‘Aukake (August) 2025 | Vol. 42, No. 08

# Ka Wai Ola

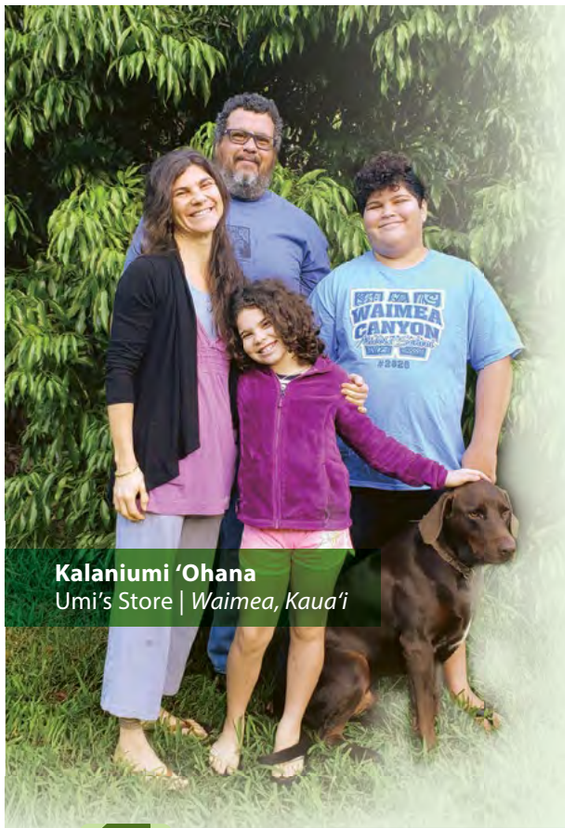
NEWS FOR THE LĀHUI

kawaiola.news

# CHIEF of WAR

PAGES 20-24

The long-anticipated series about the unification of the Hawaiian Islands co-written by Jason Momoa and Thomas Pa'a Sibbett premieres August 1 on Apple TV+ to a global audience. More than just entertainment, it is a deeply personal endeavor for the co-creators and, as the first story written by Hawaiians about Hawaiians to be produced on this scale, it represents a turning point in Native Hawaiian storytelling. - *Image Courtesy of Apple TV+*



**Kalaniumi ʻOhana**
Umi's Store | *Waimea, Kauaʻi*

OHA
MĀLAMA LOANS
*Est 1989*

# Give Your Life a Fresh New Start!

Whether you need a personal loan or business loan, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs can help you realize your dreams! For nearly 35 years, OHA has provided Native Hawaiians with low-interest loans for education, home improvements, debt consolidation, and their businesses.

***Let us help you and your ʻohana!***

**Kanani Miner**
Hina Hawaiʻi | *Pearlridge, Oʻahu*

## Mālama 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:**
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**4%[APR]***

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*Interest rates may be subject to change.

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## Honoring and Resourcing the Sacred Work of Mālama Iwi Kūpuna

Aloha mai kākou,

I recently completed the Project Iwi Kuamoʻo Cultural Protocol Training held at Kuilima, led by Kumu Halealoha Ayau, Mana Caceres, and Kalehua Caceres, loea of Hui Iwi Kuamoʻo who have dedicated their lives to the sacred responsibility of caring for and returning our iwi kūpuna to their rightful place in Hawaiʻi.

This hana is more than kuleana; it is a sacred covenant with our kūpuna, one grounded in pule, strict protocol, practice and the deepest level of mālama. It is a kuleana carried with kaumaha and ʻeha, but also with profound love for our kūpuna and our lāhui.

The training consisted of eight pule and oli, many composed by ʻAnakē Pua and ʻAnakala Eddie Kanakaʻole, sharing of repatriation and reinterment processes, and iwi wrapping. We were provided a look into the deep spiritual realm, one where the veil between our physical world and the ancestral realm is thin, and where every action carries spiritual weight.

"Mai kaulaʻi i nā iwi i ka lā," do not expose the bones to the sun. More than a caution; it is a command to ensure that iwi kūpuna, once disturbed, must, and with urgency, be restored to the darkness and peace of Pō where they were meant to rest for eternity.

The training also emphasized the expertise of Hui Iwi Kuamoʻo. Their knowledge and experience in repatriation and reburial are unmatched, and they serve as guides to ensure that every action is carried out respectfully, mindfully, and with strict adherence to cultural protocols.

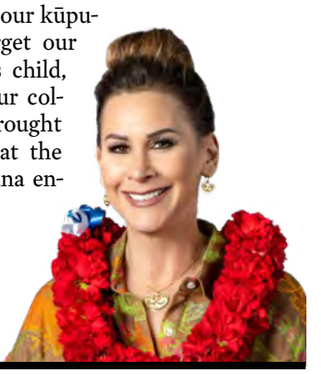
The work of Ayau and the Caceres ʻohana is relentless and 24/7. Whether negotiating for years with foreign museums to repatriate iwi kūpuna, responding to coastal erosion that exposes burials, or addressing desecration caused by development, these loea carry a burden few can comprehend.

I have come to understand deeply the post-mortem human trafficking that occurred in which our iwi kūpuna were stolen, sold, displayed, or cast aside as if they were objects rather than beloved ʻohana members.

The recent State of Hawaiʻi cesspool conversion law has created another crisis. By 2050, all cesspools must be converted to septic or sewer systems. This has already triggered extensive ʻāina excavation. Without proper cultural protocol and expert guidance, iwi kūpuna are continuously at risk of being disturbed and desecrated.

It was important for me to complete this training to understand the immense kuleana and resources required to support our loea. Working with our Strategy and Implementation and Compliance teams, along with OHA's Beneficiary Advocacy and Empowerment leaders, Chair Brickwood Galuteria, and Vice Chair Kalei Akaka, we will develop a resource plan that sustains and expands the work of mālama iwi kūpuna.

The greatest measure of our aloha for our kūpuna is our actions. We must never forget our humanity – iwi kūpuna are someone's child, father, grandmother, loved one. It is our collective kuleana to ensure that they are brought home, reinterred with dignity, and that the protocols and pule of mālama iwi kūpuna endure for generations to come. ■



Me ka haʻahaʻa,
***Stacy Kealohalani Ferreira***
Ka Pouhana | Chief Executive Officer

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### Kuhinia Maui Memorial Gathering

***August 8, 7:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.***
***Lahaina, Maui***
Paddle out from Hanakaʻōʻō Beach Park

***August 8, 1:30 p.m.***
***Wailuku, Maui***
Gathering at Kalana o Maui (reservations required)

***August 8, 5:00 - 7:30 p.m.***
***Lahaina, Maui***
Two-Year Memorial Tribute at the Lahaina Civic Center Amphitheater (reservations requested)

Kuhinia Maui takes its name from a line in a traditional Maui chant that proudly speaks of the island's unequaled beauty and richness, highlighting that Maui and its people will rise from tragedy.

### Mālama i nā Iwi Kūpuna Workshop
*August 1, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.*
*August 2, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.*
*Nāʻālehu, Hawaiʻi Island*

Learn to make hīnaʻi lauhala, kapa, kaula hau or ipu ʻumeke to donate to lineal descendants for reburial of iwi kūpuna. At Maunalua Farms. For more info or to register: hawaiianchurchhawaiinei.org

### Keolamakaʻāinana Hōʻike 2025
*August 2, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. | Wailuku, Maui*

Celebrate the 5th anniversary of Hālau Makana Aloha o Ka Lauaʻe (Kumu Hula Naomi "Sissy" Lake-Farm) at the historic ʻĪao Theatre. Seating is limited to 400. Purchase tickets at: mauionstage.com

### 23rd Heiva i Kauaʻi
*August 2-3, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.*
*Kapaʻa, Kauaʻi*

Tahitian & Polynesian dance and drumming competition, artisan demonstrations and vendors with an array of Tahitian and Pacific Island gifts, jewelry, art, woodwork, clothing and ethnic foods at Kapaʻa Beach Park. heivaikauai.net

### Royal Hawaiian Band Performances
*August 8 & 29, Noon - 1:00 p.m.*
*Honolulu, Oʻahu*

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

### Ka ʻAha Hula i Waimea - The Gathering of Hula at Waimea
*August 9, 11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.*
*Waimea, Oʻahu*

Cultural traditions of mele oli and mele hula from Hālau Hula Ka Noʻeau. waimeavalley.net

### Kamaʻāina Sunday
*August 10, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.*
*Honolulu, Oʻahu*

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

### Hawaiian Steel Guitar Festival - Keiki Kine
*August 16, 11:00 a.m. | Kahala, Oʻahu*

Featuring Keiki NextGen steel guitar players, musicians and singers from Ke Kula Mele Hawaiʻi School of Hawaiian Music. The Kahala Mall event will livestream on FB and YouTube @ HawaiianSteelGuitarShowcase. hawaiiansteelguitarfestival.com

### Book Launch - *hoʻopono: Mutual Emergence*
*August 16, 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. | Honolulu, Oʻahu*

Book signing and manaʻo by author Manulani Aluli Meyer on hoʻopono - a compilation of her published writings on Hawaiian thinking in a universal framework. nativebookshawaii.org

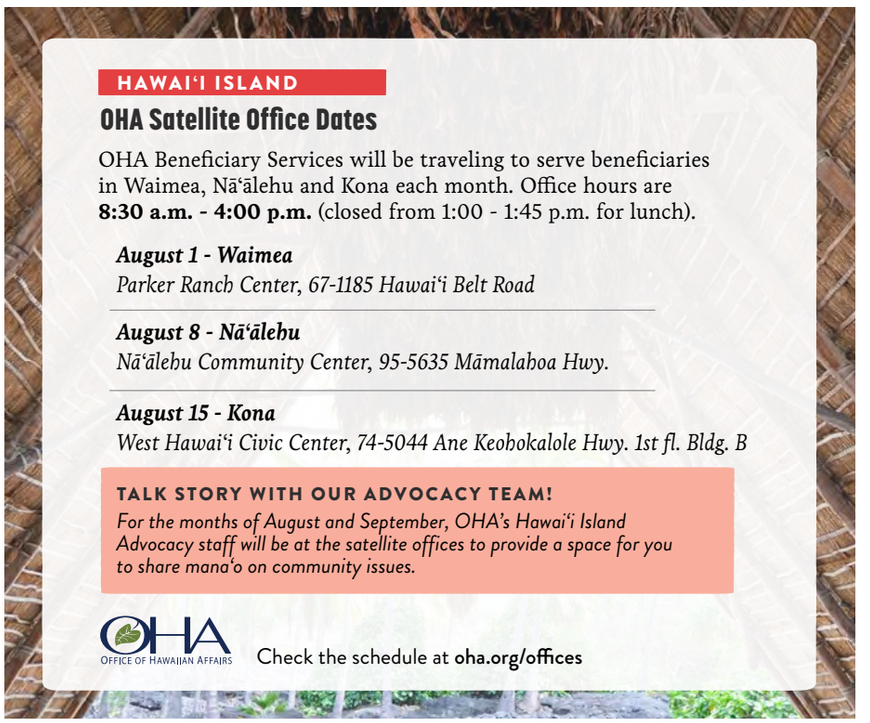
### Mālama i nā Iwi Kūpuna Workshop
*August 22, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.*
*Kahului, Maui*

*August 23, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.*
*Kahului, Maui*

Learn to make hīnaʻi lauhala, kapa, kaula hau or ipu ʻumeke to donate to lineal descendants for reburial of iwi kūpuna. At Maui Nui Botanical Gardens. For more info or to register: hawaiianchurchhawaiinei.org

### SCHHA Act 80 Virtual Consultation Session
*August 22, 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.*
*Virtual via Zoom*

Act 80 amends the SUCCESSOR eligibility for Hawaiian Homes from one quarter to one thirty-second Hawaiian ancestry. It does not affect eligibility to receive a Hawaiian Homes award. That still requires 50% blood quantum. Consultation session is sponsored by the Sovereign Council of Hawaiian Homestead Associations. Zoom link: hawaiianhomesteads-org.zoom.us/j/83031175093



HAWAIʻI ISLAND

### OHA Satellite Office Dates

OHA Beneficiary Services will be traveling to serve beneficiaries in Waimea, Nāʻālehu and Kona each month. Office hours are **8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.** (closed from 1:00 - 1:45 p.m. for lunch).

***August 1 - Waimea***
*Parker Ranch Center, 67-1185 Hawaiʻi Belt Road*

***August 8 - Nāʻālehu***
*Nāʻālehu Community Center, 95-5635 Māmalahoa Hwy.*

***August 15 - Kona***
*West Hawaiʻi Civic Center, 74-5044 Ane Keohokalole Hwy. 1st fl. Bldg. B*

**TALK STORY WITH OUR ADVOCACY TEAM!**
*For the months of August and September, OHA's Hawaiʻi Island Advocacy staff will be at the satellite offices to provide a space for you to share manaʻo on community issues.*

OHA OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Check the schedule at **oha.org/offices**

### Puʻuhonua Mākeke
*August 23, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.*
*Waimānalo, Oʻahu*

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

### Summer Concert Series
*August 30, 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.*
*Waimea, Oʻahu*

Performances by Pomai and Friends, Hawaiian Style Band, "Kumz" and Hālau i Ka Wēkiu and Featured Hālau: Ka Pā Nani o Lilinoe. waimeavalley.net

### Poi Supper at ʻIolani Palace
*August 31, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.*
*Honolulu, Oʻahu*

Celebrate Queen Liliuʻokalani's Birthday at this family-friendly biennial evening event with Hawaiian entertainment and ʻono food on the grounds of ʻIolani Palace. Iolanipalace.org

## MĀLAMA ʻĀINA EVENTS

### Lā Mālama ma Puʻuokapolei
*August 2, 8:30 - 10:00 a.m.*
*Puʻuokapolei, Oʻahu*

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

### GoFarm Hawaiʻi Cohort
Improve your farming production and agribusiness skills. Register online at gofarmhawaii.org.

- *August 6 at 5:30pm*
  *AgCurious | Online Webinar*
- *August 21 - Sept. 17*
  *AgXposure | Kamananui, Oʻahu*
- *Sept. 3 - Oct. 1*
  *AgXposure | Waimānalo, Oʻahu*
- *Oct. 22 - May 2, 2026*
  *AgXcel | Kamananui, Oʻahu*
- *Oct. 22 - May 9, 2026*
  *AgXcel | Waimānalo, Oʻahu*

### Mālama Hulēʻia Volunteer Day
*August 16, 8:00 a.m. - Noon*
*Līhuʻe, Kauaʻi*

Every 3rd Saturday is a community workday at Alakoko fishpond. Sign up to volunteer. peleke@malamahuleia.org malamahuleia.org

### Waipā Community Workday
*August 23, 9:00 a.m. - Noon*
*Waipā, Kauaʻi*

Every 4th Saturday 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. waipafoundation.org ■

# He Wa'a He Moku: Moving from Mauli Ola to Mauli Ea

By Elena Farden, OHA Sr. Director of Strategy & Implementation

At the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), we've always known that Mauli Ola, the thriving wellbeing of our lāhui, is only the beginning. True thriving is not just about services or programs; it's about Ea – our ability to chart our own course, define success in our own terms, and live into our collective self-determination. That's why the Strategy & Innovation (S&I) Paia was created: to move Mana i Mauli Ola from plan to practice.

Unlike traditional "functional" departments, which are structured by topic (like Human Resources or Finance), the S&I Paia is built as a projectized model. Our teams are formed around projects, not just plans, with full kuleana over timelines, budgets, and outcomes. This model was designed to move us faster, with more clarity and accountability, and with direct connection to community.

Each of our four S&I teams steers a course focused on a strategic direction of Mana i Mauli Ola: Educational Pathways; Health Outcomes; Quality Housing; and Economic Stability.

These strategic directions are not abstract. They are living entities piloting programs, funding strategies, and proposing policies that uplift our lāhui. From creating 'ohana-based housing solutions, to growing access to capital for Native Hawaiian businesses, to building community-centered indicators of wellbeing, each strategic direction is designed to deliver results, not just reports.

The power of a projectized structure enables its team to break down barriers.

In a traditional "functional" model, staff wait for approvals or work in silos. In the projectized S&I Paia, our teams can cross-function with purpose, clarity, and shared vision. And still, we are doing this within an agency that was born of resistance and hope. We honor that our work today sits on the foundation laid by those who demanded more for our people. Our shift to a project-based structure is not just a technical move. It is a political and spiritual one.

It is our commitment to move from Mauli Ola to Mauli Ea.

As we look ahead to FY26, our sails are full. With our biennium budget approved, we are prepared to launch new partnerships, programs, and progress for our lāhui. We know that transformation takes time, but it also takes heart – and our heart is with our community.

"Ho'okahi ka 'ilau like ana." Wield the paddles together. When we work as one, united in purpose, no current can turn us back. ■

# Community Outreach Court a Path to Sustainability

By McKenna Woodward, OHA Public Policy Advocate

Since its inception in 2017, Hawai'i's Community Outreach Court (COC) has served as a bridge between the criminal justice system and meaningful reentry for some of our most vulnerable community members.

With the recent signing of HB280 by Gov. Josh Green, this innovative court is now a permanent fixture in our state's judicial system, and a significant victory for those working to address the systemic criminalization of poverty and houselessness.

The COC is designed to help non-violent offenders, many of whom also experience houselessness, resolve outstanding legal issues in a more accessible, community-centered way. The court holds proceedings at community locations where individuals can clear active charges, lift license stoppers, and recall bench warrants, often in exchange for community service rather than fines.

This approach helps participants avoid incarceration and places them in a better position to secure essential resources such as housing, employment, and income assistance.

To date, the COC has assisted over 600 participants, cleared nearly 11,000 cases, lifted more than 7,000 license stoppers, and recalled over 900 bench warrants.

These outcomes are critical as Native Hawaiians are disproportionately represented in the state's criminal justice system and among the unhoused population. Native Hawaiians account for 37% of the state's correctional population and 28% of its houseless population, despite comprising only 21% of the total state population. Programs like the COC aim to address these disparities by offering participants a path forward grounded in dignity and support.

By institutionalizing the COC, HB280 sends a clear message: Hawai'i values rehabilitation over punishment and is committed to helping those in crisis reenter society with support and compassion. ■

*The governor also signed HB727 into law, permanently establishing the Mōhala Wāhine Program in the First Circuit. This is a gender-responsive specialty court focused on the unique needs of system-involved women. Its codification alongside the COC reflects a growing commitment to trauma-informed, culturally appropriate justice alternatives.*

# Restoring Luluku: Breaking Ground, Rooted in Community

A section of the H-3 freeway is just visible in the background of this photo of a thriving loʻi kalo. - *Courtesy Photo*

OHA HLID Project Coordinator Ardena Sanoe Saarinen with Mark Paikuli-Stride harvest kalo from the loʻi at Luluku. - Courtesy Photo.

Volunteers work Luluku. This past May, a construction contract was awarded by the Department of Transportation that will fund new infrastructure and facilities for the community. - *Courtesy Photo*

By Ardena Sanoe Saarinen, M.S., OHA HLID Project Coordinator

This summer marks a pivotal moment in the long-standing efforts to restore the historic agricultural lands of Luluku in the ahupuaʻa of Kāneʻohe.

A community-led groundbreaking ceremony and celebration took place on July 5 – a significant milestone as construction begins on infrastructure and facilities supporting community-driven cultural and agricultural revitalization on lands disconnected by highway construction.

Nestled between the Likelike Highway and H-3 interchange, the loʻi kalo of Luluku were once part of a thriving food production system. For decades, however, this ʻāina lay dormant, cut off from access and neglected despite its deep ancestral significance.

Thanks to the efforts of local farmers, educators, and cultural practitioners, this land is again becoming a place of learning, healing, and abundance.

"To get to this point, it has been an amazing journey full of trials, pain, and loss," said Mark Paikuli-Stride of the Luluku Farmers' Association & Aloha ʻĀina Health and Learning Center (LFA-AHLC).

"Through adversity, we have built pilina and regained hope as a community. It is important that we celebrate these small victories or successes and take the time to acknowledge truth and our kūpuna who laid the foundation that we are building upon."

In May 2025, a new construction contract was awarded by the Hawaiʻi Department of Transportation (HDOT). The new infrastructure and facilities (including restrooms, showers, parking, storage, an administrative office, and classroom spaces) are designed to serve the needs of a living, working cultural landscape, serving both farmers and the community with an area for processing foods, medicines, and other goods grown from the land.

They will support both the community's active restoration work and its educational programs, especially those focused on mālama ʻāina and traditional food practices.

"This groundbreaking affirms the community's unwavering commitment to ʻāina and culture," said Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) CEO Stacy Ferreira. "OHA remains steadfast in its role, ensuring that promises made to our people decades ago are upheld in places like Luluku – and this work must continue across the pae ʻāina."

But long before this construction phase in the decades-long project became a reality, real restoration within Luluku's cultural landscape was already happening.

In 2019, LFA-AHLC established a partnership with ʻĀina Momona, a Native Hawaiian nonprofit, and has continued to expand the restoration efforts of loʻi in Luluku. Their approach is hands-on, intergenerational, and deeply rooted in culture, fusing traditional Hawaiian farming and community engagement.

From 2023-2024, they served over 13,000 community members through field trips, volunteer workdays, ʻAi Pono cooking classes, and cultural learning experiences. Thousands of pounds of kalo have been grown and shared through meals prepared on-site with families learning to make poi and paʻi ʻai together.

Restoration here goes beyond agriculture.

Kahu Walt Keale blesses the keiki who, he said, "would, in turn, bless the land." - *Photo: Jason Lees*

Invasive species have been removed, loʻi terraces reestablished, and the hydrology of the area has begun to recover. The program serves a wide spectrum of the community, from keiki to kūpuna. Many have found their time on this ʻāina deeply healing. The return of wai to these lands is both literal and symbolic – a reflection of the resilience and capacity of communities to heal when reconnected to ʻāina.

"We do this work in honor of the many farmers and kūpuna who dedicated their lives to this ʻāina. We persisted for them and their legacy," said Dr. Trisha Kehaulani Watson-Sproat, vice president of ʻĀina Momona. "Luluku shows the power of community stewardship rooted in ʻike kūpuna and kuleana. This isn't just about farming kalo; it's about feeding the lāhui and reclaiming our future."

The significance of the Luluku project goes far

SEE **RESTORING LULUKE** ON **PAGE 7**

Long-time stewards of Luluku, from keiki to kūpuna, along with members of the Paikuli-Stride 'Ohana, Kahu Walt Keale, and OHA staff members at the recent ground-breaking ceremony, blessing, and celebration. - *Photo: Jason Lees*

## RESTORING LULUKU

Continued from page 6

beyond the facilities being built. It represents the long-term investment of people who never gave up on the land – or each other. It shows what is possible when communities lead, when agencies listen, and when ancestral knowledge guides restoration.

These support facilities weren't just given to the community. They were fought for across decades, departments, and districts. From taro patches to tool sheds, every inch reflects years of effort by those who refused to let Luluku's past be paved over or forgotten without a fight.

"The progress at Luluku stands as proof of what's possible when Native Hawaiian communities lead. As trustees, it's our kuleana to uplift and empower these grassroots efforts across all 'āina impacted by historical injustices as part of our broader commitment to strengthening the entire lāhui," said OHA Board Chair and Hawai'i Island Trustee Kaiali'i Kahele.

As construction work moves towards completion in the next 12 months so, too, does the deeper work: feeding, teaching, and restoring. But Luluku isn't simply being restored or rebuilt, it's reawakening – one lo'i at a time. ■

*The Hālawa-Luluku Interpretive Development (HLID) project was created by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) to help mitigate some of the adverse impacts resulting from the construction of the H-3 Freeway by facilitating community collaboration on an interpretive development plan, stewardship management plans, and implementation of select mitigation actions determined in consultation with the stewards of each project area. OHA is a recognized consulting agency for the overall H-3 mitigation program and acts as the project manager for HLID.*

### OHA's Kuleana for H-3 Mitigation

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) recognizes the decades of work and perseverance of the Luluku stewards and celebrates this milestone accomplishment. Despite the excellent stewardship work occurring at the Luluku agricultural terraces, mitigation is still needed in the Hālawa and Ha'ikū Valley areas also affected by Interstate H-3.

OHA's role as the recognized consulting agency for this mitigation project includes kuleana for ongoing advocacy and holding both Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) accountable for making resources available to continue federal historic preservation-related mitigations and state-level conservation district commitments made decades ago.

OHA remains committed to working with Nā Kūpuna a me Nā Kāko'ō o Hālawa (NKNKHI) and the Ko'olau Foundation to bring about cultural restoration and preservation work in both Hālawa and Ha'ikū valleys, respectively.

