold the position. His unwavering dedication to the cleanup is firmly rooted in his love for the land.

“E pane mai ka nonoi o Nohili,” (answering the requests of Nohili) is PMRF’s slogan. This reflects the staff’s awareness of the importance of Native Hawaiian cultural values. Nohili refers to the high sand dunes at Nohili Point, the famous “Barking Sands” of Kaua‘i.

Operation Regulus, conducted by the PMRF from 1956 to 1964, was an operation used for missile launch and guidance training. Flight-test vehicles and training missiles were never armed and contained retractable landing gear, making them reusable.

DHHL commends Nizo and his team for their outstanding efforts in Kekaha and the Mānā Plain, as their actions align with the mission of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole and benefit the broader community. Their removal of the missile debris allows for effective land use.

Volunteers cleared an estimated 2,300 lbs of debris from DHHL land in Waimea, Kaua‘i, last December. An inert testing missile crashed there more than 60 years ago during "Operation Regulus" conducted at the PMRF in Nohili between 1956-1964. - *Photo Courtesy of DHHL*

DHHL manages more than 14,500 acres of land in Waimea; two-thirds of the area can be described as steep mountainous terrain and isolated valleys. DHHL’s Kaua‘i Island Plan (KIP) calls for development in Waimea to be centered around residential and subsistence agricultural homesteads – a self-sustaining community where residents can cultivate produce for both personal use and sale. Surrounding parcels may include community-use spaces, a pu‘uhonua or retreat, areas for conservation, and opportunities for kalo cultivation.

Diamond Badajos is the information and community relations officer for the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands

The Role of the Microbiome in Cancer Prevention and Treatment

By Jodi Leslie Matsuo, DrPH

Emerging research has uncovered a powerful ally in the fight against cancer: the human gut microbiome.

This community of bacteria, fungi, viruses, and other microbes living in our gut influences nearly every aspect of health, from digestion to immunity. Researchers now recognize that the microbiome plays a crucial role in cancer prevention and may even impact how well patients respond to treatment.

A healthy gut biome – one that contains a balanced and diverse community of microorganisms – protects the body against cancer in multiple ways. Chronic inflammation is a known driver of many cancers, and an unhealthy gut microbiome can contribute to this process. When good or beneficial bacteria thrive, they produce short-chain fatty acids like butyrate, which help lower inflammation and maintain gut health.

However, dysbiosis – overgrowth of harmful bacteria – produces toxins and cause inflammation that can cause cancer cells to grow more easily. Bloating, gas, diarrhea, constipation, brain fog, fatigue, weak immunity, acne, and eczema are signs of dysbiosis.

The microbiome also plays a crucial role in one's immunity. Nearly 70% of immune cells are in the gut. The gut bacteria that live there help train these cells to recognize and fight harmful invaders, including cancer cells.

Beneficial bacteria, such as *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium*, have been shown to support the body's ability to detect and destroy abnormal cells before they develop into tumors. In addition, the microbiome assists in detoxifying the body by breaking down carcinogens from food and the environment, reducing their exposure to the body and related chances of the cells developing into cancer.

Researchers are uncovering the gut microbiome's role in cancer treatment, influencing the effectiveness of chemotherapy, radiation, and immunotherapy.

Certain gut bacteria help break down chemotherapy drugs, enhancing their impact while reducing side effects like nausea and fatigue. The microbiome also supports DNA repair and inflammation control, aiding recovery from radiation therapy. In immunotherapy, which boosts the immune system's ability to target cancer, a balanced microbiome may improve treatment response by strengthening immune function and tumor recognition. Researchers are even exploring fecal microbiota transplants (FMT), where beneficial microbes from a healthy donor help restore gut balance and enhance treatment success.

Eating traditional Hawaiian foods supports a thriving gut microbiome by nourishing beneficial bacteria. Probiotics introduce good bacteria that aid digestion, enhance immune function, and reduce inflammation, while prebiotics feed these microbes, ensuring a balanced gut environment.

Fermented foods like poi, kimchi, natto, and yogurt are rich in probiotics, while kalo, ʻuala, ʻulu and bananas provide prebiotic fiber that sustains beneficial bacteria. A combination of both prebiotic and probiotic foods is essential for maintaining gut health.

On the other hand, processed foods, added sugars, artificial sweeteners, excessive animal products, and alcohol disrupt the microbiome, promoting inflammation, yeast overgrowth, and gut dysbiosis, which can contribute to leaky gut syndrome and increased disease risk.

Supporting gut health through a nutrient-dense, fiber-rich diet is a crucial step in cancer prevention, treatment, and overall wellbeing. ■

Born and raised in Kona, Hawaiʻi, 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 X @DrLeslieMatsuo.

INPEACE: A New Home in Nānākuli

By Sanoe Marfil

As we celebrate INPEACE's 31st anniversary, I am honored to share an exciting new chapter in our journey—a place we can call home. INPEACE recently acquired a 15,000-square-foot building in Nānākuli, which we are transforming into the INPEACE Community Hub at Nānāikeola.

INPEACE was envisioned by three extraordinary women—Alice Kawakami, Kathryn Au, and Sherlyn Franklin Goo—whose work focused on improving educational opportunities for underserved communities in Hawaiʻi. They founded INPEACE in 1994 with a mission to support individuals in pursuing education degrees. That mission took shape in 1996 through our first program, Ka Lama o Ke Kaiāulu, providing college assistance, mentorship, and professional training to build diversity in the teaching profession and ensure culturally relevant role models for students.

In 1999, alongside parent and community member Michelle Mahuka, INPEACE established Keiki Steps, a free Hawaiian culture-based, family-child interactive Pre-K program designed to address school readiness in high-poverty communities. Over the years, we have continued to grow, developing programs based on community needs and expanding our reach across Oʻahu, Maui, Molokaʻi, Kauaʻi, and Hawaiʻi Island.

Now, as CEO, I am honored to carry this vision forward. My journey with INPEACE began 18 years ago as a young mother with my 1-year-old daughter when we enrolled in Keiki Steps. Inspired by my daughter, I became deeply involved, volunteering and engaging with the curriculum which has shaped my commitment to this work. Today, I am proud of the impact INPEACE creates in the lives of the people we serve and feel a deep responsibility to give back to the communities that once gave so much to me.

Our new home, Nānāikeola, is inspired by the legacy of kupuna leader Aunty Agnes Cope, a devoted advocate for Native Hawaiian health and culture. Nānāikeola will uplift community well-being, address educational gaps, revitalize Hawaiian culture, bridge economic divides, and foster community development. It will be a place where families, educators, and entrepreneurs can access the support they need in a welcoming, centralized space.

We are excited to begin operations in April 2025 while simultaneously making this space our own. To bring this vision to life, we are seeking financial support for critical renovations that will transform this building into a thriving center where our programs can flourish, our staff can thrive, and our community can grow together.

Nānāikeola is more than just a name - it reflects our commitment to strengthening our lāhui by "looking to life." Mahalo nui to our community for making this vision a reality. ■

For more information or to support this initiative visit inpeace.org.

Sanoe Marfil is the CEO of INPEACE and a dedicated servant leader. She serves as a commissioner for the Department of Hawaiian Homelands and as president of the Nānāikapono Hawaiian Civic Club. Currently pursuing a doctorate in education at Fielding Graduate School, Sanoe focuses on the intersection of genealogy and leadership while raising her three daughters alongside her husband Byron Jr., instilling the values of Hawaiian culture to guide their future growth as active community members.

Celebrating Language, Leadership, and Advocacy



By the Hoʻokaʻa ʻIke Team

"ʻO wai lā kou makuahine? ʻO ka ʻāina nō! ʻO wai lā kou kupuna wahine? ʻO ka ʻāina nō!"
(Who is your mother? It is ʻāina! Who is your grandmother? It is ʻāina!)
– Joseph Iosepa Kahoʻoluhi Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu, Ke Aloha ʻĀina, 1895

In February, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) participated in Ola Ka ʻĪ events across the pae ʻāina to celebrate and perpetuate ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi in public spaces. With thousands of attendees across Hawaiʻi Island, Maui, Molokaʻi, Oʻahu, and Kauaʻi, these gatherings highlighted the growing commitment to language revitalization.

As part of our efforts to support this event, we created an activity-coloring book in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi that shares our kuleana and mission. More than 900 copies were distributed to keiki kaiapuni and community members, with a free PDF now available on our website. Mahalo to the communities who hosted us, and hoʻomaikaʻi to the haumāna who represented their kula through oli, mele, and haʻi ʻōlelo (speech competitions).

In March, OHA proudly co-sponsored the Aloha ʻĀina Leadership Awards (AALA) with Kanaeokana and Kanu o ka ʻĀina Learning ʻOhana. AALA honors students who live aloha ʻāina, carrying the kuleana of stewardship, cultural pride, and leadership.

Representing Hawaiian-focused charter schools, kaiapuni programs, Kamehameha campuses, and other Kanaeokana network schools, these haumāna embody the understanding that ʻāina is an ancestor, a source of life, and the foundation of our identity as Kanaka.

Selected by their schools, awardees received a makana to support their future endeavors. Mahalo to Kanaeokana and KALO for hosting AALA since 2018 and for ensuring that the next generation remains rooted in the values of our kūpuna. To this year's 18 awardees: we wish you the best and hope you continue to ʻauamo your kuleana as poʻe aloha ʻāina.

Advocacy and aloha ʻāina are not just for our oldest haumāna. In March, OHA welcomed kumu and students from Hālau Kū Māna to the Board of Trustees' Beneficiary Advocacy and Empowerment Committee meeting.

After emailing our trustees, students prepared verbal testimonies, offering lei and oli along with poised speeches that clearly laid out their issues. Eighth- and 12th-grade students shared heartfelt stories about how recent federal funding freezes have impacted their programs - and proposed a variety of creative solutions.

Students also engaged with OHA trustees and staff to explore the many available career pathways at OHA that might align with their passions. Their participation reflects the strength of our young leaders and the importance of ensuring they have the support they need to thrive.

Through language, leadership, and advocacy, these events reaffirm our collective commitment to ea and the mauli ola of our lāhui. ■

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.

(L-R) Strategy Consultant Makiʻilei Ishihara and Hoʻokaʻa ʻIke Team Director Kuʻuleianuhea Awo-Chun at OHA's table at Ola Ka ʻĪ - Koʻolau in early February. - *Courtesy Photo*

Being Waiwai: A Book on Water and the Future of Hawaiʻi

By Kamakanaokealoha M. Aquino

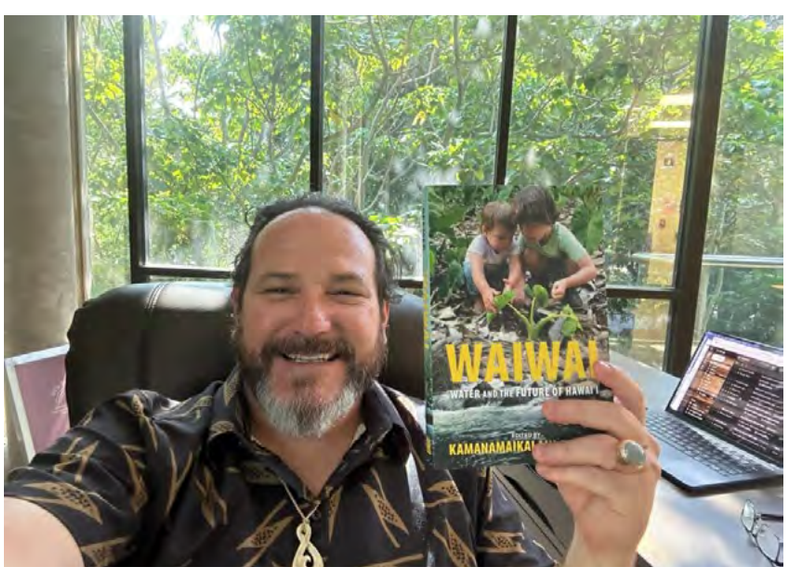
A recent book, *Waiwai: Water and the Future of Hawaiʻi,* edited by Kamanamaikalani Beamer, Ph.D., was recently published by the University of Hawaiʻi Press.

A groundbreaking book exploring water in Hawaiʻi and bridging ancestral knowledge with current challenges, this edited book brings together community members, cultural activists, academics, scientists, and policymakers. It also investigates environmental responsibility in the case of the U.S. Navy's Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility on Kapūkakī. Contributors also include Pua Souza, Kawena Elkington, Ikaila Lowe, Kapua Sproat, Mahina Tuteur, William Tam, Thomas W. Giambelluca, Chip Fletcher, Wayne Chung Tanaka, Sharde Freitas, T. Kaʻeo Duarte, Ayron Straugh, and the Oʻahu Board of Water Supply.

This new book will provide readers with critical knowledge of the current status of water in Hawaiʻi and the goal to catalyze action. The central question contributors aim to answer is: "What do people need to know about the future of water in Hawaiʻi, and what can they do to enable a better future?". Each chapter provides a guide to community members, academics, scientists, policymakers, and aspiring visionaries to redirect the course of water management toward sustainability for future generations.

You're invited to the book launch at Waiwai Collective on Thursday, April 3, 5-7 p.m. Register at bit.ly/waiwailaunch. Come hear directly from the editor and contributing authors as they discuss their research and perspectives; purchase your copy of the book, get it signed, and enjoy light pūpū while networking with other attendees. Pick up your copy now from UH Press (uhpress.hawaii.edu/title/waiwai-water-and-the-future-of-hawaii) or from your local bookstore. ■

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.