## TRUSTEE KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

The Probate Court has appointed a Trustee Screening Committee to nominate three candidates from whom the Court will select one Trustee to succeed Trustee Robert K.W.H. Nobriga. The successor will be appointed to fill one five (5) year term and be eligible for an additional five (5) year term, as determined by the Court.

The Screening Committee is now seeking active leaders from the community with a deep sense of commitment and the ability to ensure Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop's vision and legacy are perpetuated into the future.

**The optimal candidate would have:**

- A recognized reputation of integrity and good character
- The capacity to fulfill the responsibilities of a fiduciary under trust law
- Respect from and for the community
- Consistent and active leadership in the community with specific emphasis on issues impacting the well-being of the Hawai'i people
- A willingness and sincerity to uphold the purposes of the Kamehameha Schools
- History of success in business, finance or related areas
- Received a formal education
- Outstanding personal traits including Hawaiian values

**Candidates must possess demonstrated expertise in one or more of the following areas:**

- Business administration
- Finance and investment
- Strategic planning and policy setting
- Areas of interest to Kamehameha Schools including education, law or governance

Maximum total compensation of $186,928, paid as follows: $146,928 annual retainer and $2,500 per meeting (maximum 16 meetings in a 12-month period).

**Qualified candidates should submit the following:**

- A cover letter and resume
- A statement defining your perception of the role of a Trustee; your vision, goals and objectives for the Trust Estate; and what you would do to attain those goals

**Please submit your cover letter, resume and statement by September 1, 2025 to:**

**Trustee Screening Committee**
**c/o Inkinen Executive Search**

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# Dreaming Big Dreams

By Nathan Hokama

Kiniokahokuloa Zamora's success as a fashion designer is a story about the power of 'ohana.

Perhaps his parents sensed he was destined for greatness, and this inspired his name, which means "king of the morning star."

Today, he is known simply as Kini Zamora, the designer who has established the eponymous fashion house recognized locally and globally.

In 2015, Zamora became a household name virtually overnight after representing Hawai'i on the reality TV show, *Project Runway*.

Zamora was 10 years old when his Aunty Delilah offered to give him and his cousins their first sewing lesson. It was pivotal experience; Zamora was hooked. His aunty had learned to sew from Zamora's grandfather and was passing on this sewing expertise to the next generation.

"I was the only one who wanted to learn more," Zamora remembered. "My mom gave me sketch pads because I liked to draw, to create. She always knew I had that in me. Sewing was a medium to express myself, to bring my sketches to life. I would design clothes for troll dolls and dress them up."

His 'ohana encouraged his passion for sewing. "I always received fabric for Christmas, and I enjoyed sewing all my own clothes," he said. "I designed and wore jams shorts to school. My aunty showed me how to construct from a commercial pattern and how to piece things together from a design perspective."

Zamora also sewed for others. One of his proudest achievements was creating a customized tank top for his mom; it was the first gift he made.

Despite learning to design and sew from his aunty, Zamora wanted to formalize his knowledge with a degree in fashion technology from Honolulu Community College (HCC).

His parents were unable to financially support his college aspirations, so Zamora applied for college financial aid, obtaining scholarship assistance from Kamehameha Schools, the Rotary Club, and other organizations plus additional financial support from HCC as a male in a female-dominated field of study.

After graduating from HCC, Zamora applied, and was accepted, to the prestigious New York Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). However, he quickly found the classes too basic.

Zamora's replica of Queen Kapi'olani's coronation gown on display at 'Iolani Palace.

He stuck it out for more than a year, but eventually decided it was not worth his time or money and returned home to Hawai'i. Nevertheless, he enjoyed the experience of living in New York City.


Kini Zamora is all smiles at Honolulu Fashion Week in 2016. He became a household name overnight after he competed in the 2015 season of "Project Runway." - Courtesy Photos

Kini Zamora's 2017 summer clothing line.

When Zamora was selected to compete in *Project Runway*, it set a new trajectory for his fledgling business. "I applied six times over a 10-year period before finally being selected," he said. It is that kind of resilience that has fueled his success.

He participated in extensive interviews and even a psychiatric evaluation designed to ensure that the "cast members" could handle the sometimes-brutal critique from celebrity judges and compete with other talented, ambitious contestants.

"It was excruciating," he said.

He made it through the initial application process and was flown to Los Angeles for open casting before a panel of judges. Upon returning home, he submitted a video, a work portfolio, and participated in an on-camera interview.

Once he was selected as a finalist, Zamora had just five days to get to New York City. Finalists were not introduced to each other or allowed to interact. The show was filmed at 8:00 p.m. and by 7:00 a.m. the following morning he was on a plane returning to Hawai'i.

After learning he was selected for the show, he was not allowed to tell anyone why he would be away for six weeks. "But I think everyone knew," he said.

The exposure Zamora received from being on *Project Runway*, super-charged his business. He suddenly had to curate work requests to ensure he could keep up with the demand. It was a good problem to have.

And the feedback Zamora received from the judges on the show helped to hone his design aesthetic. He specializes in two areas: avant-garde creations and ready-to-wear.

His avant-garde creations are often "over-the-top" pieces created for weddings, pageants and for performing artists, including hula hālau. "It's always gratifying to see your work on stage," he grinned.

His ready-to-wear clothing is the company's signature Hawai'i lifestyle brand. Each year, he produces four or five collections, each with 20-60 mix-and-match design options sold primarily through the company's website and at No'eau Design in Kapolei. He would eventually like to elevate Kini Zamora into a lifestyle brand and expand into eyewear, accessories, fragrance, and home furnishings.

Zamora also has contracts to produce aloha wear uniforms for organizations like 'Iolani Palace, Maryknoll School and St. Louis School and he hopes to scale up his business to serve bigger uniform contracts.

To help expand his business, Zamora secured an Office of Hawaiian Affairs Native Hawaiian Revolving Loan Fund loan.

His team is currently composed of five part-time employees and sub-contractors who are committed to making work fun, interesting and creative. And he offers design internships to college students.

Zamora is also trying to run an environmentally responsible business. "The fashion industry is the second most polluting industry (in terms of waste)," he notes.

Walking his talk, the company is taking steps to be more sustainable. Zamora participated in the first two "Goodwill Goes Glam" shows, which encourages reducing, reusing, recycling, and upcycling used clothes and accessories. His company packages online orders with minimalism in mind and also offers pick-up options. Paper from sublimination printing is recycled to create patterns or as wrapping paper, while fabric remnants are donated to H&M's recycling program for reuse.

Today, from his studio in Hālawa, Zamora and his team continue to create enduring designs and dream even bigger dreams for the future of the business. ■

## *Kumu Hula, Producer, Entertainer, Musician, Recording Artist*

# *Encircling Love: Remembering Julia Kealoha Kalama-Cabral*

April 27, 1932 - June 22, 2025

By Ed Kalama

*Editor's note: In 1995, Kealoha Kalama was interviewed for the Kalihi Pālama Culture and Arts Society's "Nānā i nā Loea Hula" oral history project. Her quotes here are sourced from that transcript.*

Kealoha Kalama, whose life embodied the rhythm, beauty and spirit of Hawaiʻi, passed away peacefully at the age of 93. Her daughter Jewel and granddaughter Julianne served as primary caregivers during the last years of her life.

As a dancer, singer, kumu hula and producer, Kalama inspired thousands with her movement, her voice and her creative energy as she shared the vibrancy of the Hawaiian culture with audiences across the globe.

From an ʻohana of 13 brothers and sisters – she was the eighth child - Kalama was raised in Nānākuli and Kapālama.

"We grew up with lots of music and hula, but most of all a good life out in the country. We had a big place for us to run around, lots of flowers everywhere and parents who gave all of us what they could. My big love was the hula," Kalama said.

She said she was "somehow always involved" with music and singing, learning how to play the ʻukulele, piano and even trying her hand at guitar.

Kalama's mother, Virginia Hamau Kalama, was the community association president and the president of the Nānākuli Hawaiian Civic Club. She was also very much involved in politics.

"While growing up I saw her work so hard for that community," Kalama said. "She always played music, and she got us children involved too. I always say that my mother was my biggest inspiration in my entertainment life."

Kalama's first formal hula instructor was Puanani Alama, whom she described as a beautiful hula dancer and wonderful instructor. She then met John Piilani Watkins.

"I was very honored to perform for his group. He was also my kumu in hula and sometimes music. John was a great composer, beautiful singer and musician, and just a fantastic entertainer."

In the late 1950s, Kalama was featured on shows held at the old Kapahulu Tavern, the Waikīkī Sands Club and on the neighbor islands. Her first trip to the continent in the early ʻ60s was an exciting month-long excursion spent entertaining from Los Angeles to Washington state.

Watkins introduced Kalama to Joseph Kahaulelio who, along with Pauline Kekahuna, was looking for hula dancers for their big shows at the Princess Kaʻiulani Hotel and at the Moana Hotel.

Kalama would go on to become the featured dancer at shows at the Halekūlani Hotel and Hilton Hawaiian Village, often taking the stage to the song *There Goes Kealoha*.

During her career, Kalama would dance for legendary Hawaiian entertainers such as Vicki Iʻi Rodrigues, Genoa Keawe, Bill Aliʻiloa Lincoln, Louise Kaleiki, Leinaala Haile and Leinaala Simerson.

She also had the privilege of traveling with "Uncle" Sol Bright and "Hawaiʻi's Songbird" Lena Machado to Japan and across the continent.

After returning from Japan, Kalama worked as a visitors' information hostess for the state Department of Transportation. The job entailed entertaining many of the VIPs who arrived in Hawaiʻi.

Kealoha Kalama - *Courtesy Photo*

"We greeted people at Hickam Air Force Base as well, even the president of the United States," Kalama said. "Our biggest thrill was greeting Elvis Presley when he did a concert here at our old stadium."

Kalama was then asked to serve as a ground hostess for Aloha Airlines where she brought Hawaiian music to airports everywhere. She also traveled for the Hawaiʻi Visitors Bureau, sharing her culture throughout the United States, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand.

She also traveled to Europe – a trip that included a performance for the British royal family.

In 1969, she produced her own Hawaiian revue at Ulumau Village in Kāneʻohe, then put on a Polynesian revue for the Waikīkī Resort Hotel. She also produced shows at the Reef Hotel, Hyatt Regency, Halekūlani Hotel and Bishop Museum.

"I've had the most beautiful dancers and wonderful musicians – Atta Issacs, Harold Hakuole, Billy Hew Len, Larry Asing, Peter Mendiola, Arthur Hew Len and Pua Almeida. And two great singers in Gary Aiko and Frances Kamahele," she said.

There are so many talented and recognizable names that Kalama shared a stage with: Ethelyne Teves, Jeff Teves, Joe Keaulana, Ainsley Halemanu, Joan "Aunty Pudgie" Young, "Aunty" Lovey Apana, Robert Cazimero, Andy Cummings and Myra English to name a few.

"I've also had the pleasure of entertaining with friends who were great in both hula ʻauana and hula kahiko – George Holokai and Kimo Alama Keaulana, who also worked on my Polynesian revue in Waikīkī," she said.

Kalama also performed with singer Rosalie Stevenson – who sometimes sang with the great Alfred Apaka. The two traveled extensively throughout Australia, Kwajalein, Johnson Island, Okinawa, Guam and Saipan.

In 1971, Kalama opened Hālau Hula o Pōhai Kealoha (hālau hula of encircling love) on the grounds of Bishop Museum. She taught – and performed – at the museum for over 25 years.

She also brought Hawaiian culture to military children, serving as a kupuna in the Hawaiian studies program at Admiral Nimitz Elementary School.

"It's been a challenge to teach military children," Kalama said. "But I really enjoy them learning our culture, singing Hawaiian songs and especially learning how to pronounce our Hawaiian words."

Kalama served as a judge in many hula competitions – including the Merrie Monarch Festival – and recorded three albums and a single for Pumehana Records, Genoa Keawe Records and her own label, Kalama Records.

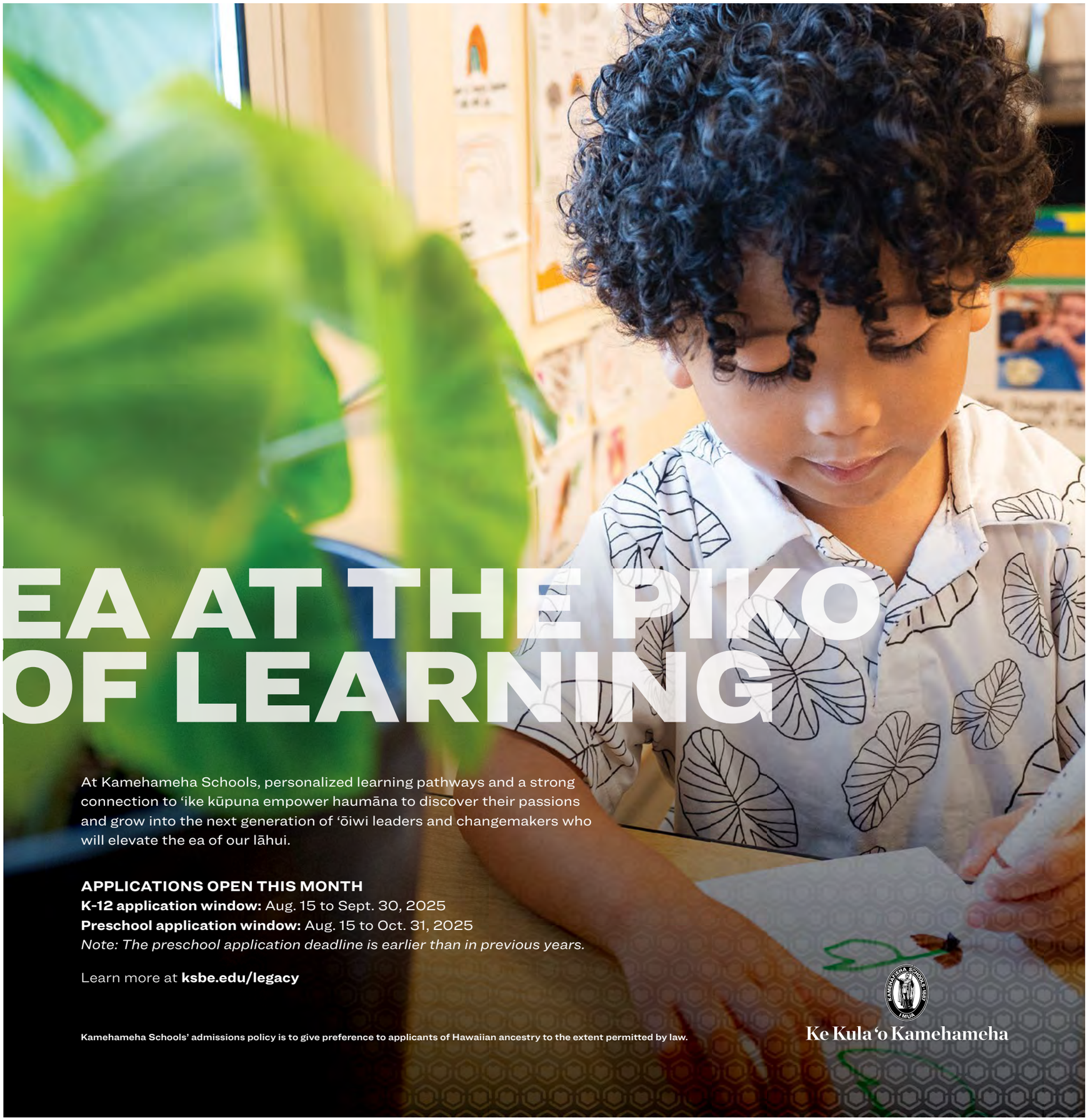
She was a member of the Hawaiian Civic Club of Honolulu and the Kalihi-Pālama Hawaiian Civic Club, as well as being a member of Hale o Nā Aliʻi.

In 2005, she was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hawaiʻi Academy of Recording Arts, their highest honor for a lifetime of excellence. That same year, she was also honored by the Hawaiian Civic Club of Honolulu at its annual Holukū Ball.

In 2023, Kalama was enshrined in the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame.

Kealoha Kalama was preceded in death by husband, Wilfred Cabral, and is survived by her three children Jewel K. Scoggins, Sidney Kahoonei and Raymond Kahoonei; three sisters Pearl Momi Kaeo, Rosella Puanani Kalama-Akiona and Jackie Maynard; four grandchildren and great-grandchildren. ■

*Ed Kalama is a former communicator for Kamehameha Schools and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. He is the proud nephew of Kealoha Kalama.*



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Ke Kula ʻo Kamehameha

## Faces of the Diaspora

# Building Artificial Intelligence Through a Native Lens

By Megan Ulu-Lani Boyanton

Since Keoni Mahelona first stepped foot in Aotearoa as a college student, the country and its vibrant Polynesian culture has shaped him. "It was like being at home," he said. Both the Native Hawaiian and Māori cultures share strong beliefs around sovereignty. And both value protection over ownership.

Today, having lived in Aotearoa for more than 15 years, Mahelona speaks with a Kiwi lilt. He has made a good life for himself there: he fell in love with a Māori and together they're raising a son, Nukumamao, who is both Māori and Kānaka Maoli. And he works at a Māori media organization, Te Hiku Media, helping to create tools designed through a native lens utilizing artificial intelligence (AI).

However, Hawai'i still calls to Mahelona, 40. He wants to serve his lāhui, too.

"I've always had – and still do have – that feeling," Mahelona said. "It's a kuleana, not a desire. I have a kuleana that tells me, that pulls me back, and it's always been there."

Mahelona originally hails from Anahola, Kaua'i. He grew up in a house that his Kanaka Maoli father built with his own hands. Though it didn't have electricity, it served as a roof over the heads of their 'ohana.

Mahelona remembers his dad and mom working hard to provide for their children. It fortified his resolve to pursue an education and change his family's circumstances.

"Growing up, our school friends – who were often not Hawaiian – had nice houses and other nice things. Hawaiians often were the poor people," Mahelona recalled.

Under his tūtū wahine's matriarchy, the extended 'ohana would gather on an uncle's homestead land: an agricultural lot received in 1985. There, the relatives would host parties, tending imu and saying pule before meals. On the 'āina, Mahelona's father grew mai'a. "Dad had the best bananas on the island," Mahelona said. His father also grew and sold flowers.

As part of the Hawaiian Renaissance generation, "my father was always strong in his Hawaiian identity," Mahelona said. However, his father yearned to learn 'ōlelo Hawai'i which Mahelona's tūtū kāne didn't pass onto the next generation.

Mahelona inherited that longing for language. And sovereignty.

As a child, he dreamed of becoming a famous actor although his grandmother pictured him as a brain surgeon. Later, Mahelona aspired to be an astronaut before settling on engineering.

He graduated with honors from Kamehameha Schools Kapālama in 2003. From there he headed to Massachusetts' Olin College of Engineering. The snow was easier to adjust to than the American culture. After studying abroad in Aotearoa, Mahelona earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering as part of Olin's second graduating class.

Keoni Mahelona - *Courtesy Photo*

He worked in Boston for a year, but Aotearoa continued to intrigue him. Upon receiving a Fulbright Program scholarship tied to computational nanotechnology, Mahelona returned to Aotearoa in 2009 to attend Victoria University of Wellington.

That same year, he met his partner, Peter-Lucas Kaaka Jones, at a barbecue. They lived together in Wellington for a couple of years before Mahelona earned his master's degree in physics in 2011.

Although he had three university degrees, including one in business, Mahelona struggled to secure an engineering job. He remembers it as the first time that race played a role in his exclusion.

"I won't say it was the main reason, but it was definitely there, no doubt," he said.

Instead, Mahelona did yardwork, photography and consulting. He and Jones moved north where Jones' parents resided. While Mahelona helped Jones' dad on the farm, milking cows and planting kumara (sweet potatoes), Jones brainstormed on how to fix his new employer's dismal financial situation.

Jones had been hired as the general manager at Te Hiku Media in 2012. Mahelona helped him analyze the organization's negative finances and Jones successfully reversed course. Today, Te Hiku Media raises millions annually in funding.

Meanwhile, Mahelona was conducting water collection research. Later, he launched a smart water startup. Though it lasted only three months, he learned valuable lessons from the experience. In 2014, Mahelona was brought into the fold at Te Hiku Media after rebuilding its website.

Te Hiku Media's radio station often conducted interviews about topical issues in the community before uploading them. However, the team didn't want to hand their data over to American corporations like YouTube.

Instead, Te Hiku Media built its own digital platform – although it soon needed new technologies to enhance language access. With thousands of hours of native audio archives, transcription would require an unreasonable amount of time – so Mahelona began building AI geared toward te reo Māori (Māori language).

Eventually, the tech team expanded from one – Mahelona – to about 10 people. Today, as the organization's chief technology officer, he's spearheading campaigns for Indigenous people to share their voices, which, in turn, improves Te Hiku Media's tools. To this end, in about 10 days some 2,500 people recorded more than 300 hours of audio.

This year, Te Hiku Media launched a similar campaign, the Lauleo Project, in Hawai'i.

This past February, about 1,200 people read sentences in 'ōlelo Hawai'i totaling 420 hours in just one week. "That's an absurd amount of speech data," Mahelona said.

Mahelona is driven to continue serving people back home, although he understands that, as a Hawaiian living overseas who doesn't work in the Hawaiian community, he needs to build pilina.

Still, "I'm quite proud that the work that we're doing is also going back to Hawai'i in a positive way," he said.

For now, besides his career, Mahelona is focusing his energy on 1-year-old Nukumamao. And when he dreams of his keiki's future, he hopes Hawai'i is in it. ■

# Reframing Histories of Kānaka Diaspora

By Lehuauakea

Narratives of diaspora are nothing new to our community and culture. Growing up in Hawaiʻi, it is commonplace to learn about the first migrations that brought our kūpuna into Polynesia, to Tahiti, and on to the islands that many of us now call home.

We have stories of our own deities' migratory paths that connect numerous islands across the Pacific. In many cases — whether it be our lineal human ancestors or akua — their migrations kept them on the move, often bringing them to distant lands beyond Hawaiʻi's shores.

In post-contact histories, Chief Kaʻiana and a woman documented as "Winee" were the first Kānaka to sail abroad on Western vessels in 1787, following in the footsteps of their voyaging ancestors, seeking new places and experiences previously unknown to the Hawaiian people.

Sailing for months at a time, Kaʻiana and Winee accompanied their crews along transpacific trade routes to modern China, the Pacific Northwest Coast, and the Philippines. Their journeys would soon spark a movement of Hawaiians seeking opportunities abroad.

Relocation — temporary or permanent — of Native Hawaiians began in larger numbers in the early 1800s, primarily with young men seeking employment in the rapidly expanding Pacific Northwest economy. As their labor contracts expired, some returned home to Hawaiʻi while others remained in the region, establishing communities that stretched from Southern California to British Columbia and Alaska.

Kanani Miyamoto

Lehuauakea

Markers of these early Kānaka remain in the form of place names and the present-day descendants of Native Hawaiian families who still reside near the original Kānaka settlements.

Today, Native Hawaiians continue this migration from Hawaiʻi to the Pacific Northwest, some leaving home for career or educational opportunities, planning to later return home.

Unfortunately, an overwhelming proportion of those living in the continental Native Hawaiian diaspora find themselves unable to afford moving back to Hawaiʻi. With decades of compounding socioeconomic factors resulting in the rising cost of living, limited employment opportunities, dispossession of family lands, and skyrocketing home prices, the average local Native Hawaiian family must do more to stay in Hawaiʻi.

This painting entitled "Step Aboard" by Lōkela Alexander Minami is an example of the artwork in a new exhibition called "DISplace" at Seattle's Wing Luke Museum. - *Courtesy Photos*

A growing number of individuals and families simply can't keep up with these mounting financial demands and are faced with the difficult reality of relocating to the continent to more feasibly afford a better quality of life.

As of 2020, over half of the total Native Hawaiian population now lives outside of Hawaiʻi for the first time in history.

These diasporic narratives serve as the focus of the new exhibition, "DISplace," which opened at Seattle's Wing Luke Museum on June 13. Co-curated by myself, and artist-educator Kanani Miyamoto, "DISplace" puts into context the multifaceted experiences of resilience and adversity within Native Hawaiian diaspora communities in the Pacific Northwest expressed through the work of 11 contemporary Hawaiian artists from Oregon and Washington, an in-depth historical narrative, recorded audio interviews, and loaned objects from community members.

By highlighting these stories as part of a continuous history, rather than a relatively new one, "DISplace" offers visibility to the diversity of diaspora experiences and the different factors behind relocation. It also touches on the highly nuanced stories of multigenerational displacement, such as those of individuals born on the continent.

Bringing our own experiences as Native Hawaiian artists with roots in both Hawaiʻi and on the continent, Kanani and I curated this exhibition with intention, inviting the Pacific Northwest community to tell their own stories of finding their voice despite the struggles of assimilation, challenges with cultural connection, and mixed identity.

Going into this project, I recognized the privilege in my background — being born in Portland, Oregon, yet raised between Oʻahu and Hawaiʻi Island and attending Kamehameha Schools before relocating back to Oregon as a teen.

Despite a childhood lived in multiple places, I was blessed to be raised around my culture and community, speaking ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, dancing hula, and knowing my heritage. This is far from what is considered the 'norm' of a contemporary Native Hawaiian diaspora experience, but it also made me wonder: What is the norm?

With many Hawaiians leaving for various reasons at different stages of life, some able to return to Hawaiʻi as adults, and others born second or even third generation away from their ancestral homelands, the experiences of those seeking, finding, and expressing connection to our culture are diverse and numerous.

Yet, we always find ways to maintain our connection to Hawaiʻi on the continent — through hālau hula, Hawaiian Civic Clubs, community māla (gardens), student groups, and relationships with family and community back home. Between kumu hula, community organizers, educators, and families now living in diaspora, many Hawaiians are doing important work to ensure proper representation of our culture in distant places while creating safe spaces for our communities abroad to remain connected to their cultural heritage.

As an alarming number of Kānaka face the difficult decision of relocation, it is important to consider diaspora on a spectrum. There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to defining our lāhui who have been displaced or chose to leave to afford a better standard of living for themselves and their families.

At the same time, we recognize that Hawaiʻi is not the same without Kānaka Maoli. So, perhaps it is time for the lāhui still living on ʻāina to consider the ways that we can leave the door open for our diaspora community to begin moving back, and recognize that we are stronger together, no matter where we might call home. ■

*A graduate of Pacific Northwest College of Art, Lehuauakea is an interdisciplinary artist and kapa practitioner who currently resides in Oregon.*

# KAHĀ 2025 Brings Kaua'i to Nevada for Connection and Healing

By Malia Nobrega-Olivera

Nearly 40,000 Native Hawaiians now call Clark County, Nevada, home. And this past June, many of them gathered at Palace Station in Las Vegas for the 3rd Annual Ka 'Aha Ho'olauna Aloha (KAHĀ), a vibrant celebration of Hawaiian culture, language, and traditions.

This year's KAHĀ , held June 27-29, honored the island of Kaua'i with the theme "Maika'i Kaua'i, Hemolele i ka Mālie" (Beautiful Kaua'i, Peaceful in the Calm). The gathering creating a space for multigenerational Hawaiian families and Kānaka kāko'o (those who support Native Hawaiians) to reconnect with their roots while living far from home.

KAHĀ's origins are deeply spiritual. Inspired by a moe 'uhane (dream) on New Year's Day 2023, founder Dwayne Ku'ualohanui Kauli'a saw a joyful gathering of people, signaling the need to create a space for Hawaiian community connection and healing.

Supported by kūpuna and loea, the dream became a ho'okō (fulfillment) of four pillars: aloha, ho'oponopono, 'ike ho'oilina, and honoring Kamehameha Pai'ea.

Gatherings like KAHĀ allow Kānaka to remain 'onipa'a (steadfast) despite the challenges we face, and move forward while grounding themselves in aloha, culture, and language.

KAHĀ 2025 featured over 20 kumu and loea from across Hawai'i and the continent – nearly half of whom were from Kaua'i – sharing 'ike and mo'omeheu (knowledge and culture) through hands-on, interactive workshops. Participants learned hula kahiko and 'auana under the guidance of nā kumu hula Puna Dawson, Maka Herrod, Kalani Flores-Hatt, and Leimomi Ho, while also engaging in oli, mele, and Hawaiian language immersion.

Hana no'eau were showcased through lauhala weaving, lei-making, kapa, and featherwork, allowing attendees to create pūpū Ni'ihau earrings and bracelets, raffia kūpe'e, and nā hulu kāhili pa'a lima. The Kaua'i cultural practitioners who shared these hana no'eau included me, Kumu Sabra Kauka, and 'Anakē Awapuhi Kahale (Ni'ihau).

The KAHĀ 2025 Hulu Kupuna honoree is Loea Hula Aunty Leimomi Ho, kumu hula of Keali'ika'apunihonua Ke'ena A'o Hula. - *Photos: Joe Dypiangco, KAHĀ 2025*

Ka 'Aha Ho'olauna Aloha, Inc., which hosted the gathering, is led by KAHĀ's board of directors whose members represent Hawai'i, Clark County and California. They are joined here by loea from Hawai'i.

Sessions on lā'au lapa'au, Hawaiian ecosystems, Kaua'i and Ni'ihau mo'olelo, and sacred hymns provided a holistic cultural curriculum that embraced the mind, body, and spirit. KAHĀ was blessed with experts and practitioners from Kaua'i including Tuti Kanahele, Mike Demotta, Chucky Boy Chock, and Pam Smith Chock.

"This gathering isn't just about learning skills; it's about living the legacy of our kūpuna and healing as a lāhui," Kauli'a shared during the opening ceremony, emphasizing that aloha remains the foundation of all that we do, wherever we are.

With Clark County's growing Hawaiian community, KAHĀ serves as a cultural bridge, addressing the longing for connection and opportunities for cultural immersion that many Kānaka living on the continent desire.

For many participants, KAHĀ is a rare opportunity to practice and normalize 'ōlelo Hawai'i, to build 'ike pilina (healthy relationships), and to deepen their 'ike honua (sense of place) while living away from Hawai'i nei. It also fosters intergenerational learning, with kūpuna, parents, and keiki engaging side by side in activities that celebrate their heritage.

Ka 'Aha Ho'olauna Aloha, Inc. (KAHĀ) is a Hawai'i-based nonprofit organization dedicated to building and strengthening the Hawaiian community on the continent while connecting them to the lāhui and 'āina aloha. The organization is led by Kauli'a who serves as president, and the KAHĀ Board of Directors with members representing Hawai'i, Clark County, and California.

KAHĀ's commitment to fostering aloha, culture, language, and community ensures that Hawaiians across the Pacific are empowered to live their heritage fully while navigating life in the diaspora.

As KAHĀ continues to grow, the organization plans to expand its offerings and deepen its partnerships to bring even more opportunities for cultural exchange, language revitalization, and intergenerational learning to Kānaka Maoli living away from Hawai'i.

Whether you are a lifelong learner, a kumu, or a Hawaiian seeking to reconnect, KAHĀ offers a welcoming space to practice, learn, and celebrate together.

As KAHĀ reminds us, "'O ke aloha nō ka mea nui" (love is indeed the most important thing). In a world of change, gatherings like KAHĀ 2025 are vital reminders that aloha, culture, and language keep us grounded, connected, and strong – no matter where we live. ■

*To learn more about KAHĀ, explore upcoming programs, or become a sponsor or vendor, visit hawaiikaha.org. Here, you will find resources for families, workshop registration, and ways to support this mission of aloha.*

# Kiaʻi Papahānaumokuākea:
## Protecting our Puʻuhonua From Commercial Fishing

By the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group

A discarded commercial fishing net suffocates coral in Papahānaumokuākea. - *Photos: Courtesy of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project*

The late "Uncle Kawika" Kapahulehua, who was a member of the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group (CWG), once shared about a special fishing tradition of his people, the ʻOhana Niʻihau.

Each year, eight men would journey by double-hull canoe, slicked with coconut oil and stocked with salt and supplies, across the 120 miles to Nihoa Island. Guided by southern winds and the evening stars, their intention was simple – to catch just enough fish to sustain their families. Although Kauaʻi, Niʻihau, and Nihoa are socially and politically connected as a hui moku, this journey only happened once a year for a single week in April.

CWG founding member, the late Louis "Uncle Buzzy" Agard, fished in Papahānaumokuākea back when commercial fishing was allowed. After observing the ecosystem collapsing from commercial extraction, he became a strong advocate for the protection of Papahānaumokuākea as a "Puʻuhonua no Hawaiʻi," an ocean sanctuary. He recognized it as a breeding ground for important species that "seed" other ocean areas.

These stories from kūpuna remind us that traditional Hawaiian practices of fishing are guided by reciprocity and mutual respect; that certain areas are not open to everyone, nor are they open all the time, and to take only what is needed and to give back in return – especially in places like Papahānaumokuākea.

Papahānaumokuākea spans the Northwestern region of the Hawaiian Islands from Nihoa to Hōlanikū and up to 200 nautical miles from the shores of these islands, covering three-quarters of the Hawaiian archipelago and over 582,000 square miles. It is the ancestral homeland of our people, the Kānaka, and the place to which we return when we leave the physical world.

The name, Papahānaumokuākea, given by CWG elder Dr. Pualani Kanakaʻole Kanahele, is a union between two important primordial beings: Papa (Earth Mother) and Wākea (Sky Father). This union represents life, birth, growth, and regeneration.

As a puʻuhonua for millennia, a national marine monument since 2006, a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage Site since 2010, and a national marine sanctuary since early January 2025, there are strong mechanisms in place to protect Papahānaumokuākea's natural and cultural resources, vulnerable ecosystems, and the more than 7,000 species found there.

A diver works to remove fishing nets from an outcropping of corals.

However, just six months after its sanctuary designation, Papahānaumokuākea and our traditional Hawaiian value systems of sustainable fishing are threatened by extractive commercial fishing, economic pressures, and American politics.

The United States president, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WESPAC), and their allies operate under the dangerous presumption that these are American waters and that American fishermen have the right to fish there.

On April 17, 2025, President Donald Trump signed the proclamation "Unleashing American Commercial Fishing in the Pacific," allowing commercial fishing in parts of the Pacific Islands Heritage Marine National Monument in the Central Pacific, one of the largest marine protected areas in the world.

As a result, American fishing vessels are now conducting operations in waters surrounding Kio (Wake) Island, Kalama (Johnston) Atoll, and Paukeaho (Jarvis) Island.

Shortly thereafter, Trump issued Executive Order 14276 "Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness," directing federal agencies to slash commercial fishing regulations that protect places like Papahānaumokuākea to boost domestic production and combat foreign trade of the American seafood industry.

On June 12, 2025, WESPAC publicly reaffirmed their intention to open Papahānaumokuākea to commercial fishing and is slated to ask the president to do so.

This is not an abstract worry. It's an immediate threat.

Prior to its prohibition, commercial fishing in Papahānaumokuākea crashed the lobster and bottom fish populations due to overextraction. The lobster decline was also linked to monk seal population declines.

And in 2000, the shark population in Papahānaumokuākea was ravaged by a single commercial fishing vessel that killed 990 manō in just 21 days.

Ironically, however, fishing prohibitions within Papahānaumokuākea actually benefit the fishing industry. Between 2014 and 2017, Hawaiian longline tuna revenue rose by 13.7% compared to 2010–2013, contradicting dire predictions of huge economic losses. Vessels can catch more fish while traveling similar distances without needing to journey into Papahānaumokuākea.

A research study published in 2022 on the "spillover effects" of marine protected areas found that ʻahi (tuna) catches increased by 54% in fishing grounds adjacent to Papahānaumokuākea. Numerous other studies affirm the importance of establishing marine protected areas as a means of boosting fish stocks and creating sustainable local fisheries outside of protected areas.

SEE **KIAʻI PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA** ON **PAGE 15**

(L) This endangered monk seal was rescued after it was found entangled in fishing nets. (R) Scientists cut netting that has ensnared an endangered honu. Since 2020, the Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Program has removed one million pounds of debris from the sanctuary - much of it fishing-related. - *Photos: Courtesy of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project*

## KIA'I PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA

Continued from page 14

Although commercial fishing is still banned in Papahānaumokuākea, it remains vulnerable and highly impacted by the byproducts of global commercial fishing exploitation, as it has become a collection point for the world's marine debris.

Lost fishing materials entangle corals, litter habitats, and choke wildlife. Since 2020, the Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Program has removed over one million pounds of marine debris from Papahānaumokuākea, much of it fishing-related. The clean-up continues.

For over 20 years, grounded in a deep living pilina of genealogy, cultural protocol, research, and stewardship, the CWG has been the most active Native Hawaiian group working to protect Papahānaumokuākea. Both the CWG and co-trustee the Office of Hawaiian Affairs staunchly oppose commercial fishing in Papahānaumokuākea.

One of the core goals of Papahānaumokuākea's management plan is to maintain ecosystem integrity – but that goal cannot be met if commercial fishing targets key species for profit.

As Uncle Kawika always reminded us, "Inā mālama 'oe i ke kai, mālama nō ke kai iā 'oe. Inā mālama 'oe i ka 'āina, mālama nō ka 'āina iā oe." (If you care for the ocean, the ocean will care for you. If you care for the land, the land will care for you.)

However, a time is coming when our actions must extend beyond mālama; we must kia'i.

CWG member and founding NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Papahānaumokuākea superintendent 'Aulani Wilhem recalled that when CWG first began this work, "People would ask, 'What are you protecting it from?' And our answer was, 'That's the wrong question. It's about who and what are we protecting it for."

Join us as we stand united in upholding Papahānaumokuākea as a pu'uhonua, a sacred refuge worthy of protection. ■

*To learn more and stay updated on this critical issue, follow the Papahānaumokuākea Cultural Working Group on Facebook and Instagram, and visit their website: www.alohacwg.com. To express your opposition to extractive commercial fishing in Papahānaumokuākea, the CWG suggests sending letters to Hawai'i's congressional representatives, to the Sanctuary Advisory Commission, and to WESPAC Executive Director Kitty Simonds, U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, and Department of the Interior Secretary Doug Burgum.*

## From Moʻolelo to Molecules:

# The Restorative Science of Dr. Kiana Frank

By Donalyn Dela Cruz

Just past Ulupō Heiau, Dr. Kiana Frank sits on a bench that provides a serene view of Kawainui Marsh. She immediately recalls a moʻolelo of this wahi pana that once flourished as a large fishpond – and the people who had influence over the area.

"It's a really long story, but it's basically about all these layers of what does leadership really mean? What does pono look like on ʻāina? And how do we make sure that we're acknowledging our akua? Because that was the step that was missing – they were missing the acknowledgement of the unseen," Frank mused.

Dr. Kiana Frank
*- Photo: Donalyn Dela Cruz*

As she gazes out at Kawainui, she continues the story of a young Kahinihiniula who was given a Mākalei branch linked to the goddess Haumea. Kahinihiniula used the branch to attract fish in Kawainui after he had been overlooked.

In 2007, Oʻahu's Kawainui Marsh in Kailua was officially designated as a State Wildlife Sanctuary. It is mostly covered with layers of sedge.

Frank shares moʻolelo of this once thriving loko iʻa to help keiki and ʻŌiwi understand what was once here – and to envision what might one day be restored.

For the past five years, restoration of a small portion of Kawainui that includes Ulupō Heiau has been taking place through a stewardship agreement with the Department of Land and Natural Resources and Kauluakalana, a community nonprofit.

Clearing of sedge has led to the return of native birds. As for the fish, Frank notes they are invasive species that feed off the mud.

Kawainui has always been a place of wonder for Frank who grew up nearby – she can point out her grandmother's house among others along its perimeter. It was her grandmother who told her a moʻolelo of the "edible mud." Her curiosity led her on an academic journey from the marsh into the laboratory.

After graduating from Kamehameha Schools in 2004, Frank earned a bachelor of science degree in molecular genetics from the University of Rochester. She then attended Harvard University where she earned a master's and Ph.D. in molecular cell biology.

Woven throughout her educational path was cultural inspiration found in working with Paepae O Heʻeia and its restoration of an ancient fishpond. She attributes cultural practitioners who have done, and are doing, the work in ʻāina among her most influential teachers.

Her work on the ʻāina, paired with her academic training, gives her a formidable combination of skills that she brings to her work as an associate professor at the Pacific Biosciences Research Center where she integrates molecular biology, geochemistry, and Hawaiian culture.

It is the depth of moʻolelo that guides Frank in her ongoing curiosity of what lies beneath the layers of sedge in Kawainui – and what can one day be restored. The slimy world of mud and microbes offers both molecular structure and ancient stories of moʻo wāhine.

"You can say all of this culture is science, because it is – 100%!" exclaimed Frank.

"You have to be able to translate back and forth. I think that's an area where I do well. I sit in that translation space."

It's a space where she can break down a story about a moʻo and the yellowing of the hau as a biological indicator.

There was a time where she spent so much time in the mud that she could correctly guess its temperature.

"Her magic is that she loves the sciences deeply and she loves the sciences of her kūpuna deeply," said Kamuela Enos, director of the Office of Indigenous Knowledge and Innovation at the University of Hawaiʻi. "Whenever I'm with her, I see the work that she's doing. She has something that is really unique, which is this intersect of rigor and understanding ancestral thought, excitement, and creativity."

Frank's creativity is on full display in the #BOSSdancefriends videos she choreographs that share ʻāina-based science and are shot on location. Her mission is "to increase the enthusiasm of science in underrepresented Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island populations."

It has been some time since she has produced any new dance videos. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Frank was diagnosed with rat lungworm disease. She was stricken with excruciating pain and lost her faculties and strength. It has been a long road of ongoing recovery and reflection.

"All these things that are really challenging in your life," she said, "I feel like it was a lesson from my kūpuna that I need to slow down. They tried to teach me that multiple times, and I never listened."

Frank has not stopped thinking about how the kūpuna thought about creating systems that would last generations and wonders how we can integrate within the context we have now.

In May 2024, as part of the NSF Research Experience for Undergraduates: Environmental Biology for Pacific Islanders – a program led by Kānaka scientists Dr. Kiana Frank and Dr. Matt Medeiros – Frank (center in yellow) guides undergraduate fellows in filtering water samples collected across Ahupuaʻa Kailua for microbial and geochemical analysis, deepening their practice of kilo wai. *- Photo: Alex Robinson*

Dr. Kiana Frank looks out over Kawainui Marsh in Kailua, Oʻahu.
*- Photo: Donalyn Dela Cruz*

"Like, how do we utilize contemporary technologies and innovations in a way that our kūpuna would have in order to restore ʻāina, to restore our connection?"

A reflection that her work is centered around ʻāina in relation to people.

"A biologist really studies the relationships of organisms all the way to a cellular level, how cells interact. But I think as a Kanaka scientist, and one that works in the restoration of ʻāina, you're not just restoring a place, you're restoring people. And so you have to understand all of those relationships."

She points out as an example the native birds (aeʻo and ʻalae ʻula) that have returned since volunteers restored a small area of loʻi kalo in Kawainui.

Frank may have slowed her pace, but not her pursuit.

"I'm forever chasing the moʻolelo," said Frank. "You know, I've been really kind of on this kick about digging into Hawaiian language newspapers for evidence of microbes." ■

# Māhū: Living Within and Between the Wā of Kāne and Wāhine

By Adam Keawe Manalo-Camp

To our ancestors, the world was fluid, relational, and alive. And part of that Indigenous landscape and worldview are māhū. More than simply an identity, māhū held specific kulana and kuleana (roles and responsibilities) within traditional Hawaiian society – a vital, integrated presence that helped sustain the entire ecosystem of our lāhui.

Māhū embody a concept rooted in our cosmology and history. The word needs no translation, only remembrance, just as ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, like other Austronesian languages, flows with fluidity in its non-gendered pronouns, with the word ʻo ia embracing "he, she, and it" as one.

Across Moananuiākea, many Pacific peoples honor similar roles: faʻafafine in Sāmoa, fakaleiti in Tonga, akavaʻine in the Cook Islands, vakasalewalewa in Fiji, kakōl in the Marshall Islands, wininmwáán in Chuuk, and takatāpui and whakawāhine among Māori.

These identities reflect a vast network of gender diversity that existed long before the advent of colonial violence and continues to defy its boundaries today.

Some scholars have described māhū as living within and between the wā, the generative spaces of kāne and wahine.

Author, activist and co-founder of Māhū Ola Dr. Kahala Johnson offers this metaphor: "The Hawaiian kauhale (traditional housing complex) includes a plurality of living and working spaces that allow an ʻohana to fulfill both specific and shared kuleana. Like the kauhale, the pilina between māhū, wahine, and kāne exists as a way for our lāhui to create a home together."

In traditional Hawaiian culture, Māhū are not outsiders or outliers. They are essential threads in the tightly woven fabric of our relational universe that nourishes the social and spiritual health of our communities.

"Māhū exist in pilina with wāhine and kāne, and it is this relationship that situates my understanding of māhū within, against, beneath, and beyond the patriarchal binaries imposed by U.S. settler colonialism upon Kānaka Maoli," Johnson said.

Historically, māhū were respected, honored, and celebrated for the care they held for the community. Māhū were also political leaders and protectors, and Johnson proudly claims Kauholanuiamahu as a political ancestor, "who challenges the false assumption that māhū are apolitical or uninvolved in the affairs of warcraft, peacecraft, statecraft, economy, or diplomacy."


In 2019, during the peaceful occupation of Maunakea, Dr. Kahala Johnson, an author, activist, and co-founder of the organization, Māhū Ola, helped to establish Hale Mauna Māhū, a house and space for queer LGBTQIA+ protectors, at Puʻuhonua o Puʻuhuluhulu. - *Photo: Māhealani Ahia*

Kauholanuiamahu became the aliʻi ʻaimoku over Maui and Hawaiʻi, built the fishpond of Keoneʻōʻio in Honuaʻula on Maui, and quelled a rebellion incited by a rival chief. Johnson says that remembering these stories normalizes māhū as political figures and gives māhū today a rightful kuleana claim to power.

Beyond māhū, traditional Hawaiian culture included aikāne and punalua relationships — intimate, same-gender bonds like the one between Kamehameha III and his half-Hawaiian, half-Tahitian partner, Kaomi Moe — which carried their own forms of authority and legitimacy.

Along with Western contact and later, occupation, came the introduction and eventual internalization of foreign ideologies including homophobia and transphobia. External violence transformed into intergenerational harm, a process Johnson calls "māhūcide," which he describes as the "systematic erasure of māhū from ʻohana and lāhui."

This historical and existential harm echoes in the mental health crises and high suicide rates among māhū youth. What was once honored was turned into a source of shame and a slur. That shame has lodged itself deeply within our lāhui.

To remediate the systemic harm inflicted upon our māhū community, the kuleana of the larger community should be "one of aloha and unwavering accountability" Johnson said, adding that māhū must be defended with the same fierce dedication our lāhui shows for Kahoʻolawe, Maunakea, Kapūkakī, and our sovereignty.

Māhū as an identity carries profound teachings about transformation, a core value in our cosmology. According to Johnson, "māhū exist and create our maoliness within a Hawaiian cultural ecology already attuned to the endless shapeshifting patterns of ʻāina, body, and desire.

"The land changes, the tides change, the moons change, the stars change, the akua change. When you recognize that life is constantly transforming, you understand transformation as the piko of our worldview, grounded in Pō. Attempts to resist this change or confine our existence into rigid binaries are antithetical to life itself."

Johnson uses coral as an example, explaining that corals exist in a multitude of combinations. "Coral can change, can reproduce with itself or by itself. The coral polyp is a progeny of its mākua, Pō, which exists in a cosmic network of relations and pluralities far beyond human embodiment. Wā itself — time, space, vocality, interlude — is māhū. The foundation of our mana is nocturnal and cosmic, and that power of creation emerges through us as us."

Johnson calls for the urgent creation of culturally grounded spaces like Māhū Ola on Maui, which is a collaboration between Hui No Ke Ola Pono, Maui Medic Healers Hui, and Maui AIDS Foundation.

To young Kānaka Maoli reconciling their māhū identity, Johnson offers a call to courage and responsibility: "Politicize deeply, politicize early. Never let anyone, including me, tell you that māhū do not belong to our movements for sovereignty and liberation. Take up space and create a better world for the 17th Wā, for the next pilina to emerge from the Pō beyond māhū, wāhine, and kāne."

Māhū are not here to be crushed, erased or forced into uniformity. As Johnson declares, "We are 'hammahs,' not nails." ■

# Think Hawaiian: Kamehameha I

By Kainoa Horcajo

We cannot discuss Kamehameha – the man, the chief, the king, the legend, without mentioning the circumstances surrounding his birth, the world he was born into, and the stories that would slowly but inexorably be drawn into his gravity.

Like any story of a legendary figure, additions and exaggerations can be expected. This is doubled by the fact that he was born before Western arrival, at a time that was not counted in years from Christ's death by a culture that at that time did not put pen to paper. But there is a kernel of truth in every story, and we can be sure our oral accounts, our mele, oli, and moʻolelo carry with them facts and truths that are undeniable.