Dr. Kamanamaikalani Beamer holds a copy of his new book. A book launch will be held at Waiwai Collective in Mōʻiliʻili on April 3. - *Courtesy Photo*

OHA Welcomes Deb Haaland to its Honolulu Office

On March 10, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) was honored to welcome former U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) to its offices at Nā Lama Kukui in Honolulu. The welcome began with a traditional high protocol ceremony, not just because of her recent status as a U.S. Secretary, but also to acknowledge her as a warrior for the rights of Indigenous peoples. A trailblazing First Nations leader, she was the first Native American to lead a U.S. Cabinet department. Prior to her appointment by former President Joe Biden, she was a congressional representative for New Mexico, becoming one of the first two Native American women to serve in the U.S. House. During her tenure, she co-sponsored more bills than any other freshman member of Congress and advocated for Indigenous rights, climate action, and social justice. Her historic appointment as Secretary of the Interior marked a turning point in U.S. history, placing a Native American leader in charge of federal land management and tribal affairs for the first time. In that capacity, she prioritized land conservation, environmental justice, and strengthening tribal sovereignty. - *Photo: Bill Brennan*

Lehuauakea Receives Emerging Native Arts Grant

Lehuauakea - *Photo: Moriel O'Connor courtesy of Lehuauakea*

ʻŌiwi interdisciplinary artist and kapa practitioner Lehuauakea has been awarded the Walker Youngbird Foundation's latest grant recognizing early-career Indigenous artists. The $15,000 grant is awarded twice a year.

Lehuauakea is reimagining the practice of kapa-making, merging traditional and contemporary designs to create unique pieces of art. The grant will be used to prepare for a 2026 solo exhibition in New York City that will feature mixed-media kapa textiles, textile-based paintings and wearable kapa garments.

Raised in Pāpaʻikou, Hawaiʻi Island, Lehuauakea is a graduate of Pacific Northwest College of Art and resides in Oregon and was a student of kapa-maker Wesley Sen whose kumu included Pua Van Dorpe, Beatrice Krauss, Malia Solomon, Carla Freitas and Dennis Kanaʻe.

With a focus on kapa-making, Lehuauakea builds on the patterns and traditions used for generations and focuses on themes related to environmental stewardship, Indigenous cultural resilience and the evolving contemporary Kanaka Maoli identity.

Lehuauakea's work has been shown in exhibitions nationally and internationally and is included in many prominent collections around the world.

Play About Paʻakai Tours U.S. and Canada

An original production of the Honolulu Theatre for Youth (HTY) called *The Paʻakai We Bring*, is currently on an international tour across the United States and Canada.

Playwright and HTY Artistic Associate Moses Goods created the production in collaboration with the HTY ensemble. The play, intended for audiences age 7+, explores the Native Hawaiian relationship to paʻakai – a food, medicine and sacrament essential to our individual and collective wellbeing – within the context of balance and healing.

Led by Goods, the HTY creative team traveled to Hanapēpē, Kauaʻi, to spend time learning from and working with the Nobrega, Nizo and Santos families – all of whom are traditional salt harvesters – before creating the production. *The Paʻakai We Bring* follows multiple generations of Kauaʻi salt farmers and mixes traditional stories with hula, original songs and live music.

The four-member performing ensemble includes Pōʻai Lincoln, Lokomaikaʻi Lipscomb, Mattea Mazzella and Junior Tessoro.

Raised on Maui, Goods is a prolific ʻŌiwi playwright whose plays include stories about Nanaue (the shark man); Christian convert Henry ʻŌpūkahaʻia; renowned paniolo Ikuā Purdy; Olympian Duke Kahanamoku and more. He has also appeared on television and in movies, including a recurring role in NCIS: Hawaiʻi.

To find out where on the continent *The Paʻakai We Bring* will be playing email: sk@holdenarts.org.

Akimseu and Kaʻuhane Honored by the YWCA

Momi Akimeseu - *Courtesy Photos*

Michelle Kaʻuhane

Bank of Hawaiʻi (BOH) Director of Brand and Senior Vice President Momi Akimseu and Hawaiʻi Community Foundation (HCF) Chief Impact Officer and Senior Vice President Michelle Kaʻuhane are among the four exemplary female leaders being honored at YWCA Oʻahu's 48th Annual LeaderLuncheon and 125th Anniversary celebration on May 8 at the Sheraton Waikīkī Hotel.

YWCA Oʻahu CEO Norika Namiki noted that each honoree has made significant contributions to the community and

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A Visit From Hālau Kū Mana

In March, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) welcomed haumāna and kumu from Hālau Kū Mana Hawaiian-focused charter school. The students attended OHA's Board of Trustees' Beneficiary Advocacy and Empowerment meeting to offer testimony to trustees regarding their concerns about the impact that recent federal funding freezes will have on programs at their school, sharing personal stories and offering creative solutions. Following the meeting, the haumāna toured OHA's offices and talked with staff about what they do as part of an exploration of possible career pathways that might align with their passions to serve our lāhui. The tour was coordinated by OHA Strategy & Implementation's Hoʻokaʻa ʻIke team led by Director of Education and Culture-Based Learning Kuʻuleianuhea Awo-Chun. - *Photo: Jason Lees*

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to the advancement of women in Hawai'i. "Their dedication to community service and positive impact in their respective fields exemplify YWCA O'ahu's mission of 'eliminating racism, empowering women,'" said Namiki.

Akimseu leads BOH's brand marketing, creative services and content marketing divisions and serves as co-chair of Nā 'Ōiwi Aloha, the bank's Native Hawaiian Employee Resource Group. Prior to her current appointment, Akimseu served as BOH director of community and employee engagement and as president of the BOH Foundation, overseeing more than $20 million in corporate sponsorships, employee giving and philanthropic contributions. Her community involvement includes Kōkua Kalihi Valley, the Hawai'i Book and Music Festival, and PATCH Hawai'i.

Before joining HCF where she oversees community grants and initiatives, development and donor relations, and strategic communications and public policy, Ka'uhane served as president and CEO of the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement. She has also served as deputy director of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands and as executive director of Hawaiian Community Assets. She currently serves as a Kamehameha Schools trustee and as a community advisory council member to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve in Washington, D.C.

In addition to Akimseu and Ka'uhane, L&L Franchise Chief Executive Officer Elisia Flores and Remedy Intelligent Staffing owner Kristi Inkinen Yanagihara are also being honored.

Two 'Ōiwi Artists Named 2025 FPF Fellows

Mixed media visual artist Brittany Keakaokalani "Kea" Hashisaka Peters from 'Ewa Beach, O'ahu, and mixed media performing artist T.J. Keanu Tario from Nu'uanu, O'ahu, have both been named 2025 First People's Fund (FPF) Fellows.

Kea Peters - *Courtesy Photos*

T.J. Keanu Tario

Peters is one of 11 recipients of FPF's Cultural Capital Fellowship – a yearlong program that offers financial support and guidance to culture bearers and artists who are deeply rooted in their communities and committed to passing on ancestral knowledge within their Native communities.