First came the prophecy. Kamehameha's birth was said to have been heralded by a bright new star with the tail of a bird streaking across the sky. Halley's comet, appearing in 1758, was surely quite a sight. The high priests interpreted the omen as marking the birth of a chief who would be a killer of chiefs, a threat to those currently in power. The decree came that such a child be put to death.

Born in the middle of a furious thunderstorm, the newborn was pushed through the side of the thatched hut and rushed many miles across the countryside to be raised in secret among commoners in a little fishing village in a remote part of Hawaiʻi Island.

After that jealous chief's passing, young Kamehameha was brought back into the royal retinue to be raised alongside the other young chiefs of the island, learning all the skills that could be learned. Early on he demonstrated his natural talents in hand-to-hand combat, strategy, speed, strength, and wits.

Stories of his growing strength and rising influence abound. Surrounded by older chiefs, prophecy, and rising tides of power, Kamehameha was emboldened to demonstrate his mana. In front of a crowd of onlookers, he lifted and overturned the massive 5,000-pound Naha Stone, long said to be the sign of the one who would unite the islands under one rule.

Looking backward, the arc of his life can seem predetermined. But he was not the highest-ranking chief by bloodline. He was not the heir apparent. What followed was not guaranteed. The belief that he could do what had never been done was shaped by who he was, the people surrounding him, and the world in which he lived.

The story of Kamehameha is a lesson in Hawaiian thought. It is a reminder to believe in the ability to bend the universe to one's will. Through physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual discipline, and the appropriate application of mana, the greatest among us tap into the riptides of reality and pull what is needed into being. Prophecies exist, but they do not fulfill themselves.


Portrait of Kamehameha I by artist Brook Kapūkuniahi Parker, 2017.
*- Image Courtesy of Brook Parker (hawaiianatart.org)*

Kamehameha was likely happiest when fishing, farming kalo, surfing his favorite breaks, and enjoying the simple rhythms of life - up with the sun, sweating at work, smiling and laughing in play, circled around the fire with loved ones at night. This is how he spent his final years after uniting the islands. It's also the life he lived as a child raised in secret. But like many great leaders, he made the difficult decision to walk away from that life to serve something larger.

The ancient world he lived in was both idyllic and brutal. Ruling chiefly families were engaged in a generational game of thrones, periods of peace broken by war, each reign vulnerable to the temperament of the chief in power. All it took was one leader obsessed with revenge or wealth to bring misery to thousands.

Many aliʻi over the centuries had seen the vision that uniting all the islands under one rule would bring peace, security, and wellbeing to the people. Kamehameha understood this deeply. Prophecy, preparation, and the counsel of trusted peers convinced him that he held the best chance of making it real.

He gave up the quiet life he loved, knowing the path ahead would be full of struggle. And he knew what kind of message he needed to give his people to prepare them.

"Imua e nā pokiʻi, a inu i ka wai ʻawaʻawa. ʻAʻohe hope e hoʻi mai ai." Forward, my brothers and sisters, and drink of the bitter waters of battle. There is no turning back.

The rally before war was not about easy victory. It was a solemn acknowledgment of what lay ahead...pain, sacrifice, difficulty, and uncertainty, and the necessity of continuing anyway.

Avoiding adversity only leads to more of it. Kamehameha understood that refusing the burden would lead to future generations bearing the cost. Instead, he stepped forward. He drank the bitter waters.

His story is too often remembered from the mountaintop, as the king who ruled. But his legacy was built in the valleys, in the struggle, in the years of preparation, in the small daily choices he made long before any crown.

We officially celebrate our first king on June 11 but there are reminders of the kingdom he built for us every day. By uniting the islands, he laid the foundation for a Hawaiian-led government that resisted colonial domination for nearly a century. He established a kingdom, named an heir, and stayed rooted in traditional beliefs even as others around him turned to the new ways of the missionaries.

And when the time came, he did not seem interested in how he would be remembered. He had done what he had come to do.

In his final moments, he is said to have uttered: "E ʻoni wale nō ʻoukou i kuʻu pono ʻaʻole e pau."

Continue the good that I have done, for it is not yet finished.

Others translate it as: Endless is the good I have given. Carry on my work. The meaning has been reinterpreted countless ways, adapted into slogans, prayers, and political messaging.

What often goes unmentioned are the words he reportedly said just before that, when asked for some final statement by a badgering chief he supposedly chided, "Why are you giving commands?! For what purpose?"

As he took his final breaths, he knew it was no longer up to him, his words, or his actions. He had already spoken. Already ruled. Already built. Already acted. He left behind a system, a succession, and a kingdom. The rest was no longer up to him.

The work had been done. ■

*Kainoa Horcajo is a writer, speaker, storyweaver, cultural practitioner, steward of his ʻohana's regenerative farm in ʻĪao Valley on Maui, and principal owner of The Moʻolelo Group, a multidisciplinary consultancy. To subscribe to his digital newsletter, "Think Hawaiian," go to kainoahorcajo.com/newsletter/.*

# Battle for O'ahu – Part 1

By Kirby M. Wright

*"Battle for O'ahu – Part 1" is a work of creative nonfiction by Kirby M. Wright, an award-winning 'Ōiwi poet, novelist and playwright.*

We launch from Moloka'i. Three mano (12,000) of warriors. Hundreds of war canoes, with the biggest carrying cannons and muskets. Two schooners join us offshore – I see Young and Davis on deck with a brass cannon between them. I love the sound of hulls and paddles on water. I wear a yellow-feathered helmet, a coconut fiber battle cape, and boar tusk wrist guards.

My men know an army twice our size awaits. They show no fear. Canoes from Maui join us halfway through the channel. It is as if a chunk of Moloka'i broke off to form a new island that moves toward O'ahu. The southeast tip of O'ahu is walled with cliffs. Black ledges rise above the sea. Our landing will be the shoreline of Waikīkī. A whale surfaces, showering us with seawater from its blowhole.

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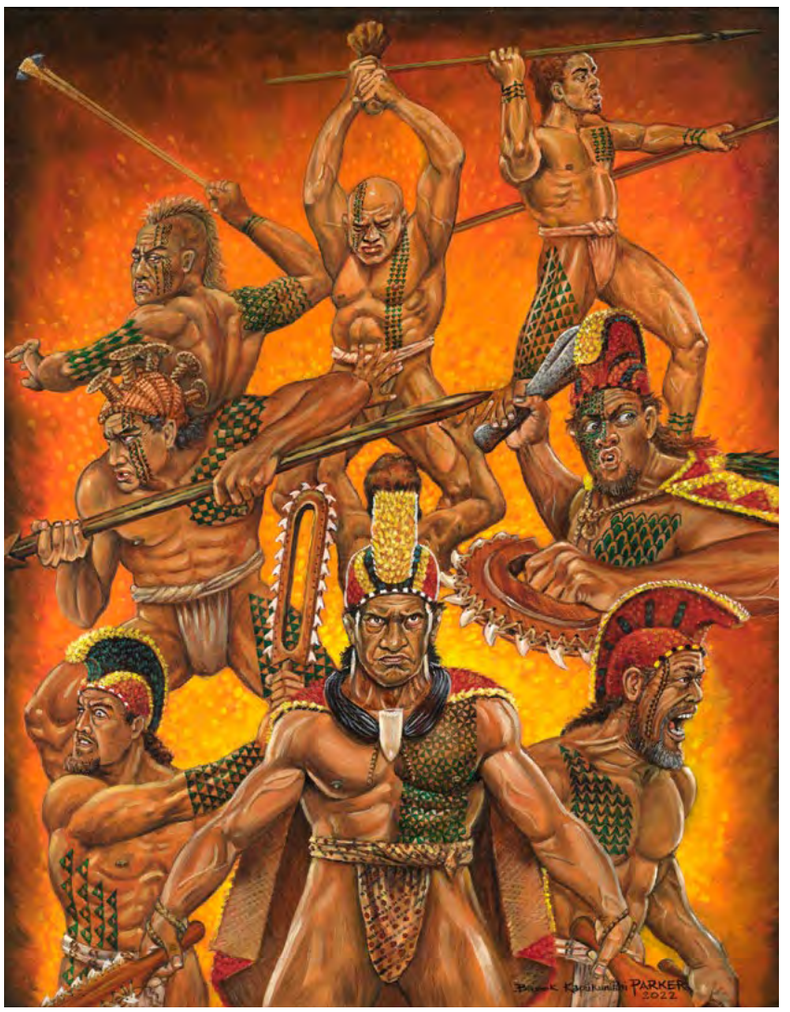
We reach Waikīkī. It is strangely quiet. No sign of O'ahu's kupa, aside from an 'ohana of fisher folk. My war canoe flies through the shallows and glides up a mud bank.

My warriors unload cannons and muskets. I have the canoe booms removed and its hull turned upside. The paddles are gathered and stored in a hold, to discourage the fearful from fleeing. My scouts return. They report enemy warriors massing in the Nu'uanu highlands, where cliffs are notched for cannons. Ka'iana, my rival from Kaua'i, has joined them. I suffer knowing I must kill the man I once loved as a brother.

We camp between a coconut grove and the crater wall, awaiting attack. No attack comes. We rest three days in Waikīkī. My men grow anxious. Skirmishes break out. Maka'āinana women have made the crossing with us. Some are the wives of warriors. One belongs to Young. They make us simple meals of fish and poi. They serve the soft flesh of 'ulu, 'uala, and mai'a. Some in my army only eat breadfruit, banana, and sweet potato. A few suck on the sugary stalks of kō.

Young and Davis make ammunition for the cannons by wrapping river stones in kapa bundles. I have entrusted the ali'i wāhine with muskets. These royal women practice firing and loading on a field beneath the crater.

It is difficult for me to eat. I find it harder to sleep. The wind rattles the coconut fronds and strange birds cry out in the light of a crescent moon, as if dying.




"Nā Koa" by artist Brook Kapūkuniahi Parker, 2022. - *Image Courtesy of Brook Parker (hawaiianatart.org)*

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Day four in Waikīkī. Anger moves like waves through my army. They are anxious. Two low chiefs from Kona test stone clubs against the trunks of kiawe trees. Their blows sound like drumbeats. The time to make war has come. We march north over mud flats and follow a river through fields of kiawe. I carry the sacred ax 'Olopū, made from the green stone of Kaua'i.

A column of my tested koa (warriors) follow a river meandering toward a crater smaller than Lē'ahi. These small volcanoes are dangerous. Enemy warriors may charge from either or both sides, destroying formations and denying the chance to fire cannons and muskets.

We reach the base of the crater. The pū kaua blows. This war trumpet is the voice that chills the coward to the bone. An enemy crescent skirts its edge, blocking our advance. Black war dogs roam the plain between armies. It is time.

"Makawalu," I order my men. Brush formation. Two small forces break from my army to take up positions right and left. They will protect our flanks against surprise attacks. Davis and Young position the cannons. I share the 'awa bowl with my fellow ali'i. I drink deeply. The calm comes.

Across from us on the battlefield O'ahu's warriors pass the 'awa bowl too. The 'awa steadies my hands and makes my feet feel part of the earth, as if I have risen from the lava pulsing with fierce blood.

O'ahu's warriors rattle their spears and clubs. The dogs flee. The deadly hum of slings comes, filling the sky with pōhaku. Stones pelt us, cutting open skin and cracking gourd helmets. I order our ihe (spear) men forward while my ma'a warriors sling back pōhaku. They hurl spears – dagger tips strike my front line and men fall.

I spot Ka'iana raising his musket and firing. I signal my Haoles. Young pours in black powder and Davis lights the fuse. Lōpaka booms. Flying stones cut through the enemy crescent. The smaller cannons fire. Second and third volleys shatter their crescent into pieces. A black fog from the firing cannons drifts over the battlefield. Ka'iana urges his men on, leading a swarm into our teeth of my army.

The ali'i fire their muskets, knocking Ka'iana off his feet. Ka'iana struggles to stand. Again, our muskets fire. Ka'iana drops. Ke'eaumoku presses the front wall of pololū (long) spears forward. The two smaller forces unite to attack from the west.

O'ahu's army is trapped. Many stand their ground and fight hand-to-hand. Some run into the foothills. I know the trail they take north will lead us to my half-brother. This first battle was only a skirmish. Kekūhaupi'o carries Ka'iana's body to the crater and places it on a ledge. Tomorrow I will bury my enemy and my friend. Perhaps he believed he would take my life today and send my men back to Kona. ■

*Kirby M. Wright is an award-winning 'Ōiwi poet, novelist, and playwright. He was born and raised in Hawai'i, graduated from Punahou, and has a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing. His family land on Moloka'i served as the breadbasket for Kamehameha's warriors while training for their assault on O'ahu. His Hawaiian blood comes by way of Kulia Na'oho, his piha Kanaka Maoli great-grandmother from Waiehu, Maui.*


Kaʻiana, played by Jason Momoa, leads an attack on the island of Oʻahu in *Chief of War*, the nine-episode series about the unification of the Hawaiian Islands. Loea ʻUmi Kai fabricated the traditional weapons wielded by the warriors. *Chief of War* will stream on Apple TV+ beginning August 1. - *Photo Courtesy of Apple TV+*

# A Turning Point for Native Hawaiian Storytelling

*By Puanani Fernandez-Akamine*

Years ago, Thomas Paʻakaiokahonua "Paʻa" Sibbett was working at Kualoa Ranch when he read in a newspaper article that discussions were in the works about making a film about Kamehameha. He remembers thinking to himself, "if Hollywood wants Hawaiian stories I can do that."

The spark that ignited within him that day set a new trajectory for his life. Raised in Washington state as a child of the diaspora, Sibbett returned to the continent and began writing scripts. He would write 12 scripts before selling his first one.

Immersing himself in the world of movie-making, he soon formed a friendship with another ʻŌiwi raised in the diaspora, an up-and-coming actor named Jason Namakaeha Momoa, and they began collaborating on projects – a partnership that has now spanned 15 years.

Over the years, their collaborations have included *Braven* (2018), *The Last Manhunt* (2022), *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom* (2023), and, most recently, *Chief of War*, the highly anticipated nine-episode television series about the unification of the Hawaiian Islands that will stream globally on Apple TV+ beginning August 1.

## Pitching the Idea

*Chief of War* has been described as a "passion project" for Momoa and Sibbett, but it's more than that – it is a huliau (turning point) for Native Hawaiian storytelling.

This is the first time that a story written by Hawaiians about Hawaiians has been financed and produced on such an epic scale. It is a moment that was decades in the making and that required years of hard work and the building of pilina within the industry.

"We had [the script] for a while, but we knew it had to be big. It took me 20 years to get to where I had to be [in my career] in order to pitch something like this," Momoa reflected.

Momoa and Sibbett pitched *Chief of War* to Apple while Momoa was in Budapest filming *Dune* (2021). Momoa made a call to Zack Van Amburg, the chief content officer for Apple TV+. "It was perfect timing because I had finished filming season three of *See* (2019-2022) and had worked with Apple since 2018. We were on the call for probably over an hour. We had the script, the plot – the whole layout of the season.

"It was the first time I've ever just had a 'yes.' It was green-lit the moment I pitched it to him. He was so excited. And I don't think that would have happened if I hadn't done 30 episodes of *See*. There's a good relationship there."

## Centering the Story on Kaʻiana

It would be reasonable to assume that the lead character in a story about the unification of the Hawaiian Kingdom would be Kamehameha – after all he was known as "Ka Naʻi Aupuni" (conqueror of the nation). And for a moment, Momoa and Sibbett did seriously consider telling a "Kamehameha story."

"I'll be completely honest. As a Kanaka I was worried about the response to that. I kept thinking about how to approach it – like what perspective do you take? There is so much nuance to his story and everybody has a connection to it in one way or another," Sibbett said noting that in some circles Kamehameha is almost deified.

Sensitive to that, along with the understanding that there are ʻohana who, based on their lineage, might see Kamehameha as more of a villain than a hero Sibbett said, "we ultimately came to the decision that we shouldn't tell that story at all even though it's commercially viable."

The day after they made that decision, it dawned on Sibbett that the story of unification could be told through another, lesser-known character. "It's an interesting dynamic. The world probably knows more about Kamehameha than any other Hawaiian. But during his lifetime the only Hawaiian name spoken outside of Hawai'i was Ka'iana."

Ka'iana was a high chief of Kaua'i who left Hawai'i in 1787 aboard the vessel *Nootka* as the guest of Captain John Meares. It is likely that he was the first aliʻi to travel abroad on a Western ship – although he was not the first Hawaiian. That distinction went to a woman whose name is recorded as "Winee." She left Hawai'i about three months before Ka'iana on another ship, the *Imperial Eagle*, as the personal servant of the captain's wife.

Ka'iana traveled around the Pacific Rim, visiting China, the Philippines and the Northwest Coast of America. When he returned to Hawai'i he was fluent in English and had amassed a large collection of Western weapons – assets Kamehameha was quick to leverage. Ka'iana and his two brothers joined Kamehameha's army and helped the future king secure the islands of Hawai'i and Maui.

Sibbett said that focusing the story on Ka'iana instead of Kamehameha "made it really interesting. He was a character who had traveled the world. It fit perfect – not just for storytelling. It worked great for Jason too because he is also very worldly. He is Kanaka, but he's traveled."

Paʻa Sibbett and Jason Momoa at the *Chief of War* premiere at Ko ʻOlina on July 18. Sibbett and Momoa co-wrote *Chief of War* over a period of about 10 years. - *Photo: Jacob Chinn*

One particularly riveting scene involves a hōlua sled race between Kamehameha (Kaina Makua center left) and Ka'iana (Jason Momoa center right). Loea Tom Pōhaku Stone fabricated 12 hōlua sleds in three months for the production and then taught Momoa how to ride. - *Photo Courtesy of Apple TV+*

Kaina Makua as Kamehameha. The series portrays him as a man coming to terms with his kuleana and his reluctant acceptance of the burden of leadership. It is a side of his story that is not usually told. - *Photo Courtesy of Apple TV+*

While researching the story, Momoa discovered that he is a descendant of Ka'iana. "That was something we came upon, so it was wonderful that it just kind of fell into place," Sibbett added.

From a storytelling perspective, focusing on a lesser-known character gave Momoa and Sibbett more flexibility. "The best way to tell this story is with a character that you can dirty up a little bit. A character that you can run through the mud, expose his flaws, vilify and redeem. We can do anything with a character like that and still tell the story of unification."

## Casting Kamehameha

One of the many interesting stories about the creation of *Chief of War* is how Kaina Makua – a Kaua'i kalo farmer, cultural practitioner and community educator – was cast to play the role of Kamehameha.

It was a chance meeting three years ago at a canoe regatta. "The moment I laid eyes on him I was like: 'That's Kamehameha,'" Momoa recalled. "It was a thunderbolt to the brain, to my soul. I ran up to him. I needed to know who he was and talk to him. It was destiny. He walks the talk. He's brought all this integrity. He's a true Kanaka."

In *Chief of War*, Kamehameha is portrayed as a man coming to terms with his kuleana and reluctantly accepting the burden of leadership. "We know Kamehameha was trained as a warrior. And we know that he became the sole mōʻī of Hawai'i [Island]. I wanted to focus on that period in between," Sibbett said.

"There was another aspect to Kamehameha. We know that after the unification he turned people to agriculture. He loved farming. It's the human side of his story that we don't always talk about. This is Kamehameha portrayed in a specific context at a specific time."

Pondering the subject of leadership Sibbett said, "Imagine being told your whole life that you are supposed to be this. But can you be a leader simply because you're told you're one? Or do you need to find that path yourself? That is the window I wanted us to open and look through and talk about."

In taking on the kuleana of portraying Kamehameha, Makua said he looked within. "If you look at Kamehameha, and his role as a leader, he has to go through the trials of decision-making, doubting his decisions, right or wrong. And I go through that in the same way. I'm already in leadership in our community. You got to be the strength. You got to be vulnerable. And I feel it was exactly that. So the preparation was simple. I did what I do. I became myself."

## Researching History and Culture

Sibbett's bookshelves at home are lined with titles like *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i* by historian Samuel Kamakau and *Kamehameha and His Warrior Kekūhaupiʻo* by Rev. Stephen Desha. He grew up in a family that sang songs and told stories and, despite living outside of Hawai'i, Hawaiian culture and history "was always just alive in us. It's just part of who I am."

Over the 10 years that Momoa and Sibbett worked on the storyline for *Chief of War*, they read everything they could get their hands on – including translations of 19th century Hawaiian newspapers.

Because while the story of Kamehameha and the unification of the kingdom is familiar, their challenge was telling the story from Ka'iana's point of view – and how to include all the wonderful information they found during their research.

"It was exciting. It was so much fun. The research was never labor," Sibbett reflected. "The real question became what can't we include? Like, we just don't have space for everything and in some cases, we were combining two

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characters into one so that we could salvage some of those stories."

They zeroed in on trying to present as much as possible in a way that didn't feel disjointed. "The real joy was hearing non-Hawaiians tell us, 'I can't believe how much of the story we don't get to tell,'" Sibbett recalled. "But we just didn't have a place for [everything] in the narrative that we were building."

While researching the story, Momoa and Sibbett connected with Awaiaulu, the organization dedicated to developing resources and resource people that can bridge Hawaiian knowledge from the past to the present and the future.

### Asserting 'Ōlelo Hawai'i

Awaiaulu Programs Director Kau'i Sai-Dudoit met Sibbett and Momoa on Maunakea in July 2019. They were directed to her after asking around about who could help them with history and language.

There, on the mauna, Momoa and Sibbett told Sai-Dudoit about their project. "I was impressed because the two of them had done their homework," Sai-Dudoit recalled. "We spent about an hour just talking and talking."

Sai-Dudoit made arrangements to meet with them on O'ahu so Awaiaulu Executive Director Dr. Puakea Nogelmeier could be looped in. At the meeting, Momoa and Sibbett talked with them about their vision for the project, which was still in the idea stage as there was no funding. "We said okay, let's see how this thing morphs. But we can be onboard," said Sai-Dudoit.

When Apple agreed to finance *Chief of War*, Awaiaulu became a key collaborator. Nogelmeier and Sai-Dudoit took on the kuleana of translating the script into 'ōlelo Hawai'i. Because they were privy to the script as it was being refined, they also served as historical and cultural consultants.

"We had Zoom meetings. As scripts were produced they wanted them to be translated – but they would also accept our feedback on the content," said Nogelmeier. "There was some material that we would say 'we can't translate this because it's problematic' and they were responsive to that."

The plan from the beginning was for the first two episodes to be completely in Hawaiian. "Pa'a and Jason actually had to fight for that because Apple was 'on the fence' and then flaked out at one point and said 'no,'" recalled Sai-Dudoit.

"And so they fought for it and they won that fight. The first two episodes are completely in Hawaiian and rest of the episodes are 40-60% in Hawaiian – except [the episode] when Ka'iana is traveling."

"It absolutely had to be in 'ōlelo," Momoa said. "Our cast is very diverse, mostly Polynesian. [Besides Hawaiians] we have Tongans and Samoans and Māoris. When you see Temeuera (Morrison) playing Kahekili and Cliff Curtis [playing Keoua] what they were doing [learning to speak Hawaiian] is insane. I can't just roll over and speak Māori, right?

"Aside from a couple of folks like Kaina who speak Hawaiian fluently, it was extremely challenging. For me, personally, it was the hardest thing I've ever done."

When filming began, other Awaiaulu staff were pulled in as Hawaiian language coaches to work with the actors. Keawe Goodhue emerged as the project's Hawaiian language supervisor while Kaho'okahi Kanuha was tapped to be Momoa's personal language coach.

Commenting on the importance of making the series in 'ōlelo Hawai'i, Kanuha said it strengthens the lāhui and our connection to lāhui.

"What identifies us as the same lāhui? It's not the color of our skin anymore because we all look quite different. But if we 'ōlelo Hawai'i, if we practice Hawaiian practices, if we know our mo'olelo (stories) and tell our mo'olelo, if we know our culture and practice our culture – those are the things that we can identify each other by," he said.

"This project brings all of that together. Because of our political situation – if you don't know, google 'Hawaiian occupation' – it's difficult to envision a Hawaiian future because we have no idea what our past looked like. But if we can imagine what Hawaiian society was like, then we can imagine what Hawaiian society should be moving forward.

"This isn't something that just brings the past back to life," Kanuha added. "This is something that brings life to our present and to our future."

### Balancing Authenticity...

For Momoa and Sibbett it was imperative that *Chief of War* was created and presented with authenticity and cultural integrity.

Noted musician and cultural practitioner Kaumakaiwa Kanaka'ole served as *Chief of War's* cultural supervisor, and a long list of consultants were also involved – respected cultural practitioners in their respective fields that included folks like Keone Nunes (tattoos), Francis Palani Sinenci (hale-building), Dalani Tanahy (kapa-making), 'Umi Kai (weapons) and Tom Pōhaku Stone (hōlua sledding).

When traditional weapon-maker 'Umi Kai was approached by Sibbett to serve as a consultant for *Chief of War*, he responded with caution. "Hollywood has not been kind to cultural people. They don't represent them well; they exaggerate things according to what they think can be entertaining," Kai said to Sibbett.

"Pa'a said, no, that he wanted to keep it as authentic as possible. But indicated that the only way they can produce something is to make it entertaining as well," Kai recalled. "I said, 'that's fine, but just stay within certain boundaries so that you don't misrepresent Hawai'i and its people.'"

Kai ended up making nearly 30 traditional weapons and various implements for the production. His weapons were sent off to Los Angeles where molds were made and

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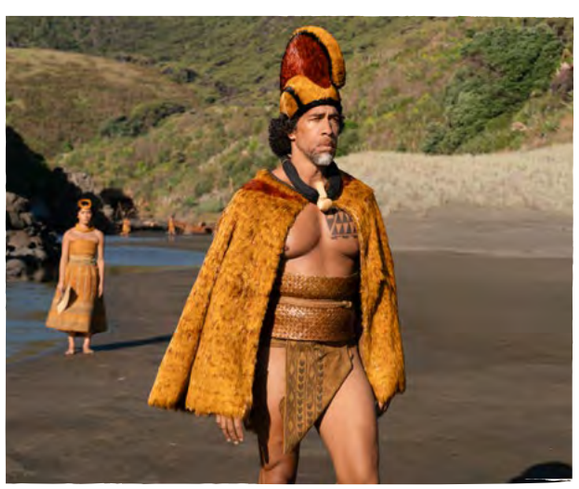
Jason Momoa as Ka'iana. Because *Chief of War* is a story about politics, deception and war, it presents a vision of Hawai'i as a warrior culture that may shock outsiders who have long viewed Hawaiians as a "host" culture for tourism. - *Photos Courtesy of Apple TV+*

(L-R) Māori actor Te Kohe Tuhaka as Namakeha ("Namake") and American-born Tongan actor Siua Ikale'o as Nahiolea ("Nahi"), the half-brothers of Ka'iana, evade the forces of Kahekili.



Moses Goods as Ke'eaumoku ("Moku") walks away after exchanging words with his daughter, Ka'ahumanu, played by Aotearoa-born Tongan actress Luciane Buchanan.

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rubber renditions of the weapons created for filming the series’ many intense battle scenes. Kai’s original weapons were just used for close-ups.

Tom Pōhaku Stone, an expert in hōlua sledding, was in California with his ‘ohana when he got a call from Sibbett about being a project consultant. He flew home early to meet with him. Once he agreed, Stone had three months to make 12 hōlua sleds for the production – which includes a thrilling hōlua race scene.

With help from his wahine, Aulani, Stone met the near-impossible fabrication deadline. But he also had to teach the production team about building a hōlua slide and how to ride. “I spent a whole day with Jason Momoa talking about it,” said Stone. “We went over to the Big Island and talked about how to actually ride a hōlua sled.”

The hōlua race scene was filmed in Aotearoa (where most of the filming was done due to cost), but the production team kept in touch with Stone via Zoom. Because Stone couldn’t be there to supervise the building of the slide he said, “they built the wall a little bit higher than what it was supposed to be. But they made it work.”

Hōlua sledding is an extreme sport – imagine going down a rock slide at anywhere from 40-80 mph on a sled that is only six inches wide and up to 12 feet long with the ride ending once the sled hurtles off a cliff and plunges into the ocean – so for safety reasons, CGI is used in part of the scene. Stone was just happy to share an aspect of our culture that few people know exists.

### ...With Entertainment

Despite the care taken to honor our culture and history and to maintain authenticity, everyone involved in the production is quick to point out that while *Chief of War* is based on actual events, it is not a historical documentary. Momoa and Sibbett have exercised creative license as storytellers, not only to move the story forward, but for cinematic or entertainment purposes.

“We’re crunching 10, 20 years of chronology into a short story. And there is no guarantee of a season two for us, so we want to make sure that we’re telling stories that reflect the Hawaiian experience and the things that we have been through,” said Sibbett.

Additionally, some historical events were moved around “because we needed our characters to experience the event on a personal level instead of hearing about it happening somewhere else,” he said.

“They took some liberties, but they were open to suggestions. Some of the liberties seemed logical and functional as far as filming goes, but were problematic in terms of history or culture. We would bring in those angles and they were pretty open,” said Nogelmeier.

“You’re going to have to make creative choices,” Momoa said. “We’re working for a massive company trying to sell [the story] and get this out. We can kick down the door. The next generation can make it even better.”

“I think that, as creatives, as storytellers, we made decisions that maybe aren’t universally acceptable in the Hawaiian community and that’s okay. The fact that we can even have the conversation is amazing – as is the fact that we are in a place to discuss our history on such a platform,” said Sibbett.

### Including and Empowering Other ‘Ōiwi

By all accounts, Momoa has been extremely generous about sharing his considerable platform in the film industry with other Hawaiians. *Chief of War* has provided employment and opportunities for Hawaiian talent both in front of and behind the cameras, including hundreds of extras.

“I think at least 85% of the crew [in Hawai‘i] were Kānaka or Hawai‘i-born,” said Hawai‘i Unit sound mixer Nohealani Nihipali. “So our industry is turning. We have enough people who can represent every department in our industry, who know how to make this work.

“Pa‘a and Jason are inspiring us, they’re empowering us. We have lots of stories and there’s enough work for everybody – all different kinds of work. But it’s Jason’s platform that he’s opening to other people,” she said.

Ioane Goodhue plays “Lima” who is kahu (honored attendant) to Kalanikūpule, son of Kahekili. He is one of a handful of cast members with speaking roles who is fluent in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and was happy to get the call to be part of the project.

“I’ve been carving out a little niche for myself here at home with some Hawai‘i films, but nothing to this scale, obviously,” Goodhue said.

“In film we have artistry that gets represented really well at the indie level, and then you have industry, which is a different beast. This project team has found a happy medium where artistry and industry can co-exist. I’m really excited for where this will go and what will come after.”

Moses Goods, who plays Ke‘eaumoku, is a seasoned ‘Ōiwi actor and playwright who has been active in Hawai‘i’s local theatre scene for almost 30 years. He said being part of *Chief of War* is a continuation of what he’s been doing as a storyteller, but on a much larger scale.

“I’ve been doing my thing performing in classrooms and theatres. But when I auditioned for this and was cast, it was a moment for me. It was something I had hoped would happen in my career – and it happened,” said Goods. “The Hawaiians who were already ‘in the room’ opened the door and invited more Hawaiians into the room on every level – as actors and crew and cultural consultants.”

As a student, Mainei Kinimaka loved taking photos, making short films, and doing the morning announcements at school. When she graduated, Kinimaka, who is ‘ohana to Momoa, worked as his assistant for six years to learn about the film industry.

Momoa took her under his wing, giving her experience working on set, directing, filming and producing. Kinimaka eventually tried acting and when *Chief of War* came up, she auditioned for the role of “Heke,” sister to

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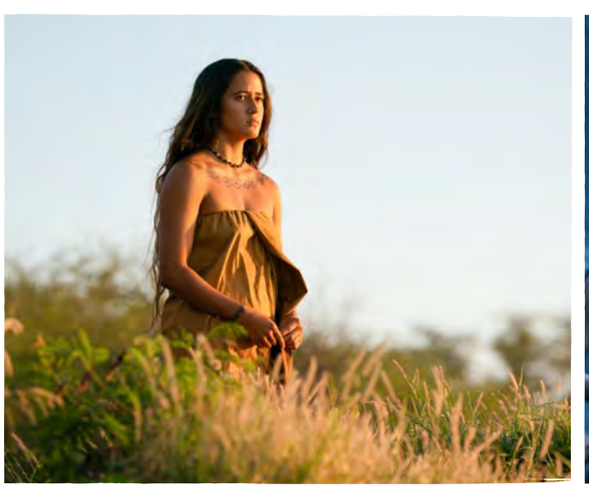
Maui-born Brandon Finn as Kalanikūpule, son of Kahekili. He is portrayed as the son who lives in his father’s shadow, at once seeking Kahekili’s approval while recoiling from his cruelty. - *Photos Courtesy of Apple TV+*



Mainei Kinimaka as "Heke," the sister of Kekupuohi ("Kupuohi"), wife of Ka’iana. Kinimaka shared that her character who is a healer, was a role created to serve as a counterpoint to the violence that dominates in the storyline.

(L) Veteran Māori actor Temuera Morrison as Kahekili with Ocean Kaowili as "Pāhoa," Kahekili's kahu (honored attendant) and counselor. They are antagonists in the story who plot to control - or destroy - Ka'iana.

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Kekupuohi, wife of Kaʻiana.

Heke is an invented character who provides a counterpoint to the violent world that surrounds her. "She is a healer," Kinimaka said. "An innocent, peaceful person caught up in the crossfire of war." As an interesting side note, Kinimaka shared that the name, Heke, pays homage to "Grace Heke," the lead character in *Once Were Warriors*, a 1994 Māori film that helped inspire Momoa's desire to tell Hawaiian stories.

"I realize how great an opportunity this is for our people. Hawaiʻi has such an unimaginable amount of talent and so many incredible storytellers. If *Chief of War* gets another season, I think they'll be able to invite more filmmakers from Hawaiʻi to [be involved]. That's going to be key," Kinimaka added.

### Seizing Control of Our Narrative

Since the film industry emerged a century ago, Hawaiʻi has hosted hundreds of feature films and television series. But in most cases, Hawaiʻi and her people have been an exotic backdrop for stories that could have happened elsewhere starring actors with no connection to this place.

"Many times shows have come out about Hawaiʻi and we've been offended. But years ago it hit me that those filmmakers want to honor Hawaiʻi – they just don't know how to do it. They were trying to share their love of this place, but that's not their kuleana. It's ours," Sibbett reflected.

"This show being created, produced, written, acted, and (because of Jason's involvement as a director of the final episode) directed by Hawaiians is a big deal. We don't take for granted how amazing this opportunity has been," Sibbett added.

"Instead of us chasing and trying to be a part of this industry as the background of somebody else's story, what we're hoping is that our people can value what's being done and realize they can be the main character of a movie."

"It's not that films were not being made, but to have something made on this level feels really good," Momoa said. "Hawaiʻi has so many beautiful, wonderful stories. I hope this inspires others. You want the next generations to be better and better and better. I think what we've created right now sparks a lot of beautiful things. I think a lot of things are going to open up."

"The intent of this project was to tell our story and try to and tell it in the best possible way," said Ocean Kaowili, a firefighter by vocation who plays "Pāhoa," kahu to Kahekili. "When most of the world thinks about Hawaiʻi it's grass shacks on a beach. They don't know our history, where we come from, and the challenges we face as Hawaiians – you know, the demographics. This depicts us as a prosperous people with our own government. I think that's huge."

Momoa and Sibbett are deeply grateful for Apple's support and are ready to continue moving forward – they just need to know that *Chief of War* will be well-received by audiences outside of Hawaiʻi.

"As soon as we have that confidence, we'll do everything we can to make sure there's more storytelling. I have a whole archive of stories to build, stories I've already prepped. I've got pilots ready to go," Sibbett said. "Doing *Chief of War* was a way to open the door for more storytelling by our people."

"We put everything into this. It's our home, our people, it's our everything. It's not just another show. It's our lives, our families, our ancestors," Momoa said emotionally.

"This has been a dream of mine my whole life. Is it 100% the best it can be? No. But is it going to inspire future generations and is it going to kick down the door for something that's never been done before? I think yes." ■

Most of the principle cast members along with executive producers and friends ham it up on the red carpet at the Chief of War premiere at Ko ʻOlina on July 18. - *Photo: Kelli Meskin Soileau*

## Key ʻŌiwi Contributors to "Chief of War"

### Co-Creators/Co-Writers
» Jason Momoa
» Thomas "Paʻa" Sibbett

### Title Role
» Jason Momoa: Kaʻiana

### Starring Roles
» Moses Goods: Keʻeaumoku ("Moku")
» Mainei Kinimaka: Heke (sister to Kekupuohi "Kupuohi")
» Kaina Makua: Kamehameha

### Supporting Roles (*not an exhaustive list*)
» Ioane Goodhue: Lima (kahu to Kalanikūpule)
» Ocean Kaowili: Pāhoa (kahu to Kahekili)

### Supervisors/Leads (*not an exhaustive list*)
» Kala Crowell: Key Assistant Location Manager
» Keawe Goodhue: Hawaiian Language Supervisor
» Pono Guerrero: Key Assistant Location Manager
» Nohealani Nihipali: Hawaiʻi Second Unit Sound Mixer
» Kaumakaiwa Kanakaʻole: Cultural Supervisor
» Kahoʻokahi Kanuha: Language coach to Jason Momoa
» Wainani Young-Tomich: Hawaiʻi Second Unit First Assistant Director

### Cultural Consultants (*not an exhaustive list*)
» Kauila Barber: Costume makeup and hair
» ʻUmi Kai: Weapons and implements
» Archie Kalepa: Canoes/sailing
» Huihui Kanahele-Mossman: Costume makeup and hair
» Kimo Kepano: Hawaiian Light Seer
» Marques Marzan: Costume makeup and hair
» Joseph Aliʻi Miner: Martial arts
» Puakea Nogelmeier: ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi script
» Keone Nunes: Tattoos
» Kauʻi Sai-Dudoit: ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi script
» Rick San Nicolas: Featherwork
» Francis Palani Sinenci: Hale building
» Thomas Pōhaku Stone: Hōlua sleds/sledding
» Dalani Tanahy: Kapa-making
» Jerry Walker: Martial arts
» Hina Wong-Kalu: Customs/culture

# Nā Mea Hawai'i: A Model for Hawaiian Business

By Kelli Meskin Soileau

Nā Mea Hawai'i – originally called Native Books and Beautiful things – was co-founded over 30 years ago by Maile Meyer and a hui that included Nake'u Awai, Colleen Kimura of Tutuvi, Nola Nāhulu of Betty Mu'u, and more.

Their collaborative business model featured locally made Hawaiian fashion, art, clothing, cultural items made from wood, stone, bone, shell and materials from the 'āina, food products like Mamaki tea, beauty products, hula implements, Hawaiian books and other mea (things) made in the islands.

Nā Mea was always a collective effort intended to support small businesses, farmers, practitioners, artists, writers and the makers of Hawaiian things. In perpetuating traditional values and communal practices, their business model was more about sharing than financial gain and about instilling pride in the culture and community rather than commodifying it.

Under Nā Mea Hawai'i, The Shop Pacifica at Bishop Museum will offer a curated selection of local fashion, accessories, memorabilia, workshops and activities.

This model attracted people who also valued participating in a shared economy – like some retailers who are working for causes bigger than money.

"David Shepard is a scientist and conservationist who initially sold shirts out of the back of his car. And Hawaiian Force got popular really fast but their main focus is to support PKO (Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana)," Meyer said, emphasizing the altruistic nature of these businesses.

Each business has different goals and sharing a value system allows for flexibility in supporting each one. Nā Mea's retailers and makers range from small start-ups looking to create a stable income to those who have reached their goals and everything in between.


CNHA has assumed operations of Bishop Museum's Shop Pacifica, with plans to refresh the space to showcase more local and Hawaiian-made merchandise. - *Photos: Kelli Meskin Soileau*

In the spirit of community, Nā Mea added activities and a Kīpuka Makerspace to bring people together to learn lauhala, featherwork and lei-making.

Nā Mea Hawai'i has cultivated a Hawaiian way of doing business by working collaboratively in a sharing economy rather than a profit margin. This past June, the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA) purchased Nā Mea Hawai'i and plans to carry that legacy forward.

"CNHA is committed to honoring Maile's vision and continuing her decades-long work of uplifting Native Hawaiian makers, learners, and practitioners," said Max Mukai, CNHA's director of business development.

"They are the right amplifier of Nā Mea's value system in supporting local businesses and start-ups," Meyer added enthusiastically. "They have been a steppingstone for so many businesses."

Meyer remains actively involved with Nā Mea Hawai'i under CNHA as a consultant to guide the transitional process and ensure that the Na Mea brand's legacy, values, and cultural integrity are upheld.

It has only been a few months, and CNHA has already expanded the brand reach, launching into the Hawai'i's Finest Summer Expo and acquiring and moving into a second retail space at Bishop Museum's Shop Pacifica.

"The museum provides an opportunity to reach even more audiences and deepen engagement through programming that celebrates Native Hawaiian culture, storytelling and craftsmanship," said Mukai.

Bishop Museum is anticipating stronger brand alignment between Shop Pacifica, the museum and the possibility of exclusive merchandise created in collaboration with local artists, makers, and cultural practitioners inspired by the museum's collections.

"We saw in CNHA not just a capable retail operator, but an organization that puts community at the center of everything they do," said Brandon Bunag, Ed.D., Bishop Museum vice president of public programs and interim director of education. "CNHA is a natural partner for us because of the deep alignment between our missions and their community focus."

Shop Pacifica will also be a space for workshops, product showcases, and cultural events that will turn the shop into a place for gathering and learning.

"Bishop Museum is a natural fit to uplift businesses that have been long standing vendors with Nā Mea Hawai'i, The Mākeke, and our KūHana business accelerator," said Mukai.

"Together in one space, visitors and kama'āina are offered a curated selection of local fashion, accessories, snacks, memorabilia, and more."

Nā Mea Hawai'i's brand is now a part of CNHA's integrated business and ecomonic support programs that offer entrepreneurial training, business loans, retail opportunities and cultural education. Individuals can potentially work their way through the various multifaceted programs, gain valuable information and life experience, and eventually create a thriving business venture of their own.

CNHA is working to build more capacity to support and establish a larger presence of Native Hawaiian businesses in the marketplace, reaching visitors and the local community on a larger scale.

Local and Native Hawaiian-owned businesses interested in participating in CNHA's larger marketing presence can fill out a vendor application at themakeke.com. ■

# E Koaʻe E

By Lisa Kapono Mason

The famous koaʻe of Kīlauea showing off during the 28th eruption episode at Halemaʻumaʻu on July 9. Koaʻe use circulating heat currents to gain lift, a method of flight known as thermal soaring. - *Photo: Tom Kūaliʻi, prints available @tomkualiiphotography*

The Koaʻe kea, or white-tailed tropicbird, is a native seabird found throughout the Hawaiian Islands. Though they spend much of their lives solitary and at sea, these birds return seasonally to rocky cliffsides from Kauaʻi to Hawaiʻi Island to breed.

From March through October, koaʻe kea gather at one of their long-established breeding colonies at Kaluapele, adorning ʻŪekahuna and Halemaʻumaʻu, within Kīlauea volcano.

Koaʻe return to their same partner year after year, raising a single chick together each season in rocky crevices along the crater walls. Their white plumage, streaked with black along their eyes and wings, and long, ribbon-like tail feathers called streamers, play a central role in their aerial courtship and bonding rituals.

Although awkward on foot, Koaʻe kea are mighty flyers, capable of staying aloft for long periods as they forage over the ocean for tasty mūheʻe and mālolo. At Kaluapele, one can see them soaring near the intense heat of Pele's explosive fountains, riding the thermals with precision and grace.

This behavior, sometimes precarious, is an adaptive marvel that turns each eruption into a kind of performance, one where the elegance of flight contrasts sharply with the raw creation of new earth. Koaʻe are truly a dazzling companion to the living breath of Kīlauea. ■

*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.*

# Bridging Currents:

## UH Hilo Connects Oceanic Journeys to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival

By Pelehonuamea Harman

This summer, UH Hilo served as a cultural and intellectual bridge between the New Directions in the Humanities international conference and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

These two global events – centered on Indigenous knowledge, language revitalization, and the role of youth in shaping culture – highlighted UH Hilo's leadership at the intersection of scholarship, ʻike kupuna, and community.

Held at UH Hilo and chaired by Dr. Patsy Y. Iwasaki, the New Directions in the Humanities conference marked the first time this prestigious gathering was hosted in Hawaiʻi. Previous locations included Paris and Rome, with Lisbon, Portugal, set to host next.

The conference opened with a kīpaepae welcome ceremony, grounding guests in the spirit of the land and people of Hawaiʻi.

Under the theme "Oceanic Journeys," scholars, students, and cultural practitioners explored the humanities through a Pacific lens. Presentations spanned topics from language reclamation and Indigenous storytelling to cultural continuity and place-based education. A field trip to the luapele – the volcanic landscape sacred to Pele – provided an experiential learning opportunity rooted in Hawaiian ways of knowing and deepened participants' understanding of the connection between land, language, and identity.

UH Hilo faculty, staff, and students played central roles sharing research, performing mele and oli, and engaging in cross-cultural dialogue. The conference affirmed UH Hilo's strength as an Indigenous-serving institution committed to community-centered and place-based education.

Weeks later, UH Hilo's voice resonated from the National Mall in Washington, D.C., where university representatives participated in the 2025 Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

Under the theme "Youth and the Future of Culture," the Hawaiʻi delegation led the Language Reclamation Program. Representatives from UH Hilo leadership, Ka Haka ʻUla o Keʻelikōlani, ʻImiloa Astronomy Center, Ke Kula ʻo Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu, and the National Native American Language Resource Center shared mele, oli, hula, and strategies for revitalizing ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi.

A key facilitator for the folklife festival was UH Hilo alumnus Hālena Kapuni-Reynolds who serves as a curator at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. His leadership helped ensure that Indigenous voices from Hawaiʻi were highlighted with respect and authenticity on this national stage.

Visitors to the Hawaiʻi tent participated in intergenerational dialogue and hands-on activities, learning how language restoration is deeply tied to land, education, and cultural identity. In a powerful gesture of continuity, several "Oceanic Journeys" attendees visited the Hawaiʻi tent to thank the UH Hilo delegation for extending the spirit and ʻike of the conference to the nation's capital.

Whether we are hosting a conference as kamaʻāina at our own university or attending as malihini at a national gathering, our relationship to Hawaiʻi remains central to who we are and how we engage. In every setting, we carry this ʻike (knowledge), aloha, and the values rooted in this ʻāina with us.

These gatherings affirmed a shared vision: that the humanities are most powerful when grounded in place, lived experience, and Indigenous knowledge systems. UH Hilo's presence at both events underscored its commitment to cultivating future cultural leaders – those who carry tradition forward while envisioning and shaping a resilient future. ■

The Hawaiʻi tent at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival was full of information and activities like lei making and ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi.

# A Mirror of the Past, a Beacon of Hope for the Future

By Dr. Randy Kosaki

Papahānaumokuākea! A place that fires one's imagination with dreams of exploration and discovery.

In modern times, it can seem like the great sagas of human exploration are behind us – such as the first migrations out of Africa, the exploration of the Pacific by our navigator ancestors, and more recently, exploration of the deep sea and outer space.

In the context of a planet that has been explored non-stop for millennia, what is left for us to discover? Perhaps we need to look within ourselves.

Children are born with an innate sense of wonder. Every sight and sound is a new discovery to be explored and celebrated. As time passes, however, new discoveries become fewer, and that sense of wonder gives way to the more pragmatic realities of daily life.

Except...there are many of us who never fully grow up and lose that sense of wonder about the natural world. For the true natural history nerds, our greatest thrills come from getting wet and dirty and seeing what is around the next coral head, beyond the next drop-off, and ultimately, what is beyond the horizon.

But there is another important horizon to which we must navigate, one even more distant than the one we can see. It is the horizon of the future, the one that only the generations yet unborn will ever lay eyes upon.

And for such students, Papahānaumokuākea shines like a beacon – a source of knowledge to which we can return repeatedly. With each visit, we gather small pieces of understanding of our place in the natural world; knowledge that will help chart a course into the future for those with the patience to learn.

One of the last truly great wild places left on Earth, Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Sanctuary (PNMS) ranks with the African Serengeti, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and the Amazon Rainforest.

But perhaps most importantly, Papahānaumokuākea represents the greatest natural laboratory on Earth for Kānaka Maoli, because it is somewhere we can go to learn about ourselves.

PNMS is a mirror into which we can gaze – one that offers a painfully unflinching view of ourselves. Our hopes and dreams for a better future are clearly visible in this mirror, as are our faults and shortcomings. We can see our successes in protecting large swaths of ocean, even as we can see the detrimental impacts of human activities.

Most disturbingly, we can see our society's failures to address existential problems for which obvious solutions exist – such as climate change and marine debris. It is in this context that Papahānaumokuākea is at her most valuable: a living reminder that the most important and challenging of all human frontiers remains unexplored – the frontier that exists in the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of the next generation.