Peters is an illustrator and founder of Kākou Collective, an online outlet for sharing original artwork and quality products to share authentic artistic expression that inspires a connection to the cultural values, traditions and communities of Hawai'i with the rest of the world - with an emphasis on products made using ethical and sustainable practices.

Tario is one of 19 recipients of FPF's Artist in Business Leadership Fellowship – a yearlong program that helps independent Native artists pursue art as a way to build a business to support themselves and their families, providing them with network-building, professional development guidance and funding.

A Julliard-trained classical pianist, Tario is also a film composer, actor, cultural practitioner and drag performer. Tario has performed with the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra, premiered a ballet "E aha ia ana 'o Mauna Kea" at Leeward Community College through the Native Arts & Cultures Foundation LIFT fellowship, and created a musical based on the imprisonment of Lili'uokalani.

FPF is a Native-led nonprofit whose mission is to honor and support Indigneous artists and culture bearers to help Native communities heal and thrive. Since 2004, FPF has directly supported more than 6,000 Native artists, distributing more than $9.3 million in grants, fees and honoraria. Each FPF fellowship comes with a $10,000 cash award.

OHA Honored to Welcome Pohnpei's Royal Family

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) was honored once again to welcome His Majesty Wasalapalap Isipahu, Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw (Herbert Hebel), Her Majesty Likend of Madolenihmw (Merleen Martin Hebel), of Pohnpei (one of the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia) to its offices at Nā Lama Kukui in Honolulu on March 21, accompanied by Nahnapas Madolenihmw (Prince Bernie Suzuki) and Stanley Iriarte, the king's nephew. Their Majesties visited OHA last year while they were in Hawai'i for a series of "Talanoa" – meetings of traditional Pacific leaders hosted by OHA during the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts last June – that resulted in the establishment of the Osiana Traditional Leaders Forum formalized at a historic signing ceremony at 'Iolani Palace on June 11, 2024. The Osiana Traditional Leaders Forum is committed to convening regularly and uniting traditional Pacific Island leaders to elevate the unified voice of Pacific Island peoples to champion critical issues affecting the peoples of Moananuiākea and the global community. The welcome included traditional high protocol. His Majesty took on the role of Wasalapalap Isipahu, Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw in 2020. As a young man he served as a classroom teacher and then joined the U.S. Navy in 1987, serving for four years, after which he lived for a time in Kansas City, Missouri, before returning to his homeland. - *Courtesy Photo*

Naone Leads Prince Kūhiō Parade

Anita Naone - *Courtesy Photo*

The annual Prince Kūhiō Parade in Kapolei, O'ahu, was led this year by Grand Marshal Anita Naone, former president of the Hawaiian Civic Club of Honolulu. With over 30 years of dedicated service, Naone has spearheaded numerous initiatives, including the Association's 'Aha Mele Program. A retired diversity and leadership manager with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, she continues her commitment to the community as a volunteer. Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs (AHCC) President Dre Kalili said, "Auntie Anita exemplifies Prince Kūhiō's legacy of servant leadership. She has dedicated her career to inclusivity and advocacy for Native Hawaiian rights." Organized by the AHCC, the parade was held on Saturday, March 29, to honor the life and contributions of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole whose advocacy for Native Hawaiians continues to influence and shape the community today. Now in its third year at Kapolei, the parade highlights the region's deep connection to Kūhiō's legacy, as it is home to four Hawaiian homestead communities and the headquarters of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands.

Protecting Forests Benefits Fisheries

According to a new study by an interdisciplinary team of researchers from UH Mānoa, Kamehameha Schools, the Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry, and Seascape Solutions, the protection of native forests in combination with restoring fallow agricultural lands to traditional place-based agroforestry systems directly benefits local fisheries.

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The study, published in February in *npj Ocean Sustainability* cites nature-based solutions (NBS) as "key strategies to achieve sustainable development goals, biodiversity, and climate goals and targets." NBS also contribute to biodiversity and human wellbeing.

Biocultural approaches to restoration incorporate both ecology and culture and "elevate and perpetuate Indigenous and local knowledge" and recognize that success in this area often depends on the perpetuation of traditional knowledge, practices and cultural heritage and that human health is directly linked to the health of the environment.

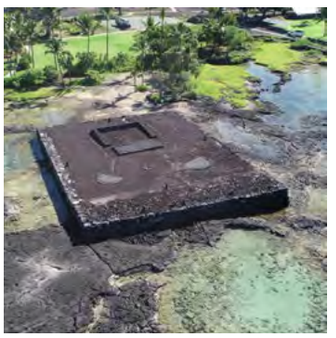
In the Pacific, restoration focuses on "ridge-to-reef" (i.e., ahupuaʻa) management frameworks since Indigenous resource management practices understand that the land and sea are "fundamentally interconnected."

The study evaluated the land-sea benefits of multi-level agroforestry (which combines agriculture and forestry technologies to create more integrated, productive and sustainable land use systems) in partnership with native forest protection increased sediment retention (i.e., prevented runoff) by 30% and increased nearshore fisheries production by 10% while supporting goals of biodiversity conservation, food production and cultural connection to place.

The researchers conclude that biocultural forest restoration is a nature-based solution that provides a "triple win for nature, people, and culture, and are critical to social-ecological resilience."

Scientific Purpose of Hāpaialiʻi Heiau Affirmed

While heiau are most often viewed through a religious/spiritual lens, a study by UH Mānoa researchers focused on the scientific purpose of Hāpaialiʻi Heiau in Kahaluʻu, Hawaiʻi Island, near



Hāpaialiʻi Heiau - *Photo: Kamehameha Schools*

Keauhou.

The research, "Scientific Aspects of Hāpaialiʻi Heiau," was published in the January issue of *Waka Kuaka*, The Polynesian Society journal, by UH Mānoa Engineering Professor Albert Kim, and ʻŌiwi civil engineer Brenton Sasaoka, a recent graduate of UH Mānoa.

Supported by the National Science Foundation, their work represents some of the first research using western methodologies to examine the scientific aspects of heiau.

The study mathematically investigated the heiau's functionality, independently measuring the coordinates of the stones within the heiau using Google Earth and Google Maps technology, then calculated the relative distances and angles between the internal stones. Their research affirmed that the heiau's carefully positioned stones were constructed to observe the movement of the sun throughout the year, thus providing a means for the kūpuna to track seasonal changes critical to agricultural and fishing activities – essentially a calendar or almanac.

Hāpaialiʻi Heiau was constructed during the 15th century and is said to have been built by Chief Kalaninuiʻīamamao. It directly faces the western horizon and, thus, is perfectly positioned to track the horizontal movement of the sun.