PNMS is a place that young people need to experience first-hand, in the hopes that it will inspire future generations to make better choices than we have. The greatest saga of human exploration lies ahead of us, and the answers lie within us. I have faith that our young people will rise to meet this challenge. Using Papahānaumokuākea as a vantage point will give them a retrospective view of our past, and a vision for a better future. ■

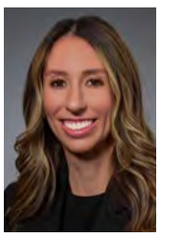
*Randy Kosaki recently retired as NOAA's Research Coordinator for PMNM/PNMS. His first research cruise to PNMS was in 1982, and he has spent the last 20 years exploring PNMS's mesophotic coral ecosystems, deep coral reefs at 150-330+ feet in depth. Working with Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group, numerous new species discovered at these depths have received formal scientific species epithets (names) in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi.*





# Honoring Culture in Modern Landscapes

By Kapiʻolani Street



*NaHHA would like to share an article from one of our Lamakū Hoʻokipa, our Beacons of Hospitality, who are making a positive impact through the value of mālama and as a contributing member of the Native Hawaiian community.*

As a Hawaiian, my kuleana extends far beyond my job description. Each time I step onto a project, I carry my ancestors with me and the voices of our people. Working on Koa Ridge, a master-planned community in the ahupuaʻa of Waiawa, has been deeply personal, challenging me to reconcile my cultural identity with both my personal and professional roles.

We know that development in Hawaiʻi has come at great cost to the Native Hawaiian people.

ʻĀina, once cultivated with care, is divided and sold. I've stood in places where wahi kūpuna once thrived, and I've heard the pain of those who fear that each project pushes us further from who we are.

Still, I believe that development, when guided by values like mālama ʻāina, can build a vibrant future. Many locals, including first-time homeowners, will make Koa Ridge their new home. If growth is inevitable, I stand to ensure it's shaped with cultural accountability and purpose.

Koa Ridge sits on lands that once nourished loʻi kalo and thriving communities. From the outset, Castle & Cooke conducted cultural and archaeological assessments, preserved or documented significant sites, and continues cultural monitoring under Section 106, not just to meet legal standards, but to honor the legacy of this special place.

One of our most important partners has been the Lenchanko ʻOhana, the kiaʻi of Kūkaniloko. Their guidance has grounded our work in ʻike kūpuna and affirmed that land is intimately tied to us, deserving of respect and care.

From Hawaiian language street names to native landscaping and interpretive signage, our efforts aim to embed sense of place, not as decoration, but as declaration. These actions are purposeful in rooting new communities in historical context binding their connection to our ancestors.

To those in our Native Hawaiian community who feel the tension, as I often do, I see you and I feel it too. It is not easy to straddle these worlds, but we must. If Native Hawaiians are not present in these spaces, we forfeit the opportunity to influence and shape the outcomes.

Development and cultural perpetuation are not mutually exclusive. Their coexistence demands deep engagement and steadfast commitment to honoring living culture, not just its memory. ■

*Kapiʻolani M. Street, P.E., is a Native Hawaiian civil engineer from Maui and manager of engineering & site development at Castle & Cooke Homes Hawaiʻi. With degrees in engineering, anthropology, and business, she brings a multidisciplinary lens to culturally rooted development and was named the 2021 Hawaiʻi Young Engineer of the Year for her leadership in shaping infrastructure that honors place, people, and purpose.*

# He Alahele i Maʻa:
## Navigating Education in Times of Change

By Kuuleianuhea Awo-Chun,
OHA Director of Education and Culture-Based Learning

Education in Hawaiʻi and in the United States is in flux. Leaders wrestle with questions about the purpose of schooling, who controls it, and how resources are distributed. These uncertainties directly impact the wellbeing of students, families, and educators.

In Hawaiʻi, the tug-of-war between politics and education is nothing new. Our people have faced shifting systems before, and our resilience has carried us through.

Before Western contact, Kānaka ʻŌiwi upheld a sophisticated system of education including: learning within families, training for sustenance, chiefly leadership development, and apprenticeships in skilled trades (Johnson, 1981; Kaomea, 2000; Kawaiʻaeʻa et al., 2018). Oral traditions like oli (chants), mele (songs), moʻolelo (histories), and ʻōlelo noʻeau (wise sayings) preserved and passed on essential ʻike and values (Keehne et al., 2018).

Within this system, Hawaiian society sustained a complex and resilient structure adapted to its environment and needs (Balutski, 2024; Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992). Even after the introduction of Western ideas and technologies, Kānaka ʻŌiwi maintained agency over education, boasting near universal literacy and founding the first public school system west of the Mississippi – and the only system established by a sovereign monarch.

Over time, education was leveraged as a tool of control and assimilation. Policies banned ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi in schools and reshaped learning to produce labor for the colonial economy (Kaomea, 2000; Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, 2013).

Over time, pedagogies that once sustained our people were replaced with those designed to erase our identity. Yet, resistance never ceased. From underground language transmission to modern immersion schools, from community and ʻohana-led cultural learning to Hawaiian-focused charter schools, Kānaka ʻŌiwi have continually maintained our educational connection to language, culture, ʻāina, and identity (Kawaiʻaeʻa et al., 2018).

Today, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) carries a constitutional and statutory kuleana to advocate for improved educational outcomes for our beneficiaries. Our Mana i Mauli Ola strategic plan affirms this kuleana by prioritizing Hawaiian education systems.

In addition to OHA, the State of Hawaiʻi has also committed to Hawaiian education. Article X, Section 4, of the Hawaiʻi State Constitution mandates that the state promote the study of Hawaiian language, history, and culture. In *Clarabal v. Department of Education*, the court affirmed that this includes "reasonable access" to Hawaiian language immersion in public schools (NHLC, 2024). The state Board of Education echoes this through its policies on Hawaiian education, kaiapuni, and Nā Hopena Aʻo, affirming the systemic importance of Hawaiian values and knowledge.

Still, the struggle for equity in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, culture- and ʻāina-based settings remains ongoing. Underfunding, underrepresentation, and policy neglect continue to threaten the integrity of Hawaiian education. But we are not walking blindly. We move in the footsteps of those who came before us, whose strength built and fortified these paths.

As Liholiho once said, "Na wai hoʻi ka ʻole o ke akamai, he alahele i maʻa i ka hele ʻia e ʻoʻu mau mākua." Who would not be wise on a path already traveled by our ancestors? ■



# How Food and Lifestyle can Rival Medicine

By Jodi Leslie Matsuo, DrPH, RDN

In the days of our kūpuna, healing didn't begin in a clinic or pharmacy – it began in the loʻi, the imu, the lāʻau garden, and the kai.

Food wasn't just sustenance, it was lāʻau lapaʻau, a source of renewal, healing, and strength. Daily movement in work and play, harmony within the ʻohana, and spiritual grounding defined the lifestyle. A growing body of research backs this ancestral wisdom with scientific evidence.

Let's consider type 2 diabetes, where Native Hawaiians have a 30% higher prevalence than the state average. The American College of Lifestyle Medicine published a groundbreaking study in 2023 showing that a whole-food, plant-based diet, combined with physical activity and stress management, reversed type 2 diabetes in nearly 40% of participants within 12 weeks – without medication. Others would deem it "remission" vs. "reversal."

Regardless of the terminology, these results suggest more than just diabetes management; they demonstrate the healing power of a positive holistic lifestyle – something that medications alone cannot achieve.

A 2019 study in *The Lancet*, one of the world's top three medical journals, found that poor diet is the leading risk factor for early death worldwide, ranking above tobacco or high blood pressure. Yet we often overlook it as a serious treatment option. Imagine if your daily dose of poi, weekend lūʻau stew or poke bowl could protect your heart better than a pill.

Turns out that the nutrients in these foods shows it can.

Kalo is not merely a traditional staple, it's anti-inflammatory and gut friendly. Lūʻau leaves are rich in nitrates, which improves circulation, lowering blood pressure. Limu contains fucoidans, shown to reduce cholesterol, support immunity, and even suppress cancer cell growth. Fish have omega-3 fatty acids that lower inflammation and triglycerides and support heart and brain health. Our traditional foods are medicine.

Studies also show that walking in nature, gardening, breathing deeply, praying, and connecting with others, are all protective of our health as well. A 2021 article in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* reported that consistent social connection and spirituality significantly reduced heart disease risk. Our kūpuna considered these practices necessary to being pono.

Of course, medications have their place, especially in urgent or advanced stages of disease. But so do ʻai pono, hoʻoponopono, and many of our other traditional practices. Food and positive lifestyle changes work at all stages, preventing, treating and, in many cases, reversing chronic disease – without the side effects.

Reclaiming this healing power requires a mind shift from reactive care to proactive care; to not just be content with disease management, but to aim for disease reversal and to accept kūleana for your own health.

FOOD RX Blueprint

In response to feedback from our community, I recently launched Food RX Blueprint, an evidence-based, culturally grounded resource to empower our lāhui to use food as medicine. As part of this initiative, the Food RX Assistant app (launching in August 2025) was developed as a one-stop tool to explore health topics, receive personalized guidance, and discover cultural healing foods. If you are interested, my website is foodrxblueprint.com ■

*Follow Dr. Matsuo on:*
*Facebook (@DrJodiLeslieMatsuo),*
*Instagram (@foodrxblueprint)*
*and on Twitter/X (@foodrxblueprint).*

# Who Was Kaʻiana ʻAhuʻula?

By Kalei Nuʻuhiwa, Ph.D.

*"E lī ana i luna i lalo ʻeuʻeu kōlea i ka puapua, kōlili na koʻo o ke koaʻe i ka makani, kaha ka uwau i ka mālia, kuehuehu ke kanaka eia ka hanu; ei ala!"* (*The blood will run cold, constantly stirring fear, fluttering like the tail of the koaʻe in the wind, the shearwater swoops in the stillness, the men catching the breath; I am here!*).

Samuel M. Kamakau memorialized this battle cry of Kaʻiana ʻAhuʻula, a chief sent to make war with Keoua Kuʻahuʻula by Kamehameha I. But who was Kaʻiana ʻAhuʻula and what happened to him?

One of the most iconic lithographs made of an 18th century Hawaiian was based on a painting by Spoilum, a Chinese artist in Canton. It depicts a handsome, well-muscled Hawaiian warrior with contemplative features holding a spear and wearing a mahiole and ʻahuʻula. Below the sketch are the words, "Tianna a Prince of Atooi." This is how most Hawaiians know of Kaʻiana.

There are many Kaʻiana – Kaʻiana, Kaʻiana Ukupē, and Kaʻiana ʻAhuʻula – found in stories recorded by Kamakau, Fornander, and Desha. It is often difficult to discern whether this is one person or several.

ʻO ʻAhuʻula ke kāne, ʻo Kaupekamoku ka wahine. Hānau kā lāua ʻo Keawe Kalanikuaiwa Kaʻiana a ʻAhuʻula he kāne. According to Kamakau, Kaʻiana's father is ʻAhuʻula.

ʻAhuʻula is the son of Keawekekahialiʻiokamoku. ʻAe, THAT Keawe who is mentioned in the *Kumulipo*.

Lithograph based on painting by Spoilum in 1787, credited to London, 1790 - John Meares.

Kaʻiana is related to high-ranking chiefly lines from Hawaiʻi, Maui, and Oʻahu through both of his parents. Arguably, Kaʻiana might outrank Kamehameha's genealogy.

It is unclear whether Kaʻiana was born on Kauaʻi or if his parents moved there after his birth, but he was raised there with his siblings (hoahānau) Namakeha and Nahiolea. With training in engineering, architecture, genealogies, weather and omen predictions, Kaʻiana was a learned man. Not much else is recorded about his youth.

Kamakau recounts that Kaʻiana sailed abroad for three years to various Asian and American lands befriending many along his travels. It is noted that he walked with distinction dressed in his mahiole and ʻahuʻula wherever he went, drawing crowds of people. He learned how to use swords and various munitions, and to speak other languages including English and Cantonese, learning about the daily lives of the peoples he visited.

When he returned home to Hawaiʻi, he was gifted cattle, goats, horses, citrus, plants, various weaponries, and gun powder – but the only things that survived the long voyage were his weapons.

When Kaʻiana arrived at Kealakekua, Kamehameha I was impressed by his ability to communicate with the foreigners and with his supply of weapons. Kamehameha gifted Kaʻiana with land and 12 waʻa kaulua adorned with ʻahuʻula to pursuade him to join his war campaign against Keoua, who was Kaʻiana's first cousin.

Kaʻiana's skill in communicating with foreigners was extremely valuable. He became an arms dealer for Kamehameha, Kahekili, Kāʻeokūlani and other chiefs who wanted to acquire the war tech of that era.

Kaʻiana also managed to impress several aliʻi wahine, including Kaʻahumanu and her mother, Nāmahana, who became his spies. He eventually had two wives, Kekupuohi and Loʻe. Kaʻiana also had a daughter, Kamakahalahalawai, whom he raised on Kauaʻi.

Kaʻiana and his siblings fought in most of Kamehameha's battles on Hawaiʻi Island and Maui. Eventually, Kaʻiana became disenchanted with Kamehameha, and decided to support the Oʻahu people and Maui chief, Kalanikupule, after learning that there was a plot to remove him and his siblings from their status under Kamehameha's leadership.

Kaʻiana and his siblings perished at Laʻimi during the Battle of Nuʻuanu. ■



# Ka Mahiole Kilakila a Kaumualiʻi

Na Kalani Akana, Ph.D.

ʻAnoʻai ke aloha e nā makamaka o neia kolamu nūpepa. Ma muli o ka hoihoi ā ʻoukou i kaʻana ai me aʻu e pili ana i ka moʻolelo i paʻi ʻia mai nei e pili ana i ko Kauaʻi kaila o ka mahiole, eia kekahi moʻolelo pōkole e pili ana i ka mahiole a Kaumualiʻi, ke aliʻi nui hope o Kauaʻi. He makana ua mahiole la a Kamehameha i makana aku ai iā Kaumualiʻi. ʻO kēlā mahiole ka mea wale nō ma ka Hale Hōʻikeʻike ʻo Pīhopa me ka moʻomakana (provenance) i ʻike leʻa ʻia.

Ua makana ʻo Kamehameha i ka mahiole, kekahi ʻahuʻula, me kekahi mau mea waiwai ʻē aʻe iā Kaumualiʻi ma kekahi kuʻikahi ʻaelike ma ka makahiki 1810. Ua hoʻāʻo ʻo Kamehameha e naʻi iā Kauaʻi e like me nā mokupuni aʻe akā ua pīholo kāna mau waʻa peleleu i ka ʻino ma kekahi hoʻāʻo a ma kekahi hoʻāʻo hou, ua loaʻa lākou puʻali koa i ka maʻi ʻōkuʻu.

Ma kekahi moʻolelo o ko Hawaiʻi poʻe, ua pae ʻo Kamehameha ma Kauaʻi me ka paulele i kekahi wānana mai kona kahuna mai. Ua ʻike kēia kahuna i ka piʻi ʻana i ko Hawaiʻi hōkū ʻo Ikaika (Kaʻāwela) e kau pū ana me ko Kauaʻi hōkū. Wahi a kēlā kahuna, e kaʻa ana ʻo Kauaʻi iā Kamehameha. Iā lākou i hiki ai ma Kauaʻi, hoʻomaka lākou i ka hoʻonoho ʻana i ke kaua me ka manaʻo nō hoʻi e kaua koke nō. I ko lākou hoʻomaka ʻana e kaua aku, pane aku ʻo Kaumualiʻi, "O hoʻi a nānā mai ʻoe, a uhi aʻe ke kapa ʻeleʻele, a kau ka puaʻa i ka nuku, a laila, kiʻi mai i ko ʻāina." No laila, ua haʻalele ʻo Kamehameha akā ua hala ʻo ia ma mua o Kaumualiʻi.

Edward Kawānanakoa me ka mahiole, a ʻahu a kona kupuna ʻo Kaumualiʻi.

Ma ka makahiki 1821, ua huakaʻi ka hoʻoilina mōī a Kamehameha, Liholiho, i Kauaʻi ma ka moku *Haʻaheo o Hawaiʻi*. Ua hoʻonā ʻo Liholiho iā Kaumualiʻi me ka ʻōlelo, e mau ana nō ke ea o Kauaʻi ma lalo ona akā ʻaʻohe ʻoiaʻiʻo ko ka mōī ʻōlelo. Ua hoʻolalelale ka mōī hou iā Kaumualiʻi e kipa i kona moku a iā ia e nānā ana i ke kamahaʻo o ka moku, ua huki ʻia ka heleuma a holo ka *Haʻaheo o Hawaiʻi* i Oʻahu a lilo ʻo Kaumualiʻi i pio o ke aupuni. ʻAʻole i mālama ʻo Liholiho i ka ʻaelike o kona makuakāne.

Ua hoʻi ʻo Kaumualiʻi i Kauaʻi no ke kipa wale nō ma hope o kona male ʻana iā Kaʻahumanu a ma hope iki mai ua hala ka mōī hope loa o Kauaʻi, ka mokupuni i naʻi ʻole ʻia e Kamehameha. ʻO ka makahiki 1824 kēlā. He ʻiʻini ko Kaumualiʻi e noho pū me Keōpūolani ma ka pā ilina ma ka hale pule ʻo Waiola ma Waineʻe, Lahaina. He hoahānau nō lāua a maopopo iā lāua i ke ola o ke kanaka i lawe pio ʻia. ʻO ka mahiole, ua mālama ʻia e kekahi mikioneli ʻo Whitney kona inoa a laila ua hoʻoili ia iā Pīhopa. ■

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

*To read this in English go to kawaiola.news*

# "Hawaiians, Join Together in Unity"

By Soulee Lester Kealohaonālani Stroud

From 1903 until his death in 1922, Prince Kūhiō served as a delegate of the Territory of Hawai'i to the U.S. Congress. A true statesman, he accomplished all of his advocacy without the ability to vote. Prince Kūhiō is well known for his forward political thinking, for example, advocating for suffrage and for giving women the right to vote.

Suffragist Hannah Kaaepa (1873-1918) was born in Hawai'i and emigrated to Utah, settling with other members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Iosepa, Tooele County, Utah, a community of Hawaiian and Polynesian Mormons that was established in 1889.

In February 1899, Kaaepa was part of the Utah delegation made up of prominent Utah suffragists that traveled to Washington, D.C., to participate in the third Triennial Congress of the National Council of Women. Kaaepa addressed the National Council and urged council members to use their influence to support Queen Lili'uokalani in her efforts to secure suffrage for the women of Hawai'i.


Kaaepa died on Sept. 29, 1918, in Hilo, Hawai'i. Her last words included an expression of loyalty to the crown and to her faith: "Give my aloha to the Prince Kalaniana'ole, stand by him, stand by the church and stand by the flag." ("Mrs. George Lowe, Failing Since Death of Queen, Passes On," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Oct. 1, 1918)

Nā Lei Makalapua – the Mainland Council Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs, includes 16 Hawaiian Civic Clubs in Alaska, California (4), Colorado, Illinois, Missouri, Nevada, Oregon, Tennessee, Utah (2), Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin.

With Nā Lei Makalapua membership approaching 1,000, we are the constituents of one-third of the House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate. This reach, working in harmony with Hawai'i's Congressional Delegation, is a formidable advocacy consortium at the national level.

Nā Lei Makalapua collectively journeys to the Capitol and engages with its respective members of Congress to advocate for the lāhui. Like Hannah Kaaepa, our membership has, and will, continue to "protect and advance Kanaka Hawai'i rights holding the U.S. federal government and the State of Hawai'i trusts in fulfilling their responsibilities to all Kanaka Hawai'i." (NLM Constitution Article II Section 1:c)

"E huliāmahi e nā Hawai'i a ho'ā'o e 'ae like e like me ka mea hiki, I hiki ke loa'a ka ha'ina o ka pilikia nui, 'o ia ho'iki ola a ka lāhui." (Hawaiians, join together in unity and try to agree so that the answer to a large problem, the life of the race, can be found.) – Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole Pi'ikoi ■

*To learn more about Hannah Kaaepa go to: utahwomenshistory.org/the-women/hannah-kaaepa.*

*Soulee Lester Kealohaonālani Stroud is a community organizer who served as president of Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs from 2011-2014.*



# DHHL Secures $22.3M Federal Grant

By Diamond Badajos

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) has secured a substantial $22.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant (NHHBG).

Established under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act (NAHASDA), the NHHBG exclusively provides funding to DHHL to address the unique housing challenges faced by Native Hawaiians by offering affordable housing options for low-income Native Hawaiian families.

"The ongoing allocation of these federal funds allows us to continue offering affordable housing options that ensure our beneficiaries' success and stability for generations to come," said DHHL Director Kali Watson. "The unwavering dedication of our congressional delegation deserves recognition in this award as they are the true advocates behind this source of funding for the department."

As the designated recipient for the NHHBG administered by the HUD Office of Native American Programs (ONAP), DHHL received $9.6 million in funding in 2002 to advance housing initiations for eligible Native Hawaiian families. Over the last 20 years, the department has consistently received more than two times its original allocation, averaging $22.3 million annually.

"With NAHASDA, families who have frequently been excluded from the homebuying process can finally achieve their dreams of homeownership. By providing safe housing opportunities at prices families can afford, our 'ohana are able to stay in Hawai'i – the place they call home," Watson said.

During this past fiscal year (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025) DHHL allocated nearly $40 million, surpassing its previous highest recorded expenditure in 2017 by more than double. In the 23 years since its inaugural award, DHHL has made significant progress in the allocation of funding to its beneficiaries resulting in the:

- Expenditure of $194 million in NHHBG program funds (90% of all NHHBG funds awarded);
- Building, acquisition, or rehabilitation of 769 affordable homes using NHHBG funds;
- Improvement of approximately 693 lots with infrastructure development to support construction of new homeownership housing units;
- Rehabilitation of three community centers to provide housing services to affordable housing residents; while
- Providing housing services, such as pre- and post-home purchase education, financial literacy training, self-help home repair training and rental assistance for 5,237 families.

Enacted in 1996, NAHASDA has transformed the way Native American and Alaska Natives provide affordable housing on rural Indian reservations and Alaska Native villages. The act facilitated enhanced partnerships with financial institutions and established a block grant program, empowering Native American and Alaska Natives to decide how to effectively utilize federal funds to tackle affordable housing challenges.

Four years later, Congress amended NAHASDA by adding Title VIII, authorizing comparable funding for eligible Native Hawaiian families living on Hawaiian homelands whose total household income is at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI) for their specific counties. ■

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

# Nā ʻAkoko ʻOkoʻa
## One Genus Many Faces

By Bobby Camara

*Euphorbia celastroides* var. kaenana, from Oʻahu. - *Photo: D Eickhoff, flickr*

You know how, when you pick pua melia or pua kalaunu to fashion lei, you must be mindful about their wai pipili ʻino, their poisonous sap? Our endemic ʻakoko also leak milky sap when scarred, and while foul-tasting, we donʻt understand much about their toxicity. Hawaiʻi is home to about 17 endemic species of the family Euphorbia. Those are named ʻakoko (*Euphorbia spp.*), some say because seed capsules of some varieties are dark red, resembling drops of blood (koko).

As with many other meakanu ʻāpaʻakuma (endemic plants), we recognize a great deal of variability of our ʻakoko, from lava- or sand-hugging groundcovers, to shrubs, to small trees; many preferring homes in arid places, where dry grasses threaten fire, and potential death of our plants that are not fire-adapted. Unfortunately, endemic birds and invertebrates also suffer dire consequences.

An endemic bee, nalo meli maoli (*Hyaleus anthracinus*), on its host ʻakoko. - *Photo: Hawaiʻi Forest Institute*

Other familiar Euphorbia relatives include kukui, croton, cassava, castor bean, and poinsettia, some with clear, and others with milky, sap. Many of us know that kukui has medicinal uses, and so, too, with ʻakoko. But e akahele! Kahuna lāʻau lapaʻau compounded (mixed) recipes of specific parts of various plants and understood their usefulness. ■

(Left) *Euphorbia olowaluana*, a small ʻakoko at Puʻuwaʻawaʻa in 2002. (Right) The same tree in 2012, noticeably sadder. Dry alien grasses are an extreme fire hazard. - *Photos: KMagnacca*



# E NHLC...

## How does adoption affect DHHL eligibility? Can I designate my adopted child as the successor to my lease? What about other adopted relatives?

By Henderson Huihui,
NHLC Staff Attorney, ʻOhana Services

There is a legal distinction between legal adoption and the traditional practice of hānai. The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA) provides a specific list of relatives who may succeed to a homestead lease. This list includes spouse, children, grandchildren, siblings, as long as they have at least 25% biological Native Hawaiian blood quantum. The list also includes parents, nieces, and nephews, as long as they have at least 50% Native Hawaiian blood quantum, referred to in HHCA as "native Hawaiians."

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) requires one of these listed legal relationships for a successor. DHHL will not approve successors without one of the listed legal relationships and the required blood quantum.

Adoption establishes a legal familial relationship. The adopting parents will be listed on the adopted child's birth certificate, and the adopted person qualifies as a child to the adopting parents within DHHL guidelines. Without legal adoption, hānai children are not treated as children by DHHL for successor purposes. Legal adoption is required.

Like any other child, for successorship an adopted child must be able to document at least 25% Native Hawaiian blood quantum based on their biological ancestry – not the ancestry of their adoptive parents. So, adopted children seeking to succeed in a lease held by their adoptive parents will need to document their adoption by the adoptive parents and their blood quantum based on the ancestry of their biological parents.

This can be a difficult challenge. Adoption records, such as original birth certificates, are usually sealed by court order. To gain access to these records, a court must order them unsealed. Even with unsealed records, depending on the circumstances of the adoption, the names or ancestral backgrounds of the biological parents may not be found.

Adopted children can also be treated as legal children to their biological parents for homestead successorship, thanks to a legal rule change passed in 2023. It's important to note that for trust and estate matters, this new 2023 rule is unusual.

Normally, the law does not treat an adopted child like a continuing child to the biological parents, so families should seek legal advice for questions about the legal rules that apply to adopted and biological children in other matters beyond homesteads. This article is focused only on the rules regarding adoption and hānai relatives for Hawaiian homestead successorship.

In brief, since 2023, adopted children can be successors to their adoptive parents' homestead and their biological parents' homestead if they can document at least 25% Native Hawaiian biological blood quantum. For adopted people, evidencing biological blood quantum can be hard and requires a legal process to unseal court records. Without legal adoption, hānai children can only succeed as children to a biological parents' homestead, not their hānai parents' homestead, and the 25% blood quantum rule also applies.

Similar requirements and considerations apply to other relatives who have been adopted or hānai, including grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. ■

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

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

# Barriers to Hospice Growth and Patient Choice on Hawai'i Island

By Aneika Falcon

I am writing to bring to your attention a growing concern on Hawai'i Island that deserves public awareness. The current landscape of hospice care on the island is increasingly being defined not by progress and patient-centered care, but by stagnation and limited access – especially troubling given our rapidly aging population.

Specifically, existing hospice providers on Hawai'i Island appear to be impeding the development and entry of new hospice organizations. This resistance to competition not only limits diversity and innovation in hospice services but also restricts patient choice – essential in end-of-life care where cultural values, trust, and quality of care are paramount.

The population of kūpuna is growing, yet available hospice options have remained largely unchanged. This lack of development limits not only healthcare options, but also economic opportunities that new providers could bring to Hawai'i Island. The introduction of new hospice organizations would encourage job creation for healthcare professionals, administrative staff, and support workers, benefiting local employment and economic health.

Monopolistic or exclusionary practices in any area of healthcare threatens to undermine fairness and equity. In a place as diverse and culturally rich as Hawai'i, the ability to choose a hospice provider that aligns with one's cultural values and care philosophy is essential. The current lack of options does not reflect the needs or the diversity of our community.

This story touches multiple areas of public interest: healthcare access, economic development, patient rights, and the health of our elderly population. I believe this issue is worthy of further exploration and reporting.

An application that was submitted to the Certificate of Need (CON) office clearly demonstrates that the proposal meets the regulatory criteria for approval. Despite this, the application was denied following a public hearing held on April 25, 2025. The hearing was overwhelmingly attended by representatives and staff of existing hospice providers, with minimal representation from patients, families, or neutral stakeholders.

The denial letter suggests that the decision was influenced primarily by testimony from current hospice providers who argued that, because there is no existing waitlist for hospice care, there is no need for an additional provider. This rationale is both flawed and insensitive. The implication that a waitlist to die must exist before expanding end-of-life care is a disturbing standard that disregards the real needs of patients and families seeking dignity, timely care, and culturally appropriate support at life's end.

Moreover, the exclusion of new hospice organizations curtails economic development, job creation, and innovation in healthcare delivery. New providers bring fresh energy, culturally responsive care models, workforce opportunities, and much-needed competition to elevate care standards. The current providers' opposition appears more motivated by protectionism than public interest.

It is time to call attention to how entrenched hospice providers are shaping policy outcomes that prioritize institutional self-interest over patient choice, community growth, and equitable access to care.

This has broad implications for healthcare equity and transparency on Hawai'i Island. ■

*Aneika Falcon is a healthcare professional with 15+ years in the industry. She has family on Hawai'i Island and friends that are a part of the aging kūpuna population.*

# Empowering Hawaiian Youth Through Cultural Education and ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi

By Lynn Nguyen

In today's rapidly changing world, it can be easy for young Native Hawaiians to feel disconnected from their roots. Yet, the revival and strengthening of cultural education and ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi are proving to be powerful tools in fostering identity, resilience, and success among our youth.

Cultural identity is not just about tradition; it is a foundation for confidence and belonging. When Hawaiian children learn their language, history, and values, they gain a deeper understanding of who they are and where they come from. This sense of identity is critical during the formative years when self-esteem and social connection are shaping their future.

Research consistently shows that youth who are grounded in their culture perform better academically, experience improved mental health and develop stronger community ties. For Native Hawaiian youth, ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi is more than words — it carries the wisdom of ancestors, stories of the land and sea, and guiding principles like aloha (love), mālama (care), and kuleana (responsibility). These teachings encourage a balanced life that honors both self and ʻohana (family).

Hawaiian immersion schools and cultural programs have become safe spaces where youth feel valued and understood. They offer an environment that celebrates Hawaiian knowledge alongside modern education. Students who attend these programs often show higher graduation rates and a clearer sense of purpose. This is no coincidence — cultural education nurtures not only intellect but also the spirit.

Moreover, reconnecting with Hawaiian culture helps combat challenges our youth face, such as identity confusion, isolation, and societal pressures. In a community where systemic disparities have long existed, cultural empowerment provides a path to healing and empowerment. It reminds youth that their heritage is a source of strength, resilience, and hope.

However, to fully support this positive trend, our community and policymakers must continue to invest in and expand access to cultural education and ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi programs. Resources, trained educators, and inclusive policies will ensure that every Hawaiian child has the opportunity to embrace their culture and succeed.

In the end, empowering Hawaiian youth through cultural education is not only about preserving traditions — it is about nurturing a generation proud of their identity and prepared to lead Hawai'i's future. When our young people stand firmly rooted in their culture, they carry the legacy of our ancestors and the promise of a thriving Hawaiian community. ■

*Lynn Nguyen is a Hawaiʻi-based tutor and community advocate passionate about education, equity, and social impact. She has experience supporting youth and families through data-informed programs, nonprofit work, and public health initiatives. Lynn finds joy in nature, meaningful connection, and helping others reach their potential.*

# A Renewed Commitment

By Kali Watson, Chair, Department of Hawaiian Home Lands

*Remarks shared with members of the Aliʻi Trusts and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs at a gathering in June 2025*

It's truly an honor and a privilege to stand before all of you - representatives of the Aliʻi Trusts, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. E nā hoa hana, nā hoa kuleana, a me nā hoa aloha, mahalo for coming together in this important moment of unity.

We share a common mission - to uplift our lāhui. To fulfill the legacies entrusted to us by our aliʻi, our kūpuna, and by those who fought before us to protect our people, our ʻāina, and our identity. While we come from distinct institutions, we are bound by shared values: aloha, kuleana, pono, and lōkahi.

Our aliʻi envisioned a thriving lāhui - healthy, educated, and grounded in culture. Whether it's through Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole's vision for land and self-sufficiency, Bernice Pauahi Bishop's legacy of education, Queen Liliʻuokalani's compassion for children and families, or Queen Emma's enduring commitment to health and wellness - each of us carries a part of that larger vision.

But let us be clear: no single entity can carry this burden alone.

The challenges facing our people - housing, education, health, cultural preservation - are too vast for any one

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## A RENEWED COMMITMENT

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organization. Yet together, we are stronger. Together, we can weave a mālama ʻāina, mālama lāhui partnership that reflects the full strength of our collective legacy.

Our collaboration is not just symbolic. It is strategic. It is a recognition that coordinated action is not only possible - it is essential.

At the department, we are advancing more than housing. We are restoring identity. We are returning our people to their ancestral lands, cultivating communities where culture and commerce can thrive side by side. But to do this well, we need strong educational partners. We need strong health systems. We need trusted cultural institutions. We need you.

We envision deeper partnerships with OHA and the Aliʻi Trusts, like expanding preschool and cultural programs on homestead lands. Supporting kūpuna housing. Building community resource centers. Co-investing in renewable energy, food security, and Hawaiian businesses. These aren't just ideas - they're blueprints for self-determination.

Let us also embrace data sharing, joint planning, and coordinated funding. Let's move beyond silos and toward synergy. Let's ask not just "what can we do?" But, "what can we do together?"

As our kūpuna often said, ʻaʻohe hana nui ke alu ʻia - no task is too great when we work together.

Consider this a renewed commitment - not only to the legacies we each represent - but to a collective future. One where our children and grandchildren won't have to ask, "Why didn't our leaders work together?" Instead, they will say, "Look what they built together."

Mahalo nui loa, and let's get to work. ■

## Hōkūleʻa Lands in Tahiti

Voyaging canoes Hōkūleʻa and Hikianalia arrived in Papeʻetē on June 28 to a welcoming reception that brought together thousands of people. Accompanied by Tahitian voyaging canoe Faʻafaite, it was a moment that honored half a century of Hōkūleʻa's legacy and the ancestral relationship between Hawaiians and Tahitians. Hōkūleʻa made her first historic voyage to Tahiti in June 1976, making landfall at the very same spot in Papeʻetē (later renamed Hōkūleʻa Beach). That iconic journey ignited a cultural renaissance and proved that Polynesians were skilled navigators who explored the vast Pacific Ocean. Their arrival was greeted with formal ceremonies and later a celebration and program featuring music, dance and haʻi ʻōlelo (speeches) by Hawaiian and Tahitian leaders. Earlier that week, on June 24, the canoes made their first landfall in French Polynesia at the sacred marae of Taputapuātea on the island of Raʻiātea. Taputapuātea is revered as the ancestral home and spiritual center of Polynesian voyaging. - *Photo: Jonathan "Sav" Salvador for PVS*

## Pūʻōhala Cuts Pūnana Leo Classroom

Pūnana Leo families and ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi supporters gathered in front of the Department of Education building in downtown Honolulu on July 10 to protest the loss of a preschool classroom at Pūʻōhala Elementary School in Kāneʻohe, Oʻahu.

The decision by the Hawaiʻi Department of Education to cut one of Pūnana Leo's two preschool classrooms at Pūʻōhala will affect about 20 preschoolers from Pūnana Leo o Koʻolaupoko. This loss not only affects the students, but the entire pipeline of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi education in Windward Oʻahu.

At Pūʻōhala, Hawaiian language immersion students comprise more than 75% of the school's enrollment. Without the kaiapuni program, Pūʻōhala would arguably be listed among campuses targeted for closure due to low general education enrollment.

"We're not asking for special treatment — we're asking the state to recognize the truth: this is an issue of equity and commitment," said one Pūʻōhala parent. "It's unjust that our youngest learners are pushed aside when our program is thriving."

The group called for the creation of a dedicated, DOE-operated Hawaiian Language Immersion site in Kāneʻohe within the Castle Complex.

Limited space in existing Hawaiian immersion programs is affecting Hawaiian families across the state, as demand for Hawaiian language medium instruction is growing.

In *Clarabel v. State of Hawaiʻi*, a lawsuit brought by a mother on Lānaʻi, the Hawaiʻi State Supreme Court ruled in 2019 that the state is constitutionally required to make reasonable efforts to provide access to Hawaiian immersion education.

## Quiocho Named TNC Marine Program Director

Kalani Quiocho - *Courtesy Photo*

Kalani Quiocho was named the Hawaiʻi Island marine program director at The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Hawaiʻi and Palmyra.

Prior to his appointment, Quiocho was at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for more than 10 years serving as a marine program analyst, as NOAA's first cultural resources coordinator, as a Native Hawaiian program specialist and a cultural advisor, infusing federal decision-making with Indigenous knowledge.

Born and raised in Hilo, Quiocho graduated from Kamehameha Schools Kapālama and went on to earn a BA in Hawaiian studies from UH Mānoa and a BA in marine science from UH Hilo. After graduating, he was selected in 2014 to TNC's Hawaiʻi Marine Fellowship Program.

"Kalani's experience helping NOAA to include Indigenous knowledge in federal decision-making is a tremendous gift," said TNC Hawaiʻi and Palmyra Executive Director Ulalia Woodside Lee. "We are thrilled to grow our capacity to partner with local communities and collaborate to restore abundance and health to Hawaiʻi's coral reefs and nearshore ecosystems."

"We are the culmination of our ancestors and their lived experiences and now we have an important opportunity and responsibility to take care of people and the places that have continued to bring us life," Quiocho said. "I am proud to perpetuate this cherished tradition of aloha ʻāina with The Nature Conservancy."

Quiocho is currently pursuing a doctoral degree at UH Mānoa.

## BLNR Rejects Army EIS for Oʻahu Leases

Citing significant gaps in environmental analysis, on June 28 the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) voted to reject the U.S. Army's final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for state lands currently leased on Oʻahu. Their decision came after hours of impassioned public testimony.

Three sites were covered under the FEIS: state-leased portions of the Kahuku Training Area, the Kawailoa-Poamoho Training Area, and the Mākua Military Reservation. Significantly, the Army did not pursue lease renewals of Kawailoa-Poamoho (4,390 acres) or Mākua (782 acres). The FEIS only sought lease renewal of 450 acres (of the current 1,150 acres leased) at Kahuku.

In May, BLNR also voted to reject the Army's FEIS for state lands leased at the Pōhakuloa Training Area on Hawaiʻi Island.

DLNR's Land Division consulted with the Commission on Water Resources Management, the Division of Aquatic Resources, the Division of Forestry and Wildlife, the Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands and the State Historic Preservation Division in reviewing the FEIS. Its recommendation to BLNR not to accept the FEIS represented a consensus among all DLNR divisions.

BLNR found that the FEIS did not adequately account for known and likely archaeological sites, lacked recent data for biological resources, and did not include stream aquatic surveys. Each of these concerns was raised in the draft EIS phase but went unaddressed in the final report.

The Army's current leases for the more than 6,000 acres of state-owned land at the three Oʻahu sites, and for 23,000 acres at the Pōhakuloa Training Area, expire in 2029.

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## NEWS BRIEFS

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### BWS Sues the Navy

On July 1, the Honolulu Board of Water Supply (BWS) filed a federal lawsuit against the U.S. Navy for its releases of petroleum and other hazardous chemicals into Oʻahu's drinking water supply.

The Navy acknowledged responsibility for the massive environmental and human health crisis caused by the November 2021 Red Hill fuel release but has refused to accept responsibility for the costs incurred.

Past, ongoing, and future restoration, remediation and mitigation efforts will cost BWS about $1.2 billion. To minimize the burden of these costs for Oʻahu taxpayers, BWS is holding the Navy accountable.

Nearly four years ago, BWS was forced to shut down its Hālawa Shaft and the ʻAiea and Hālawa wells. BWS also implemented enhanced water quality testing, started planning for additional groundwater monitoring wells, and shifted to alternate water sources to provide safe drinking water to Oʻahu residents.

"This is not an issue that will be solved quickly or cheaply. Every action must be taken to protect the purity of Oʻahu's water, and it is only right that the Navy assume financial responsibility for its actions that put water purity and the safety of everyone on Oʻahu at risk," said BWS Manager and Chief Engineer Ernie Lau.

"Litigation was our last resort and comes after months of futile negotiation with the Navy and [its] refusal to pay for any of the costs incurred – even while publicly [acknowledging] its responsibility for this disaster and subsequent contaminant releases," said BWS Board Chair Nāʻālehu Anthony.

## 12 ʻŌiwi Named to PBN's 2025 "40 Under 40"

The Pacific Business News "40 Under 40" is an annual program that recognizes 40 outstanding young professionals in Hawaiʻi under the age of 40 who have demonstrated leadership, significant career achievements, and community involvement in their individual fields. This year, 12 Native Hawaiians were among PBN's honorees. They will be recognized at a banquet on August 14 at the ʻAlohilani Resort Waikīkī Ballroom. Pictured (L-R) beginning with the top row are Kayla Keehu Alexander, Aloha United Way; Kapua Chandler, Nāmāhana School; Alexis Charpentier, Waikīkī Health; Zane Dydasco, Chick-fil-A Makiki; Ilihia Gionson, W.M. Keck Observatory; Tyler Gomes, Kilohana by Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement; Alexarae Kam, ALTRES; Kimeona Kane, 808 Cleanups; Christopher Lum Lee, TriSec, Inc.; Brittany Montilliano, YWCA Oʻahu; Skye Kolealani Razon Olds, Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement; and Sage Kealohilani Quiamno, Future for Us and Amazon. - *Photos Courtesy of Pacific Business News*

### State Leaders Vow to Mitigate Impact of Tax Bill

Gov. Josh Green, U.S. Senators Brian Schatz and Mazie K. Hirono, and U.S. Representatives Ed Case and Jill Tokuda released the following statement after Congress passed a Republican tax bill that will cut healthcare coverage through Med-QUEST for more than 40,000 people in Hawaiʻi, gut food assistance programs (e.g., SNAP) that more than 20,000 Hawaiʻi families rely on, and raise the national debt by an estimated $3.3 trillion. The bill was signed into law by President Donald Trump on July 4.

"The Republican tax bill breaks promises, and guts funding for healthcare and food assistance that thousands of Hawaiʻi families rely on every day. It's a terrible bill that we all strongly opposed.

"While it won't be easy to stop all the damage from these cuts, we're moving quickly to protect our communities. Over the next few weeks, we'll be meeting with state and local officials, community partners, and service providers to assess the fiscal impact on Hawaiʻi and develop operational plans to blunt the harm.

"That includes coordinating resources, setting local priorities, and making sure the most vulnerable aren't left without support. These next few years won't be easy, but we are mobilizing now to respond, protect our people, and make sure Hawaiʻi can weather what's coming."

### September Proclaimed Hawaiian History Month

In June, the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs (AOHCC) celebrated Gov. Josh Green's signing of Act 167, designating September as Hawaiian History Month.

The legislation reflects decades of community-driven education, cultural observances, and advocacy efforts championed by the Hawaiʻi Ponoʻī Coalition, established in 2007 to educate residents and visitors on Hawaiʻi's true history and the culture that makes our islands unique.

The coalition, of which AOHCC is a founding member, launched the annual ʻOnipaʻa Celebration at ʻIolani Palace in September 2007 to honor Queen Liliʻuokalani and spark public engagement through history, culture, and the arts.

"This recognition is long overdue," said Dre Kalili, AOHCC president. "Our organization was created to elevate the voices of Native Hawaiians in government, education, and society. Securing Hawaiian History Month is not just a symbolic act – it's the continuation of a kuleana we've carried for more than a century."

In 2019, delegates to the AOHCC's 60th Annual Convention passed a resolution calling on the state to officially designate September as Hawaiian History Month. That call to action, aligned with the Hawaiʻi Ponoʻī Coalition's long-standing work, culminated in this past legislative session with overwhelming support.

The AOHCC acknowledged Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole, who was lead sponsor of the bill. "By designating September as Hawaiian History Month, the state affirms our collective responsibility to tell the full story of Hawaiʻi," Keohokalole noted.

### Actions of Aloha Relaunches Under DeSoto

Pua DeSoto - *Courtesy Photo*

Actions of Aloha, which began as a social media challenge during the pandemic and inspired thousands to practice intentional kindness, recently appointed Pua DeSoto to its new chief executive officer.

A professional surfer and rising business leader, DeSoto brings fresh vision and a sense of purpose to the organization's next chapter. Actions of Aloha will relaunch this summer with new products, partnerships, and digital experiences to "activate" aloha in everyday life.

"Actions of Aloha was born at a time when our community needed hope," said DeSoto. "Today, aloha remains our greatest strength – and I'm honored to help lead this movement forward."

Since its formation, Actions of Aloha has raised and donated over $45,000 to institutions such as ʻIolani Palace and Bishop Museum. Its signature card decks, apparel, and guided content have inspired small but meaningful acts of kindness that ripple through communities.

The organization's mobile app – free on iOS – features daily aloha challenges, guided meditations, and cultural affirmations that have been used in classrooms, team settings, and homes to build stronger relationships and promote emotional wellbeing.

Actions of Aloha plans to grow its impact through new initiatives focused on wellness and Hawaiian language revitalization in collaboration with Hawaiʻi nonprofits, businesses, and educators to scale its reach in promoting aloha, not just as a value, but a daily practice.

To learn more visit actionsofaloha.com and follow @ActionsOfAloha on Instagram. ■

## BURIAL NOTICE: IWI LOCATED IN WAIKĪKĪ - SEEKING LINEAL/ CULTURAL DESCENDANTS

Notice to interested parties is hereby given that human skeletal remains were discovered by International Archaeological Research Institute, Inc. One complete and one partial skeletal element were identified within two rock shelters. Based on the disposition of the remains, they were determined to be primarily deposited. The finds were made during archaeological inventory survey excavations for the proposed purchase of a parcel in Waikīkī Ahupuaʻa, Kona District, Island of Oʻahu, TMK (1) 3-6-023:006, through the Clean Water and Natural Lands Fund for preservation. The find does not fall within a kuleana LCA. The SHPD has assigned State Inventory of Historic Places numbers of 50-80-15-09355 and 50-80-15-09356 to the burials. The remains were left in place following identification, and preservation in place is proposed. A final determination will be made by the Oʻahu Island Burial Council in consultation with the SHPD and any identified lineal and/or cultural descendants. Individuals with information pertaining to the burial should contact Ms. Regina Hilo at SHPD (808-692-8026, Regina.Hilo@hawaii.gov) or Ms. Leslie Iaukea (808-692-8023, Leslie.Iaukea@hawaii.gov) within 30 days of this notice. These individuals must provide information to the SHPD demonstrating lineal descent from these remains or descent from ancestors buried in Waikīkī Ahupuaʻa or Kona District.

## CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: WAIKOLOA AHUPUAʻA, HAWAIʻI ISLAND

*TMK: (3) 6-8-002:011*

Kulaiwi Archaeology, LLC is conducting a cultural impact assessment (CIA) and Ka Paʻakai Analysis for TMK: (3) 6-8-002:011, Waikoloa Ahupuaʻa, South Kohala District, Island of Hawaiʻi. The project proponent, Parker Ranch Enterprises II LLC, plans to construct a water well with the property. All persons having information of traditional cultural practices and places located within Waikoloa Ahupuaʻa and the vicinity of the project parcel are hereby requested to contact Solomon Kailihiwa, Kulaiwi Archaeology, LLC, skailihiwa@kulaiwiarchaeology.com (808) 493-8884 within thirty (30) days of this notice.

## CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: WAIKOLOA AHUPUAʻA, HAWAIʻI ISLAND

*TMK: (3) 6-8-002:018*

Kulaiwi Archaeology, LLC is conducting a cultural impact assessment (CIA) and Ka Paʻakai Analysis for TMK: (3) 6-8-002:018, Waikoloa Ahupuaʻa, South Kohala District, Island of Hawaiʻi. The project proponent, Coffman Engineers, Inc. plans to construct a water well within the property. All persons having information of traditional cultural practices and places located within Waikoloa Ahupuaʻa and the vicinity of the project parcel are hereby requested to contact Solomon Kailihiwa, Kulaiwi Archaeology, LLC, skailihiwa@kulaiwiarchaeology.com, (808) 493-8884 within thirty (30) days of this notice.

## CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: FIBER OPTIC CABLE PROJECT KĀNEʻOHE, OʻAHU AND KOHALA/ʻUPOLU POINT, HAWAIʻI ISLAND

SWCA Environmental Consultants is preparing Cultural Impact Assessments (CIAs) and Ka Paʻakai Analyses for the proposed Kūnoa North Inter-Island Middle Mile submarine fiber optic cable (FOC) project. This project will establish a total of six cable landing sites designed to bring fast, reliable broadband to rural areas across the Hawaiian Islands. At each landing site, the fiber optic cable will be brought ashore via a horizontally directionally drilled passage beneath the beach, with a manhole set back from the shoreline serving as the connection point between the submarine and terrestrial FOC.