Kamehameha Schools restored the heiau almost 20 years ago and now stewards this wahi kūpuna in collaboration with the community. It stands as a testimony to the brilliance and ingenuity of our people. ■

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Aloha ʻĀina: The Only Path Forward for Hawaiʻi

Kaialiʻi Kahele
CHAIR
Trustee, Hawaiʻi Island

The erosion of Hawaiian sovereignty at the hands of settler-colonial forces was driven by economic exploitation. This system, in which Hawaiʻi remains trapped today, prioritizes profit over people, speculation over stability, and short-term gains over long-term prosperity for our lāhui.

The consequences are clear: soaring living costs displace Native Hawaiians, climate collapse threatens our islands, and a fragile economy is dictated by outside forces. These are not unfortunate side effects – they are the inevitable results of an economic model built to extract from Hawaiʻi, not sustain it.

Since the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, political and corporate leaders have treated these crises as issues to be managed rather than evidence of systemic failure.

Their approach has been to tweak policies while maintaining the status quo, as if land speculation, food dependency, and climate vulnerability can be solved with minor reforms. This delusion has led to the continued erosion of our people's cultural integrity while decision-makers congratulate themselves for preserving a system that pushes Native Hawaiians out of our homeland.

But we are not powerless.

Our kūpuna did not build their world by asking for permission to thrive. They cultivated abundance through loʻi kalo, loko iʻa, and the ahupuaʻa system, which sustained entire communities for centuries.

Aloha ʻāina is not a slogan or an abstract ideal – it is the only viable economic model for Hawaiʻi's survival.

Our current system depends on external markets, imports, and unsustainable growth. In contrast, an aloha ʻāina economy is built on regenerative principles rooted in Hawaiian values. It prioritizes food sovereignty, energy independence, responsible land stewardship, and Indigenous governance over our resources. This is not just an alternative approach – it is the only way to secure a future for Native Hawaiians in Hawaiʻi.

We call on our leadership to act. Lawmakers, developers, and corporate leaders must use their influence to fulfill their commitment to sustainability and the health of our fragile ecosystem. They must make decisions that serve more than donors, shareholders, and profit margins – decisions that truly benefit Hawaiʻi's people.

It is time to abandon the outdated belief that if something is not profitable, it is not possible. The gap between rhetoric and reality forces Native Hawaiian families to bear the cost of an extractive system while those in power benefit, reducing Hawaiʻi to a name rather than a people.

The foreign economic order would prefer we believe there is no alternative – that our economic fate is preordained and immutable. But true progress requires breaking free from this imposed framework.

The status quo offers only marginal, unimaginative change incapable of addressing crisis after crisis. A true aloha ʻāina economy does not seek permission from investors or developers. It prioritizes the wellbeing of our people over profit.

The question is no longer whether change is necessary, but who is willing to fight for it.

Leaders who continue to prop up this failing system are not leading – they are caretakers of its decline, clinging to an extractive framework that profits off our lands, culture, and people.

My challenge to those in leadership is this: Will you uphold a system designed to erase us, or will you stand for an economic future rooted in aloha ʻāina? The real work of building a sustainable Hawaiʻi will not come from investing in the status quo. Our prosperity, security, and legacy must be built through Indigenous knowledge and self-determination.

Aloha ʻāina is not passive. It is a call to action. The only question left is: Who has the courage to answer it? ■

Pono Living: Sustainable Housing for the Lāhui

Keoni Souza
VICE CHAIR
Trustee, At-Large

Today, as we face rising costs, shrinking space, and climate change, sustainable housing offers a path forward that honors our past while building a resilient future for the lāhui.

Housing isn't just about shelter; it's about sustaining our way of life for generations to come. We're seeing bold steps toward that vision.

For too long, housing in Hawai'i has felt out of reach for our people. The median price of a home on O'ahu hit $1,075,000 in February 2025, pushing kama'āina farther from the places we call home. Mayor Blangiardi and the city's Department of Land Management's redevelopment of Iwilei plan, unveiled in March 2025, is a piece of that puzzle.

With the city's acquisition of nearly 5 acres, including the Iwilei Center and the former First Hawaiian Bank building, this transit-oriented development (TOD) near the Kūwili Skyline station aims to deliver 1,500 to 2,000 housing units. It's a chance to create a mixed-use community where people can live, work, and connect.

Castle & Cooke has also put forth a master plan for the Iwilei area, which envisions a dynamic, pedestrian-friendly community that integrates residential, commercial, and recreational spaces. Their plan includes modernizing infrastructure, improving walkability, and increasing green spaces to enhance the quality of life for residents. With both public and private stakeholders investing in Iwilei's future, there is a unique opportunity to create a model urban neighborhood that balances growth with sustainability.

With these two projects in the works, it's an opportunity for multiple state agencies, including OHA, DHHL, and other companies, to collaborate. OHA can play a crucial role in ensuring that Native Hawaiian voices are at the forefront of the decision-making process, advocating for culturally rooted, sustainable, and community-driven development.

Iwilei aligns with our OHA Mana i Mauli Ola Strategic Plan for Housing, emphasizing the need for equitable and affordable housing solutions. By leveraging its resources, OHA can support initiatives such as culturally appropriate architectural designs, Native Hawaiian homeownership opportunities, and economic empowerment programs. Solar panels, rainwater catchment, and native plants can tie every home to the ʻāina, fostering environmental stewardship. We will pave the way to embrace modern advancements while staying grounded in Native Hawaiian values and ensure that these projects truly serve our lāhui.

A key aspect of the Iwilei redevelopment is the integration of public transportation with housing and commerce. The proximity of the Skyline rail station allows for a shift away from car dependency, offering residents easy access to employment hubs, shopping centers, and cultural landmarks.

The inclusion of affordable housing units within the master plan ensures that long-time residents, including Native Hawaiian beneficiaries, could have the opportunity to remain in their communities rather than being displaced by rising costs.

As trustees of this legacy, we must push for more. The state's $1.6 billion vision for 28,000 homes around Iwilei and Kapālama shows ambition. However, ensuring that these developments prioritize affordability and cultural preservation is critical. Partnerships with DHHL, nonprofits, and developers who see profit in community, not displacement, are essential to achieving this goal. By working together, we can ensure that Iwilei becomes a thriving, inclusive neighborhood that embodies the principles of sustainable living.

Our kūpuna taught us to mālama ʻāina. Pono living through sustainable housing: affordable, efficient, and tied to the land we love. With strategic planning, community input, cultural sensitivity, and responsible development, Iwilei can demonstrate how urban revitalization can honor both the past and the future. ■

Why I am Excited About the Future for Hawaiians!

Keli'i Akina, Ph.D.
Trustee, At-Large

The Hawai'i Revised Statutes (Section 10-3) declares that one of the important reasons the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) exists is to "better the conditions of Native Hawaiians and Hawaiians." In short, the law of the land states that OHA's kuleana is to better the conditions of all Hawaiians.

In many ways, this is a broad and daunting task. So how do we know whether OHA is fulfilling this responsibility? That was my question when I became a trustee in 2016. And at my first budget vote, I expressed concern that there was no easy way to see whether OHA's spending was actually bettering the conditions of Hawaiians.

I'm happy to report that back in 2019 my fellow trustees and I, OHA staff, and the community began to develop our 15-year strategic plan, Mana i Mauli Ola (Strength to Wellbeing), which has since become central to OHA's operations. This plan includes goals for housing, education, health, and economic outcomes for the Hawaiian people. It outlines the baseline of current conditions, sets specific goals for improvement – detailing the desired outcomes and timelines – and presents the action plans to achieve them.

Here are some examples of how the strategic plan works.

One of OHA's priorities is tackling homelessness, a critical issue that disproportionately affects Native Hawaiians, who consistently make up approximately 40% of the homeless population on O'ahu. OHA's strategic plan aims to reduce the proportion of Native Hawaiians in O'ahu's homeless population from 39.3% (our baseline) to 18.8% (our goal) by 2035. To address this disparity, OHA is committed to providing solutions ranging from immediate housing to homeownership opportunities for Kānaka families to build intergenerational wealth.

OHA is also dedicated to supporting education for Hawaiians to be lifelong learners. In 2023, the college-going rate for Native Hawaiian public-school graduates was 35%, compared to 51% statewide. OHA's strategic plan includes action plans to raise this rate to 59% by 2035, envisioning a future where the majority of Native Hawaiian public-school graduates achieve greater educational attainment.

Additionally, OHA prioritizes Hawaiian health and wellbeing. Since 2018, Native Hawaiians have been over-represented in Hawai'i's correctional facilities, comprising a staggering 36% of the incarcerated population. OHA's strategic plan seeks to reduce Native Hawaiians' share of Hawai'i's correctional population to 21.8% by 2035, creating a pathway to lower incarceration rates and promote overall wellbeing for the Hawaiian community.

OHA strives to create opportunities for ʻohana to pursue multiple pathways towards economic stability. Currently, the Native Hawaiian unemployment rate in Hawai'i is 4.8%, slightly higher than the statewide rate of 3.6%. OHA's strategic plan aims to reduce this rate to 1.6% by 2035. By focusing on reducing unemployment, OHA seeks to empower Hawaiian families and guide them toward a more secure future.

OHA's strategic plan, Mana i Mauli Ola, outlines an intentional pathway to improve the lives of Hawaiians in areas like housing, education, wellbeing, and economic resilience. With baseline data ensuring accountability and transparency, the plan serves as a blueprint that aligns each budget decision with strategic outcomes and demonstrates how they contribute to the broader mission. I am confident that OHA's strategic plan will empower Hawaiians to thrive in the next decade! ■

Trustee Akina with fellow trustees, Ka Pouhana Stacy Ferreira, and students from Hawaiian-focused public charter school Hālau Kū Māna.
- Photo: Jason Lees

Sustainability Through a Native Hawaiian Lens

Brickwood Galuteria

Trustee, At-Large

For Native Hawaiians, sustainability is not just a strategy but a way of life. Rooted in aloha ʻāina and kuleana, it reflects the deep interconnection between people, land, and ocean. The ʻāina is not merely a resource but a living ancestor that sustains and nurtures the community. This perspective calls for a holistic approach – honoring ancestral wisdom while addressing modern challenges.

Historically, Hawaiians exemplified sustainable living through the ahupuaʻa system, a land division model extending from mountains to sea. This system ensured long-term abundance through collective responsibility. Today, these principles remain relevant as Hawaiians navigate political, economic, social, and environmental challenges.

Sustainability requires Hawaiians to maintain a unified political voice to protect their rights, land, and resources. Strengthening representation through organizations like the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) along with grassroots movements is crucial. A cohesive front can advance policies that safeguard sacred sites, cultural practices, and water rights.

Engaging youth while honoring kūpuna ensures leadership continuity, blending modern perspectives with ancestral wisdom. Encouraging participation in government and advocating for sovereignty-based initiatives fosters self-determination. Protecting land and water rights remains essential to sustainability and cultural preservation.

Economic resilience depends on balancing self-sufficiency with sustainable growth. Revitalizing traditional practices – such as local agriculture, fishing, and aquaculture – enhances food security while preserving culture. Supporting Hawaiian-owned businesses fosters economic strength.

Entrepreneurship aligned with Hawaiian values, such as organic farming initiatives and green energy startups, blends economic prosperity with cultural preservation. Tourism can be reshaped to promote responsible, community-led initiatives that educate visitors while protecting natural resources. Prioritizing education and vocational training in renewable energy and technology provides long-term economic opportunities.

Healing from historical trauma is vital for long-term sustainability. The effects of colonization and the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom still impact Hawaiians today. Reconnecting with ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, cultural practices and traditions fosters a sense of belonging and pride. Teaching Hawaiian history in schools and hosting community workshops rebuilds cultural connections.

Events like the Merrie Monarch Festival and practices like hoʻoponopono strengthen identity and unity. Open dialogue and cultural pride empower Hawaiians to process collective struggles and build emotional resilience. Strengthening family bonds and community support systems further enhances wellbeing.

Environmental sustainability is central to the Hawaiian worldview. Protecting resources like forests, coral reefs, and watersheds ensures their availability for future generations. Reforestation, sustainable fishing, and invasive species management safeguard the ʻāina. Collaborations between Native Hawaiian groups and environmental organizations amplify conservation efforts, particularly in addressing climate change, which disproportionately affects island communities.

Reviving traditional ecological practices integrates ancestral knowledge with modern environmental management. Sustainable land use planning, reducing reliance on imported goods, and advocating for clean energy solutions are critical steps toward environmental health.

The path forward requires integrating political advocacy, economic resilience, social healing and environmental stewardship. By blending ancestral wisdom with modern innovation, Hawaiians can honor their history, uplift their people, and safeguard their land. Success lies in bridging generations, empowering youth, and embracing the collective strength of shared purpose and cultural pride.

Sustainability extends beyond the environment to encompass cultural, social, and economic wellbeing. Living in alignment with these values ensures not just survival, but the ability to thrive as a people, honor the land and secure a meaningful future. ■

"Kalākaua he Inoa..." It's Merrie Monarch Time Again!

Carmen "Hulu" Lindsey

Trustee, Maui

Back in 1963 Hawaiʻi Island was struggling economically.

A recent tsunami had caused devastation, and the decline of sugar plantations along the Hāmākua Coast had further weakened the local economy. Helene Hale, Hawaiʻi County chairwoman at the time, introduced the Merrie Monarch Festival as an opportunity to boost tourism as a means of economic recovery.

In 1964, the Merrie Monarch Festival was born. The first festival featured a relay race, a barbershop quartet, a King Kalākaua beard lookalike contest, a recreation of King Kalākaua's coronation, and a Holokū Ball.

Despite initial enthusiasm, support for the festival dwindled after a few years. However, Executive Director Dottie Thompson revitalized it in 1971 by introducing a hula competition. Then in 1976, the competition expanded to include men – drawing even more interest and cementing the festival's place in Hawaiian culture.

The festival's revival coincided with the Hawaiian cultural renaissance, a movement that encouraged the resurgence of Hawaiian language, arts, crafts, music, and voyaging traditions. The festival grew rapidly, eventually expanding to a full week. Interest in the festival steadily increased and in 1978 the event outgrew its original venue at the Hilo Civic Auditorium and was relocated to the Edith Kanakaʻole Multi-Purpose Stadium.

In 1981, a solution for the festivals growing popularity emerged: for the first time, the festival was televised, allowing elders and those unable to attend in person to enjoy the hula performances from their homes.

By 2013, the festival had celebrated its 50th anniversary, marking its transformation from an economic initiative to a deeply significant celebration of Hawaiian culture.

In the early 1950s, while living in Keaukaha, my dear friend and neighbor Johnny Lum Ho and I spent hours singing together on the porch of my home on Krauss Avenue. We loved challenging each other to hit the highest notes. Johnny possessed a smooth falsetto voice, and after I moved to Honolulu with my ʻohana, he went on to sing professionally with Aunty Edith Kanakaʻole's hālau.

One day, Johnny called to tell me about the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival, organized by Aunty Dottie Thompson and Uncle George Nāʻope. He was planning to enter and, over the next 20 years, he became one of the most accomplished kumu hula in Hawaiʻi. Johnny was admired for his original compositions and creative hula interpretations. He had a way of making chants come alive.

One memorable year, his hālau performed a mele about wind, rain, and storms and, as if nature itself was responding, the stadium was battered by strong winds, heavy rain, and experienced a power outage.

His mele often captured aspects of traditional Hawaiian life, such as how ancient Hawaiians treated ʻuku (fleas) in a child's hair or the many uses of ti-leaves – for wrapping food, making hula skirts and garlands, or serving as part of healing rituals.

In 1992, Johnny honored me by inviting me to sing for his Hālau Ka Ua Kani Lehua at the Merrie Monarch Competition for my daughter Napua's performance in the Miss Aloha Hula competition. I will always cherish this special experience.

Although the Merrie Monarch Festival was initially created to stimulate Hawaiʻi Island's economy, it has come to mean so much more. It stands as a testament to the resilience and beauty of Hawaiian culture.

Just as King Kalākaua, the Merrie Monarch, sought to strengthen the Hawaiian people through the revival of cultural traditions, this festival ensures that Hawaiian heritage continues to thrive for generations to come. My deepest mahalo to my dear friend, Luana Kawelu, for continuing this important legacy. ■

NOTICE OF INTENDED DISPOSITION: MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAIʻI KĀNEʻOHE BAY

In accordance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), the Marine Corps Base Hawaii (MCBH) Kāneʻohe Bay intends to carry out the disposition of human remains removed from Federal or Tribal lands to the lineal descendants, Indian Tribe, or Native Hawaiian organization with priority for disposition in this notice. Disposition of the human remains in this notice may occur on or after April 18, 2025. If no claim for disposition is received by March 19, 2026, the human remains in this notice will become unclaimed human remains.

MCBH recorded one discovery of likely Native Hawaiian human skeletal remains at MCBH Kāneʻohe Bay. There were no associated funerary objects. The individual represented by this discovery was encountered during archaeological testing on Jan. 24, 2024, on MCBH Kāneʻohe Bay. There was no evidence of associated archaeological features or material. Additional details can be found in the related record of consultation.

The following organizations have priority for disposition of the human remains described above: Diamond ʻOhana; Olds ʻOhana; Keohokalole ʻOhana; Naʻu Kamaliʻi; Boyd ʻOhana; Donna Ann Camvel; Paoa Kea Lono ʻOhana; Cy Harris; Kekumano ʻOhana; Kekoʻolani ʻOhana; Malia Newhouse, Koʻolauloa Hawaiian Civic Club; Clive Cabral; Temple of Lono; Office of Hawaiian Affairs; and Oʻahu Island Burial Council.

Written claims for disposition of the human remains in this notice must be sent to: June Cleghorn, Senior Cultural Resources Manager, Environmental Compliance and Protection Division, Marine Corps Base Hawaiʻi Kāneʻohe Bay, Box 6300, Kāneʻohe Bay, HI 96863-3002, telephone (808) 496-7126, email june.cleghorn@usmc.mil. ■

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

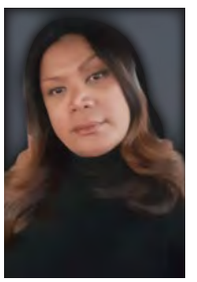
HEWAHEWA – We are trying to reach the many descendants of Hewahewa Nui of Kohala, Hawaiʻi Island. There are 14-16 lines who descend from him. Our committee of descendants is planning a unified genealogy workshop "Are You Hewahewa?" on Saturday, May 3 at 10:00 a.m. at the Pīkake Pavilion in Waimea Valley on Oʻahu. Space is limited and reservations are required. There is a registration fee of $35 which will include lunch. Payment must be received by April 28. To register for the workshop go to bit.ly/Hewahewa or contact Na'mi Kama at 808-927-8072 or email the.descendants.namikama@gmail.com.

NAEHU-SAFFERY REUNION - Descendants of Edmund Saffery, wives Kupuna & Waiki Naehu holding reunion meetings. Combined 14 children: Fanny (Kaiaokamalie), Edmund II (Wallace), Henry (Kaanaana), Caroline (Rose), William (Cockett & Makekau), John (Kahaulelio & Nahooikaika), Thomas (Luna), Mary (Palena), Emma (Pogue), Anna (Kealoha & Nahaku) Juliana (Freitas), Charles (Hawele & Kauwahi), Helen (Tripp), Emalia Nellie (Ernestberg & Conradt & Kaloa). Interested in helping? tinyurl.com/NSOASite Contact Dayton Labanon, 808-232-9869, dlabanon@gmail.com, Manu Goodhue manu_losch@hotmail.com, 808-551-9386 or Naomi Losch, 808-261-9038.

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 Hawaiʻi 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

KAUAUA - Attention all Kauaua Ohana members, we will be having a Kauaua Ohana reunion in 2026 on Maui and will hold our first general meeting on Saturday, March 8th at the Maui Botanical Gardens / old Maui Zoo in Kahului from 10a to 12 noon. Please come to assist with reunion planning and coordination. Information can be found on websites: kauauamaui.org or Facebook – Kauaua Maui Ohana. Please call Lisa Kunitzer (808) 281-4537 or Josephine Harris (808) 344-1519 if you have questions re: this Kauaua ohana reunion. ■

To create a space for our readers to honor their loved ones, Ka Wai Ola will print *Haliʻa Aloha - obituaries and mele kanikau (mourning chants)*. Haliʻa Aloha appearing in the print version of *Ka Wai Ola* should be recent (within six months of passing) and should not exceed 250 words in length. All other Haliʻa Aloha submitted will be published on kawaiola.news. Haliʻa Aloha must be submitted by the 15th of the month for publication the following month. Photos accompanying Haliʻa Aloha will only be included in the print version of the newspaper if space permits. However, all photos will be shared on kawaiola.news.



SHANNON NAYAH KEHEART RACOMA DEC. 5, 1975 – JAN. 31, 2025

Waimānalo, Oʻahu – Shannon Nayah Keheart Racoma of Waimānalo, was born on Dec. 5, 1975, and passed peacefully at her home in San Francisco on Jan. 31, 2025. Nayah was a proud graduate of Kapunahala Elementary, Waimānalo Elementary and Intermediate, and Kailua High School Class of 1993. She furthered her education and earned an associate's degree from Heald Business College, certifications in real estate at the Northern Nevada Real Estate School, nursing at Carrington College in Las Vegas, and pharmaceutical and dialysis technology at City College in San Francisco. Nayah dedicated much of her career to nursing and had a deep interest in the airline industry, learning its many intricacies over the years. Gifted in languages, she was fluent in English, Hawaiian, Samoan, Spanish, Japanese, and French. Nayah loved being with her ʻohana and bringing people together through her cooking, always ensuring that those around her were well-fed and cared for. She is preceded in death by her grandparents Benjamin and Charlotte Kiaaina, and Garciano and Fuamoli Racoma; brother Runi "Buddy" Racoma, Jr.; and niece Kaʻaiʻōhelo Nobrega-Olivera. She is survived by her mother Frances Lokelani (Kiaaina) Racoma of Waimānalo; father Runi Racoma of Wahiawā; sisters Stacey Racoma of Waimānalo, Victoria Puaʻala (Chris) Kimsel of ʻĀlewa, Reena Racoma of Wahiawā, Kela Racoma of Nānākuli; brothers Victor "Budda" (Malia) Nobrega-Olivera of Hanapēpē, Kauaʻi, and Rooney Keola Racoma of Wahiawā; 21 nieces and nephews: Genoa, Sharray (Adrina), Shardae "Nayah" (Keiki), Shaydan (Khyla), Kaedan, Taedan, Xaydan, Isaiah, Israel, Fynix, Mahea, Braezen, Braxtyn, Kamakanamaikalani, Ezekiel, Tia, Ikaika, Lily, Kalena, Makamae, and Kamaiyah; and two grandnephews, Kūnuiākea and Pāhili.

MOSES ELWOOD KALAUOKALANI FEB. 18, 1941 – JAN. 26, 2025

I ka lā 26 o Ianuali i ka makahiki 2025, uē hāmama ke apoālewa i ka inoa ʻo Moses Elwood Kalauokalani a ua hekili aku nei ke Akua nani. (Hal.29.3) Ua haʻulena he koa nui, he mauna kanaka, he kanaka kapukapu. "ʻOia hoʻi ʻo ko kākou hoahānau mai Aotearoa mai," i haʻi mai ai ʻo Kahu Paul Nahoa Lucas. He ʻōlelo noʻeau kēia no ka ʻŌlohe lua pilipaʻa ʻo Moses Elwood Kaluaokalani "Kua hinga he totara i te wao nui a Tāne." He mea paio naʻauao, akā iaʻu iho ʻo ia ʻo ʻAnakala Moke wale nō. ʻO ko mākou hoa kiaʻi, he kanaka hoʻomākeʻaka, he kukuʻi moʻolelo, he mālama i ka ʻawa. He mea nui loa, he kukui, he koa, a he aloha na kāne wahine, na ʻĀnakē Omi. Ua kanikani ka pele ma ka pūʻoʻa ma ka hale pule ʻo St. John's by the Sea no kāna keiki hānau one no kona haʻalele loa ʻana i ke ao polohiwa a Kāne. Me ka puʻuwai ʻeha a me ke aloha nunui, a hui hou kāua, e ʻAnakala Moke.

On Jan. 26, 2025, the name Moses Elwood Kalauokalani was cried loudly from the highest heavens and the glory of God thundered. The mighty koa has fallen, a mountain of a man, a man of dignity, regal appearance, noble bearing, entitled to respect and reverence. This proverb from our Maori cousins, as told by Rev. Paul Nahoa Lucas translates to "A mighty totara tree from the forest of Tāne has fallen," signifying the great loss of a significant member of the community who has passed away – a befitting proverb. A formidable opponent, but to me he was just Uncle Moke. Our guardian, a jokester, a storyteller, and keeper of the kava. More importantly, he was the light, strength (warrior), and love of Aunty Omi. The bell rings in the belfry of St. John's by the Sea for its native son born of this land who has passed on to the realm of Kāne. With a hurting heart and much love, until we meet again Uncle Moke. ■

– Tribute by Lorrie Ann Santos

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.

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AINA REALTOR - Real Estate Seminars – O'ahu - Start learning about real estate. Attend one of Locations' educational seminars covering topics like first time Home buying, investing, and senior real estate planning. Reserve a spot for the next one. Don't wait. Jordan Aina - RS-85780 Cell: (808) 276-0880 - Locations Hawaii LLC, RB-17095

DHHL BIG ISLAND LEASE – Maku'u Farmlots, Puna. Single level 3BR/2-1/2 baths, carport on 5.23 acres. $375,000. Contact Ruth 808-936-5341 or ruthmelani@aol.com.

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

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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- two story custom home built in 1996, wrap around porch w/ocean view. 3 bedrooms/ 3 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.

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All Offices are closed on State holidays

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808.594.1835
Email:
info@oha.org

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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
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Kūlana 'Ōiwi, P.O. Box 1717
Kaunakakai, HI 96748
Phone: 808.553.4640

KAUA'I / NI'IHAU
4405 Kukui Grove St., Ste. 103
Līhu'e, HI 96766-1601
Phone: 808.241.3390

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Malama Education

Help with tuition and other fees for preschool, K-12, trade school, and undergraduate and post-graduate college.

Loan amounts:
$2,500 - $20,000

5%TO–6%APR

Mālama Home Improvement

Expand your home or make repairs.
Loans over $50,000 require non-real estate collateral.

Loan amounts:
$2,500 - $100,000

5%TO–6%APR*

Mālama Debt Consolidation

Consolidate and pay off existing debts.
Loans over $20,000 require non-real estate collateral.

Loan amounts:
$2,500 - $20,000

5%TO–6%APR*

Mālama Business

Purchase equipment or inventory, or obtain working capital.
Loans over $50,000 require non-real estate collateral.

Loan amounts:
$2,500 - $149,999

4%APR*

Hua Kanu Business

Whether it's to purchase equipment or inventory, or you need a loan for working capital.

Loan amounts:
$150,000 - $1,000,000

4%APR*

For eligibility requirements visit our website or contact us.

loans.oha.org | 808.594.1888

*Interest rates may be subject to change.

Apply for an OHA Hawaiian Registry Card at: www.oha.org/registry