The planned Kāneʻohe Marine Corps Base Hawaiʻi (KMCBH) landing site is located within the ahupuaʻa of Heʻeia in the moku of Koʻolaupoko, on the island of Oʻahu, within the Tax Map Key (TMK) parcel (1) 4-4-008:001. The site is situated within a grassy clearing near the eastern terminus of Perimeter Road, where the road begins to curve inland to meet Palikilo Road. The site lies adjacent to Pali Kilo Beach along the north-facing shoreline of the Mōkapu Peninsula. On Oʻahu, this project (with two landings on Oʻahu: KMCBH and Haleʻiwa) is set to benefit the communities of Nānākuli and Waimānalo and the Hawaiian Home Lands community of Nānākuli.

The planned Kohala/ʻUpolu Point landing site is located within the ahupuaʻa of Honoipu and a small portion of the ahupuaʻa of ʻUpolu in the moku of Kohala on the island of Hawaiʻi, within the TMK parcels (3) 5-6-001:074, (3) 5-6-001:056, and (3) 5-6-001:062. The site is located at the northern end of Honoipu Bay, directly south of the former ʻUpolu Coast Guard Station along the Old Coast Guard Road. On Hawaiʻi Island, this project is set to benefit the districts of Hāmākua and Puna and the Hawaiian Home Lands community of ʻUpolu Point.

SWCA is seeking community input regarding cultural knowledge of these areas, including past and present land use, cultural traditions, gathering practices, and any concerns the community might have related to cultural practices in the vicinity of the project areas. Please contact SWCA at hawaiiculturalconsultation@swca.com or (808) 437-8974 by Aug. 29, 2025, for more information or to share insights. Your input will help ensure cultural practices and concerns are properly considered. ■



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# This Budget is Bold, Transparent, and Centered on Our Lāhui

**Kaialiʻi Kahele**
CHAIR
Trustee, Hawaiʻi Island

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) recently adopted a $136 million biennium budget with a supermajority of the Board of Trustees. It's a budget that took months to build, countless hours of public presentations, and hard, sometimes uncomfortable conversations. It's also the most transparent and community-driven budget process in OHA's nearly 50-year history.

Let's be clear: this wasn't a backroom deal. Every decision, every motion, and every amendment happened in public view. We debated in real time. We listened to educators, advocates, and beneficiaries. And we made course corrections when it became clear the path forward needed to change.

### 84% of the Budget Was in Lockstep

Excluding personnel and travel, 84% of this budget aligned with OHA administration's original proposal. Only around $2–4 million (roughly 2% of the total) was under active debate. That small percentage mattered because it reflected our kuleana as trustees to ask hard questions about which programs and partners are best positioned to deliver results for Native Hawaiians.

We didn't always agree on how to invest, but we were unified on the why: improving Native Hawaiian wellbeing, strengthening education, supporting economic mobility, and protecting ʻāina.

### Listening and Course Correction: Charter Schools

One of the most significant moments in this budget process came late. Initially, the budget proposed equal funding distributions to Hawaiian-focused charter schools to avoid potential conflicts of interest – after all, some trustees have family members in these schools.

But we listened. We heard from school leaders who explained how harmful equal distribution would be to some of our most vulnerable communities. They asked us to reconsider, and we did. The result? OHA made its largest investment ever in Hawaiian-focused charter schools. The data supported it. The community demanded it. We aligned our actions.

### Stronger Oversight and Accountability

This budget isn't just about dollars; it's about how those dollars are managed. We strengthened due diligence requirements, added conflict-of-interest safeguards, and expanded BOT oversight of awards. Many former non-competitive awards are now competitive, with higher reporting and transparency standards.

We welcome partnerships with private and community organizations, but not at the expense of trust or integrity.

### Living Wages for OHA's Workforce

We also looked inward. For too long, some OHA employees earning under $100K had been overlooked for salary adjustments – some for nearly a decade. This budget changed that. We approved targeted increases for staff earning below Hawaiʻi's living wage standard and with more than two years of service.

The result: every OHA employee now earns at or above a true living wage for Hawaiʻi. We hope this sets an example for other state agencies.

### Setting the Record Straight on Trustee and Executive Pay

Let's address a common misconception: Trustees did not vote to raise our own pay. The 2024 OHA Salary Commission mandated adjustments after a 15-year gap. A handful of executive positions saw increases, primarily at the CEO's urging to help recruit and retain top talent. But the priority was clear – raise up those at the bottom first, not enrich the top.

### A Budget That Reflects Our Values

This biennium budget reflects what happens when leaders are willing to listen, adapt, and prioritize community needs over politics. It's not perfect – no budget ever is – but it represents a bold step forward, grounded in transparency, fairness, and fiduciary responsibility.

As chair of the Board of Trustees, I believe OHA's beneficiaries deserve nothing less. This budget is a promise to our lāhui: we are committed to doing better, being better, and ensuring every dollar entrusted to us serves the people of Hawaiʻi. ■

# Mana Mele

**Keoni Souza**
VICE CHAIR
Trustee, At-Large

Mana is not just spiritual energy – it is identity, it is lineage, it is the invisible thread that ties us to our kūpuna and ʻāina. For me, music is my mana.

Traditional Hawaiian music has never been just the streaming background ambience at a party or a pleasant pastime. It is my power source – a vessel of memory, emotion, and resistance. It reminds me of who I am, where I come from, and why I must carry these stories forward.

Every mele inoa is a genealogy, a way to honor someone's life and legacy. Every mele ʻāina expresses gratitude to our sacred places. Every oli echoes the breath of our kūpuna. These aren't just performances. They're offerings. They are acts of devotion and remembrance, strung together by kaona, by pilina, by aloha.

In my work at the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), you've likely noticed I often refer to mele. I do this intentionally. It's how I connect, how I process, and how I lead. I don't just hear mele – I live through it. It shapes my values, my decisions, and my understanding of ʻāina and people.

Growing up, mele was everywhere. At family pāʻina, birthdays, or lūʻau someone always had a guitar or ʻukulele in hand, and voices joined together naturally, without needing a stage or spotlight.

Today, I see a shift. Playlists have replaced kanikapila. We listen more than we sing. And while technology has helped us preserve old recordings, it has also created distance between us and the act of making music together. What once was a shared language is at risk of becoming just a special event.

This is why the kuleana we hold at OHA goes beyond budgets and policies. It includes nurturing the ways of life that sustain our people. That means uplifting those who carry the torch of mele – the composers, chanters, kumu hula, and musicians who teach us to remember.

Organizations like Merrie Monarch, the Hawaiʻi Academy of Recording Arts, the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame, and the Hawaiian Music Perpetuation Society are not just cultural institutions – they are guardians of mana.

Through my musical group, Nā Hoa, I've seen how traditional Hawaiian music can restore pride, spark identity, and awaken the soul. I've witnessed ʻohana weep while singing nā mele kūpuna. I've seen keiki stand taller after learning an oli. This is not entertainment. This is healing. This is transformation. This is mana.

We need to continue to return mele to its rightful place – in our homes, in our classrooms, in our everyday lives. We must make it easy and natural to sing. That's why I will always support initiatives that prioritize mele. I believe it is our kuleana as OHA trustees to ensure that funding reaches those who protect this legacy. I've been working to initiate some ways to support mele even further:

- Supporting mele workshops in every moku, led by kūpuna and other local musicians.
- Funding archives to preserve rare and endangered songs.
- Offering grants to those who wish to record their own mele and moʻolelo.
- Embedding traditional music and ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi into keiki education.

This is not just preservation – this is breath. This is life. And when we lift our voices together, teach our keiki, and honor the wisdom of our kūpuna, we do more than survive – we thrive.

Let ours be the generation that remembers. Let us be the lei that binds past to future – one note, one mele at a time. Because for me, and for many others, music is not a pastime. Music is our mana. ■

# Reviving the Paniolo Spirit: A Path to Sustainable Economic Renewal on Molokaʻi

**Keliʻi Akina, Ph.D.**

Trustee, At-Large

Fourth-generation Hawaiian cowboy James "Jimmy" Duvauchelle inherited the paniolo spirit.

He rose through the ranks of Molokaʻi Ranch to become its foreman in the 1970s, mentoring young riders and preserving the knowledge passed down through his family. When the ranch shut down in 2008, he didn't walk away. Instead, he leased 3,000 acres and founded Pōhakuloa Ranch, keeping cattle drives and paniolo culture alive for his children and grandchildren.

His story is more than personal – it's a living example of how Molokaʻi's economy can be shaped by cultural pride, land stewardship, and adaptability.

That is why I was eager to travel to Molokaʻi with my fellow trustees during the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' (OHA) annual neighbor island visit last month. Molokaʻi has always stood apart from the other islands, being defined not by resorts or high rises, but by perseverance and a deep connection to ʻāina.

During the community meetings, beneficiaries described the many economic challenges they face on the island: declining job opportunities and youth outmigration, and a lack of industries aligned with community values.

As Molokaʻi looks toward a sustainable solution for economic development, one viable idea can be found in its past: restoring the paniolo legacy. More than just cowboys, paniolo represent a Hawaiian model of mālama ʻāina and intergenerational learning. Yet the economic potential of this legacy has gone largely untapped. Reinvesting in this tradition offers a grounded, culturally aligned path to economic renewal.

At its height, Hawaiʻi's cattle industry was a major economic force. By the mid-20th century, the islands were home to over a million acres of ranch land, exporting thousands of head of cattle annually to the continent.

Molokaʻi played a role in this legacy, with its own ranches contributing to statewide production. This history proves that a thriving, local ranching economy is not only possible, but that it's part of our heritage. With modern technology, regenerative practices, and leadership rooted in cultural values, Molokaʻi can reclaim its place in Hawaiʻi's ranching future.

Revitalizing Molokaʻi's ranching economy begins with land and livestock. Supporting small-scale ranchers with access to land, equipment, and mentorship can boost local food production and reduce dependence on imported meat.

Opportunities also exist to create value-added goods: Molokaʻi-made jerky, leather goods, and tallow products that can serve both local and export markets without relying solely on imported goods. These ventures support self-sufficiency and allow ranchers to keep more value within the community.

Molokaʻi has resisted large-scale tourism, but low-impact, community-led cultural tourism can be a source of income that aligns with local values. Paniolo storytelling tours, horse rides, and cultural events, all designed and maintained by locals, can welcome respectful visitors without sacrificing identity. Rather than mass-marketing, this approach uplifts culture, educates guests, and keeps economic benefits within the community. Supporting business development rooted in paniolo values ensures that economic growth aligns with culture and ʻāina.

To sustain paniolo culture, we must invest in education. Land-based programs in schools can teach youth about ranching, ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, and cultural history. Apprenticeships with local ranchers and conservation projects can provide career paths rooted in identity and skill. By connecting education to culture, we ensure that Molokaʻi's young people can thrive without leaving their home island.

Reviving paniolo culture is not about nostalgia, it's about resilience. It's about creating a Molokaʻi economy that reflects the strength of the lāhui and the wisdom of the ʻāina. In the paniolo, we find a roadmap to dignity, discipline, and aloha ʻāina. By supporting this legacy, we empower Molokaʻi to shape its own future on its own terms. ■

# Hawaiʻi: A Model for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

**Brickwood Galuteria**

Trustee, At-Large

This column not so subtly invites reflection through a theme of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) – a subject deeply resonant with Hawaiʻi's social and cultural landscape. While many may remain publicly silent on DEI, the values that shape our communities compel me to speak.

Diversity here is not theoretical. It is embodied in the rhythms of daily life, and at its core are Native Hawaiians, whose ancestral connection to the ʻāina provides both grounding and ethical leadership amid a shifting national climate.

To Native Hawaiians, land is more than territory – it is genealogy, identity, and elders. The principle of kuleana guides our role as stewards articulated in many ways – revitalizing ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi in homes and classrooms, nurturing ʻāina restoration, and perpetuating ancestral wayfinding as beginning examples. Our actions do not merely preserve tradition – they illuminate pathways toward equity, sovereignty, and communal well-being.

In stark contrast is the federal government's 2025 executive orders to dismantle DEI initiatives nationwide.

These directives disband DEI offices, revoke funding tied to equity metrics, and pressure agencies, contractors, and institutions to abandon culturally responsive programming. Even nonprofit and educational spaces now face legal scrutiny for integrating inclusion practices. These policies threaten to erase decades of progress in confronting systemic disparities and building diverse leadership pipelines.

And yet Hawaiʻi holds firm. Our islands are home to an extraordinary demographic tapestry – Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Portuguese, Samoans, Micronesians, and many others.

Nearly a quarter of our residents identify as multiracial, but Hawaiʻi's distinction lies not in statistics – it lies in the integration of cultures through shared food, language, and values. Where else in the world does your meal share poi and pork adobo, or spam musubi and sweet bread, ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi and pidgin English; aloha, pono, and ʻohana – each thread contributes to a vibrant, interconnected whole.

Native Hawaiians are not simply part of this weave – we are its origin and anchor.

As cultural architects, educators, and advocates, Kānaka lead through practice. Immersion schools like Pūnana Leo, community-led governance efforts, and cultural revitalization projects re-center ancestral wisdom. Native Hawaiian leadership affirms that equity is not a trend – it is a tradition passed through generations.

Though many may be publicly silent on the subject of DEI, that silence must never be mistaken for surrender. We stand not in opposition, but in affirmation that diversity, equity, and inclusion are not partisan ideals – they are ancestral principles deeply embedded in Hawaiʻi's ethos. In a national climate increasingly hostile to equity work, our kuleana is to raise our voices with clarity, dignity, and aloha.

Hawaiʻi must continue protecting and expanding its DEI efforts – investing in culturally grounded education, strengthening governance accountability, and ensuring our systems reflect values of inclusion and justice. Our leadership on these issues is not an anomaly – it is a legacy. As federal restrictions attempt to suppress equity frameworks, Hawaiʻi's example becomes not only essential, but global.

This issue of *Ka Wai Ola* presents stories, visions, and reflections that may or may not name DEI outright – but make no mistake: the work is here. Hawaiʻi stands as a model of what's possible when diversity is cherished, equity is protected, and inclusion is the foundation, not an afterthought.

In these uncertain times, we are called not only to resist injustice, but to embody the values that have always made this place unique. The world is watching, and we must show them how inclusion is not only possible but rooted in the very identity of these islands. Aloha and mālama for now. ■

# OHA Leaders Visit Beneficiaries on Kauaʻi

(Top) ʻĀina Alliance site visit in Anahola. L-R: Ka Pouhana Stacy Ferreira, OHA Trustees Kalei Akaka, Dan Ahuna, Hulu Lindsey, ʻĀina Alliance Board President Jeremie Makepa, OHA Board Chair Kaialiʻi Kahele, John Kaneholani, Emmalani Makepa-Foley and Dustin Makepa.

(Bottom) Hāʻena State Park visit with ʻĀina Stewards of Hui Makaʻāinana o Makana L-R: Eric Hansen, Sophia Harder-Puaʻoi, Pua Chin, Trustees Dan Ahuna, Kalei Akaka, Vice Chair Keoni Souza, Billy Kinney, Megan Talley, Chair Kaialiʻi Kahele. - *Photos: Kelli Meskin Soileau*

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.

## KEAKA KAULIʻA-NEULA
## OCT. 1, 1987 – JUNE 20, 2025

Keakaokalāʻalohi Kawaipiʻikalani Kauliʻa-Neula was born on Oct. 1, 1987 at Kapiʻolani Hospital in Honolulu and raised in Nānākuli and on Maui. He passed away at Queen's Hospital on June 20, 2025. His inoa kūpuna comes from his great-great-great grandfather, Tūtūpā Keaka Kekuia of Kapapala-Kaʻū, Hawaiʻi. He leaves behind one keiki Kahalepiliokealoha; his mākuakāne hānai, Kuʻualohanui Kauliʻa; three sisters Ebony Lehuanani, Jolina Kehaulani, and Honesty Kamāmalu Kauliʻa; and two brothers Kelena and Kealiʻi Neula. His Celebration of Life will be on Aug. 9 on Oʻahu and on Aug. 23 on Maui. E ola loa i ke aloha!

**He Haʻikupuna Aloha no Keaka Kauliʻa-Neula**

ʻO keia ka haʻikupuna ʻo Keakaokalaʻalohi Kawaipiʻikalani Kauliʻa-Neʻula ma ka ʻaoʻao o kona mākuahine ʻo Donalynn Kauliʻa, kona kūpunakāne ʻo Peter Kauliʻa, me kona kūpunakāne kuakahi ʻo Keliʻi Kauliʻa. Pēnei nō kēia moʻokūʻauhau o Keaka:

Hānau ʻia ʻo Keaka Kuia Kekuia, he kāne
Hānau ʻia ʻo Waiholua Kekaua, he wahine
Noho pū lāua a hānau ʻia ʻo Lepeka Kekuia, he wahine.
Noho ʻo Lepeka Kekuia iā ʻĪpaʻapuka Kauliʻa,
Hānau ʻia ʻo Julian Keliʻi Kauliʻa, he kane.
Noho ʻo Julian Keliʻi Kauliʻa iā Lokalia Maliano Keliʻiholokai
Hānau ʻia ʻo Peter Hakuʻolekalimaeka-kanaloa, he kane.
Noho ʻo Peter Hakuʻolekalimaekakanaloa iā Flora Mayoga
Hānau ʻia ʻo Donalynn Agnes Kauliʻa, he wahine.
Noho ʻo Donalynn Kauliʻa iā Glenn Hoʻo-huli Neula
Hānau ʻia ʻo Keakaokalāʻalohi Kawaipiʻi-kalani Kauliʻa-Neʻula,
he kane....ka mea nona kēia haʻikupuna aloha.

(Ua hānai ʻia ʻo Keaka e kona mau kūpuna/mākua ma ka ʻaoʻao Kauliʻa)

E ola ka hā o ka ʻohana Kekuia!
E ola ka hā o ka ʻohana Kauliʻa!
E ola ka hā o ka ʻohana Neula!
E ola ka hā loa o kuʻu mākuakane.
E ola loa i ke aloha!

*Submitted by: Kuʻualohanui Kauliʻa* (*Keaka's adopted father/mākua hānai*)

## KATHERINE LESLIE HENDRICKS
## NOV. 14, 1947 – JUNE 4, 2025

Katherine Leslie Hendricks, of Kailua, Oʻahu, passed away June 4, 2025. She was born in Honolulu on Nov. 14, 1947. She graduated from Kamehameha Schools in 1965 and the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa with a bachelor's degree in Zoology and a master's degree in public health. In the early 1970s she researched vaccine development for ciguatera at UH and for dengue fever at Lēʻahi Hospital. She served for 30 years at the State of Hawaiʻi Department of Health, initially focusing on water, air, solid waste, and hazardous waste management and enforcement. She was later promoted to supervisor for the State of Hawaiʻi Clean Air Branch, monitoring and enforcement. Kathy loved being around family and friends. She enjoyed finding new ramen and saimin places to try, watching movies, and discovering new places to shop. She always had a large pot of something cooking to feed everyone and was the designated sashimi cutter. She loved ballet and poetry and could recite numerous passages by heart. She was preceded in death by her parents Richard and Ella Sawyer (Akuna Goo) and younger brother Thomas Sawyer. She was the proud mother of Jason and Melissa both of whom also predeceased her. Kathy is survived by her husband Todd Hendricks; brother Richard Sawyer; sister Barbara Sawyer; grandchildren Lea, Solymar, Grace, Sarah, Korah, Haruna, and Maximiliane; great-grandchildren Coda and Daphne; and all her Sawyer ʻOhana. Kathy spent her final days at home, surrounded by those who cherished her, much like she had always enveloped others in love and warmth. ■

OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

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info@oha.org

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Phone: 808.594.1888

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Phone: 808.204.2391

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Phone: 808.553.4640

### KAUAʻI / NIʻIHAU
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Līhuʻe, HI 96766-1601
Phone: 808.241.3390

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Wailuku, HI 96793-1400
Phone: 808.873.3364

www.oha.org/offices

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

**AINA REALTOR -** Do you or someone you know own a property in the Waimānalo or Papakōlea Homestead areas and are open to selling? I represent a Native Hawaiian buyer, currently on the Hawaiian Homes waitlist, who is ready, willing, and able to make a serious offer. If you've considered selling or know of a property that might become available, please reach out. This is a special opportunity to help a fellow Hawaiian return to the ʻāina. All inquiries will be handled with care and confidentiality. Jordan Aina Realtor RS-85780 - Cell: 808-276-0880 Email: jordan.aina@locationshawaii.com

**AINA REALTOR -** Call me to talk story and let's make homeownership a reality. If you have questions, I can help with both Hawaiian Homestead and residential properties on all islands. One of my missions is to keep native Hawaiian Families in Hawaiʻi. Let's build a better future for the next generation. Call me: Jordan Aina - RS-85780 Cell: (808) 276-0880 - Locations Hawaii LLC, RB-17095

**HAWAIIAN MEMORIAL PARK CEMETERY –** Garden of Meditation Lot 25 Plot. Open/close Bronze Marker Vase, cement vault, setting fee for marker and vase. Value of $15,000, selling for $10,000. If interested call 808-389-0743.

**HOME FOR SALE IN LAʻIʻŌPUA SUB-DIVISION IN KAILUA-KONA** - 3 bedrood 2 bathroom home for sale. Asking for $510,000. If interested please contact Tracy at 808-238-0386 or 808-557-9949.

**RESEARCH RECRUITMENT -** Native Hawaiians 18–65 without prediabetes/diabetes. Earn $25–50 if eligible! Contact: alabore@arizona.edu for information.

**SELLING PROPERTY ON ANAHOLA AND LĪHUʻE?** Interested in anyone selling their property in Anahola and Līhuʻe Hawaiian Homes. Contact Tracy Waialae Cell: 808-557-9949. Landline: 808-238-0386. Email: tracyrivera1962@yahoo.com.

**WAIʻANAE VALLEY HAWAIIAN HOMESTEAD RARELY AVAILABLE** excellent condition 4bed/2bath fully refreshed with new paint inside and out, new flooring, new carpet, new fixtures, new kitchen appliances, clean, ready to move in. For more information contact Tiffany Kekumu, Realtor 808-542-6555; talk Realty, LLC RS-78035.

**WAIOHULI, KULA, MAUI, PAPER LEASE AVAILABLE**. Looking at all offers even willing to trade for Oʻahu lease. Contact info: jkeka1147@yahoo.com. ■


*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**

**KAHOALIʻI –** Calling ALL descendants of Kahoaliʻi, including nā ʻohana Kamohoaliʻi, Kalawaiʻanui, Nakoa and Kaʻahanui. We will be having a great gathering of our ʻohana this coming Labor Day Weekend, Aug. 29 – Sept. 1, 2025, at Keʻanae Uka (the old YMCA camp) in Keʻanae, Haʻikū, Maui. Go to kahoalii.org for more information and to register.

**NAEHU-SAFFERY REUNION 2025 -** Descendants of Edmund Saffery and his wives, Kupuna and Waiki Naehu, are invited to the 2025 Naehu-Saffery Family Reunion on Saturday, Aug. 30, 2025, (Labor Day Weekend) in Hauʻula, Oʻahu. Connect with family, share stories, and celebrate our heritage! For more info contact: Dayton Labanon: 808-232-9869, dlabanon@gmail.com, Manu Goodhue: 808-551-9386, manu_losch@hotmail.com, Naomi Losch: 808-261-9038, nlosch@hawaii.edu. Visit the NSOA website: tinyurl.com/NSOASite. T-shirt orders due: June 30 and Registration due: Aug 1. Download registration packets at tinyurl.com/NSOAReunion25. ■

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# PROTECT OUR IWI KŪPUNA

## *Serve on an Island Burial Council*

*The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) is seeking qualified candidates to fill vacancies on Island Burial Councils throughout the pae ‘āina.*

Island Burial Councils are tasked with convening interested stakeholders and descendants of iwi discovered within the bounds of planned development projects. These councils ‘auamo (carry) the important kuleana of determining whether these previously identified burials must be preserved in place or relocated. The councils also make recommendations to the Department of Land and Natural Resources regarding the appropriate management, treatment and protection of iwi kūpuna.

There are five island burial councils:

**Hawai‘i Island | Maui/Lāna‘i | Moloka‘i | O‘ahu | Kaua‘i/Ni‘ihau**

Each council consists of at least nine members (with the exception of Moloka‘i which consists of five) who represent the various moku of each island. Council membership also includes representatives of development or large landowner interests (this group gets no more than three seats on the nine-member councils, and no more than one seat on the Moloka‘i council).

Island Burial Council nominees are approved by the governor. Regional representatives are selected from the Hawaiian community based on their understanding of culture, history, burial beliefs, customs and practices of Native Hawaiians.

OHA is currently accepting applications until **October 1, 2025**

To learn more or to submit your name for consideration go to:

**www.oha.org/burialcouncils/**

*Empowering Hawaiians, Strengthening Hawai‘i*

OHA
OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS