



# Ka Wai Ola

NEWS FOR THE LĀHUI

kawaiola.news

# LIVING IN EXILE

PAGES 18-20

Pa'ahao (inmates) at Saguaro Correctional Center in Arizona participate in Makahiki celebrations in October 2011. This month marks 30 years since the state has utilized private prisons on the continent to house Hawai'i inmates.  
- Photo: © Nick Oza - USA TODAY NETWORK via Imagn Images



## KOHOPONO 2025 LEGISLATIVE REPORT CARD

This **KOHOPONO 2025 Legislative Report Card** continues Ka Lāhui Hawai'i's long-standing effort to educate our lāhui about how Hawai'i lawmakers vote on issues that deeply impact our communities. Koho Pono means "to choose correctly," underscoring our belief that informed civic engagement is essential to protecting our people, 'āina, wai, and cultural lifeways. Ka Lāhui Hawai'i—a Native initiative for self-determination and self-governance formed by grassroots Kanaka Maoli in 1987—has published more than a dozen report cards since 2006 to provide clear, accessible information on legislative decisions so our people can be better informed. For the 2025 session, this educational report highlights three bills that passed (SB 739, HB 505, and HB 830) and one that did not (HB 606), each carrying major consequences for our lands, water, housing, cultural practices, and future generations.

**SCORING: A = Voted pro-Hawaiian. F = Voted against Hawaiian interests. C = Voted with reservations. N/A = Excused. \* = Introduced Measure.**

## THE BILLS



### Senate Bill 739: Land Exchange of Private Lands for State Lands

**Ka Lāhui Hawai'i Position: OPPOSE** | Allows the Governor, with BLNR approval, to exchange "ceded lands" — stolen Hawaiian Kingdom Crown and Government lands taken without Kanaka Maoli consent or compensation — for privately owned agricultural lands, with no requirement for Kanaka Maoli consultation, consent, or compensation. These stolen national lands may then be repurposed for affordable and workforce housing, including transit-oriented housing near the rail line. This raises serious concerns about the alienation of Hawai'i's national lands and the weakening of the "ceded lands" corpus, which must remain intact until Kanaka Maoli unrelinquished claims and nationhood are resolved.

### House Bill 505: Red Hill WAI Bill

**Ka Lāhui Hawai'i Position: SUPPORT** | Establishes a WAI Policy Coordinator to coordinate Red Hill remediation initiatives and creates the Red Hill Remediation Special Fund. This measure addresses the ongoing water crisis impacting Kanaka Maoli communities after eight decades of military contamination from the U.S. Navy's Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility at Kapūkaki. It represents a crucial first step toward ensuring long-term remediation of Hawai'i's most precious resource—wai—and strengthens efforts to safeguard our aquifer and drinking water for future generations.

### House Bill 830: Historic Preservation Reviews

**Ka Lāhui Hawai'i Position: OPPOSE** | Authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources to outsource historic preservation reviews to private consultants, raising serious conflict-of-interest concerns since many archaeologists already work for developers. Rather than accelerating housing construction, this shift could cause additional delays, as SHPD would still need to review and approve the outsourced work despite limited staffing. Relying on third-party consultants also risks lower-quality assessments, incomplete findings, and weakened protections for iwi kūpuna and other cultural sites, undermining both HRS Chapter 6E and Hawai'i State constitutional duties to safeguard Kanaka Maoli traditional and customary practices.

### House Bill 606: Funding for the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL)

**Ka Lāhui Hawai'i Position: SUPPORT** | Appropriates additional funds to DHHL to address the 29,000+ Kanaka Maoli on the homestead waitlist—families who have waited generations for lands promised under the 1921 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act. This prolonged displacement from ancestral lands is more than a housing crisis; it is a cultural crisis that undermines community stability and pushes Kanaka Maoli further from their homeland. Strengthening DHHL funding is critical not only to provide housing for Kanaka Maoli, but also to keep more of our people home, as more Kanaka Maoli are forced to leave Hawai'i due to the lack of affordable housing.

SENATE	DISTRICT	SB739	HB505	HB830	HB606
HENRY AQUINO	Pearl City, Waipahu	F*	A	F	A
BRENTON AWA	Kāne'ohe, Kahuku, Laie	A	A	F	A
STANLEY CHANG	Hawai'i Kai, Aina Haina	F	A	F	A
LYNN DECOITE	Hāna, Moloka'i, Lāna'i	F	A	F	A
SAMANTHA DECORTE	Nanakuli, Wa'anae	A	A	F	A
DONAVAN DELA CRUZ	Mililani Mauka, Wahiawa	F*	A	F	A
BRANDON ELEFANTE	'Aiea, Pearl City	F*	A	F	A
KURT FEVELLA	'Ewa Beach	F	A	F	A
CAROL FUKUNAGA	Mānoa, Makiki, Papakōlea	F	A	F	A
MIKE GABBARD	Kapolei, Makakilo	F	A	F	A
TROY HASHIMOTO	Wailuku, Kahului	F*	A	F	A
LES IHARA, JR.	Kaimuki, Palolo, Mo'ili'i	F	A	F	A
LORRAINE INOUYE	Hilo, Papa'ikou	F	A	F	A
DRU KANUHA	Kona, Ka'u	F	A	F	A
JARRETT KEOHOKALO	Kāne'ohe, Kailua	F	A	F	A
MICHELLE KIDANI	Mililani, Waikele	F*	A	F	A
DONNA MERCADO KIM	Kalihi Valley, Moanalua	F	A	F	A
RONALD KOUCHI	Kaua'i, Ni'ihau	F	A	F	A
CHRIS LEE	Kailua, Waimanalo	F	A	F	A
ANGUS MCKELVEY	South and West Maui	A	A	F	A
SHARON MORIWAKI	Kaka'ako, McCully, Waikiki	F	A	F	A
KARL RHOADS	Liliha, Downtown, Nu'uauu	F	A	F	A
HERBERT "TIM" RICHARDS, III	Hāmākua, Waimea, Waikōloa	F	A	F	A
JOY SAN BUENAVENTURA	Puna	F*	A	F	A
GLENN WAKAI	Kalihi, Salt Lake	F	A	F	A

HOUSE	DISTRICT	SB739	HB505	HB830	HB606
DAVID ALCOS III	'Ewa Beach, Ocean Pointe	F	A	F	A
TEREZ AMATO	Kihei	C	A*	F*	A*
DELLA AU BELATTI	Makiki, Punchbowl	A	A*	F	A*
CORY CHUN	Pearl City, Waipahu	F	A*	F	A
ELLE COCHRAN	West Maui	N/A	N/A	N/A	A
LUKE EVSLIN	Lihue, Hanamaulu	F	A	F*	A*
DIAMOND GARCIA	'Ewa, Kapolei	A	A	F	A*
ANDREW GARRETT	Mānoa	F	A*	F	A
JOE GEDEON	Hawai'i Kai	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TINA GRANDINETTI	Kahala, Kaimuki	F	A*	F	A*
MARK HASHEM	Aina Haina, Kuli'ou'ou	F	A	F	A
DANIEL HOLT	Chinatown, Iwilei	F	A*	F*	A*
IKAIKA HUSSEY	Kalihi Valley	C	A*	F	A
LINDA ICHIYAMA	Salt Lake	F	A*	F	A
GREGGOR ILAGAN	Puna	F	A	F	A
KIM COCO IWAMOTO	Downtown, Kaka'ako	A	A*	A	A
KIRSTIN KAHALOA	Honouaunau, Kailua-Kona	F	A*	F*	A*
JEANNE KAPELA	Volcano, Na'alehu	F	A*	F	A*
SUE KEOHOKAPU-LEE LOY	Hilo	F	A	F	A
DARIUS KILA	Nanakuli, Mā'ili	F	A	F*	A
LISA KITAGAWA	Kāne'ohe, Waiahole	F	A*	F	A
SAM KONG	'Aiea	F	A	F	A
MATTHIAS KUSCH	Hilo, Hāmākua	F	A	F	A
TRISH LA CHICA	Mililani	F	A*	F	A
RACHELE LAMOSAO	Waipahu	F	A*	F*	A
MIKE LEE	Kailua, Kāne'ohe Bay	F	A*	F*	A
NICOLE LOWEN	Kailua-Kona, Honokohau	F	A*	F*	A*
LISA MARTEN	Kailua, Waimanalo	F	A*	F*	A*
SCOT MATAYOSHI	Kāne'ohe, Maunawili	F	A*	F*	A
LAUREN MATSUMOTO	Mililani Mauka	F	A*	F	A
TYSON MIYAKE	Wailuku, Waikapū	F	A*	F*	A
DEE MORIKAWA	Koloa, Waimea, Ni'ihau	F	A	F	A
CHRISTOPHER MURAOKA	Wa'anae, Makaha	A	A	F	F
NADINE NAKAMURA	Anahola, Hanalei, Kapa'a	F	A	F	A
IKAIKA OLDS	Mo'ili'i, McCully	F	A*	F	A
AMY PERRUSO	Wahiawā	F	A*	F	A*
ELIJAH PIERICK	Royal Kunia, Village Park	A	N/A	F	N/A
MAHINA POEPOE	Moloka'i, Lānai, Hāna	A	A*	A	A*
SEAN QUINLAN	Hale'iwa, Kahuku, Lā'ie	F	A	F	A*
JULIE REYES ODA	'Ewa Beach, Iroquois Point	F	A*	F	A*
JACKSON SAYAMA	Palolo, Kaimuki	F	A*	F	A
GARNER SHIMIZU	Moanalua, Āliamanu	A	A*	F	A
KANANI SOUZA	Kapolei, Makakilo	F	A*	F*	A*
GREGG TAKAYAMA	Pearl City, Wai'au	F	A*	F*	A*
JENNA TAKENOUCHE	Nu'uauu, Liliha	F	A	F*	A*
ADRIAN TAM	Waikiki	F	A*	F	A*
DAVID TARNAS	Waimea, Waikōloa	F	A*	F*	A*
SHIRLEY TEMPLO	Kalihi, Ke'ehi Lagoon	F	A	F	A
CHRIS TODD	Keaukaha, Pana'ewa	F	A*	F*	A
JUSTIN WOODSON	Kahului, Pu'ūnēnē	F	A	F	A
KYLE YAMASHITA	Pukalani, Makawao, Kula	F	A	F	A

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*Ka Wai Ola* is published monthly by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to inform, inspire and uplift the lāhui and others by covering issues of concern to the Native Hawaiian community, celebrating successes, and sharing information about OHA programs and efforts. Advertising in *Ka Wai Ola* does not constitute an endorsement of products or individuals by OHA. *Ka Wai Ola* has a circulation of more than 70,000 including direct mail and digital subscribers. Additionally, several thousand more copies are distributed via OHA's neighbor island offices, state and county offices, private and community agencies, and newsstands. Our website, [kawaiola.news](#), has about 16,000 monthly visitors. *Ka Wai Ola* is printed by O'ahu Publications. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs' main office is at 560 N. Nimitz Hwy, Suite 200, Honolulu, HI, 96817. Telephone: 808-594-1835. Email: [kwo@oha.org](mailto:kwo@oha.org). ©2025 Office of Hawaiian Affairs. All rights reserved.

## We Have Not Abandoned the Path Our Kūpuna Cleared for Us

Aloha mai kākou,

As the year draws to a close, most resonant is how our OHA ‘ohana has moved through a period of transition with clarity, urgency, and a steadfast commitment to our beneficiaries.

Times of change test any organization, yet they reveal who we are at our core. This past quarter, a shared determination emerged to navigate this moment with integrity and accountability. Every accomplishment reflects that kākou spirit: staff rising to meet new demands, leaders working in alignment, and community anchoring us in our purpose.

We are delving in the work of educating and consulting around expiring military leases; not to decide for our people, but to provide beneficiaries with historical grounding, legal context, and space to engage in honest dialogue.

OHA is entrusted to steward and advocate for these crown and government lands. Safeguarding them is a duty we discharge with vigilance. What encourages me is the depth and courage of our community's engagement, bringing mana'ō that is informed and rooted in aloha 'āina.

Concurrently, OHA rapidly mobilized \$6.1 million in emergency relief for an anticipated 14,000 beneficiaries. Many households would have otherwise fallen through state program gaps. Our teams worked with intention, ensuring families had support when they needed it, not after the crisis passed.

This quarter also brought our staff onto OHA's legacy lands, guided by community stewards whose labor protects wahi pana many of us only read about. These huaka'i offer more than team building; they remind us that our work is never abstract. It lives in place, in lineages, and in responsibilities that transcend job titles and span generations, connecting us to something larger than ourselves.

Agency-wide professional development remains a priority, strengthening and unifying those called to serve. OHA continues to cultivate a

workplace where people can flourish by securing living wages, advancing income equity, expanding paid family leave, broadening telework, and establishing mobile satellite offices.

Updates to bylaws, governance policies, and delegations of authority reflect transparency, fiduciary integrity, and our ongoing embrace of the Mana i Maui Ola values we champion.

Perhaps most visible was OHA's presence in the community, from conventions here and on the continent to week-long roundtables across Moku o Keawe. Everywhere we went we listened for truth, not confirmation. We showed up grounded in our mission, understanding that abundance means nothing unless shared, and that focus, discipline, and selfless service allow our work to thrive amid noise and challenges.

There is still much work ahead: educating our people; protecting our lands and waters; expanding access to resources; strengthening civic engagement; and building pilina across generations and communities.

If our kūpuna could see the resilience, growing capacity, and aloha carrying us through this quarter I believe they'd be proud – not because our work is finished, but because we have not abandoned the path they cleared for us. Wherever we are, whatever titles we hold, we will continue to walk that path together into 2026 and beyond. ■

Mahalo nui,

**Summer Lee Haunani Sylva**

Ka Pouhana Kūikawā  
Interim Chief Executive Officer



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## BOT Meetings Broadcast Live on 'Ōlelo

By Bill Brennan, OHA Communications Director

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) has partnered with 'Ōlelo Community Media ('Ōlelo) to broadcast and stream the organization's Standing Committee and Board of Trustees meetings, significantly expanding community access between OHA and the Native Hawaiian Communities it serves. The collaboration strengthens OHA's ability to communicate with – and serve – Native Hawaiians and all of Hawai'i's diverse communities.

"This partnership marks an exciting new chapter in OHA's efforts to serve and support Native Hawaiians by expanding access to our decision-making processes, while also providing better connectivity between OHA and the Native Hawaiian communities we are dedicated to serve," said OHA Board of Trustees Chair Kaiali'i Kahele.

"It aligns with initiatives such as our recently announced emergency relief program for Native Hawaiian families affected by the federal government shutdown, along with other efforts that reflect our continued commitment to the

wellbeing of our communities."

All meetings that take place in OHA's boardroom at the agency's home office on O'ahu are covered by the partnership. The agreement also allows for broadcast and streaming of meetings held across the islands, including recent sessions at UH Hilo's Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language.

"'Ōlelo Community Media is honored to collaborate with OHA in this important effort," said 'Ōlelo Community Media President & Chief Executive Officer Roger McKeague. "At 'Ōlelo, we believe open communication and civic engagement are the foundations of a thriving community. By supporting OHA's work, we help ensure that important conversations and decisions affecting Native Hawaiians are shared widely, openly, and without filters."

Through this partnership, 'Ōlelo and OHA reaffirm their shared commitment to transparency, civic engagement, and ensuring the public has meaningful access to governance and initiatives designed to uplift Native Hawaiians and strengthen Hawai'i's communities.

'Ōlelo began carrying OHA meetings on cable Channel 53 on November 12. ■

## OHA and HNC Launch Congressional Fellows Program

By Bill Brennan, OHA Communications Director

On November 4 the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) and the Hawaiian Native Corporation (HNC) announced the launch of Nā 'Elele o Kahikina Congressional Fellows Program, a unique opportunity to prepare the next generation of Native Hawaiian leaders for influential roles in government, policy, and advocacy.

Administered in part by E Ala E and the Nākūpuna Foundation, this competitive fellowship will sponsor up to six college graduates to spend up to one full year in Washington, D.C., beginning in January 2026. Fellows will gain first-hand experience in the heart of federal policymaking – working in congressional offices, observing committees and caucuses, and engaging with key community and national partners.

"For generations, our ali'i and kūpuna have carried Hawai'i's voice to the highest levels of government with courage and dignity," said

OHA Board Chair Kaiali'i Kahele. "Nā 'Elele o Kahikina continues that legacy by empowering our young 'Ōiwi to serve as messengers of our lāhui – bringing the wisdom of our islands to national conversations that shape our collective future."

The fellowship name reflects the bridge between past, present, and future. Kahikina, meaning "the east," signifies arrival, renewal, and enlightenment. As 'elele (messengers and ambassadors) the Fellows represent a lineage of Kānaka 'Ōiwi leaders rooted in Hawai'i while growing and expanding their knowledge in Washington, D.C.

Today, emerging leaders are rising to 'auamo kuleana (take on their roles and responsibilities) inspired by those who have gone before them to help shape the decisions that will affect Hawai'i's future.

Fellows will receive comprehensive financial support including stipends to cover housing, transportation, and relocation expenses, ensuring accessibility for all qualified applicants. ■



## Keli'iho'omalulu and Walker Receive Alaka'i Awards

By Puanani Fernandez-Akamine



Remy Keli'iho'omalulu (left) and Lori Walker (right) with OHA Trustees. Photo: Nelson Gaspar

Office of Hawaiian Affairs' (OHA) Trustee Aide Remy Keli'iho'omalulu and Land and Integrated Assets Interim Director Lori Walker are OHA's latest Alaka'i Award recipients.

This award is presented quarterly to two OHA staff who embody the organization's values through their action, leadership and decision-making. The Alaka'i Award recognizes individuals who demonstrate commitment

to OHA's mission and who consistently go "above and beyond." Awardees are nominated by their coworkers.

Keli'iho'omalulu, serves as an aide to Trustee Keli'i Akina and is described as someone who lives OHA's core values: she is inclusive and a team player, she is respectful, compassionate, and leads by example, and she shows up every day with purpose and vision.

A colleague writes that "Remy inspires others through her perseverance, compassion and authenticity, uplifting those around her. She listens deeply, offers support without hesitation, and leads with both humor and heart."

Her coworkers find say she offers thoughtful feedback and balances her many tasks with grace. "Remy shows that strength and kindness can coexist and sets the tone for a positive, collaborative work environment."

Walker started at OHA nearly 10 years ago as an analyst. She was later promoted to manager for the Land and Integrated Assets Department, and now serves as its interim director. Her team says she a compassionate, accessible leader who models both excellence and humility.

For years, Walker has been the steadfast foundation of OHA's land department, gracefully balancing her regular kuleana as a manager with the additional responsibility of serving as its interim director for the past year – something at which she has excelled, securing millions in project funding and boosting lease revenues to advance land acquisition and development initiatives.

"She has fostered a culture grounded in laulima, lōkahi, loko maika'i and kūlia – values deeply reflected in the way she mentors, supports and uplifts her team. Lori's unwavering commitment to OHA and its mission inspires those around her," said a colleague.

Congratulations and mahalo nui to Remy and Lori for your dedication and commitment to our lāhui! ■

# \$6.1M Allocated to Offset Federal Shutdown Impacts

By Bill Brennan, OHA Communications Director

In an emergency meeting on October 27, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Board of Trustees (BOT) approved \$6.1 million in emergency funding to help Native Hawaiian beneficiaries employed by the federal government and impacted by the federal government shutdown as well as beneficiaries affected by the November 1 suspension of SNAP benefits.

The board directed OHA administrators to work out details of the benefits program, dubbed “I Ola,” to include determining eligibility requirements and potential partnerships ahead of a November 6 BOT meeting in Hilo.

At that meeting, the board approved a the administration’s recommendation to provide up to \$350 per person to verified Native Hawaiian households without child dependents – beneficiaries that include kūpuna, disabled adults, and low-income adults who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits but are excluded from the state’s Hawai‘i Relief Program (TANF Support for Housing and Utility Payments).

Trustees also approved a second tier of relief providing up to \$1,200 per person to verified Native Hawaiian furloughed federal civilian workers earning no more than 400% of the Federal Poverty Level (approximately \$72,000 for a single-person household) who are experiencing a pay interruption and are also excluded from the Hawai‘i Relief Program.

I Ola was designed to reach Native Hawaiian households who are at-risk and who may not qualify for other state or federal assistance. “We are ad-

ressing the needs of some of our most vulnerable beneficiaries,” said OHA Board of Trustees Chairperson Kaiali‘i Kahele.

To expedite administration of the I Ola relief program, OHA partnered with Hawaiian Council and, on November 10, an online portal went live to receive and process applications from beneficiaries. The distribution of funds began the same week.

An estimated 14,000 Native Hawaiian beneficiaries qualify for the \$350 direct payment to help meet food costs, and another 1,000 Native Hawaiian federal employees are eligible for the \$1,200 relief payments.

“This targeted approach reflects our responsibility to deploy trust resources with intention and equity, avoiding duplication with existing state relief measures,” said OHA Interim Administrator Summer Sylva.

“Our lāhui continues to face real hardship, and together we are demonstrating what it means to care for our people with compassion, accountability, and unity,” added Hawaiian Council CEO Kūhiō Lewis.

Although the 43-day federal government shutdown ended on November 12, OHA’s I Ola funds continue to be distributed. To assist beneficiaries on the neighbor islands, Hawaiian Council deployed staff to Maui, Moloka‘i, Kaua‘i and Hawai‘i Island the week of November 21 to get people signed up for relief funds.

As of mid-November, approximately 2,000 people had applied. ■

For more information go to:  
[hawaiiancouncil.org/oha-relief/](http://hawaiiancouncil.org/oha-relief/).

## TRUSTEE KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

The Probate Court appointed a Trustee Screening Committee to nominate three candidates to be considered by the Court for appointment as a Trustee for the Estate of Bernice Pauahi Bishop.

The Screening Committee solicited applications from individuals who possess a deep sense of commitment and the ability to ensure Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop’s vision and legacy are perpetuated into the future. After reviewing resumes and vision statements of 83 applicants, and conducting personal interviews with semifinalists, the Screening Committee has determined that the following three finalists (listed in alphabetical order) best meet the Probate Court’s requirements and desirable qualities and characteristics:

**OLIN K. LAGON**  
**KEITH VIEIRA**  
**ERIC K. YEAMAN**

### 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

### The Probate Court required candidates to possess expertise in one or more of the following areas:

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

The public is welcome to submit written comments on the candidates, which will be filed with the Court and will become public record.

Anonymous comments will not be accepted.

Comments, including legal name and contact information, are due by 4:00 p.m. on December 31, 2025, and can be submitted by:

### Mail:

Trustee Screening Committee  
c/o Inkinen Executive Search  
1003 Bishop Street, Suite 1477, Honolulu, HI 96813

### Email:

[executives@inkinen.com](mailto:executives@inkinen.com)

### Online form:



[www.inkinen.com/ks-public-comment-2025-2026/](http://www.inkinen.com/ks-public-comment-2025-2026/)

## I Ola One-Time Relief Amounts:

### SNAP:

Local grocery store gift cards up to \$350 are being issued to verified Native Hawaiian beneficiaries without dependents. Foodland gift cards will be provided to residents on O‘ahu, Maui, and Kaua‘i; KTA gift cards for residents on Hawai‘i Island; and due to the remote locations, residents on Lāna‘i and Moloka‘i will receive a direct assistance check.

### Federal Employees:

Checks up to \$1,200 will be issued to verified Native Hawaiian federal civilian (nonmilitary) employees not receiving pay during the shutdown who earn no more than 400% of the Federal Poverty Level.

# OHA Responds to Efforts to Fast-Track Military Lease Renewals

By Puanani Fernandez-Akamine

“We have to fight for our rights. We have to fight our best and we have fight smart,” said ‘Ilima Long, testifying before the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Board of Trustees (BOT) on November 13.

Long was just one of nearly a dozen beneficiaries who testified before the trustees ahead of its vote on how OHA will respond to ongoing military land-lease and funding negotiations between the state and federal governments.

Without exception, beneficiaries testifying that day objected to the renewal of military leases.

Ben Schafer, an Air Force veteran, testified that the military today “is very different” saying that “if they train on our lands, then we become part of that killing wherever it might be. We don’t want to be any part of it.”

James Maioho, who has toured the impact zone, testified that the level of devastation “was really shocking” and asserted that the military’s claim that they are making Hawai‘i safer is false. “What happens on these bases makes Hawai‘i one of the hottest nuclear targets on the planet. This cannot be allowed to continue,” he said.



‘Ilima Long (left) and James Maioho (right) were two of the dozen beneficiaries who testified against military leased lands at the Nov. 13 OHA board of trustees meeting. - Photos: Nelson Gaspar

For months, Gov. Josh Green has been working with U.S. Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll to fast-track renewal of expiring military leases in Hawai‘i despite community sentiment and the Board of Land and Natural Resources’ rejection of both of the Army’s Environmental Impact Statements to renew state land leases in Pōhakuloa and on O‘ahu earlier this year.

Green has repeatedly expressed concern that the federal government may invoke eminent domain to seize the lands – something he wants to avoid – under the assumption that invocation of eminent domain is inevitable.

A November 4 *Civil Beat* article by Blaze Lovell reported that, in an October 29 letter to Driscoll, Green proposed \$10 Billion from the federal government to renew leases for Pōhakuloa and about 400 acres on O‘ahu. The funds would be used, among other things, for environmental, energy, transportation, and housing projects.

Green also proposed convening a negotiation team to set parameters on a settlement, saying in the letter that “a negotiated settlement, rather than a protracted con-

tested condemnation, offers the clearest, most efficient path.” Members of the proposed negotiation team have yet to be named.

OHA’s military lease response plan was approved on November 13 and calls for OHA to be included in Green’s “Joint Negotiation Team,” and to co-chair the state’s “Technical Working Group” along with the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

“The state constitution requires that Native Hawaiians and OHA not only be considered and consulted, but also compensated for any use of lands of the public lands trust,” said OHA BOT Chair Kaiali‘i Kahele. “Our beneficiaries are insisting that OHA be a leader with the state in talks with the military about the future use of our lands.”

Trustees also voted to hold community consultation sessions on its military lease negotiating positions to further inform OHA’s stance. The first meeting was held at UH Hilo on November 26, with a second planned for December 17 at the Kamehameha Schools Community Learning Center at Mā‘ili on O‘ahu.

The BOT also approved inclusion of a bill in OHA’s 2026 legislative package calling for a constitutional amendment to prohibit live-fire military training on the state’s public trust lands to be included on the 2026 ballot.

While the November 13 meeting was in process, a press release from the governor’s office announced that an Advisory Committee for Military Leased Lands comprised primarily of Native Hawaiians had been selected. OHA Chief Advocate Leinā‘ala Ley brought this to the board’s attention during the meeting, noting that the OHA’s Interim Administrator Summer Sylva was named to the committee.

However, Long, who has experience working for labor unions, testified that, “Advisory teams do not negotiate. Advisory committees are nothing. Hawaiians need a meaningful seat at the table; a meaningful pathway and space to fight for the return of our lands. I very much support OHA’s direction to assert its rights to negotiate.”

In a November 14 statement, OHA acknowledged the governor’s announcement, expressed appreciation that Sylva was invited to participate, but clarified that OHA’s role in the group would be to examine legally and politically viable alternatives to condemnation, recognizing what is at risk should the federal government pursue condemnation in a manner that disrupts state rights, undermines historical land claims, weakens the political trust relationship, and disregards the unresolved history of Hawai‘i’s unrelinquished sovereignty.

“It’s important these conversations do not occur in silos or in a rigid, linear sequence,” said Sylva said. “The idea that condemnation is inevitable – and that discussions must focus solely on valuation – overlooks the viable paths still available. Exploring all options is not only prudent—it is essential to avoid forcing Hawai‘i into false choices.

“At the same time, the committee’s work to assess the valuation of these lands should not alarm those who

oppose condemnation,” Sylva, a Native rights attorney, continued. “Accurate valuation serves multiple pono purposes far beyond preparing for potential legal action. For decades, military leases have been significantly undervalued.

“Conducting long-overdue due diligence on the true worth of our lands is essential – whether the path forward involves new or renewed leases, non-live-fire training arrangements, or other alternatives to condemnation. Responsible stewardship of trust lands cannot wait for crises, particularly when their very purpose is to be restored to the people from whom they were unlawfully taken.”

Following up on November 17, Kahele sent a letter to the U.S. Senate and House Armed Services Committees, with copies to government leaders including Green and Hawai‘i’s congressional team, regarding the lands leased by the military. The letter requested inclusion of Section 2831 in the final version of the FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, along with a targeted amendment requiring formal consultation with OHA and Native Hawaiian organizations.

“Section 2831 helps address the complex issues that the State of Hawai‘i, the Department of Defense, OHA, and Native Hawaiians are facing, and can ensure that negotiations lead to timely decision-making while preventing indefinite delay. It also promotes a coordinated federal-state process, rather than fragmented or service-specific approaches,” Kahele said.

A background memo included with the letter provided information about the Public Land Trust and the federal government’s relationship with the Native Hawaiian community.

“It is important for our national leaders to understand the history and the responsibilities that the federal government, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and the State of Hawai‘i all have on this issue,” added Kahele.

Kahele notes that OHA wants to work transparently with all parties involved and also include the community in the important decisions to be made. To this end, OHA has also launched a comprehensive public education website on the military leased lands issue that includes an anonymous community survey.

“There is meaningful opportunity in this process if the governor and the committee approach it with courage, conviction, and a commitment to leading not from fear but from principle,” reaffirmed OHA Board Chair Kahele. “OHA stands ready to contribute in that spirit.” ■



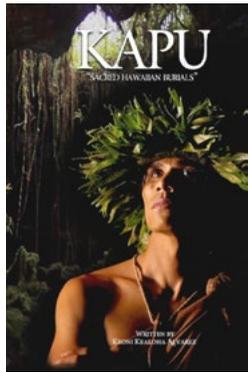
For more information about the history of military land leases in Hawai‘i or to share your mana‘o on this issue via our confidential survey, scan the QR code or go to: [www.oha.org/aloha-aina](http://www.oha.org/aloha-aina)

# Books for the Lāhui

## Four new, very different publications to inform, inspire and entertain

By Puanani Fernandez-Akamine

### Keoni Kealoha Alvarez: *KAPU Series*



The accidental discovery of a burial cave near his ancestral home in Puna on Hawai'i Island set the trajectory for Alvarez' life. He was only 8 years old at the time, but he has made it his life's work to protect iwi kūpuna, and in particular, to watch over the iwi resting in the burial cave he stumbled upon more than 35 years ago.

Over the decades, Alvarez has immersed himself in learning about traditional burial methods, eventually producing a film, *KAPU: Sacred Hawaiian Burials*, along with several books that detail this remarkable discovery and what he has learned since.

There are now four books in the series, beginning with a children's book, *The Boy and his Hawaiian Cave*, published in 2021 followed by *KAPU: Hawaiian Burial Methods* published in 2022, *KAPU: "Sacred Hawaiian Burials"* – the book version of his film – published in 2023, and in May 2025, Alvarez published his fourth book, a hardcover coffee table book by the same name that uses illustrations and culturally grounded narrative to help people understand traditional Hawaiian ways of honoring the ancestors.

All books in the *KAPU* series are available on Amazon, and the two-hour film can be viewed on PBS Hawai'i at [pbshawaii.org/kapu-sacred-hawaiian-burials/](http://pbshawaii.org/kapu-sacred-hawaiian-burials/).

### Peter J. Oluloa Britos: *Valley of Spiraling Winds*

Writer Pete Britos was born to a family of musicians and traveled the world playing music as a child. In the 1980s he competed in professional level racquetball in California, and after leaving the sports industry worked a variety of jobs including as a logger and painter. In the 1990s he landed in the Los Angeles film industry writing, producing, and directing.

After earning an MFA in screenwriting and a Ph.D. in critical media studies, he returned to Hawai'i, and helped

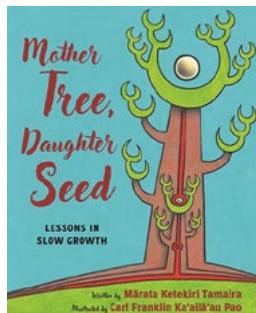


develop art, film, digital media and animation programs at UH Mānoa, Hawai'i Pacific University (HPU), and the State Foundation for Culture & the Arts. He is currently a professor at HPU.

Britos' debut novel, *Valley of Spiraling Winds*, is a groundbreaking, speculative sci-fi novel – the first novel by a Kānaka Maoli writer published by UH Press – and is the first of a planned trilogy. The book explores the roots of contemporary Hawai'i through the lens of a dystopian future. It is an edgy, time-hopping novel that follows the journey of a mixed-race Hawaiian family over three centuries.

Britos has also written and directed an indie film, *House of the Shark*, that will be released in 2026. *Valley of Spiraling Winds* is available from UH Press, Native Books Hawai'i and Amazon.

### Mārata Tamaira & Carl Pao: *Mother Tree, Daughter Seed*



Husband and wife duo, writer Mārata Tamaira and artist Carl Pao, teamed up to produce a new children's book, *Mother Tree, Daughter Seed: Lessons in Slow Growth*, about the tender relationship between two koa trees, Mother Tree and her offspring Daughter Seed. Over the course of many decades, and at every stage of her development, Mother Tree guides

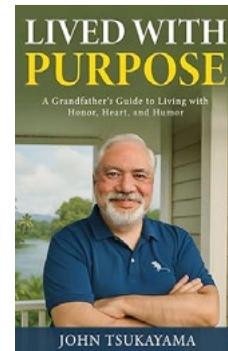
Daughter Seed – who ultimately learns the meaning of self-worth, the value of slow-growth, and the interconnectedness of all things.

Hawai'i-based author Mārata Tamaira is Māori with ancestral links to Ngāti Tūwharetoa. She has a doctoral degree in gender, media and cultural studies and has published widely in academic journals, book anthologies, and periodicals. *Mother Tree, Daughter Seed* is her first children's book and her first book collaboration with her

husband, celebrated 'Ōiwi artist Carl Pao, an art teacher at Kamehameha Schools whose work has been featured in both private and public collections here in Hawai'i and abroad.

Blending contemporary storytelling and vibrant illustrations, *Mother Tree, Daughter Seed* is rooted in an ethos of social emotional literacy and ecological stewardship reinforced with 'ōlelo Hawai'i and Hawaiian values. It is available from UH Press, Native Books Hawai'i, Barnes & Noble, UBC Press, and Amazon.

### John Tsukayama: *LIVED WITH PURPOSE*



John Tsukayama's new book, *LIVED WITH PURPOSE: A Grandfather's Guide to Living with Honor, Heart, and Humor*, is a memoir written first for his grandchildren. It shares his perspective on Hawaiian values and community challenges through the lens of his experiences as a graduate of Kamehameha Schools, an IRS officer, a private investigator, a security executive, and an academic.

Tsukayama, an adjunct professor at BYU Hawai'i, has a Ph.D. in international relations. His memoir weaves together his personal stories and professional experiences in which truth meets consequences. Despite a life spent seeking painful truth in the shadows, his memoir is a story of hope and a manual for living.

With a personal philosophy centered on Hawaiian values, hospitality, and extending the definition of "family," his memoir is intended to pass along lessons of kuleana to future generations. A significant portion of his book details his work as an investigation team leader for the 1997-1999 Kamehameha Schools Bishop Estate "Broken Trust" controversy, which he calls "the most important case of my life."

His first book, *The Process of Investigation*, now in its fourth edition, is a collaboration with Charles A. Sennewald first published in the 1980s. *LIVED WITH PURPOSE* will be available at Amazon beginning December 15. ■



## Community Briefing & Listening Session on

# MILITARY LEASED LANDS

Mā'ili, O'ahu

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Community Learning Center at Mā'ili

87-790 Kulauku St., Wai'anāe, Hawai'i 96792

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For more information, go to:

[www.oha.org/aloha-aina](http://www.oha.org/aloha-aina)

# Ua Lele nā Manu i Kahiki

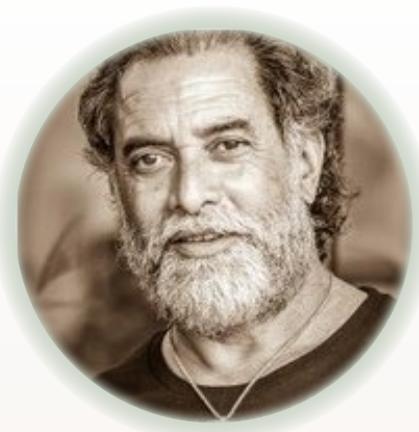
## Remembering and Honoring Some of Those We Lost This Year

Compiled by Puanani Fernandez-Akamine



**Kapualehuaonapalilahilahiokaala**  
**Ka'apu Sproat Fonoimoana**  
March 9, 1938 - Oct. 2, 2025

**Honolulu, O'ahu:** Beloved traditional Hawaiian healing practitioner Kapua Ka'apu Sproat Fonoimoana was a member of Ke Ola Mamo's board of directors and the kūpuna council of practitioners of Hawaiian healing traditions. Sproat Fonoimoana was raised in Punalu'u, O'ahu, and despite being born in the mid-20th century, she had an unconventional upbringing. Her 'ohana lived in a traditional hale pili (grass house) without electricity or running water – part of a kauhale built by her father, David Ka'apu, on the family's 2-acre 'ohana parcel. The family planted lo'i kalo and lived traditionally and self-sufficiently on the 'āina. Sproat Fonoimoana later attended Kamehameha Schools, her love of education fostered by her mother who was a school teacher. As a result of her extraordinary childhood and upbringing, Sproat Fonoimoana was an early advocate of 'ai pono as well as a lā'au lapa'au practitioner, and an avid gardener and farmer, who grew both food and medicinal crops. With 'ike gleaned from her childhood, she also taught public health educators and dietitians how to dry and preserve traditional Hawaiian foods in preparation for open ocean travel – and then she traveled with dietician Ka'iulani Odom to carry those dried traditional provisions to the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia to supply crew members of the *Hōkūlē'a* as they made their way home to Hawai'i. Sproat Fonoimoana often worked with Ko'olau physician Dr. Miriam Chang, even sharing patients from time-to-time – including one patient with severe external injuries. Sproat Fonoimoana treated the patient with lā'au lapa'au, and they were healed without scars.



**George "Keoki" Fukumitsu**  
June 2, 1953 - May 18, 2025

**Hakipu'u, O'ahu:** Keoki Fukumitsu, affectionately known as "Kalo Man," was a seventh generation kalo farmer born and raised on 'ohana kuleana land in the ahupua'a of Hakipu'u. A respected community leader, advocate and organizer, Fukumitsu was a kumu of kalo and traditional agro-ecological management, providing advice and guidance on restoration and farming efforts based on the 'ike kūpuna passed down through his 'ohana. Fukumitsu was also active in the Aloha 'Āina movement and Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana in the 1970s and 80s, and was one of the original members of the Hakipu'u 'Ohana (part of a coalition of plaintiffs collectively known as "Windward Parties") in the landmark Waiāhole water case in the 1990s that sought to restore streams diverted from Windward O'ahu by Central O'ahu sugar plantations. Fukumitsu was the founder of grassroots nonprofit Ho'ihō'i Ea which offers programs designed to provide a comprehensive approach to cultural preservation, sustainable development and community empowerment. Fukumitsu was profiled in a 1985 *Nā Maka o ka 'Āina* documentary, *Today's Maka'āinana – the Fisherman and the Farmer*, and in a 2011 segment on the Free Hawai'i Broadcasting Network called *Kalo Man – A Visit with Keoki Fukumitsu*. Fukumitsu served as an advisor on various taro projects for UH Mānoa, Windward Community College, Kaua'i Community College, the Native Hawaiian Advisory Council, and the Kawainui Marsh Ulupō Heiau Project, and was appointed to the state's Taro Purity and Security Task Force. Beloved by his 'ohana and friends for his strength and resilience, Fukumitsu was steadfast in his aloha for the 'āina, for his 'ohana, and for his kaiāulu.



**Jonelle Leinā'ala Pavao Jardin**  
Nov. 26, 1973 - Oct. 4, 2025

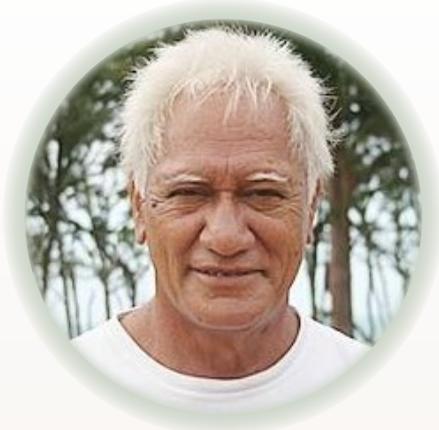
**Kalāheo, Kaua'i:** Kumu Hula Leinā'ala Pavao Jardin was the beloved and celebrated kumu of Hālau ka Lei Mokihana o Leinā'ala from Kaua'i. Since 2011, the multiple award-winning hālau has been a top performer at the annual Queen Lili'uokalani Keiki Hula Competition, but in 2022 Hālau ka Lei Mokihana o Leinā'ala made history as the first hālau from Kaua'i to win the prestigious Lokalia Montgomery Perpetual Award at the Merrie Monarch Festival after a clean sweep in all wāhine categories. Earlier this year the hālau made history again when Jardin's niece, Jaedyn Janae Puahualani Pavao, was crowned 2025's Miss Aloha Hula – the first dancer from Kaua'i to earn the coveted title. Jardin was a graduate of Waimea High School on Kaua'i and of UH Hilo. She began dancing at the age of 3 under Kumu Hula Ku'ulei Punua, and later trained under Kumu Hula Lovey Apana and Kumu Hula Beverly Muraoka. While attending UH Hilo, she continued her advanced training under Kumu Hula Rae Fonseca. A year after returning to Kaua'i in 1995 to care for her mother, Jardin opened her hālau with Kumu Fonseca's blessings. Over the past 30 years, her hālau has grown to include some 200 haumāna on Kaua'i, and in Japan and Mexico. Beyond achieving excellence in the artform that is hula, Jardin emphasized culture, language and history, connecting her haumāna with experts, resources and service opportunities in the community to dignify cultural practices and inspire restorative action. Jardin's daughter, Breeze Ann Pavao, now leads the hālau as its kumu hula.



**Natalie "Tasha" Kama**

Aug. 14, 1952 - Oct. 26, 2025

**Kahului, Maui:** Respected community leader, social justice and housing advocate, kahu and Maui County Councilwoman Natalie "Tasha" Kama was in the middle of serving her fourth consecutive term when she passed. Born and raised on O'ahu, Kama moved to Maui as an adult 10 years after her dad received a homestead lease there. Known as a woman of deep faith, compassion and aloha, Kama became a pastor at her father's Christian Ministry Church in Wailuku soon after moving to Maui in 1983. With an associates degree in human services and certificates of competence in case management and substance abuse counseling, she was a passionate social justice organizer with Faith Action for Community Equity on Maui and helped establish the Waiohuli and Keokea homestead community associations. A mother of 11 keiki – and raised with 11 siblings herself – Kama led the revival of the parent-teacher association at Iao Intermediate School. She won her first election to the Maui County Council in 2018 after beating former Maui Mayor Alan Arakawa. Kama said in an interview that she was motivated to serve on the county council because half of her children live on the continent due to the lack of affordable homes in Hawai'i. Kama was the council's presiding officer pro tempore and chair of the Housing and Land Use Committee – handling some of the council's most polarizing issues including Bill 9, the controversial short-term vacation rental phase-out measure and South Maui's Honua'ula master-planned community project. Kama was beloved for her grace, patience and kindness.



**Parker Kaipō Kaneakua, Sr.**

Sept. 24, 1943 - Aug. 29, 2025

**Kalihi, O'ahu:** For decades, respected Loea Lā'au Lapa'au Kaipō Kaneakua was a pillar of Hawai'i's traditional Hawaiian healing community. During his lifetime, he touched many people with his healing skills, intuition and discernment. Born to a family of traditional healers whose members specialized in treating specific diseases, Kaneakua began training when he was just 5 years old, learning how to identify, gather and prepare the plants needed for remedies, as well as in a variety of diverse healing practices. Although his training included instruction from more than a dozen of his kūpuna, he learned lā'au lapa'au and lomilomi from his father and pule, ho'oponopono and pale keiki (midwifery) from his grandmother. Born and raised in Kalihi Valley on O'ahu, he learned his healing skills the traditional way – by listening, observing and doing. Deeply spiritual, Kaneakua combined his faith in Ke Akua and Christianity with traditional practices, developing a holistic perspective on treating illness. Sought after as a healer, even from patients outside of Hawai'i, Kaneakua often healed injuries when western approaches were unsuccessful. He was steadfast in his belief that Ke Akua was the source of all healing. Generous with his knowledge, Kaneakua was kumu to those who wished to learn, taking his haumāna on "herb walks" in both rural and more urban settings, pointing out plants used for lapa'au and explaining their uses and preparations. He also worked with physicians on Kaua'i, Maui and in Kohala sharing the ways in which he used his senses – including smell, voice vibrations and pulse readings to diagnose illnesses.



**Mervin Lionel "Merv" Lopes**

Sept. 23, 1932 - May 8, 2025

**Waikoloa, Hawai'i Island:** Best known as Chaminade University's beloved basketball coach, Merv Lopes became a household name in Hawai'i in 1982 after coaching his team to a historic victory over top-ranked NCAA Division 1 University of Virginia – at the time, Chaminade was an underfunded NAIA school. Considered one of the biggest upsets in sports history, the win was followed by subsequent victories against nationally ranked teams like Southern Methodist earning the Chaminade Silverswords the nickname "Giant Killers" and Lopes the nickname "Merv the Magician." Lopes coached basketball at Chaminade for 12 seasons, from 1977-1989, and remains the "winningest" coach in Chaminade history. Lopes was born in Nānākuli and his athleticism provided him with the opportunity to attend 'Iolani School. He graduated from 'Iolani as a three-sport athlete and went on to play football at San Jose State University. After earning a master's degree from UH Mānoa and serving in the U.S. Army, Lopes became an educator, working for 30 years in the Hawai'i Department of Education as a middle school guidance counselor and as a high school P.E. teacher. In addition to coaching at Chaminade, Lopes coached at both Kalaheo and Kailua high schools, as well as in international sports programs around the world. Despite his success, those in the know say that for Lopes, coaching was more about building character than winning games. Known as a humble and aspirational leader, Lopes was devoted to his 'ohana and loved spending time at the ocean and fishing. In 2022, Lopes was named to Chaminade University's Hall of Fame.

**Author's note:** This ho'omana'o is intended to recognize and honor the extraordinary contributions to our lāhui of those profiled. These are individuals who are widely known in our community, and this is a mere snapshot of their achievements based on information compiled from various community resources. The true richness of their lives – and how deeply they are loved and will be missed by their 'ohana and friends – cannot be captured in this format. We also acknowledge that there are many, many others who were lost to our lāhui this past year who we did not profile. For this, we apologize because we know their loss weighs heavily on the hearts of those who they loved and who loved them. As ever, our readers are invited to submit Hali'a Aloha (fond remembrances) of their loved ones for publication in Ka Wai Ola newspaper. Ke Akua pū.

## Ali'i Birthdays



**Lot Kapuāiwa, Kamehameha V**  
December 11, 1830

Lota Kapuāiwa Kalanimakua Ali'iōlani Kalanikupuapa'īkalaninui was born to Elizabeth Kīna'u and Mataio Kekūanaō'a. He founded the Royal Order of Kamehameha I society in April 1865.

The Prince Lot Hula Festival, named in his honor, was originally held at his former home, Moanalua Gardens.

**December 7, 9:30 a.m.**  
Kawaiaha'o Church Ali'i Sunday Worship Service



**Ke Ali'i Pauahi**  
December 19, 1831

Bernice Pauahi Pākī was born to Abner Kuho'oheihēpahu Pākī and Laura Kanaholo Kōnia and named for her aunt, Queen Pauahi. As the last direct descendant and heir to the Kamehameha lands, she endowed some 375,000 acres of land to found the Kamehameha Schools.

**December 14, 9:30 a.m.**  
Kawaiaha'o Church Ali'i Sunday Worship Service



**Queen Kapi'olani**  
December 31, 1834

Kapi'olani Napelakapuokaka'e was born in Hilo to Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole and Kinoiki Kekaulike of Kaua'i, daughter of King Kaumuali'i. She married Kalākaua in 1863, a decade before he became king. One of her many contributions to Hawaiian music was *Ka Ipo Lei Manu*, a love song for Kalākaua who died in San Francisco before hearing her song.

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**HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I**  
**Apply from Jan. 2 to Jan. 31, 2026**  
Our weeklong boarding program on O'ahu provides foundational Hawaiian values and practices through hands-on, community-based learning for keiki entering 6th grade.

**KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS  
SUMMER PROGRAMS**  
**Apply from Jan. 2 to Feb. 15, 2026**  
Nurture your child's growth beyond the regular school year. Through our summer programs, learners will deepen their 'ike Hawai'i and create community connections, propelling them to reach their full potential.

Mark your calendar and learn more at [ksbe.edu/legacy](https://ksbe.edu/legacy)  
*Note: The Ho'omāka'ika'i deadline is earlier than in previous years*

  
**Ke Kula 'o Kamehameha**

Kamehameha Schools' admissions policy is to give preference to applicants of Hawaiian ancestry to the extent permitted by law.



### OHA Papakōlea Community Meeting

Dec. 9, 6:00 p.m.  
Papakōlea, O'ahu

Learn about OHA's current programs, and share your community concerns with the Board of Trustees. Meeting will be held at Prince David Kawānanakoa Middle School.

### OHA Waimānalo Community Meeting

Dec. 11, 6:00 p.m.  
Waimānalo, O'ahu

Learn about OHA's current programs, and share your community concerns with the Board of Trustees. Meeting will be held at Waimānalo Hawaiian Homestead Association.

### OHA Community Briefing on Military Land Leases

Dec. 17, 6:00 p.m.  
Mā'ili, O'ahu

Community informational briefing about the military leases on Public Trust Lands that are expiring between 2028 and 2031. At the Community Learning Center at Mā'ili.

For more information, go to: [www.oha.org](http://www.oha.org)

### Hawai'inuiākea Program Info Session

Dec. 1 at 9:30 a.m., Dec. 9 at 3:00 p.m., Dec. 11 at 9:30 a.m. | Mānoa, O'ahu

Learn about the college's Hawaiian studies & library and information science dual master's degree program. In person or virtual. [manoa.hawaii.edu/hshk/info-session](http://manoa.hawaii.edu/hshk/info-session)

### Mālama Mākua Film Screening & Panel Discussion

Dec. 4, 5:30 - 8:00 p.m. | Kaka'ako, O'ahu

Explore the connection between Hawaiians and the lands of Mākua Valley. Panel discussion with the cast and community advocates. [paifoundation.org](http://paifoundation.org)

### Kānaka 'Ōiwi Burials: Their Care, Management, and Preservation

Dec. 4, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. | Virtual

A presentation by OHA Compliance Manager Kai Markell on the care and preservation of iwi kūpuna. Zoom event - advance registration required. [oha.org](http://oha.org)

### The Eddie Aikau Invitational Opening Ceremony 🌿

Dec. 5, Time TBD | Waimea, O'ahu

The contest will run if wave face heights consistently reach 40 feet between Dec. 7, 2025 through March 6, 2026. Watch the livestream of the opening and the contest at [KHON2.com](http://KHON2.com) or YouTube @ [khonnewshawaii](https://www.youtube.com/khonnewshawaii). [theeddieaikau.com](http://theeddieaikau.com)

### Royal Hawaiian Band Performance

Dec. 5 & 12, Noon - 1:00 p.m.  
Honolulu, O'ahu

The Royal Hawaiian Band holds free concerts on the 'Iolani Palace Grounds most Fridays. [rhb-music.com](http://rhb-music.com)

### Ka 'Aha Hula at Waimea

Dec. 6, 7, 13, 17, 20 & 27, 11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m. | Waimea, O'ahu

Enjoy hula presentations by a variety of hālau. [waimeavalley.net](http://waimeavalley.net)

### Community Empowerment Webinar: Building Pilina Through Legislative Engagement

Dec. 11, 6:00 p.m. | Virtual

Learn how laws and policies are developed and enacted in Hawai'i to strengthen Native Hawaiian representation in Hawai'i's Legislature. To register go to [oha.org/CommunityEmpowermentWebinar](http://oha.org/CommunityEmpowermentWebinar)

### 3rd Annual 'Ohana Day 🌿

Dec. 13, 3:30 - 6:45p.m.

Honoka'a, Hawai'i Island

Hāmākua Youth Foundation fundraiser featuring a buffet dinner, live music, keiki games, door prizes, a silent auction, and more. [hamakuayouthcenter.net](http://hamakuayouthcenter.net)

### Kama'āina Sunday

Dec. 14, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Honolulu, O'ahu

Enjoy audio tours of 'Iolani Palace, 'ono food, lively entertainment, and shop local vendors. [iolanipalace.org](http://iolanipalace.org)

### Pu'uhonua Mākeke

Dec. 20, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Waimānalo, O'ahu

Products, services, and businesses from Pu'uhonua across Hawai'i. Pu'uhonua o Waimānalo in the Pavilion. FB/IG @ [puuhonuamakeke](https://www.facebook.com/puuhonuamakeke)

## HAWAI'I ISLAND

### OHA Satellite Office Dates

OHA Beneficiary Services will be traveling to serve beneficiaries in Waimea, Nā'ālehu 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).

#### December 5 - Waimea

Parker Ranch Center 67-1185 Hawai'i Belt Rd.

#### December 12 - Nā'ālehu

Nā'ālehu Community Center, 95-5635 Māmalahoa Hwy.

#### December 18 - Kona

West Hawai'i Civic Center, 74-5044 Ane Keohokalole Hwy. 1st fl. Bldg. B

Check the schedule at [oha.org/satelliteoffices](http://oha.org/satelliteoffices)



### Make Music Jams

Dec. 21, Noon - 1:00 p.m.  
Honolulu, O'ahu

On the 21st each month the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame hosts a concert at Nā Lama Kukui. IG @ [nalamakukui](https://www.instagram.com/nalamakukui)

### Hula Kalikimaka ma Helumoa

Dec. 21, 4:30 - 8:30 p.m. | Waikīkī, O'ahu

An event to collect non-perishable, shelf-stable food items and raise \$20,000 for the Hawai'i Food Bank. [paifoundation.org](http://paifoundation.org)

### Hot Kūpuna Nights

Dec. 28, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.  
Honolulu, O'ahu

Every fourth Sunday bring your 'ukulele to the second floor of Nā Lama Kukui and join the kanikapila. IG @ [nalamakukui](https://www.instagram.com/nalamakukui)

### Queen Kapi'olani Night Tours 🌿

Dec. 28-30, 5:30 - 9:00 p.m.  
Honolulu, O'ahu

Special evening tours of 'Iolani Palace in honor of Queen Kapi'olani's birthday. Experience the palace decorated in 19th century grandeur. [iolanipalace.org](http://iolanipalace.org). ■



Ho'ākoako Lāhui Events are sponsored by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to support nonprofit organization events that offer significant benefit to the Native Hawaiian community. For more information visit [OHA.org](http://OHA.org).



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# Restoring Abundance Along our Skyline

## The city's new vision to bring food, culture, and connection through food access hubs



Full moon planting of mea kanu and lā'au lapa'au. - Photos: City and County of Honolulu

By Kealoha Fox, Ph.D.

When Kānehoalani passes over O'ahu, sunlight glimmers on Skyline tracks and new garden beds at Hō'ae'ae Station. Between the steel and the soil at Honouliuli Station, 25 varieties of kalo lift their leaves to the dawn while 15 'ulu trees spread their shade – living symbols of a quiet transformation taking root.

This fall, Skyline stations in Waipahu and Ho'opili came alive – boosted by the October opening of segment two, which now connects Kapolei to Kalihi. Kūpuna arrived with carts, keiki darted between food tents, and local farmers sold produce while sharing mo'olelo of the lands that nourish them. Students from Waipahu High School's Culinary Arts Pathway offered dishes made from the very produce they had grown in their own campus nursery.

For the City and County of Honolulu, these gatherings were more than symbolic. They marked the start of a bold idea: transforming these 13 Skyline stations into food access hubs – places where local, healthy, and culturally rooted food is as accessible as catching a train. This initiative – now a finalist in the global Bloomberg Philanthropies 2025 Mayors Challenge – emerged from the urgent realities facing island residents.

“Our goal is that everyone living along Skyline's 19-mile route will have access to fresh, affordable, local food,” said Mayor Rick Blangiardi. “Honolulu is building stations of abundance for the people of O'ahu.”

### Healing the Land, Nourishing the People

O'ahu imports nearly 85% of its food, and prices continue to rise. Many residents live far from grocery stores that sell affordable local fruits, vegetables, and starches. These barriers intensified when SNAP benefits were paused nationwide in November.

But for Native Hawaiians, food access is more than an economic challenge – it is a spiritual wound born of disconnection from 'āina momona, the abundant lands that once sustained generations in our own respective



Mobile food pantry distribution with Hawai'i Foodbank at Hō'ae'ae Station.

kauhale and kaiāulu. Restoring that abundance is about more than food – it's about restoring mana as our legacy and maui ola as our destiny.

Grounded in these values, the city began prototyping its “stations of abundance” idea at two stations in West O'ahu. Partnering with the Hawai'i Foodbank, 'Elepaio Social Services, Waipahu High School, DR Horton Hawai'i, and local growers, the city hosted farmers' markets and mobile pantry events that distributed 7,000 pounds of fresh produce – roughly 5,800 meals – to more than 300 households in just a few hours.

Residents lined up early, eager not just for the food, but for the belonging it brought to be part of something positive, growing long-term sustainability. Lina of Waipahu said she came with her friend so they could help each other carry their groceries home between Hō'ae'ae and Pouhala stations. “We would come twice a month if they came back,” she smiled. “We help each other – that's how it should be.”

### Innovation Rooted in Indigenous Wisdom

While the stations of abundance vision embraces innovation – like scoping refrigerated food lockers, food-as-medicine vouchers, and transit-linked farmers' markets – it's guided by Indigenous knowledge using the Kūkulu Hou methodology.

City staff worked with practitioners to align planting on Skyline's footprint with Native Hawaiian lunar cycles. Strategic plantings at Hō'ae'ae and Honouliuli are for both edible crops and cultural plants like 'uala for lā'au lapa'au, acknowledging the full spectrum of nourishment that 'āina provides.

To ho'oulu lāhui Hawai'i, they are seeds of maui ola – a return to wellness and vitality.

We're designing a city that reflects our values, where government acts as a steward rather than a manager. Stewardship here means laulima. While the mayor's offices and city departments lead this effort, the real strength comes from the community itself. Schools, farmers, Native Hawaiian organizations, social service agencies, and residents each bring their expertise.

By 2028, the city hopes to scale the project across



Farmer's market with 'Elepaio Social Services at Honouliuli Station.

all 13 stations, supported by more than 25 community partnerships and an anticipated 1 million meals provided through local food systems. Each site will reflect the cultural and culinary identity of its neighborhood.

### Building Pilina Along the Skyline

Food is not separate from place or people; it is the bridge between them. This program intentionally weaves relationships and reciprocity across agencies and communities that historically worked in silos.

SEE RESTORING ABUNDANCE ON PAGE 14

### Fresh Food Along Skyline

The City and County of Honolulu's stations of abundance initiative will connect 'ohana to fresh, local, and culturally rooted foods along the new Skyline corridor:

- 13 Skyline stations to become transit-oriented food hubs by 2028
- 50 food-at-Skyline events, workshops, demonstrations, and markets reach 50,000 residents
- 10,000 pounds of food plants and cultural crops harvested, shared, and distributed to residents
- 25 community partnerships established with the city supporting 'āina momona
- 1 million local, healthy, and culturally inclusive meals provided over two years

Through ho'ōla - reviving living systems - the program strengthens pilina between people, place, and food, reminding us that abundance grows when we nurture the land that feeds us all.

# Who Decides What is Historic?

By Maxx Ramos

In 2020, I had the opportunity to temporarily return home. Hawai'i's high cost of living and limited career options took us away and the pandemic brought us back. My now-husband and I packed up our stuff, left our apartment in Seattle, Washington, and returned to O'ahu. A 2% mortgage interest rate drove us, and many others, to look at purchasing a home.

On O'ahu we looked at million-dollar condos and single-family homes, canvassing areas like Mānoa where many historic home plaques dot the yards. It made me curious: how did these homes earn such a distinction? Who made that determination? And what does it say about the land it sits on?

## What is a historic home?

To be considered a "historic home," a house must be at least 50 years old and be considered significant under certain criteria. Interested homeowners can apply for the distinction through the Hawai'i Historic Places Review Board (HHPRB).

If approved, homeowners receive a county property tax credit or exemption. Sometimes, this distinction also gives them access to certain grant funds for maintenance or rehabilitation of the historic structure. Once a home is designated for preservation, the homeowner must maintain an accessible viewpoint for the public and install a plaque approved by the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD).

SHPD is the entity responsible for implementation of Hawai'i's historic preservation program and oversees the review board (10 governor-appointed members). The board reviews applications and votes on which properties should be added to the register.

SHPD also makes recommendations regarding protection and documentation of all historic properties, including how to respond to the discovery of iwi kūpuna. Compared to SHPD, HHPRB is not well-known, yet it plays a critical role in determining what parts of Hawai'i's past are preserved. As of press time, the HHPRB seat specifically designated for a Hawaiian culture and history expert remains vacant.

While homeowners can apply for historic home designation on their own, many hire an architectural historian to complete their applications. Historians research the architectural significance of a home and its former owners and residents. They're familiar with the nuances of the criteria and can steer a homeowner to a successful application.

## Mānoa, according to the applications

Mānoa is overrepresented when compared to oth-



This residence, with elements of the Craftsman and Prairie architectural movements, was built around 1920 and is an example of the suburbanization that displaced agriculture in Mānoa Valley and representative of the exclusivity of early 20th century aristocrats in Hawai'i. - Photos: Historic Hawai'i



This home was designed by Har Wood, a local architect credited for developing what is known as the "Hawai'i Regional Style." He helped design the Alexander & Baldwin building and Honolulu Hale, both in downtown Honolulu. This is a rare example of his residential work.

er O'ahu neighborhoods. Of the 405 homes on the [historichawaii.org](http://historichawaii.org) website, 163 were in Mānoa.

As I reviewed the applications, I paid particular attention to who prepared the application, when it was submitted, justification of the home's importance, what history it helped to preserve, and any Native Hawaiian historical or cultural relevance.

After reviewing the 163 applications from Mānoa, I determined the following:

- 52 applications were prepared by the same individual, including applications with two or more preparers
- 30 of the homes were built or financed by people whose wealth or income originated from the Big 5 sugar companies
- Nine homes belonged to people directly involved in the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy
- Just 11 applications included mentions of pre-contact

Hawaiian history, culture, and language

- Just four homes housed Native Hawaiian people

Overall, the applications capture a specific history of Mānoa's transformation from lo'i kalo, to a cattle ranch, to a growing middle-class suburb. Aside from the 11 applications that included pre-contact Hawaiian history and culture, the other applications that mentioned "Hawaiian" histories were uniformly post-contact and tied to the people who built, or inhabited, those homes.

One thing is certain: very few occupants of these homes were Native Hawaiian.

## A history of erasure

Native Hawaiians were systemically dispossessed from their lands through the foreign private property system introduced via the Māhele. This was compounded by the subsequent loss of self-governance. Ordinary Hawaiians had little agency to effectively advocate for their cultural practices and traditional land uses.

To this day, while the former homes of Hawai'i's foreign oligarchs are designated "historic"—and while their current homeowners benefit from the tax credits and grants this designation makes available to them—the State of Hawai'i has allowed historic Native Hawaiian structures to deteriorate due to neglect, such as Queen Lili'uokalani's retreat in Maunawili, O'ahu, and Kaniakapūpū, King Kamehameha III's summer palace in Nu'uuanu Valley.

Through historic homes, period architecture and the histories of those with money and economic privilege are preserved. But that "history" begins with the construction of the structure—it does not include the history of the land itself, its original inhabitants, or the wahi pana within which it exists.

Without due diligence, an application for inclusion on the "historic homes" list may well ignore or misrepresent Hawaiian history. Without the necessary nuance, how can such "historic" designations preserve the stories and histories of the Indigenous inhabitants?

Even with constitutional rights and laws in place that reasonably protect Hawaiian cultural practices, systematic erasure persists when the documented history is divorced from the land it sits upon and the people who lived there first.

Interestingly, the language used in many historic home applications omit the violence of the Hawaiian Kingdom's overthrow. It overlooks the economic and social advantages provided to foreigners in establishing their residences. Phrases like "post-monarchy" and "annexation-minded" erase the resistance of Hawaiian people to this takeover and oversimplifies a complex and fraught time in Hawai'i's history.

## RESTORING ABUNDANCE

Continued from page 12

“Skyline stations are not just physical infrastructure, and now, thanks to this project, they are becoming part of the social and cultural infrastructure of our communities,” said Jon Nouchi, City Department of Transportation Services deputy director.

Āina momona is giving rise to a new kind of city planning that begins with listening, nānā pono, being present, and addressing quality of life. When residents are part of the design and prototyping, the results are quicker and more cost effective, generating community pride.

Those stories have shaped the work. Program participant Hermina shared that she went to an October event – not for herself – but for her ‘ohana. “Local vegetables are better. I have 14 grandchildren and they like purple lettuce. I usually go to three markets to get it,” she said, laughing. “Now maybe it’ll grow here where I catch TheBus.”

## A Model for Island Resilience

Islands across Moananuiākea and neighboring counties each face the same challenge: cities’ complex role to feed people in ways that are affordable, local, and culturally meaningful while activating the public lands each county is entrusted to steward.

This work reconnects the past to the future. The lands underneath and surrounding Skyline’s 18.9-mile corridor can better host plants that feed local families as our mo’olelo recount. Young people use Skyline stations not just as stops on a line, but as living classrooms for mālama ‘āina. Kūpuna see traditions re-rooting in public spaces once paved over. And city government is reimagining its role – from transit-oriented development to cultivating life.

As trains hum past the young Hāloa, leaves shimmer with promise. The land remembers its purpose, and so do the people. Along Skyline’s path, the city is rediscovering what it means to feed one another. ■

*Dr. Kealoha Fox is the deputy director of the City and County of Honolulu’s Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency.*

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Continued from page 13

### Moving forward

Hawai‘i’s original colonizers built their grand homes on stolen land, while Native Hawaiians continue to fight for recognition. Kia‘i protest the disruption of iwi kūpuna, sacred spaces and wahi pana as contemporary landowners pursue construction and profit.

The designation and preservation of homes and other structures in Hawai‘i must be reimagined to offset the undercurrent of settler colonialism in Hawai‘i’s existing historic home preservation process.

For example, wahi pana are celebrated sites with remarkable stories that live on within them. Names are lovingly bestowed to their geographical and natural features: the waters that flow there, the winds, the rains, the mountains, rock formations, and the flora unique to those places.

We lose these names when we re-name and red-line neighborhoods to fit

a zip code. We lose them when we define boundaries through the Tax Map Key system. We lose them when we stop sharing their stories.

The Hawai‘i Register of Historic Places (HRHP) should consider historic designation applications for wahi pana. And Native Hawaiians should not have to adhere to bureaucratic requirements to gain HRHP protections for cultural resources and historic places.

It is possible for historic preservation to preserve one lens of history without sacrificing another. Hawai‘i can’t change how past historic preservation decisions were made, but the state can ensure that a more holistic approach is adopted moving forward – one that doesn’t just preserve the history of colonizers.

It’s vital to include Hawaiian culture in the historic preservation evaluation process and fill the existing Hawaiian culture and history seat on the HHPRB without further delay. And perhaps it is time for an alternate pathway that encourages and fosters proactive preservation of wahi pana alongside this system built around development. ■

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# Uplifting Indigeneity on Turtle Island

By Megan Ulu-Lani Boyanton

**D**r. Kēhaulani Natsuko Vaughn's career trajectory changed after reading an article by the late Ōiwi academic Haunani-Kay Trask. Motivated by Trask's work as a scholar, activist and artist, Vaughn wanted to use her work as a researcher and an academic for community good too.

"It really blew up my world in a great way," she said. "My education became more healing."

Vaughn, 45, is now an associate professor of Indigenous feminisms at University of California, Riverside. She's also writing a book, *Trans Indigeneity: The Politics of California Indian and Native Hawaiian Relations*.

Though Vaughn currently lives in Southern California, she was raised in Hayward in the northern part of the state. There, her youth was spent celebrating and participating in cultural events like May Day with other Pacific Islanders.

"I didn't feel like we were absent of other Hawaiians," Vaughn said. "It was more like, why are there so many Hawaiians living here?"

Her mom, Suzanne Kalaniwahine Naomi Spencer, taught Vaughn and her twin sister, Karalee Mahealani Vaughn, Hawaiian values. With Kānaka Maoli, Japanese, Portuguese and English roots, Spencer's 'ohana hails from Waimea and Kohala on Hawai'i Island, with a family ranch in Laupāhoehoe.

"My mom always taught us that, when people asked 'What are you?' Hawaiian was always first," Vaughn said laughing.

Her father, Robert Vaughn, worked for United Airlines, so the family returned to Hawai'i often. After her parents divorced, Vaughn was largely raised by her mother, who worked as a bank teller and occasionally sold lei.

Vaughn spent holidays and summer vacations on O'ahu with her grandparents - who met on a sugar plantation in Laupāhoehoe. Vaughn remembers her tūtū kāne as a dynamic spirit: a fisherman who sewed nets; a gardener who grew nīoi (chili peppers), 'ōlena (turmeric) and kalo; an entrepreneur who ran a construction business; and a practitioner of lā'au lapa'au.

Vaughn's elders emphasized the importance of education, and she gravitated toward culture and academics. Growing up, she dreamed of being a teacher.

At Mt. Eden High School in Hayward, Vaughn established its first Pacific Islander Club before graduating in 1998. When she started at Occidental College in Los Angeles, she was shocked by its lack of diversity and wondered why there weren't other Pacific Islanders in the classrooms or featured in coursework.

Vaughn became increasingly passionate about educating others about colonialism's impact on Hawai'i and the displacement of Kānaka Maoli. She studied hula, learned more about the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, and wrote her senior thesis on the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and its effects on the people.

In 2002, Vaughn and her sister became the first of their



Kēhaulani Vaughn, Charles Sepulveda, and daughter Kaheawai. - Courtesy Photo

family to graduate from college.

Vaughn spent the next year teaching English in Chiba, Japan, where she learned more about her grandmother's ancestry. After applying to jobs in Hawai'i and to graduate programs in the U.S., she found herself back in Los Angeles enrolling at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

She pursued a master's degree in Asian American studies, satiating her interest in Indigenous sovereignty by taking courses in American Indian studies. Vaughn met her future partner, Dr. Charles Sepulveda (of Tongva and Acjachemen heritage), in an Indigenous methodologies course.

After finishing her program in 2006, she earned a second master's degree in higher education in 2007. Vaughn then worked at UCLA as an academic advisor and a program coordinator. In 2009, she helped form Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC), an organization that advances social justice for Pacific Islanders.

"It reminded me of what Haunani would do," Vaughn said.

She then enrolled in the graduate program in ethnic studies at UC Riverside. Her time on Turtle Island as a Hawaiian made her contemplate our kuleana to both the land and its genealogical caretakers in places where the Hawaiian diaspora resides.

Vaughn earned a master's degree in ethnic studies in 2012 and a Ph.D. in 2017. Her dissertation focused on a 1992 Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Recognition between Ka Lāhui Hawai'i and the Acjachemen Nation.

For almost two years, she served as associate dean of students and director of the Asian American Resource Center at Pomona College in Claremont, California.

In 2018, Vaughn moved to Utah where for seven years she was an assistant professor of Pacific Island education at Salt Lake City's University of Utah. Inspired by the culture-based education model of a local school, Mana Academy, in West Valley City, Vaughn served as chair of its board of directors.

During that time, she welcomed another big change: the birth of her and Sepulveda's daughter, Kaheawai Ne-shuun.

The family moved back to Riverside in 2024 where Vaughn assumed her current role as a tenured associate professor. She's also the co-director of the California Center for the Native Nations where she fosters reciprocal, collaborative relationships with tribes in the area to break down barriers to education. "I consider that a huge responsibility as someone who is Kanaka," she said.

Although she feels the yearning to return to the 'āina, that will probably be for her retirement.

"For now, I think there's also such need here in Turtle Island for Hawaiians to know that they're Hawaiian enough," she said.

Still, she describes herself as being "in awe" of the resources and support available for the lāhui in the diaspora now, as compared to her youth.

"Our culture is grounded in 'āina, but our kūpuna have always been travelers," Vaughn said. "We've always created expansive worlds." ■





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# Culture and Imagination at Play

By Donalyn Dela Cruz

Drawing came easily for Alika Spahn Naihe, who started sketching at around the age of three. As he grew, his love for drawing focused on characters from Mortal Kombat or Batman, along with cars and trucks. That changed when he came across a magazine article about Native Hawaiian artist Solomon Enos.

“I had seen his Kamapua’a series on a flight to Maui to go spend time with my family one summer when I was 15. It just blew my mind, and I loved it,” said Naihe. From that moment on, Naihe, now 39, drew art that reflected Hawaiian culture and dove into written resources to inform his drawings.

Years later, in 2018, his art caught the attention of Jeffrey Vierra who had been teaching a Place-based After-school Literacy Support (PALS) course at Nānākuli High School. Vierra, who is experienced in game design, asked Naihe to join him in the PALS program to add an artistic touch. Both were driven to create games that reflect Hawaiian cultural values.

Vierra and Naihe brought in a former student, 2020 Nānākuli High School graduate Jack Hobbs, and together they co-founded a gaming business called TheoryCraftist Games.

“Usually, the games that we create address some kind of a social issue that’s happening in the community,” noted Vierra.

They wanted to create something fun from their collective imagination. In the summer of 2022, they finally got to work.

“I started creating art first and then I showed them the art and then they’re like, ‘oh yeah let’s make a Hawaiian war game, let’s do that,’ so I was excited to get into it,” Naihe recalled.

After extensive research and several prototypes, TheoryCraftist Games successfully created Hoa Kaua, a competitive two-player card game inspired by the battles of Kalanīʻōpuʻu of Hawaiʻi Island and Kahekili of Maui.

In a world where digital gaming seems to dominate, TheoryCraftist Games is not deterred. In fact, they have risen to the occasion to meet what Vierra calls, “board game fanaticism.”

“In the last 15 years, these analysts have been saying that the bubble is going to break, but board game sales have far surpassed video game sales year after year,” explained Vierra. “And it’s this massive market.”

While Hoa Kaua began as a side project, it quickly gained interest from local board game enthusiasts and those seeking something different. At the Hula ‘Oni E craft fair in August, TheoryCraftist Games was among the featured local vendors. The vibrant game drew attention from players of all ages, and interested customers got the chance to play on its custom-designed play mat.

Coincidentally, interest was heightened by the release of the Apple TV series *Chief of War*.



Jack Hobbs (left) and Alika Spahn Naihe (right) demonstrate how Hoa Kaua is played at the Hula ‘Oni E festival in August. Standing behind them is Jeffrey Vierra. - Photos: Donalyn Dela Cruz

“We were developed around the same time that *Chief of War* started filming,” said Naihe. “So, it was really interesting”

In October, TheoryCraftist Games took Hoa Kaua to the Kauaʻi Comic Convention where attendees eagerly tested their knowledge of historic chiefly wars.

“When we got the right answer, you know, it was like we were legit, so we earned their respect,” added Vierra.

The day-to-day business of TheoryCraftist Games is to develop games that educate and entertain. They don’t advertise but have a steady clientele seeking purpose-driven designs. In all the company’s projects, Hawaiian culture remains at the center.

“Nobody is doing the type of wellness games that we focus on, especially integrating Hawaiian culture,” said Vierra. “That’s what we’re interested in.”

One ongoing project involves working with the Waʻianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center which sought to expand the Kamehameha Schools’ Lōkahi Wheel, a model that defines six areas of health to progress to wellness.

Dr. May Okihiro of the University of Hawaiʻi John A. Burns School of Medicine learned about Theorycraftist Games through a contact at PALS, reached out, and began the creative discussions.

“We decided instead of trying to just straight up teach them about the Lōkahi Wheel, what we would do instead is take a full game immersion approach, and we broke those six aspects of the Lōkahi Wheel into an RPG, or a role-playing game,” said Naihe.

The result is an app called Kaona, accessible for those 17 and older.



The Hoa Kaua gameboard features artwork by Alika Spahn Naihe.

Said Okihiro, “While gaming and games are often thought of in a negative light, they are engaging and fun. TheoryCraftist is taking this strategy and using it to provide youth an immersive, captivating, fun experience that enables the participant to think about and learn new perspectives at the same time.”

She emphasized the importance of recognizing the strengths, assets, and deep knowledge that already exist within communities and among new partners to advance health and wellbeing.

“It has been an honor and pleasure to work with them,” added Okihiro. “They have taken the challenge on to create an engaging game, grounded in community and ‘āina, that promotes lōkahi along with so much more.”

TheoryCraftist is not threatened by the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), even as models become better at generating art, textures, animations, and level design.

“I’m not against AI at all. I see it as another tool, a groundbreaking historical tool,” added Naihe. “I love all the possibilities that come out of it. And at the same time, I also see its limitations. Like, you really can’t rely on AI for anything Hawaiian culture. You really can’t.”

While AI reshapes creative industries, TheoryCraftist Games is charting a path grounded in research, cultural integrity, and imagination rooted in place. Their success shows that even in a rapidly changing world, authenticity and purpose can be the strongest competitive edge. ■

For more information or to purchase TheoryCraftist Games go to [theorycraftist.com](http://theorycraftist.com).

# A New Chapter at Hawai‘inuiākea



Dr. Keawe Lopes (left) and Dr. Jon Osorio with Pōhāikealoha Bell at Hawai‘inuiākea’s spring 2025 commencement ceremony. Bell earned a master’s in Hawaiian language and now serves as an academic advisor for undergraduates. - Courtesy Photos

By Malia Nobrega-Olivera

In 2007, after years of planning with the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s Hawaiian language and studies programs, the UH Board of Regents established the Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge to create a dedicated home for Hawaiian language, history, cultural practice, and worldview within higher education.

Dr. Maenette K. P. Ah Nee-Benham became the new college’s inaugural dean in 2008. She was succeeded in 2017 by Dr. Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio.

In less than two decades, Hawai‘inuiākea has grown to include some 50 faculty members – plus numerous other support staff, graduate assistants and student workers. Since its founding, the college has conferred nearly 900 baccalaureate degrees, more than 130 graduate degrees, and is currently finalizing the details of a new Ph.D. program.

Additionally, Hawai‘inuiākea is the only college of Indigenous knowledge within a Research 1 university (institutions that confer 50 or more doctoral degrees per year) in the U.S. – a distinction that reflects both opportunity and kuleana.

Hawai‘inuiākea includes four centers: Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies; Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language; Ka Papa Lo‘i o Kānewai Cultural Garden; and Native Hawaiian Student Services. Together, they form a pu‘uhonua – a refuge and source of learning – where haumāna can engage deeply with ancestral knowledge while preparing to lead in service of their ‘ohana, lāhui, and community. For many, this experience is transformative.

## Guided by Ancestral Principles

The work of Hawai‘inuiākea is grounded in six principles drawn from primary repositories of Hawaiian ancestral knowledge. They provide both philosophical direction and day-to-day guidance in how we teach, research, lead, and serve.



Dr. Jon Osorio speaks at the 2025 commencement ceremony. Hawai‘inuiākea has conferred more than 1,000 degrees in less than two decades.

### **Ka waihona o ka na‘auao**

*The repository of learning*

Hawai‘inuiākea will be a resource for courses and programs rooted in ancestral knowledge, supporting high-quality education for students, faculty, staff, and the global community.

### **‘Ike i ke au nui me ke au iki**

*Know the great current and the small current*

We promote research that honors both tradition and innovation, generating new knowledge informed by ancestral foundations.

### **E lawe i ke a‘o a mālama, a e ‘oi mau ka na‘auao**

*Learn, apply, and knowledge will grow*

We awaken and circulate ancestral knowledge through undergraduate, graduate, and community-based learning.

### **Hānau ka ‘āina, hānau ke ali‘i, hānau ke kanaka**

*Land, leaders, and people are born together*

We strengthen genealogical relationships between people and ‘āina, preparing students to live their learning through action.

### **Ho‘oulu Lāhui**

*Strengthen the Nation*

We cultivate self-determination and empower our people to lead with confidence and responsibility.

### **‘Ike ‘ia ke kanaka ma kāna ‘ōlelo**

*Identity is known through language*

We revitalize and renormalize Hawaiian language and identity so they continue to flourish across Hawai‘i and throughout the world.

Hawai‘inuiākea organizes its work into four key priority areas, drawing from the metaphor of wai as life and knowledge: 1) Ka Wai Puna – Knowledge Generation & Dissemination; 2) Ka Wai Inu – Knowledge Transmission and Teaching; 3) Ka Wai Mana – Governance and Institutional Leadership; and 4) Ka Wai Ola – Community and Civic Engagement.

As wai sustains life, knowledge must circulate among classrooms, lo‘i, community gatherings, and policy tables to nourish the lāhui.

## The Legacy of Dean Jonathan Osorio

Osorio became dean of Hawai‘inuiākea in 2017 after decades of service as a professor and as the former director of Kamakakūokalani. His leadership has been instrumental in Hawai‘inuiākea gaining recognition as the only Indigenous-knowledge college at a Research 1 institution.

Under his leadership, in 2024 Hawai‘inuiākea also earned a 10-year accreditation renewal from the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC), reaffirming the college’s essential role in revitalizing Hawaiian language, culture, and educational practices.

Born and raised in Hilo, Osorio began his teaching career in 1991 at Kapi‘olani Community College following a successful musical career. He joined UH Mānoa in 1994 and advanced from an assistant to full professor. His scholarship has helped shape the field of 19th century Hawaiian political and social history, while his music continues to resonate across generations. In 2019, he was recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hawai‘i Academy of Recording Arts.

After eight years of dedicated service as dean, Osorio has announced his return to teaching.

“It’s time to go back to teaching and let a younger, more vigorous and eager person take on this job. And I know it will be a blessing to that person – whoever it is,” Osorio said. His transition reflects continuity, humility, and trust in the next generation of leaders.

## A Call to Future Leadership

UH Mānoa Interim Vice Provost for Student Success Kapā Oliveira, a former professor of Hawaiian Language at Kawaihuelani, will chair a committee to select the next dean of Hawai‘inuiākea. Oliveira emphasized that this role is about service as much as leadership.

“The search represents a pivotal moment for Hawaiian higher education,” said Oliveira. “We seek a visionary leader who understands the profound kuleana of guiding an Indigenous knowledge college – someone committed to strengthening our lāhui through the perpetuation of ‘ike Hawai‘i and the cultivation of future generations of scholars and cultural practitioners.”

The position is expected to be filled by August 2026. It is a rare opportunity to step into a legacy grounded in ‘ike kupuna and committed to the growth and future of the lāhui and guided by principles that continue to transform education for Hawai‘i and beyond. ■

Those interested in learning more are encouraged to visit the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Executive Search website: [manoa.hawaii.edu/executivesearch/](http://manoa.hawaii.edu/executivesearch/)



For more information about pursuing a degree in Hawaiian language and/or Hawaiian studies, scan the QR code.

# LIVING IN EXILE

BY SONNY GANADEN

Pa'ahao prepare to dance at the Makahiki celebration at Saguaro Correctional Center in Eloy, Arizona, in November 2011. The facility houses nearly 900 inmates from Hawai'i. - Photo: REUTERS/Samantha Sais

This month marks 30 years since the state has utilized private prisons on the continent to house inmates from Hawai'i

It is a well-established truth that the criminal justice system in Hawai'i disproportionately impacts Native Hawaiians. While significant progress has been made in the last few decades to address Native Hawaiian equity in education, business, housing, and economic opportunity, the state criminal justice system remains deeply inequitable.

Despite generations of respected Hawaiians practicing law and serving in the judiciary; despite numerous studies and the termination of private prison use by other states; the utilization of private prisons has remained a significant tenet of Hawai'i's justice system since December 1995.

## THE RISE OF PRIVATE PRISONS IN AMERICA

America's "war on drugs," initiated by the Nixon administration and expanded in the 1980s under the Reagan administration included establishing mandatory federal sentences for all drug-related crimes. Today, most states have mandatory minimum sentencing laws, significantly increasing the rate of incarceration as judges are required to impose long, predetermined prison terms in drug cases without professional discretion.

As a result, since the 1980s, the federal prison population has increased by more than 500%. Today, the United States has the dubious distinction of having the highest incarceration rate of any country in the world, with nearly 2 million American citizens incarcerated in state and federal prisons, or in local jails – 70% of whom are people of color.

It did not take long for the increase in drug offense convictions to overwhelm state correctional facilities, which ultimately gave rise to a new industry: private prison management. In 1983, Corrections Corporation of America opened the world's first for-profit prison in Tennessee.

Today, Corrections Corporation of America – rebranded as CoreCivic – is the largest prison management company in the U.S. Along with GEO Group (a publicly traded company), CoreCivic manages more than 170 prisons and detention centers across America, with annual revenues in the billions of dollars.

In the past year, incarceration has increased exponentially because of hardline immigration enforcement policies. When Donald Trump announced "the largest deportation operation in the history of our country" at his 2025 inauguration, investors began betting on private prison stock, with the prom-

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Correctional Center is located in the Arizona desert 65 miles southeast of near the town of Eloy. Nearly half the inmates at the 1,896-bed facility Hawaii'i. Saguaro is a private prison operated by CoreCivic, a corrections ment corporation. In 1995, the State of Hawaii'i began sending inmates to prisons on the continent due to overcrowding. Above are both a street view al view of the facility. - Photos: Moss.com

new government contracts and the stability of existing acts with states like Hawaii'i.

ording to a September 2025 article published in *Just Se-* during the second quarter of this year (April to June) vic reported total revenue of \$538 million – an almost crease from the same period in 2024. Meanwhile, GEO ICE's largest contractor, reported second-quarter rev- f \$636 million – representing a 5% increase.

## A PERFECT STORM

America waged its “war on drugs,” economic disparity wa'i steadily increased due, in part, to speculation by e investors that drove up land prices, while the prev- of low-paying service jobs in our tourism-dominated ny failed to provide many residents with living wages. he same time, the methamphetamine crisis was explod- Hawaii'i. With increasingly harsh mandatory sentenc- incarceration at O'ahu Community Correctional Center (C) and Hālawā Correctional Facility soon exceeded ca-

led to other problems including failing infrastructure, g and health concerns, and deaths. A 1993 lawsuit by merican Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) resulted in a c-ree with the State of Hawaii'i mandating that the cor- nal system meet basic requirements – but allocated no nds to support any reforms.

hen, methamphetamine use was disproportionately af- y rural and Native Hawaiian communities. Sentences rsher and longer as prosecutors routinely stacked drug s to secure convictions with lengthy prison terms. g addiction was seen as a personal failing, not a medi- ddition or a coping mechanism associated with poverty

or trauma. And convictions were difficult to appeal, as over- worked public defenders were swamped.

From the perspective of the private prison industry, Ha- wai'i was the perfect customer.

In late December 1995, just a few months after Hawaii'i State prison officials traveled to the continent for a tour of privately run prisons, some 300 Hawaii'i pa'ahao (inmates) were quietly relocated to private prisons in Texas.

It was supposed to a temporary solution until a new pris- on was built, but that never happened. Indeed, the practice of sending pa'ahao to the continent to address prison over- crowding has expanded under every Hawaii'i governor since its inception.

## STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

In the Arizona desert, some 65 miles south of Phoenix, tumbleweeds collect along fences in an arid landscape that stretches to the horizon. This is Eloy, home of Saguaro Cor- rectional Center, a for-profit prison managed by CoreCivic. Saguaro is named for the tree-like cactus species made fa- mous by countless western films.

Eloy could not be more different from Hawaii'i and yet there are currently close to 900 Hawaii'i pa'ahao housed at Saguaro Correctional Center.

When Hawaii'i's private prison contract was initially signed, CoreCivic was allowed to choose who it housed from the state's male and female inmate populations, shuttling them across facilities in Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, and Texas.

But in 2008, female pa'ahao sent to private prisons on the continent were brought home after several lawsuits alleging sexual assault by guards. Subsequently, most of the male pa'ahao were consolidated at Saguaro.

Despite being incarcerated in the middle of a desert hun- dreds of miles from the ocean and nearly 3,000 miles away from home, some pa'ahao say that conditions at Saguaro are better than in Hawaii'i.

Local prison conditions have become so intractable that some have their own nicknames. For example, at the Hilo Community Correctional Facility, the shared communal space (without a bathroom) is known as “the fishbowl” while the same space at OCCC is called the “thunderdome.”

## CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

Testifying before the Hawaii'i State legislature in 2025, De- partment of Corrections (DCR) Director Tommy Johnson said, “DCR would have returned the inmates long ago, but for the lack of space in its correctional facilities. DCR has no choice but to send them to private out-of-state facilities. DCR has no control over when and/or how many persons are sentenced by the court to DCR's custody and care.”

Johnson's regretful official tone is a more recent develop- ment, as there are currently no elected officials in Hawaii'i who support the practice. In fact, several audits and state task force reports have slammed the private prison arrangement.

In January 2013, the Native Hawaiian Justice Task Force, comprised of nine members from the criminal justice system, submitted its report to the legislature. Their unanimous rec- ommendation was that “prisoners held out of state should be returned. The state should make the return of inmates a top

priority . . . and inmates should be returned as soon as practi- cable, consistent with public safety.”

Like other state-sponsored, well-intentioned documents, it was ignored.

The idea that Hawaii'i cannot bring its prisoners home until a new facility is built is the deeply held belief of some state officials. It rests on the assumption that the number of incar- cerated individuals is static. It is not. Crime, primarily violent crime, has fallen significantly in recent years in Hawaii'i.

Meanwhile, CoreCivic profits from bureaucracy and inac- tion by the State of Hawaii'i. The state pays CoreCivic more than \$30 million a year to house pa'ahao – ironically less than it costs to keep them home – which may explain why the practice has continued despite its unpopularity.

More enlightened thinking on the issue in recent years has led to a gradual return of inmates by the DCR – the result of an informal policy wherein individuals with Class-C fel- onies (charges carrying sentences of five years or fewer) are not sent out of state. The Hawaii'i Paroling Authority has also begun bringing home inmates who are eligible for parole.



Inmates at Saguaro participate in Makahiki in November 2011. Mandatory sen- tences for all drug-related crimes since the 1980s resulted in an increase in prison populations across the U.S. America has the highest incarceration rate of any country in the world, with nearly 2 million citizens imprisoned in federal and state prisons, or in local jails. - Photo: REUTERS/Samantha Sais

## A BROKEN SYSTEM

It is widely understood that, for Indigenous peoples and other people of color in America, the criminal justice system is broken. Or maybe it was intended to be this way.

Incarceration has long been used as a tool of oppression. The overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom was followed by a restructuring of laws. Everything about being Hawaiian be- came illegal: access to the sea; communal land ownership; freedom to practice traditional forms of dance and sport; ac- cess to Hawaiian medium education.

Known for her research on Native Hawaiian criminaliza- tion, in 2010 Dr. RaeDeen Keahiolalo-Karasuda published *A Genealogy of Punishment in Hawaii'i: The Public Hanging of Chief Kamanawa II*. Accused of murdering his wife, Kama- nawa was hanged in 1840 shortly after the signing of Hawaii'i's first written Constitution. The execution, witnessed by over 800 Hawaiians, was a grim public-political spectacle that re-



Pa'ahao perform during the November 2011 Makahiki celebration at Saguaro. When Hawai'i first began sending inmates to private prisons on the continent they were dispersed across the country, to facilities from California to Florida. However, since around 2010, Hawai'i inmates have been consolidated at Saguaro. - Photo: REUTERS/Samantha Sais

## LIVING IN EXILE

Continued from page 19

flected the increasing foreign influence in Hawai'i.

According to Keahiolalo-Karasuda, "Reexamining Hawaiian experiences in the past and current justice system through this lens allows us to see the political ramifications of incarceration and other forms of punishment, and to know that the criminalization of Hawaiians is neither straightforward nor simple."

Some of the most ardent advocates for prison reform are not Hawaiian. Kat Brady of the justice reform-focused Community Alliance on Prisons has long fought for better treatment of Indigenous prisoners. "The difference between Indigenous and Western justice is that with Indigenous justice, you always had a chance at redemption. You could be forgiven, get your slate wiped clean and start over. With Western justice you never, ever, get out," said Brady.

Despite, or perhaps because of, this alienation from their 'ohana, culture and 'āina, Hawaiian men in Saguaro have asserted their heritage - most notably by celebrating Makahiki each year.

### DELBERT WAKINEKONA AND MAKAHIKI

The history of Makahiki celebrations by pa'ahao began in the early 2000s – due in large part to the efforts of Delbert Ka'ahanui Wakinekona.

In 1969, at the age of 25, Wakinekona was indicted for the murder and robbery of a Nu'uaniu store owner – although he was not the shooter. After a three-day trial, the jury found him guilty. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

After several altercations, in 1976 the State of Hawai'i sent Wakinekona to serve his time at Folsom State Prison in California – notorious for its violence and harsh, dehumanizing conditions.

Wakinekona sued, claiming that his exile from Hawai'i violated his constitutional rights. His case made it all the

way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where he lost in 1983. That decision paved the way for the banishment of future pa'ahao to the continent.

Notably, in his dissent to the 1983 decision, acclaimed civil rights advocate and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote, "Whether it is called banishment, exile, deportation, relegation or transportation, compelling a person to quit a city, place, or country, for a specified period of time, or for life, has long been considered a unique and severe deprivation, and was specifically outlawed."

Of his experience at Folsom Wakinekona once said, "all they had there was the Mexican Mafia, the Black Guerrilla Family, and one stupid Hawaiian." Far from home, he eventually created a new community in exile as a leader among a growing population of Native Hawaiian

pa'ahao serving their time on the continent.

With help from cultural practitioner Kaiana Haili and Hawaiian social justice advocate Lillian Harwood (whom he eventually married) Wakinekona organized Hawaiian language and culture classes at Saguaro after he was relocated there. They also established an annual Makahiki celebration, with the men learning hula, oli and worshipping together.

Prison officials viewed these initiatives with skepticism. It took more than a decade, but eventually issues with facilities, wardens, official (and unofficial) rules were overcome, allowing pa'ahao at Saguaro to celebrate Makahiki – a tradition that continues to this day.

In 2011, after nearly 42 years in prison, Wakinekona was granted a "compassionate release" after a liver cancer diagnosis. He lived the last two years of his life at home in Hawai'i, reunited with his family. He got married and became an advocate for a modern pu'uhonua to replace the brutal system in which he spent most of his life.

### AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH

Even though white Americans comprise 60% of the U.S. population, they only represent 30% of incarcerated individuals – evidence of the systemic racism that plagues America's justice system and disproportionately convicts and imprisons Indigenous and other people of color charged with crimes.

That tracks here in Hawai'i where 40% of pa'ahao are Native Hawaiian despite comprising just 20% of the population. The Native Hawaiian Justice Task Force Report is filled with stories about the men and women exiled to corporate prisons thousands of miles from home, tantamount to an "out of sight, out of mind" solution to the state's 40-year-old prison overcrowding issue.

Whether due to funding or apathy, efforts to fix Hawai'i's overcrowded prison problem have made little progress. This, despite numerous studies strongly indicating that not only does mass incarceration have only a marginal impact on reducing crime, but it can also hin-

der rehabilitation, resulting in higher recidivism rates.

Rather, current research suggests that what does work are collaborative, community-based restorative justice programs; evidence-based models for rehabilitation; addiction treatment; job training; the zealous preservation of due process rights; and traditional cultural practices which perpetuate and reinforce the sense of belonging to a community.



These ho'opa'oli and drum for the 'olapa (dancers) at the 2022 Makahiki celebration at Saguaro. Makahiki at Saguaro is a nearly 25-year-old tradition. In the process of preparing for Makahiki each year, the men reconnect to their culture, learning hula and oli, praying and worshipping together, building pilina, and healing. - Photo: CoreCivic

### MOVING FORWARD

The Department of Public Safety recently released a study titled "Breaking Cycles: Alternative Models for Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice on O'ahu." It notes the overwhelming public support for systemic reform.

Earlier this year, the House passed Concurrent Resolution 153 calling for the incremental reduction of pa'ahao incarcerated in out-of-state prisons. It also requests that DCR submit annual progress reports to the legislature ahead of the 2027, 2028, 2029, and 2030 legislative sessions.

Testifying in support of the resolution, the ACLU noted that "from 1995 to 2019, the state relied upon [DCR] to provide oversight over itself. During this time, a tragic history of death, sickness, and harm unfolded at Saguaro with no concerted efforts to fix conditions or question Hawai'i's relationship with CoreCivic."

The practice of sending Kānaka Maoli men to prisons on the continent is the ultimate expression of American colonialism in the 21st century, reflecting centuries of systemic oppression, cultural erasure, and displacement from the 'āina.

This type of forced separation exacerbates emotional distress, weakens family bonds, severs ties to the land, and hinders successful reintegration. Advocates correctly argue that poverty continues to be criminalized in Hawai'i, with draconian laws regarding bail, and state and county ordinances that punish the survival behavior of those with the fewest resources.

There is no doubt that bringing our pa'ahao home to Hawai'i will be expensive. But this is more than a political or budget issue; it is a moral issue akin to asking what it will cost to preserve Hawai'i's forests, protect our coral reefs, or educate our children. ■

# Leadership Development Matters

By Nanea Lo, OHA Administrative Assistant, Advocacy and Research

For Kānaka Maoli, leadership has always been rooted in kuleana – responsibility to our ea, 'āina, kūpuna, and lāhui. It is about carrying forward ancestral kuleana while adapting to the challenges of the present moment.

As Hawaiians continue to face systemic inequities, climate change, threats to cultural survival, and struggles for sovereignty, the need for strong and grounded leaders has never been greater. Investing in leadership development is essential to our survival and our flourishing as a people.

In my work I have a front-row seat to the complex ways policy decisions and research priorities shape the lives of our people. Whether it's land use, education, housing, or health, the issues are layered and intrinsically connected to our history of occupation and ongoing colonialism.

We urgently need leaders who can navigate these systems while remaining grounded in ea and aloha 'āina – leaders skilled in policy and advocacy with a sense of kuleana to serve and uplift the lāhui. Whether in the kingdom or abroad, the kuleana is ours.

My leadership journey was shaped by programs designed to cultivate emerging leaders including the Kuleana Academy with Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA), the Native American Political Leadership Program at George Washington University, the Young Pacific Leaders with the U.S. Department of State, and the Hawai'i Asia-Pacific Leadership Program with Pacific Forum. Each opportunity provided insights and skills that shaped my view of leadership as a collective responsibility.

At Kuleana Academy, I learned to connect grassroots organizing with policy level advocacy. In the Native American Political Leadership Program, I engaged in continental-level conversations about Indigenous governance – a reminder that Kānaka Maoli are part of a global Indigenous movement. Through Young Pacific Leaders, I connected with peers across Oceania tackling challenges from climate change to cultural preservation. And the Hawai'i Asia-Pacific Leadership Program gave me tools to think about leadership on a geopolitical scale and Hawai'i's place in global politics.

These experiences not only built my technical skills but my confidence to stand in spaces of power while holding fast to my kuleana – courage to kū'e when necessary, to speak up, and to be kūpa'a in aloha 'āina. Leadership is not just being effective in Western institutions; it is about transforming those institutions to serve our people – or creating new ones when they fail us. Without investment in leadership training and mentorship, future generations will lack the tools they need to meet the challenges ahead.

For our lāhui to thrive, leadership must be nurtured at every level. Leadership is expansive, and when we rec-



The Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action's 2019 Kuleana Academy. - Photo: Courtesy of Nanea Lo

ognize it in all its forms, we strengthen our entire community.

To do this, we need to fund leadership programs. We must invest in empowering Hawaiians and create spaces where young leaders can develop proficiency while staying grounded in 'ike kūpuna. Institutions must support these efforts with resources and community members can mentor. Every contribution matters.

Leadership is not one person rising – it is about all of us rising together. Investing in leadership development is an investment in our 'āina, lāhui, and the generations to come.

Now is the time to commit resources and energy into cultivating these leaders. By investing in leadership development, we are not just shaping leaders – we are ensuring the survival of our culture, the strength of our communities, and the ea of our lāhui. ■

## KS Lawsuit is a Lesson for Native Hawaiians

By Ammon Baldomero

In October, attorney Jesse Franklin-Murdock filed a lawsuit against Kamehameha Schools on behalf of Students for Fair Admissions, a legal advocacy group aligned with the conservative political movement known as MAGA (Make America Great Again).

The suit claims that although Kamehameha is a private institution and receives no federal funds, its tuition and enrollment contracts fall under contract law which prohibits race-based admissions making Kamehameha's preference for applicants of Hawaiian ancestry illegal.

Since Donald Trump descended Trump Tower's golden escalator in 2015, support for the MAGA movement's supreme leader has grown in Hawai'i.

From 2016 to 2024, votes for Trump increased in Hawai'i by 51% while in the legislature Republicans gained five seats in 2016 and 12 in 2024; the most since 2002.

Voter maps provide a clear picture of who supports him. While neighbor island voters voted democratic at the same rate as urban O'ahu voters; in rural O'ahu Trump had heavy support.

In West O'ahu, Trump voters were the majority in Waipahu, 'Ewa Beach, Kapolei, Nānākuli, Mā'ili,

Wai'anae, and Mākaha. In East O'ahu, they were in Punalu'u, Hau'ula, Lā'ie, and Kahuku. There's also a small cluster in Kalihi.

As a private school, Kamehameha accepts students from every district. The system determines the number of admitted applicants based on the percentage of Native Hawaiians in each district. So, if an area has a high density of Hawaiians, it constitutes a higher percentage of Kamehameha's student body.

With that said, the best indicator of Hawaiian population centers are Hawaiian homesteads – the approximately 200,000 acres set aside via the 1921 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, a federal law intended to restore Native Hawaiians to their lands – now managed by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL). Presumably, a large number of Kamehameha students live on homestead lands.

And here lies the irony: if you overlaid the voter and homestead maps, you'd see that, in 2024, a large percentage of Native Hawaiians voted for Donald Trump – the man whose conservative legal comrades now seek to strip them of their dignity.

Let that sink in.

It is a case of a people voting against their own interests. But why would they do that?

You might say they couldn't have seen this coming, which may be partly true. But surely they saw what we all saw: the threats to roll back environmental laws which will accelerate sea level rise and drown Hawai'i's shores; cancellation of DEI programs which fund Hawaiian nonprofits and education programs; cancellation of grants which partly fund DHHL; and cuts to social services like tax credits, SNAP, Medicaid, and social security – of which Native Hawaiians represent a large percentage of Hawai'i's recipients.

More recently, seeing our very own Republican lawmakers Brenton Awa of Ka'a'awa and Diamond Garcia of 'Ewa Beach travel to D.C. to try and advocate for Kamehameha – only to be stonewalled – says everything about how much MAGA insiders actually care.

Indeed, let this lawsuit be a lesson for Native Hawaiians. ■

*Ammon Baldomero is an 'Iolani School graduate with a bachelor's degree in economics from Brigham Young University. He writes on Substack, a newsletter platform, publishing as "Hawaiian Luminary."*

## Kamehameha Schools is Reparative, Not Racist

By Kaeo Yuen

As one of the few Native Hawaiians at Harvard College – and a proud graduate of Kamehameha Schools – I've watched the *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* decision ripple across campus.

## HA'I MANA'O

Continued from page 21

The Supreme Court's ruling dismantled affirmative action, prohibiting universities from considering race in holistic admissions.

Now that same organization has turned its attention to Kamehameha Schools, arguing that its preference for Native Hawaiian children is unconstitutional. But that claim confuses everything about the time, place, and founding of the schools. Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop endowed an educational trust in her 1883 Will to establish Kamehameha Schools as a reparative act, not a racist one.

When Pauahi wrote her will, Native Hawaiians were dying from disease and, increasingly, the loss of sovereignty. Western reforms – beginning with the 1848 Māhele – dismantled communal land ownership, allowing foreigners to buy property and dispossess Hawaiians, while missionary schools banned the Hawaiian language from classrooms.

As the great-granddaughter of King Kamehameha I, Pauahi devoted nearly her entire estate to her people's future. She instructed her trustees “to support and educate orphans and others in indigent circumstances, giving the preference to Hawaiians of pure or part aboriginal blood.”

For a people facing cultural and physical extinction, this was an act of survival, not exclusion.

A decade later, the Hawaiian Kingdom was overthrown by American businessmen backed by the U.S. military. Kamehameha Schools, founded in 1887 under Hawaiian Kingdom laws, endures as one of the last institutions created by, and for, Native Hawaiians.

Today, it operates three K-12 campuses and 30 pre-schools serving over 7,000 students each year. Its programs integrate Hawaiian language, values, and belonging that many Native children cannot find elsewhere. For a people already facing the highest rates of incarceration, suicide, and homelessness in our own land, limiting access to culturally grounded education would only deepen those wounds.

Students for Fair Admissions claims ancestry-based education is “neither fair nor legal” ignoring the fact that the colonization of Hawaiian lands, language, and

lives was neither fair nor legal. For a people still healing from centuries of dispossession, Native Hawaiians need this kind of education most of all. We serve our people because history has not. Using the U.S. Constitution as a weapon against Kamehameha Schools is the continuance of colonization.

If these lawsuits succeed, they could open the door to attacks on The Queen's Health System, Hawaiian Home-lands, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. What is at stake is not just education, but the survival of every institution built to restore what colonization tried to erase.

And though Students for Fair Admissions may claim to fight for fairness, as an honest student for fair admission, I believe in admission not only into schools, but into opportunity itself.

True fairness ensures that every child, including those from indigent and Indigenous backgrounds, has a place to grow, to dream, and to serve. That is what Pauahi fought for in 1883. It is what we fight for now. ■

*Kaeo Yuen is a 2024 graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama. He is currently a sophomore at Harvard and a teacher assistant at Ke Kula Kaiapuni o Pū'ōhala in Kāne'ohe.*

## It's a Coup

By Lily N. Kassis

As court rulings begin to roll in against the Trump administration, as thousands of troops arrive on massive warships in the waters off Venezuela, as immigrants continue to be detained and deported without trial, as masked federal agents kidnap our innocent neighbors and friends, as wild and illegal tariffs are imposed and withdrawn, and as the president personally collects millions in bribes, let us call it what it is: a coup.

“Coup: noun; a sudden, violent, and unlawful seizure of power from a government.” – *Oxford Languages*

The president and his handpicked posse of white supremacist “yes” people have violently and unlawfully seized power over the government. I hesitate to call these actions sudden, yet it does seem to be the case for many. We have all heard the “I voted for Trump, but I didn't vote for this” narrative. Mere months into his new term, his approval has plummeted and protests opposing him

have broken records.

And the coup has been cruel. Consider the innocent people, deported to violent foreign prisons because of their tattoos. Consider the military troops deployed across the country.

To quote the character “Captain Adama” from *Battlestar Galactica*: “There's a reason you separate military and the police. One fights the enemies of the state. The other serves and protects the people. When the military becomes both, then the enemies of the state tend to become the people.”

In this “against the people” spirit, recent federal actions and executive orders have been explicitly violent – as have the actions of federal appointees. Take Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller, for example. Miller's rhetoric is intentionally violent, and actions taken under his leadership have been horrific. Immigration policy has changed enormously, and enforcement even more. The recent targeting of outspoken students has particularly disgusted me. This is all violent and fundamentally goes against the very core of our nation.

“Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

The last part of the coup (as defined above) is its unlawfulness. A huge number of this administration's key actions and policies have been ruled illegal. Many immigration policies, as well as individual immigration deportation cases, have been ruled illegal in court. Military deployments have also been ruled illegal but “the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals halted the ruling until it resolves the administration's appeal, allowing the deployment to remain.” And recent tariffs that have been ruled illegal remain in place. Various other similarly lost and appealed cases exist, and various corresponding actions continue to continue. It is a coup.

The corruption is blatant, and we, the people, are not blind. ■

*Lily Noelani Kassis was born and raised in Waimea, Hawai'i Island. She graduated from Hawai'i Preparatory Academy and is currently pursuing a bachelor of science degree in ecological determinants of health.*

## E kala mai...

In the November issue of *Ka Wai Ola*, in the ho'omana'o (memoriam) for former OHA Trustee Lui Hao on page 5, we made an error in the names of both Trustee Hao and his father. Trustee Hao was named Louis “Lui” Hao. His father was Louis Kanoa Hao.



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## 'Auhea Wale Ana 'Oe Ka Pua o Kāmakahala?

By Bobby Camara



Kāmakahala, *Genistoma waiolani*, shiny in rainforest. - Photo: Francis Joy

Where are you, kāmakahala flower? I suppose it depends what your search entails. Hawai'i is home to 19 lā'au kāmakahala 'āpa'akuma, viny shrubby, with pointy-petaled small yellow pua.

The most recent kāmakahala (*Geniostoma sp.* formerly *Labordia*) to be described lives only on Kaua'i, and is named for Clyde Imada of Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum. All delight in cool rains of mountain slopes, and their bright yellow pua, small but noticeable, say "Here I am!" Some say pua were gathered with care and

strung into lei for ali'i.

These days, perhaps because endemic pua kāmakahala are so rare, the name is used for similar-looking flowers of orange cestrum, a cousin in the Solanaceae family. Fashioned into delicate fragrant lei they are a precious gift, endemic or not, but be maka'ala! Cestrum are invasive, and our endemic species have enough pilikia as it is. Yes, "night-blooming jasmine," here since the 1870s, can be a delight for the ihu, but at what cost? They belong to and in Central America, not competing with our lā'au makamae. ■



Kāmakahala haole, *Cestrum aurantiacum*, orange cestrum. - Photo: Wikipedia



Lei kāmakahala haole, delicate elegance. - Photo: Kainani Kahaunaale Facebook

## Past Pelekikena Share Mana'o for the Next Generation

By Brittany J. Noelani Rivera

"Get involved."

Those are the words of advice from John Jensen, current member and past pelekikena (president) of 'Ahahui 'o Lili'uokalani Hawaiian Civic Club (HCC) of Southern California, the oldest Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs (AOHCC) organization on the continent.

The club's story began with Marlene Sai, a founding member and its first pelekikena. In April 1976, she gathered a group of Hawaiian friends in Southern California to share the idea of forming a Hawaiian Civic Club. With the guidance of Uncle Noah and Aunt Mary Ann Kalama, that idea took shape.

Members ultimately chose to honor Queen Lili'uokalani in the club's name, creating a connection with the then-active Northern California HCC, 'Ahahui Kalākaua of San Francisco. On February 7, 1977, 'Ahahui 'o Lili'uokalani HCC received its charter with an estimated 70 members.

I first met Aunt Mary Marlene at the 2023 AOHCC Convention, shortly after the Prince Kūhiō living history play. I approached her, introduced myself as a member of the club, and her eyes lit with surprise and delight. She shared a few memories of those early days and expressed her hope that people would keep the club going.

The conversation was brief, but it left a lasting impression – one that filled me with great motivation. It sparked a deep desire to understand our club's origins, its journey, challenges, and the vision our kūpuna carried for the future.

The following summer, when preparing our booth for the Annual Ho'olaule'a at Alondra Park, I asked Uncle John if he had any old photos we could display. What he placed in my hands were three vintage albums doc-



umenting decades of club life – camping trips, mele competitions, workshops, Christmas gatherings, May Day festivals, and more. Watching people stop to flip through those albums was heartwarming.

One man, in particular, turned each page with such intent, smiling, and snapping photos. When I asked if he recognized someone, he replied, "Yes, me!" That was how I met another past pelekikena, Sam Rosero. Throughout the weekend, many others stopped by after being told by relatives, "Go look. There's a picture of you!"

Recently, I reconnected with Uncle Sam, who encouraged me to speak with Aunt Wini Smith, also a former pelekikena. She, too, recounted her early involvement after receiving a call from Marlene Sai. Among her fondest memories are hosting *Hōkūle'a* in 1995 and hosting the first AOHCC convention on the continent in Anaheim, California. She then reflected on changes she has witnessed over the years.

When connecting with past pelekikena, many noted challenges such as organizational changes, members taking their leadership to other areas, and the ongoing struggle to involve younger generations. Yet each conversation left me with immense appreciation and ideas on how to move forward.

Like the pelekikena before us, we remain dedicated to fostering a space where Native Hawaiians can connect, engage, and stay informed. We draw on the successes, challenges, and wisdom of those who came before us. Building on the foundation they established, we commit ourselves to uplifting the next generation and carrying their legacy forward. ■

*Brittany J. Noelani Rivera is the current pelekikena of 'Ahahui 'o Lili'uokalani Hawaiian Civic Club of Southern California.*

# Nā Aka o Lono; Signs of Lono

By Kalei Nu'uhiwa, Ph.D.

**A**loha kākou e nā hoa makamaka e heluhelu nei i ia 'āpana pepa. Welina!

I love this time of the year when everything turns green from the rains, the air is cooler, the surf is up and sometimes a glimpse of lightning or snow makes a quick appearance. It's definitely sweater weather in Hawai'i.

This month I thought I'd share a part of a longer chant that is affiliated with Lono and can be used during the Makahiki. Within the lines is a list of aka (signs) that are recognized as Lono indicating a



weather system, typically rain, is on its way towards you.

This section of the chant talks about all the atmospheric happenings that we can expect during the wet season. Personally, I'd use this chant during the opening of the Makahiki ceremony, but since we have been having such good rains here in Hilo, I'm compelled to share the many types of rainbows and colors seen in the sky in the morning or just before sunset.

Why don't we go out and look for some of these signs of winter? Wishing that your parched lands receive the restorative rains of the season! Aloha! ■

Wake up Lono!

Lono descends.

The essence of Lono in Kahiki.

The cloud banks blow

At the arrival of Lono.

The intense fully formed rainbow descends

At the arrival of Lono.

The vibrant low rainbow leans

At the arrival of Lono.

The red rainbow descends

At the arrival of Lono.

The ruddy red clouds descend

At the arrival of Lono.

The rainbow tumbles

At the arrival of Lono.

The suspended rainbow descends,

At the arrival of Lono.

The orange clouds topple

At the arrival of Lono.

For Kū, for Kāne, for Kanaloa

The billowing clouds rise in Kahiki.

Appear and live!

*E ala mai e Lono!*

*Hina akula 'o Lono.*

*Ke aka o Lono i Kahiki.*

*Hina a'ela ka pae 'ōpua*

*I ka biki 'ana o Lono.*

*Hina a'ela ka 'ōnobi'ula,*

*I ka biki 'ana o Lono.*

*Hina a'ela ka pūnobi'ula*

*I ka biki 'ana o Lono.*

*Hina a'ela ka uakoko,*

*I ka biki 'ana o Lono.*

*Hina a'ela ke ao mākokō,*

*I ka biki 'ana o Lono.*

*Hina a'ela ke ānuenuē,*

*I ka biki 'ana o Lono.*

*Hina a'ela ka 'ālewalewa,*

*I ka biki 'ana o Lono.*

*Hina a'ela ka 'ōpua ki'iki'i,*

*I ka biki 'ana o Lono.*

*No Kū, no Kāne, No Kanaloa,*

*Ka pūko'a kū i Kahiki.*

*E kū e ola!*

# To You, Beloved Kumu Leinā'ala

By KipuKai Kualii

**E**Kumu, you will always be the creative and inspirational source (and force) behind each of us "Mokihana" and our entire Hālau ka Lei Mokihana o Leinā'ala, from the youngest keiki to the eldest kupuna.

Though your recent passing leaves a profound emptiness in our hearts and lives, your lessons will forever be in us: in our continued learning, in our every oli and hula and, more than anything, in our everyday lives of sharing our hula, culture and aloha.

Even while battling cancer, you led our hālau through challenging, lengthy preparations to return to Merrie Monarch to again share yours (and their) best with the world. As always, you led with grace, strength, intelligence and determination.

These are a few of my personal favorite Merrie Monarch memories: 1) 2025 Miss Aloha Hula Jaedyn Janae Puahaulani Pavao, a testament to the enduring power of your life, teachings and love; 2) 2024 Wahine 'Auana 2nd Place *KipuKai* hula honoring my paniolo father Wilfred "Willy" Kualii who you ensured was present; 3) 2023 Miss Aloha Hula First Runner-Up Breeze Ann Kalehualani Vidinha Jardin, a testament to your love for Breeze's Ni'ihau kupuna, as well as for Ke Akua (Our Heavenly Father God) and; 4) 2022 Overall Winner sweeping the wāhine competition and representing Kaua'i in purple velvet magically floating across the stage to *Mokihana Lullaby* and *Kaua'i Lana i ke Kai* sung by Robert Cazimero.

E Kumu, you taught us to dance with



intention and to always share aloha; to live aloha. And that "hula is life!" You reminded us that hula is not just to be performed for an audience, it's for our ancestors, our 'āina and ourselves. You taught us to be stewards of our culture and language as well as of our 'āina.

You showed us how to express deep reverence and aloha in honoring others. You embodied aloha in every interaction, lesson, and embrace.



Kumu Hula Leinā'ala Pavao Jardin - Courtesy Photo

We cannot thank you enough for nurturing and instilling in us both technique and the kuleana to honor and perpetuate our culture with integrity and joy. We will forever reflect your spirit – disciplined yet joyful, rooted yet innovative. Your legacy lives on in ours and in the countless lives you've touched.

We will carry you, your teachings, and intention forward. And you will forever be honored in our hula, oli and mele as your spirit guides us. Mahalo nui loa for your life and your love. E hula mau nō mākou no 'oe. We will dance for you always! ■

# No Pihemanu

Na Kainani Kahaunaale, Cody Pueo Pata, and  
Snowbird Puananiopaoakalani Bento

He aloha e ka lā hiki  
'Ohu'ohu i ka 'ehukai  
Me ka leo 'oli o nā manu  
I ka maka 'ōnohi'ula

Hui:

He pūnana, he nu'a manu  
He aloha, ua ho'i mai

Pulupē i ka ua nui  
I ka hao mai a ka Ulumano  
Ha'ukē'ukē ka hulu manu  
Ha'ukeke i ke anuanu

Hāli'imoe one o ke kaiea  
E hahani aku i ka hale manu  
Huli 'ē ka lima i lalo  
Ulu a'e ke oho kāwelu

Kīkaha mai ke ka'upu  
Manu hehi 'ale o ka moana  
He hāli'a lā, he ha'upu  
I ke po'i 'alē'ale o nā nalu

Lei ana 'o 'Ailana Hikina  
I ka nani o ka pua nohu  
'O Ka'ōhū kū ha'aheo  
'O ke kāhela, ua ana 'ia

Holo ana i ke kai kua'au  
Aniani aku i ke kai lulu  
Halulu mai ke kai o waho  
He nu'anua i ka palekai

Puana mai ke aloha  
No nā moku o Pihemanu  
Me ka leo 'oli o nā manu  
I ka maka 'ōnohi'ula



throughout our four-day stay. Paukū 'ekahi (na Pueo) describes our first day on island that began with a stunning sunrise greeting of Kānehoalani and the intensity of the wind moving over the surface of the sea. Even with the gusting winds, it was our first glimpse of mōli soaring gracefully overhead.

Paukū 'elua (na Snowbird) describes the rain-drenched tour we experienced after leaving our group orientation at the Visitor Center. It was quite a sight. The wind was whipping the rain as we rode around on our golf cart limos or visited various places on island. As much as we were being pelted by the icy rain, the manu seemed to be relaxed and continued sitting on their pūnana.

Paukū 'ekolu (na Kainani) describes our morning service project that we engaged in the following day. Under the guidance of Greg, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist, a group of us planted kāwelu (*Eragrostis variabilis*) in the sand around the old cable houses site. There were so many Bonin Petrol holes that we had to be careful not to fall in, for if we did, we would need to dig the hole out so that we would not trap a bird inside.

Paukū 'ehā (na Pueo) describes the time we had to take in the island and visit various sites like the western shore and the northern Kūkaehao (Rusty Bucket) area. The final paukū describes the group's visit to Kalau-manu (Eastern Island) and diving at the outer reef (he pale ko'a a nā kūpuna). ■



*Experience Pihemanu/Kuaihelani/Midway Atoll Live! Brought to you by the Friends of Midway Atoll, you can now view a live camera view of the island by scanning the QR code. Soon,*

*the skies and land will be filled with returning mōli who are preparing to nest. You might also be able to spot the other inhabitants of the island like the ka'upu, koloa pōhaka, manuokū, kolea, 'akekeke, koa'e, makalena, and nunulu. E lohe 'ia ke kani a'o Pihemanu!*

# O'ahu's Energy Future at Risk

By Peter Apo

*NaHHA is proud to share an article from one of our Lamakū Ho'okipa who exemplify the value of mālama and are making meaningful impacts as contributing members of the Native Hawaiian community.*



able energy projects or the upgrade of O'ahu's power plants.

Hawaii's options for natural energy production include solar, wind, geothermal, and biomass. The state is actively developing these renewable sources to reduce its reliance on imported oil.

Hawaii made history in 2015 as the first state to adopt an energy policy to transition from a predominantly imported oil-based energy system to 100% clean energy sources by 2045. However, progress has been frustratingly slow.

Of Hawaii's six main islands, O'ahu houses 70% of the state's population and is facing an escalating energy reliability crisis. The clock is ticking, and an urgent response is required.

Recently, 20% of Hawaiian Electric Company's (HECO) generation fleet was offline or operating at a significantly reduced capacity. Blackouts are an escalating concern.

The record for the largest HECO blackout was on Jan. 8, 2024, when rolling blackouts affected about 120,000 customers across two dozen communities on O'ahu.

O'ahu is more reliant on imported oil than anywhere else in the country. Due to the use of low-sulfur fuel oil – the most polluting of all energy sources – 67% of O'ahu's electricity is produced by burning oil, resulting in the highest level of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., given the island's population.

The negative framework of O'ahu's dominant oil burning system is highlighted by the highest electricity costs in the nation at three times the national average, an aging grid system leading to an increasingly unreliable energy network, and escalating pollution.

The oil-based model struggles to meet increasing energy demands driven by O'ahu's urban economic growth. The continuing reliance on foreign oil imports keeps delaying the launch of large-scale renew-

able energy projects or the upgrade of O'ahu's power plants. It's good news that Gov. Josh Green's administration adopted the Alternative Fuels, Repowering, and Energy Transition Study, which outlines a practical path forward. The new strategy prioritizes reducing dependency on oil and expanding renewable energy sources by importing natural gas as a short-term fuel transition strategy that would immediately cut costs, lower carbon emissions, and improve grid reliability.

Natural gas would function as a temporary replacement for oil while transitioning to a platform of renewable energy sources.

Meanwhile, the state is actively developing its renewable resources to reduce its reliance on imported fossil fuels. Switching from oil to natural gas offers significant cost savings of about 15% for ratepayers, saving the average household approximately \$340 a year.

Some critics argue that investing in natural gas would slow down the incorporation of renewables. The reality is the opposite. This plan escalates the transition.

Adopting a balanced approach to our energy strategy that incorporates natural gas to reduce costs and emissions in the short term while simultaneously scaling up renewables is a strategic option that would create a more affordable and sustainable future for O'ahu. But the transition requires extraordinary leadership from HECO and the Hawai'i State Energy Office.

Meanwhile, islands such as Kaua'i have successfully integrated renewable sources into their systems, lowering costs and reducing reliance on imported oil. I mua e O'ahu! ■

## E NHLC...

I am the sole caregiver for my mo'opuna. Does our hānai relationship give me legal rights? What legal process do we need?



By Angela Correa-Pei, NHLC Of Counsel

**H**ānai – the traditional practice where someone other than the natural parents assumes kuleana for a child's upbringing – is well-established in Hawaiian culture and common in kupuna-mo'opuna relationships. The 'ōlelo no'ēau "Ike aku, 'ike mai, kōkua aku, kōkua mai; pela iho ka nohona 'ohana" (Recognize and be recognized, help and be helped; such is family life) captures this spirit of mutual care. While hānai is recognized under Hawai'i law in some contexts, hānai mākuā may need additional, formal legal status to fully meet the needs of the keiki.

Three primary legal options allow someone other than a child's legal parents to care for and make decisions for that child: power of attorney of a minor, legal guardianship, and adoption. The right option depends on the circumstances, always centering the keiki's best interests.

### Power of Attorney of a Minor (POA)

Through a POA, a legal parent voluntarily delegates rights and responsibilities to another person to care for the child. The parent can specify what powers to grant or limit for example, authorizing medical care but restricting certain procedures. The POA must be signed before a notary and cannot exceed one year (HRS §560:5-105). It may be revoked at any time or replaced with a new POA. Because it is voluntary and temporary, a POA is most useful when parents remain active and cooperative in caregiving.

### Legal Guardianship

A legal guardian has the duty and authority to make major decisions affecting a minor's welfare (HRS §571-2). Establishing guardianship requires

a court petition. The court may appoint a guardian upon finding the legal standards are met and the arrangement serves the child's best interest. Guardianship does not permanently terminate the parent's rights; parents may retain limited rights such as visitation. The guardianship ends when the child turns 18 or earlier if

the court finds it should end. Guardians must submit annual reports to the court on the child's wellbeing.

### Adoption

Adoption creates a permanent, irrevocable legal parent-child relationship, fully transferring parental rights and responsibilities to the adoptive parents. The process requires a court hearing and findings that the child is adoptable, the petitioners are fit and able to provide care, and adoption is in the child's best interest (HRS §578-8). Upon finalization, the court orders a new birth certificate listing the adoptive parents. Adoption permanently severs the legal ties to the biological parents.

While hānai relationships remain cherished, a formal legal status may be required to make decisions and ensure stability for the keiki. The appropriate path depends on your family's needs and what serves the child's best interests.

"He lei poina 'ole ke keiki; A lei never forgotten is the beloved child." - 'Ōlelo No'ēau #740 ■

*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](http://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](mailto:NinauNHLC@nhlchi.org).*

## Maui Project Lease Milestone

By Diamond Badajos



**T**he Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) achieved a significant milestone September 22 by awarding its first agricultural project leases for two subdivisions on the island of Maui. In total, 105 leases were granted: 55 leases for the Waiehu Mauka subdivision and 50 leases for the Honokōwai subdivision.

The event marked the department's first agricultural lease awards since the early 2000s. Waiehu Mauka covers about 240 acres and consists of half-acre lots. Honokōwai spans approximately 45 acres and will include 1- to 2-acre lots.

"Our beneficiaries want to be on the land and agricultural project leases expedite that opportunity for them," DHHL Director Kali Watson said. "This model not only provides our beneficiaries with the land base to construct homes but also offers them a chance to cultivate a dependable food source. This represents cultural revitalization."

Both project areas are funded by Act 279; the legislature's historic allocation of \$600 million to the DHHL in 2022 which allows the department to acquire lands closer to existing infrastructure and initiates the installation of essential utilities like water, sewer, power, drainage and roadway infrastructure prior to the construction of homes.

"We need to focus on the mission of making sure the paper leases awarded become actual land leases," said Sen. Troy

Hashimoto. "We need to get the land ready to move in; the \$600 million is not enough."

Work in Waiehu Mauka will begin in 2027 and should be completed by 2033. Construction at Honokōwai is scheduled to begin in 2029 with anticipated completion in 2031.

The awarding of agricultural project leases before the completion of subdivisions provides beneficiaries with an undivided interest in a specific parcel of their interest. Furthermore, those holding agricultural project leases have the added benefit of transferring their leases to a qualified successor who meets the 25% blood quantum requirement.

Project leases are the department's new approach to moving beneficiaries off the waitlist. This initiative aims to create various avenues to homeownership while safeguarding the legacy of an 'ohana's lease.

DHHL is set to award more than 230 project leases on Maui next year in the following areas: Pūlehunui (100), Honokōwai (40), and Hāna (96).

The department will deploy a new approach when awarding Hāna leases: a pilina-based priority waitlist to identify applicants who are a former or current area residents, lineal descendants, or an applicant with a relative who is a current resident of the area. DHHL's strategy to developing homestead communities in rural areas will prioritize a pilina-based priority waitlist. This process will uphold the cultural values and customary Hawaiian traditions that are critical to the community's wellbeing. ■



Samuel Kaleikoa Ka'eo and 'ohana celebrate their agricultural project lease award alongside DHHL, state and county leadership. - Photo: Courtesy of DHHL

## He Mana ko nā Inoa

Na Kalani Akana, Ph.D.

**H**e mana ko nā inoa. No ka po'e Iudaio, ua kapu loa ka inoa o ke Akua a 'a'ole i kāhea 'ia Kona inoa ma muli o ka mana. Ua pela wale 'ia Kona inoa penei, יהוה, a i 'ole /yod he vav he/ inā heluhelu 'ia mai ka 'ākau i ka hema. Mai neia mau hua pī'āpā Hebera nō ka YHVH i puana 'ia Jehovah ma ka Baibala Pelekania. Ho'ohana ka po'e Iudaio i ka inoa Adonai a i 'ole Hashem i nā manawa a lākou e 'ōlelo ana e pili ana i ke Akua.

No ka po'e Hawai'i, he mana ko nā inoa kekahi. He mana nui ko nā inoa Hawai'i, akua me nā inoa ali'i. Ua hiki iā kākou ke 'ike i ka inoa o ka makua o kekahi kanaka ma muli o ka hua palapala /a/ e like me 'Umi-a-Līloa, 'o ia ho'i, 'o 'Umi ke keiki a Līloa. 'O Kīhā-a-Pī'ilani ke keiki a Pī'ilani. 'O Hā'ae-a-Pae ke keiki a Pae. He kōkua kēia 'ike i ka po'e e noi'i ana i ka mo'okū'auhau. 'A'ole i ho'ohana nā po'e kahiko Hawai'i i ka inoa hope, a i 'ole ka inoa 'ohana. Ua ho'omaka nō ka ho'ohana 'ana i ka inoa 'ohana ma muli o kekahi kānāwai i kuahaua 'ia e Kamehameha IV ma 1860. Inā hānau 'ia kekahi keiki e kekahi pa'a male a laila e lilo ana ka inoa o ka makuakāne i inoa 'ohana. Inā 'a'ole ho'āo 'ia ka makuahine o ke keiki, a laila pono ke keiki e lawe i ko ka makuahine inoa.

Ua ho'ohana ke kānāwai i ka hua 'ōlelo po'o'ole no ke keiki a ka wahine i male 'ole 'ia a he mea 'eha kēia i ka Hawai'i, no ka mea he kūpono nā keiki a pau. Ua 'ike 'ia ka ho'okae keiki po'o 'ole i ke keikikāne a Kamehameha III



me Grace Lahilahi Young. 'O kēia keikikāne, 'o Albert Kūnuiākea, i ho'ohana 'ole i ka inoa o kona makuahine pono'i ma muli o ke kānāwai. Ma muli ho'i o kona kūlana hānau, ua ho'okae wale 'ia 'o Kūnuiākea e nā mikioneli Kalawina, nā kānaka i koi iā Kauikeaouli e nānā 'ole iā ia

Kūnuiākea i kāna ho'oilina mō'i. 'O Kūnuiākea ka hope loa o nā Kamehameha, 'a'ole 'o Pauahi.

Ua kānāwai ho'i 'ia, na ka makua e kapa i kāna keiki i hānau 'ia ma ka inoa Kalikiano i kūpono no ke kaikamahine a kūpono no ke keikikāne. Ua kāpae na'e kēia lula ma ka makahiki 1967.

Ua 'oko'a ke kānāwai inoa no nā ali'i noho aupuni. Ua kolu like ka lula inoa me ko 'Enelani mau mō'i – kapa wale 'ia lākou ma kona inoa mua e like me ka mō'iwahine 'o Elizabeth o Pelekania. Pēlā nō ka lula kapa no Kalākaua, 'a'ole 'o ia 'o Kalākaua Kapa'akea (ka inoa o kona makuakāne).

Pēlā pū me ke kapa 'ana i nā keiki a Kekaulike me Pī'ikoi, 'o ia 'o Kawānanakoa, Kalaniana'ole, me Keli'iahonui. Aia a koho 'ia lākou i ho'oilina mō'i e Kalākaua ua ho'ohā'ule 'ia ka inoa Pī'ikoi. No laila, 'o nā pua a Kawānanakoa, ho'ohana lākou i ua inoa hanohano ā hiki i kēia lā. Inā ua loa'a ke keiki i ke Kamāli'ikāne Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole, e ho'ohana ana lākou pua iā Kalaniana'ole i inoa 'ohana. ■

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

*To read this in English go to [kawaiola.news](#)*

## Can White Rice Work for Us Too?

By Jodi Leslie Matsuo, DrPH, RDN



**A**ny Hawaiian would feel right at home in Japan or South Korea, where rice is served at nearly every meal. Yet despite white rice being a daily staple, people in these countries have some of the lowest obesity rates in the world, about 4% in Japan and 6% in South Korea. In Hawai'i, Native Hawaiians experience obesity rates 7-10 times higher. How can that be if we all eat rice? Isn't white rice supposed to be the cause of our obesity and diabetes problems?

Many people assume that Japanese and Korean people stay thin because of their genetics. However, research shows when they move to Hawai'i or to the U.S. continent, their rates of obesity and chronic disease rise sharply. Their genes remain the same, only their habits and environment change.

This shows that lifestyle patterns matter far more than genetics when it comes to weight and overall health.

Part of why Japanese and Koreans can enjoy rice without the weight gain has to do with their meal pattern. A typical Japanese meal includes a small bowl of rice, about 2/3 to 1 cup, along with 2-4 side dishes and a bowl of miso soup. Koreans follow a similar structure, with a broth-based soup instead and more side dishes.

Fish and tofu are common, and vegetables are abundant. Meat, if eaten, is typically in a combined vegetable dish. Both cultures also include functional foods daily - ginger, garlic, scallions, mushrooms, seaweeds, fermented vegetables and soy foods, and green or barley tea - all of which help lower inflammation.

Lifestyle habits matter as well. In Japan and Korea, people tend to walk more, use

public transit, and build movement naturally into their day. Meals are eaten at regular times and more slowly, with an emphasis on stopping before feeling overly full, a common cultural approach to portion awareness without strict dieting.

Compare this to what often see in Hawai'i. Are our portions of white rice and other foods larger? Is meat a side dish or main dish? Are vegetables a regular part of our meals? What functional foods are included? What type of drinks do we frequent? Is physical activity part of our daily routine?

Maybe white rice is not the villain after all.

There are practical lessons we can take from the Japanese and Korean approach. First, white rice itself is not bad for you. It becomes a problem only when it replaces vegetables or is eaten in oversized portions.

We need to adopt a new, rebalanced meal pattern. One where more of the plate is filled with vegetables prepared in different ways: fresh, steamed, stir-fried, simmered, or in soups. Meals that include more fish and tofu. If we choose meat, combine it in a vegetable dish, rather than eating it alone.

Add functional foods like ginger, garlic, seaweed, fermented vegetables. Pair meals with māmaki or herbal tea, instead of sugary drinks. When these changes are combined with cultural habits of moderation, shared meals, and natural movement throughout the day, they can make a meaningful difference. ■

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



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# Reclaiming Resilience

## The future of Native Hawaiians in STEMM

By Kelsea Kanohokuahiwi  
Hosoda, Ph.D.



With deep federal budget cuts looming, many Native Hawaiian education programs at the University of Hawai'i are at risk of losing critical funding. These programs have never been just academic initiatives – they are lifelines.

As someone who walked the halls of UH as a student, and now as a faculty member, I can personally attest to the transformative power of these programs. They were the foundation that held me through some of the most grueling years of my academic journey, earning a bachelor's in biology, a master's in molecular biosciences and bioengineering, and a Ph.D. in communication and information sciences.

The coursework was hard: physics, calculus, and organic chemistry challenged me. What got me through wasn't just determination, it was community. It was the Native Hawaiian Science and Engineering Mentorship Program which provided tutors, peer mentors, and a support network that helped me succeed. At the time, that program was funded by the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education.

Today, those kinds of programs face an uncertain future.

Now, as an assistant professor at the John A. Burns School of Medicine and the director of the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence, I'm on the other side of the system, trying to secure funding to support the next generation of Native Hawaiian scholars pursuing careers in medicine and research.

And let me tell you: the funding landscape is tough. We're navigating a time of financial scarcity, yes, but also one of rising disillusionment.

Many students and families are questioning the value of higher education. Rightfully so. A college degree no longer guarantees a stable job or livable income, and the weight of educational debt feels unbearable for many.

This is exactly why we must invest in Native Hawaiian participation in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine) at UH. The path forward lies not in abandoning STEMM, but in reclaiming it as a tool for lāhui advancement.

STEMM is still one of the most powerful tools we have, not just for upward mobility, but for sovereignty, resilience, and cultural perpetuation. Especially with the rise of generative AI and rapid technological change, we need more Native Hawaiians who can lead in these spaces – not just participate in them.

Our ancestors already did this. They were keen observers, data collectors, and innovators. Whether it was navigating using the stars, cultivating diverse food systems, or healing through ancestral knowledge they practiced science grounded in purpose and place. That legacy is in us. We must awaken it.

STEMM is not just about labs and equations. It's about ensuring that our people can analyze, adapt, and act in the face of any challenge. It's about building capacity for our lāhui through Native Hawaiian leadership in science, technology, and medicine. It's about perpetuating 'ike kūpuna in the modern world while training future doctors, engineers, policy-makers, and scientists who will serve our communities first.

If we lose these programs, we lose more than funding. We lose access and innovation.

But if we fight for them – and if we cultivate Native Hawaiian brilliance in STEMM at UH – we won't just weather the storm. We will lead the way forward. ■

## New Immersion Preschool Classroom Opens in Hāna



The fourth Hawaiian language immersion classroom – part of the Ready Keiki preschool expansion initiative – opened this year at Hāna Elementary School in Hāna, Maui. Ready Keiki is an initiative of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) headed by Lt. Gov. Sylvia Luke. Since 2024, four Hawaiian Immersion public preschools have been opened by the EOEL. In addition to the newest classroom in Hāna, they include classrooms at Blanch Pope Elementary in Waimānalo, Hau'ula Elementary, and Lāna'i Elementary. As of October, more than 100 public preschools have been opened across the pae 'āina through the Ready Keiki initiative which began in 2024. Pictured here are Hāna Elementary's immersion preschool kumu and haumāna, and Hāna High and Elementary School Principal Christopher Sanita during a recent visit to the school by Sen. Lynn DeCoite and Lt. Gov. Luke. - Photo Courtesy of the Office of the Lt. Governor

## Nakoa Named VP at Kupu

Keone Nakoa was recently named vice president of external affairs for Kupu, an O'ahu-based nonprofit that develops youth training programs across the pae 'āina in the field of environmental stewardship. Prior to his appointment, Nakoa was deputy assistant secretary for Insular and International Affairs in the U.S. Department of the Interior and a senior advisor in the Executive Office of the President under the Biden administration.

Nakoa is also a former executive at the Office of Hawaiian Affairs having served as the organization's Washington, D.C., bureau chief for more than three years from 2018-2021. He has also worked as a private practice attorney and clerked for Chief Judge Craig Nakamura and Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald and, in early in his career, he served as speechwriter



Keone Nakoa  
-Courtesy Photo

and media assistant for the late Sen. Daniel K. Akaka.

A graduate of 'Iolani School, Nakoa went on to attend Harvard University where he earned a bachelor's degree. From there, he returned to Hawai'i and pursued a law degree from UH Manoa's William S. Richardson School of Law, and then an MBA from UH's Shidler College of Business.

## HC Acquires Hawai'i Staffing and Services

The Hawaiian Council (HC), through its for-profit subsidiary, Hawai'i Holdings & Investments, has acquired Hawai'i Staffing and Services (HSS). The acquisition marks the Council's commitment to building a workforce ecosystem rooted in local values, cultural understanding, and community advancement.

Acquired earlier this year, HSS employs

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some 400 individuals. Since the acquisition, HSS has undergone a comprehensive restructuring and rebranding.



Samlynn Kubota  
-Courtesy Photo

Samlynn Kubota will serve as HSS executive director. Staffing services range from filling short term staffing needs to assembling specialized teams for complex initiatives. They also offer contract-to-hire placements, giving employers the opportunity to assess candidates on the job before extending permanent offers.

HSS also partners with businesses in co-employment rela-

tionships to manage critical HR and administrative functions including payroll, benefits, compliance, and employee relations.

“When we approach workforce development and human resource management through a cultural lens, we’re not just filling jobs — we’re investing in Hawai‘i’s people, our values, and the future of our islands. We see a tremendous void in this market that we plan to fill,” said HC CEO Kūhiō Lewis.

The acquisition expands HC’s efforts to strengthen Hawai‘i’s workforce infrastructure through education, training, and employment. Its other workforce initiatives include the Hawaiian Trades Academy, Maui Workforce Development Program, and other culturally informed training and certification opportunities.

## Pau‘ole Prevails at 4th Annual Falsetto Contest



Kellysa-Michiko Namakaokalani Pau‘ole of Waikapū, Maui, won the 4th Annual Carmen Hulu Lindsey Leo Ha‘ihai‘i Falsetto Contest on October 24 with her rendition of *Hula o Makee*. Named after Lindsey, a Nā Hōkū Hanohano Award-winning musician and Office of Hawaiian Affairs Maui trustee, the contest celebrates and preserves the artistry of Hawaiian wāhine falsetto singing and is a signature event of the Festivals of Aloha. The 2025 theme was “Hahai nō ka Ua i ka Ulu Lā‘au — Rains Always Follow the Forests” a nod to the state’s designation of 2025 as the “Year of Our Community Forests.” In second place was Brittney Latayada of Wailuku, Maui, who performed *Ka Lehua i Milia*, and Allegra Alohilani Althea Kauo of Papakōlea, O‘ahu, took third with her rendition of *Manu O‘o*. Judging the competition were Ra‘iātea Helm and Nāpua Silva for music, and Kahulu Maluo Pearson and Carlson Kamaka Kukona III for ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. Lindsey served as the overall judge and the event was emceed by Luana Kawa‘a. - *Courtesy Photo*

## Papahānaumokuākea Cultural Working Group Meets at OHA



On October 24, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs hosted the Papahānaumokuākea Cultural Working Group, providing meeting space to the group at its offices at Nā Lama Kukui. Papahānaumokuākea, formerly called the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, was designated a coral reef ecosystem reserve in 2000, a marine national monument in 2006, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010. In early 2025, Papahānaumokuākea was designated a national marine sanctuary, which provides the highest level of protection to nationally significant natural, cultural and historical resources. However, just months after its sanctuary designation, Papahānaumokuākea is threatened by repeated attempts by the Western Pacific Fishery Council to weaken marine safeguards in the sanctuary and allow commercial fishing. - *Photo: Nelson Gaspar*

## Youth-Driven Zero Waste Initiative in Ka‘ū

A group of students from Ka‘ū are leading Mālama ‘Āina Compostables, an ambitious youth-driven zero waste initiative. So far, they diverted over 19,000 pounds of food waste from the landfill and organized a Youth Convergence focused on zero waste and plastic reduction policy.

The Ka‘ū High & Pāhala Elementary students work closely with Recycle Hawai‘i to transform cafeteria waste into compost for the school’s agriculture program and local farms. Partnering with community mentors, they developed a model that is now being shared with other schools.

“Sometimes people think you have to start big,” said youth organizer Kona. “But we started with lunch trays. That’s how you build momentum — one meal, one bin, one community at a time.”

This fall, they convened 70 young leaders from Hawai‘i - and from “Cancer Alley,” Louisiana - to connect the dots between where plastic is made and where it ends up. The four-day event in Nā‘ālehu featured workshops and presentations from policy experts and kūpuna. “Bringing youth from Louisiana and Hawai‘i together closed the loop on plastic’s life cycle, from production to pollution,” said Recycle Hawai‘i Program Director Ulu Makuakāne. “That’s how movements are born.”

The youth are also supporting Bill 83, a Hawai‘i county initiative to ban single-use plastics in food service. “This generation isn’t afraid of change,” said Laura Acasio, County Office of Environmental Resilience. “They know it’s necessary for their health, their island, and their future.”

With landfill space running out and global plastic negotiations stalling, this next generation isn’t waiting for permission to lead.

## TMT Being Discussed Again

An October 24 letter signed by all four Hawai‘i Congressional Delegates and Gov. Josh Green to the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) board of directors has reignited concerns in the community.

The letter stated that the governor and his administration will work with the Maunakea Stewardship and Oversight Authority (MKSOA) and the University of Hawai‘i to “promptly establish a clear and transparent procedure for obtaining the necessary permits associated with a decommissioned site.”

Act 255, passed in 2022, established the MKSOA as the sole authority for managing Maunakea and prioritized the “reuse of footprints of observatories scheduled for decommissioning, or [that] have been decommissioned” as sites for fu-

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ture observatories instead of on undeveloped land.

Recently decommissioned (and removed) observatories Caltech Submillimeter Observatory and UH Hilo's Hōkū Ke'a are being eyed as possible locations for a relocated TMT – but community advocates note that neither site is large enough to support TMT without extending the existing “footprints.”

Some 300 written testimonies – the majority in opposition to TMT and the contents of the October 24 letter – were submitted ahead of a November 13 MKSOA meeting, with dozens more testifying in person or online. Cultural concerns and past mismanagement issues were frequently cited.

After funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) was

cut earlier this year as part of sweeping federal budget cuts, NSF announced they would pull funding for TMT and redirect their available funding to building the Magellan Telescope in Chile. However, backers of TMT have since approached Congress requesting funding via the NSF.

### Sanders Selected to the AIANTA Board

Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association (NaHHA) Executive Director Mālia Sanders was recently named to the board of directors of the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA).

Sanders has been with NaHHA for over 14 years, is an expert in regenerative tourism, and holds multiple professional certifications: sustainable tourism and destination management from Cornell University; sustainable tourism for Native Nations and communities from Arizona



Mālia Sanders  
-Courtesy Photo

State University; and cultural heritage tourism from George Washington University. NaHHA is a nonprofit organization that advocates for authenticity in the promotion of Native Hawaiian culture in the visitor industry.

A graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama and UH West O'ahu, Sanders was named Social Impact Entrepreneur of the Year by the Hawai'i Venture Capital Association in 2022. That same year she also received a Pineapple Award, which honors tourism professionals, from *Pacific Business News*.

In 2023, Sanders was selected as a Pacific Century Fellow, and last year she was recognized as one of Hawai'i's “20 for the Next 20” by *Hawai'i Business Magazine*. Sanders currently serves as president of the Hawaiian Civic Club of Honolulu.

Founded 27 years ago, nonprofit AIANTA is governed by an all-Indigenous board of directors and serves as a united voice for the \$11.6 billion Indigenous hospitality sector. AIANTA envisions Indigenous tourism as a catalyst for Native economic sovereignty.

### Minn Appointed RAM CEO



Malama Minn  
-Courtesy Photo

Malama Minn is the new chief executive officer of the REALTORS® Association of Maui (RAM). Born and raised in Hāna, Maui, Minn will lead RAM's strategic direction, government relations and member engagement efforts.

Minn has an extensive background in renewable energy projects and policy development, working at the intersection of energy, environment, and equity. She had led efforts in clean energy policy, Indigenous land and water management, and energy education and outreach.

## Three 'Ōiwi Win Literary Awards



Native Books Hawai'i Publisher Maile Meyer and Poet Laureate Kealoha Wong were honored last month by the Hawai'i Literary Arts Council with Loretta D. Petrie Awards for outstanding service to Hawai'i's writing community. Megan Kamalei Kakimoto, author of *Every Drop is a Man's Nightmare*, received an Elliot Cades Award for Hawai'i Literature. The awards were presented on November 1 at a public event at the Hawai'i State Library by the Hawai'i Literary Arts Council in concert with the library and Friends of the Library of Hawai'i. Also honored with an Elliot Cades Award last month were Larry and Rosemary Mild, a husband and wife duo residing in Honolulu who write cozy mysteries and thrillers. - Courtesy Photos

## Hawai'i Exhibit at the British Museum



A new exhibit opening at the British Museum in London will highlight the historical relationship between Hawai'i and the United Kingdom. “Hawai'i: A Kingdom Crossing Oceans” will run from January 15 to May 25, 2026, and display about 150 Hawaiian items and contemporary artwork including an ahu 'ula (the feathered cloak pictured here) gifted to King George III in 1810 by Kamehameha I with a letter requesting an alliance with the British Crown. The ahu 'ula has not been displayed in over a century. Hawaiians were included in the museum's Exhibition Stewardship Group lending 'ike kūpuna to the project. Bishop Museum Library & Archives Collections Manager Leah Caldeira; Ioea Umi Kai; UH Mānoa American Studies Department Associate Specialist Noelle Kahanu; and Kamehameha Schools English Kumu Jshnel Pacarro helped to develop the exhibit and perpetuate the centuries-long relationship between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Hawai'i. - Photo Courtesy of the British Museum/Royal Collection Enterprises, Ltd.

Prior to joining RAM, she served as executive director of the Hawai'i Construction Alliance, project development specialist at the State Department of Land and Natural Resources, energy consultant with Johnson Controls, a transformational outreach specialist with Hawai'i Energy, and a wind energy specialist with the State of Hawai'i.

Minn has the distinction of being the first kupa of Hāna to earn a Juris Doctorate from the University of Hawai'i William S. Richardson School of Law. Her journey from Hāna High & Elementary School to becoming a respected leader in environmental policy and land stewardship is a testament to her dedication, grit and passion.

### Yuen to Serve as Gemini Cultural Resident

Kumu hula and cultural practitioner Leilehua Yuen of Hilo has been tapped to serve as Gemini Observatory's first Hawaiian culture and language resident.

Yuen has a long history of working on Maunakea and one of her main projects for Gemini will be to reimagine NOIRLab's 88 Constellations map from an



Leilehua Yuen  
-Courtesy Photo

'Ōiwi perspective. She will work with Hawai'i Education and Engagement Manager Leinani Lozi to help ground the observatory “in Hawaiian values and knowledge” and “provide advice and a unique perspective” to its leadership.

Projects include creating monthly star charts that begin on the Hilo moon. Community can access these charts and their related mo'olelo on maunakea-observatories.org.

Via the observatory's Malalo o ka Lani Maunakea program, the community can learn about Hawaiian constellations, while the Papa Wahi Pana program will train people to properly enter the sacred space that is Maunakea with oli and ho'okupu.

Gemini's Hawai'i Culture and Language Residency program offers one-year, full-time positions to members of the community who are experts in Hawaiian language and culture.

“Culture and science are not mutually exclusive,” Yuen said.

## OHA Trustees Travel to Hawai'i Island



Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) Board of Trustees (BOT) and a contingent of staff spent most of the week of November 3 traveling to communities across Moku o Keawe to listen to community concerns with evening meetings scheduled in Kona, Waimea and Hilo. While on-island, they took the opportunity to visit various sites and projects and meet the 'Ōiwi leading stewardship efforts in their respective kulāiwi. The first day they visited La'i'Ōpua 2020 Community Center in Kealahou and Kahalu'u Kūāhewa in Kahalu'u ma uka, both in Hawai'i Komohana. On day two they traveled north where they visited Pu'ukoholā Heiau, Māhukona — a Hawai'i Land Trust site stewarded by Nā Kālai Wa'a — and then met with Waimea Homestead Association leadership. The next day, before heading to Hawai'i Hikina, they traveled to Pōhakuloa to see the impact of the military training for themselves. In Hilo, they spent most of their time in Keaukaha, visiting Wai 'Uli, Ka Ana La'āhana Public Charter School, and Kawānanakoa Gym. The huaka'i culminated on November 6 with a well-attended BOT meeting hosted by UH Hilo's Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language. - Photos: Jason Lees and Lehua Itokazu



Note: Trustee columns represent the views of individual trustees and may not reflect the official positions adopted by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs Board of Trustees.

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## Transforming OHA, Empowering Hawaiians: A Year of Bold Change

On December 4, 2024, I was entrusted by my colleagues to lead the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) as its chairperson. Two days later, I shared my philosophy and vision with our staff, a vision grounded in kūkulu hou – rebuilding with purpose and clarity.

This guiding principle called us to transform OHA into an organization that was bold, responsive, and deeply rooted in the values of our lāhui. The foundation of this transformation rested on several commitments:

- **Fostering a collaborative and team-minded leadership culture:** creating a workplace where every voice is valued, from our employees to our community partners.
- **Interdependence and Cooperation:** recognizing that our strength lay in working together.
- **Purpose Driven Action:** cultivating a bias for action so that OHA is not just reactive, but proactive.
- **Adaptive Leadership and Continuous Learning:** ensuring we remain flexible and open to growth.
- **Measurable Progress and Data Driven Strategy:** holding ourselves accountable to results that truly impact our people.

And this year, OHA achieved significant milestones that reflected this vision. Our newly adopted biennium budget represented the largest investment in the Native Hawaiian community in decades. It shifted resources directly into the hands of our people, supporting Hawaiian focused charter schools, the University of Hawai'i, and stewardship of our 'āina. It reduced bureaucracy, streamlined reporting, and centered community impact. Importantly, it safeguarded programs threatened by federal cuts, created pathways for future leaders in civics and public service, and introduced a groundbreaking 12-week fully paid family leave benefit for our employees – the first of its kind in Hawai'i state government.

We also modernized OHA's internal governance documents, including new bylaws, an executive policy manual, and an updated employee handbook, ensur-



**Kaiali'i  
Kahele**

CHAIR  
Trustee,  
Hawai'i Island

ing clarity and accountability across the organization.

In terms of community presence, OHA actively participated at the Hawaiian Council Convention in Tualip and at the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs Convention in Keauhou, Kona, strengthening ties across our lāhui.

This year, OHA announced the 2026 return of the 'Aha 'Ōpio youth civic educational program and launched the Nā

'Elele o Kahikina Congressional Fellowship Program in Washington, D.C., cultivating the next generation of Native Hawaiian public servants and policy leaders.

In October, OHA allocated \$6.1 million in emergency relief to support Native Hawaiian SNAP recipients and federal employees affected by the government shutdown, and last month we took a major role in addressing the issue of military leased lands, launching a comprehensive statewide public educational campaign and webpage.

As we move into 2026, OHA will continue to build upon the foundation laid this past year. We will strengthen our programs, deepen our partnerships, and remain steadfast in our mission to uplift the wellbeing of Native Hawaiians. We will continue to rebuild with vision and purpose, honoring our kūpuna, empowering our people, and inspiring future generations.

Mahalo nui to our beneficiaries, partners, and staff for walking this journey with us. Change is never easy, but together we have shown what is possible when we act with unity and determination. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs stands as a steward of our culture, heritage, and shared future. Guided by the wisdom of our ancestors, we are prepared to embrace the challenges ahead with aloha, humility, and unwavering resolve.

I invite each of you to join us in this collective effort, bringing your energy, ideas, passion, and aloha to help fulfill the promise of OHA's mission: To better the conditions of Native Hawaiians and to ensure a thriving lāhui for generations to come.

Hau'oli ka mana'o. ■

## A New Chapter Begins for Kaka'ako Makai

At our November Board of Trustees meeting, the trustees made a significant and unified decision that reflects both confidence in our direction and our commitment to advancing opportunities for our lāhui. With a strong consensus, the board voted to approve OHA entering negotiations with the Department of Hawaiian Homelands (DHHL) regarding the potential development of one of OHA's nine parcels at Kaka'ako Makai.

This action marks a forward-looking moment for OHA, rooted in collaboration, shared purpose, and strategic vision. The 3.336-acre property at the corner of Ala Moana Boulevard and Forrest Avenue, called Lot I, has long represented untapped potential within OHA's 29 acres of holdings at Kaka'ako Makai.

By authorizing negotiations with DHHL, the board is embracing the mission-driven opportunity to pursue a partnership aimed at addressing two of our community's most urgent needs: housing and long-term economic stability.

Through the work of OHA's executive leadership team and Land Department, we look forward to meaningful discussions with Director Kali Watson and his team at DHHL. I am strongly supportive of strengthening the relationship between DHHL, the state, and OHA so we can work collaboratively to meet one of the greatest needs of our beneficiaries – affordable housing.

Both OHA and DHHL carry distinct kuleana to Native Hawaiians. Yet our missions intersect at a fundamental truth: our people deserve access to opportunities that allow them to live, thrive, and build generational security.

For the first time, OHA and DHHL are taking a proactive, collaborative approach to form a partnership. This project at Kaka'ako Makai offers a chance to align resources, expertise, and responsibilities in ways that can deliver meaningful benefits to beneficiaries across the pae āina, while further advancing our mission-driven efforts to foster Native Hawaiian self-determination and economic



**Keoni Souza**

VICE CHAIR  
Trustee,  
At-Large

independence.

The board's decision also reflects trust in DHHL's ability to find a way to utilize the property through a residential mixed-use project. OHA's approval clears the path for DHHL to examine the parcel thoroughly, authorizing DHHL access to the property to perform site due diligence related to its future development, evaluate its feasibility, and determine how a potential project might advance its mission for Native Hawaiians.

"The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands is committed to working collaboratively with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to execute a first-of-its-kind approach to affordable housing for Native Hawaiian families," said Director Kali Watson.

"Mahalo nui to OHA's Board of Trustees for taking bold action on an initiative that will not only reshape the futures of our 'ohana but transform the landscape of Honolulu's urban core into a thriving Native Hawaiian community. Under the leadership and support of Gov. Josh Green, we will persist in exploring opportunities that meet the demand for affordable housing while reducing DHHL's long-standing residential waitlist."

As we enter this next phase, transparency and communication remain priorities. We will continue to update beneficiaries as discussions progress and as DHHL completes its due diligence. If a proposal for development is made by DHHL, OHA's Board of Trustees will decide on that after the due diligence phase is completed. Whatever the outcome, the board's decision affirms our commitment to responsible stewardship and to exploring every opportunity that can advance Native Hawaiian wellbeing.

This is the moment to activate the potential of Kaka'ako Makai. Through a partnership between DHHL, the state, and OHA, we have a real opportunity to move this vision forward in a way that honors our kūpuna and strengthens the future of our keiki for generations. I mua - the time has come to unlock Kaka'ako Makai for Native Hawaiians. ■

## Seeking Common Ground on Maunakea

For more than a decade, the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) has stood at the center of one of Hawai'i's most polarizing debates. The observatory, designed to peer deeper into the universe than ever before, was slated for construction near the summit of Maunakea, long considered one of the world's best sites for astronomy.

Yet for many Native Hawaiians, Maunakea is a sacred space not meant for projects such as the TMT.

Now, a new plan from state leaders seeks to chart a different course. In early November, Gov. Josh Green and members of Hawai'i's congressional delegation expressed support for exploring alternate sites for the TMT.

Instead of being built on pristine summit land, the project could relocate to one of several decommissioned observatory footprints. Hawai'i County Mayor Mitch Roth welcomed the idea, calling it a "practical compromise" that could honor both science and culture. Supporters see it as a way to move forward after years of impasse.

This approach seeks to offer several advantages. By reusing a site already altered by past observatories, the TMT could significantly reduce its ecological and visual footprint. Culturally, it may lessen the pain felt by those who view new construction on untouched land as desecration. It could also demonstrate good faith by the state and the astronomy community to align with principles of kuleana and stewardship.

Yet the path forward is far from clear. Engineers caution that the TMT's sheer size – a 30-meter primary mirror housed within a structure nearly 18 stories tall – may not fit within existing footprints. Some sites are too small, while others lack the atmospheric stability required for world-class observation.

The idea of using decommissioned sites isn't new. In 2022, the Legislature passed Act 255, creating a new management authority for Maunakea and prioritizing



**Keli'i Akina, Ph.D.**

Trustee,  
At-Large

reuse of existing telescope footprints. The intent was to ensure that any future development occurs only in previously disturbed areas, minimizing additional impact on the mountain's summit.

For Native Hawaiian leaders who oppose the project entirely, the question is not where the TMT might go but whether it should be there at all. Many practitioners maintain that even limited redevelopment continues a legacy of imbalance between science and spirituality. For many opponents, even a reduced footprint would still feel like a scar on a sacred landscape.

Meanwhile, TMT's international partners face funding delays and uncertainty. Costs have tripled to \$3 billion, and federal funding has waned as leaders consider relocating the TMT to Spain's Canary Islands.

The TMT debate reflects a broader truth: Hawai'i continues to wrestle with how to reconcile cutting-edge research with deep cultural values. Proponents emphasize education, economic opportunity, and the chance for Hawai'i's youth to lead in global astronomy. Opponents stress sovereignty, cultural continuity, and environmental care. Those seeking compromise hope that transparent dialogue and responsible governance might yield a path that honors both 'ike Hawai'i and innovation.

Whether the alternate-site proposal succeeds remains uncertain. But perhaps its greatest value lies not in feasibility, but that it represents a willingness to imagine something beyond confrontation. If Hawai'i can balance scientific ambition with respect for wāhi kapu, the conversation around Maunakea could yet evolve from division to shared vision.

In the end, the question may not be where the telescope stands, but how we stand together, in humility before both the heavens above and the āina that grounds us.

E hana kākou! ■

## Honoring a Legacy: Mahalo for the Ko'i Award

At the annual meeting of the Maui Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce, held November 14 at the Grand Wailea Maui Resort, I was deeply humbled to be named a recipient of the Ko'i Award. To receive this recognition from an organization dedicated to uplifting our community, culture, and economic prosperity is an honor that fills me with profound gratitude. I offer my heartfelt mahalo to the Chamber's leadership, its members, and all those who continue to nurture the vision of a thriving Native Hawaiian future.

The Ko'i Award carries a meaning that reaches far beyond its name. Ko'i is the traditional Hawaiian adze, a tool of precision, craftsmanship, and purpose. In the hands of our ancestors, ko'i shaped canoes, carved tools, built homes, and fashioned the implements that sustained daily life.

It symbolizes not only skilled labor but also the ingenuity, patience, and dedication that are hallmarks of Hawaiian excellence. To be associated with an award inspired by such a powerful symbol is a reminder that all of us who serve our community are called to do so with the same intention: to shape, build, and strengthen.

In honoring individuals with the Ko'i Award, the Maui Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce recognizes those whose work reflects these values – those who strive to create opportunities, empower our lāhui, and contribute to the shared foundation upon which future generations may stand. I am deeply grateful to be counted among those chosen for this distinction.

The Maui Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce itself stands as a vital institution grounded in both cultural integrity and economic vision. Its mission is to “pūpūkahi i holomua” (unite so that all may move forward together).

Through its programs, advocacy, and community-building efforts, the Chamber works to support Native Hawaiian-owned businesses, foster leadership, encourage education, and create pathways for economic self-determination.



Carmen  
“Hulu”  
Lindsey

Trustee,  
Maui

Its guiding purpose is rooted in the recognition that a strong economic foundation is one of the pillars of a thriving Native Hawaiian community.

Yet the Chamber's vision extends beyond commerce alone. It embraces the understanding that Hawaiian culture, values, and identity are inseparable from true prosperity. The organization actively nurtures cultural knowledge, encourages intergenerational learning, and cultivates connections between

business, community, and traditional practices.

In doing so, it reaffirms that Native Hawaiian economic success is not measured merely in financial terms but in the health, resilience, and cultural vibrancy of the entire lāhui.

Over the years, the Chamber has grown into a powerful network of entrepreneurs, cultural practitioners, educators, and community leaders. Each member contributes to a collective movement to uplift Native Hawaiian voices in business and civic life.

The Chamber's events, mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and partnerships all reflect a commitment to building a strong economic ecosystem grounded in Hawaiian values such as kuleana, laulima, pono, and aloha. It is this blend of cultural grounding and forward-thinking leadership that makes the organization such a force for good on Maui and beyond.

Receiving the Ko'i Award inspires me to continue contributing to the work that the Chamber champions.

As we look toward the future, I remain committed to supporting efforts that benefit our people through economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and community-centered leadership. The challenges facing our islands are great but so, too, is the strength we hold when we work together.

To the Maui Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce, I extend my warmest mahalo for this honor. May we continue to build, carve, and shape a future worthy of our ancestors' dreams and our children's hopes. ■

*E nā 'ohana Hawai'i:* 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](mailto:kwo@OHA.org). E ola nā mamo a Hāloa!

### SEARCH

**DUVAUCHELLE** - 'Ohana Reunion 2026 on Moloka'i. The Duvauchelle 'ohana invites you to reconnect and celebrate our shared legacy at One Ali'i Park on Moloka'i, July 23-26, 2026. For info or to register go to [www.duvauchelleohanareunion.org](http://www.duvauchelleohanareunion.org) beginning 10/1/25. NOTE: Flights to Moloka'i on Mokulele Airlines for July 2026 may be booked starting January 2026. Flights are limited so 'ohana should plan early. Let's strengthen our mo'okū'auhau, enjoy fellowship, and build new memories for generations to come.

**KEKAULA-AARONA** - He kāhea to all descendants of Thomas Kahalewai Kekaula and Julia Kanohokuahiwi Aarona. They had 8 surviving children: Julia Kanohokuahiwi, Cecilia Paiaia, Samuel Nohohiaulu, Mabel Kahaleiwi, Thomas Aarona, Hansen Makahuki, Edwin Kalauliwa, Mary Kauloku. Hoping to reunite with Kekaula and Aarona family to have a family reunion as a granddaughter of Thomas Aarona Kekaula. Please call or email if you have any information on these topics. Mahalo, Sephra Greher Ph.718-200-7467/ [hooheho2@gmail.com](mailto:hooheho2@gmail.com).

**KELEPOLO** - Calling the descendants of Maika'aloa and Annie (Kumulau) Kelepolo of Kainaliu, Kona, Hawai'i and their seven keiki: Albert, Peter, Josephine, William, Joseph, Isabella, and Lillian. We are planning an 'ohana reunion for July 17-19, 2026, in Kona, Hawai'i. Contact Monico Galieto (grandson of William Kelepolo) at [kelepoloohana@gmail.com](mailto:kelepoloohana@gmail.com) or call (808) 936-5682. When emailing, provide your name, phone number, mailing/email addresses. and how you're related, I will send an information packet.

**KUPIHEA** - 'Ohana of Solomon N. Kupihea and M. Hattie Kuapahi Kupihea – join us on Kua'i July 12-19, 2026! Daily activities to strengthen bonds and learn family faces. Let all your 'ohana know! Visit our website and complete the Interest Survey: [bit.ly/Kupihea-Kuapahi-reunion-2026](http://bit.ly/Kupihea-Kuapahi-reunion-2026). Email: [kupihea.reunion@gmail.com](mailto:kupihea.reunion@gmail.com).

**PIO** - Descendants of Kepio and Keoahu of Kaupō, Maui, are having a family reunion on Maui, Labor Day weekend, Sept. 4-6, 2026 at Pukalani Community Center. Their six children early on used the surnames Kepio or Pio: Sampson Kahaleuahi (Anadasia Kealoha); Victoria Nakoaelua (Kahaleauki); Maria Malaea (Keahi/Adams, Sam Akahi Sr.); Samuel Kaukani (Mele Kakaio, Rebecca Malulu); Ipoaloha (Kalalani Kekiwī); and Joseph Kaleohana (Elizabeth Nakula, Minnie Aloiau). Contact: Ka'apuni Peters-Wong 808-375-4321; Toni Kowalski-Dacquel 808-436-1845; Valda Baisa Andaya 808-572-9245; Ululani Opiana Glass 808-446-9309; Kapiolani Adams 808-778-6383; or email [pioohana@gmail.com](mailto:pioohana@gmail.com).

**QUITOG** - Trying to locate the descendants of Mary Kalu Quitog, born 7/31/1931 in Wai'ōhinu - deceased 5/28/2001, Honolulu. When emailing, please provide your name, phone, address, and how you are related. Send to [AMartinH@Live.com](mailto:AMartinH@Live.com). ■

O'ahu

KALEI AKAKA

Trustee for O'ahu

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OUR UPCOMING

COMMUNITY

MEETINGS

Papakōlea

Tuesday  
December 9, 2025  
6:00 p.m.

Meeting will be held at:

Prince David Kawanakoa  
Middle School - Cafeteria

Waimānalo

Thursday  
December 11, 2025  
6:00 p.m.

Meeting will be held at:

Waimānalo Hawaiian  
Homestead Association

Broadcasting live on  
**Ōlelo Channel 55**

Meetings broadcast live on 'Ōlelo and will be available via livestream. To watch go to [www.oha.org/live](http://www.oha.org/live) or go to OHA's Facebook and Youtube pages.

Broadcasting live on  
**Ōlelo Channel 53**

### KA PA'AKAI ANALYSIS: OLAI SOLAR AND GREEN HYDROGEN PROJECT, 'EWA MOKU, ISLAND OF O'AHU

Pacific Legacy, Inc., on behalf Tetra Tech, is conducting a Ka Pa'akai Analysis for the Proposed Olai Solar and Green Hydrogen Project in Honouliuli Ahupua'a, 'Ewa Moku, O'ahu [TMK: (1) 9-1-031:001 AND (1) 9-1-031:008]. EE H2 Oahu, LLC is proposing a renewable energy project located in Kapolei. The project design is under development but is expected to include a solar array and an electrolyzer that would use solar energy to convert water to hydrogen and oxygen via electroless.

Pacific Legacy, Inc. seeks to consult with individuals and organizations who possess knowledge regarding:

- Cultural associations, mo'olelo, or legendary accounts associated with Honouliuli Ahupua'a.

- Past and present land use or traditional gathering practices within and near the project area.
- Cultural resources which may be impacted by the proposed project, including traditional resource gathering sites, traditional access trails, wahi pana, and/or burials.
- Any other cultural concerns related to traditional Hawaiian or other cultural practices within or near the proposed project area.
- Referrals to other knowledgeable individuals who may be willing to share their cultural knowledge of the proposed project area and wider Honouliuli Ahupua'a.

Those interested in participating are invited to contact Makanani Bell at 808-263-4800 or bell@pacificlegacy.com. ■



### Record of Decision(s) for the Hawaii-California Training and Testing Environmental Impact Statement/ Overseas Environmental Impact Statement

The Department of the Navy (including both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps), jointly with the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army, and U.S. Air Force, announce their decision to conduct at-sea military readiness activities, comprised of training, testing, and modernization and sustainment of ranges, as identified in Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative) in the Hawaii-California Training and Testing (HCTT) Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Overseas EIS (OEIS). The Final EIS/OEIS was released for public viewing Oct. 3, 2025, on the project website and at information repositories.

#### **Record of Decision(s)**

After carefully weighing the strategic, operational, and environmental consequences of the Proposed Action, and considering public, stakeholder (including Native Hawaiian Organizations), and tribal input, Alternative 1 was selected as it best meets the current and future military readiness needs to meet national defense missions. This alternative reflects a representative level of annual activities to account for fluctuations in training, testing, and deployment schedules. The military services committed to the maximum level of mitigation measures that are beneficial and practical to implement under the Proposed Action and that are intended to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential environmental effects during military readiness activities.

#### **Record of Decision(s) Availability**

The Record of Decision documents for the HCTT EIS/OEIS will be available on the project website at [www.nepa.navy.mil/hctteis/](http://www.nepa.navy.mil/hctteis/). For additional information, please visit [www.nepa.navy.mil/hctteis/](http://www.nepa.navy.mil/hctteis/).

Please help keep the community informed by sharing this information.

Visit [www.nepa.navy.mil/hctteis/](http://www.nepa.navy.mil/hctteis/) to learn more about the project and the environmental analysis.

EISX-007-17-USN-1724283453

To create a space for our readers to honor their loved ones, Ka Wai Ola will print *Hali'a Aloha - obituaries and mele kanikau (mourning chants)*. Hali'a 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 Hali'a Aloha submitted will be published on [kawaiola.news](http://kawaiola.news). Hali'a Aloha must be submitted by the 15th of the month for publication the following month. Photos accompanying Hali'a Aloha will only be included in the print version of the newspaper if space permits. However, all photos will be shared on [kawaiola.news](http://kawaiola.news).



### FRANCES LOKELANI (KIAAINA) RACOMA JUNE 7, 1952 – SEPT. 26, 2025

Kāne'ohē, O'ahu: Frances Lokelani (Kiaaina) Racoma passed peacefully at home on Sept. 26, 2025, surrounded by her 'ohana. Originally from Waimānalo, she graduated from Kailua High School in 1970 and earned an associate's degree in early childhood education from Honolulu Community College. Frances worked with dedication and care throughout her life. Her career took her from her very first job at Rocky Road Egg Farm to the Honolulu Community Action Program, the Bank of America, and eventually to Child Protective Services – even working a second job at Jack in the Box to support her 'ohana. Frances was an active member of the Waikiki and Kaumuali'i Hawaiian Civic Clubs, donating her time to serve the community. Clever with her hands, Frances sewed prom dresses for her sisters, crocheted, and crafted. She was also a skilled softball pitcher and coached Bobby Sox. Although a lefty, she learned to golf right-handed. Frances was preceded in death by her parents Benjamin and Charlotte Kiaaina; siblings Bernadine, Sarah Kealoha, Benjamin Jr., and Daniel Kiaaina; children Shannon Nayah Racoma and Runi "Buddy" Racoma Jr.; and granddaughter, Ka'ai'ohelo Nobrega-Olivera. She is survived by her sisters Dorlin Kaaihili and Janice "Penny" Kiaaina; children Victoria Pua'ala (Chris) Kimsel, Victor "Budda" (Malia) Nobrega-Olivera, and Stacey Racoma; Adopted sons Isaiah, Israel, and Fynix; grandchildren Genoa, Sharray (Adrina), Shardae (Keiki), Shaydan, Kaedan, Taedan, Xaydan, Paul (Megan), Joshua (Asia), and Matt; great-grandsons Kūnuiākea and Pāhili; great-granddaughters Faavae, Lelei, Ta'ua, Kenese, and Lili-noe. Her love, laughter, and service lives on through her 'ohana and community. ■

### *E Ō Mai, e Kuleana Land Holders!*

THE KULEANA LAND TAX exemption helps Native Hawaiians keep their ancestral lands by reducing the rising cost of property taxes. All four counties have ordinances in place that allow eligible kuleana land owners to pay minimal to zero property taxes. Applications are available on each county's website.

For more information on kuleana land tax ordinances go to [www.oaha.org/kuleanaland](http://www.oaha.org/kuleanaland) and for assistance with genealogy verification, contact the Office of Hawaiian Affairs at 808-594-1835 or 808-594-1888.





## OFFICE LOCATIONS

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

All Offices are closed on State holidays

### Main Phone (all islands):

808.594.1835

### Email:

info@oha.org

### HONOLULU

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

### EAST HAWAII (HILO)

2100 Kanoiehua Ave.,  
Unit 9 & 10  
Hilo, HI 96720  
Phone: 808.204.2391

### MOLOKA'I / LĀNA'I

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

### KAUA'I / NI'HAU

4405 Kukui Grove St., Ste. 103  
Līhu'e, HI 96766-1601  
Phone: 808.241.3390

### MAUI

1887 Wili Pa Loop, Ste. 1  
Wailuku, HI 96793-1400  
Phone: 808.873.3364

[www.oha.org/offices](http://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](mailto:kwo@oha.org) with the subject "Makeke/Classified." OHA reserves the right to refuse any advertisement, for any reason, at our discretion.

**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 Hawai'i. Let's build a better future for the next generation. Call me: Jordan Aina - RS-85780 Cell: (808) 276-0880 - Locations Hawaii LLC

**AINA REALTOR** - I am looking for Hawaiian Homestead properties for sale in the following areas. MAUI - Kula & Waihee, OAHU - Kapolei, Waimanalo and Papakolea. I have Native Hawaiian clients who are looking for a homestead lot in these areas. All inquiries will be handled with care and confidentiality. Call me: Jordan Aina - RS-85780 Cell: (808) 276-0880 - Locations Hawaii LLC

**AINA REALTOR** - Keaukaha Homestead property for sale. Rarely available Hawaiian Homestead Leasehold lot in beautiful Keaukaha, Hawaii. 3 Bedroom 2 bath fixer upper. HALF Acre lot, with 1,043 soft living space. Don't miss this opportunity to own in beautiful Keaukaha. For property information and pricing, contact Jordan Aina RS-85780 Cell: (808) 276-0880 - Locations Hawaii LLC

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**HAWAIIAN MEMORIAL PARK** - Garden of Meditation single plot includes opening/closing, cement vault, marker/vase, interment/entombment. If interested call 808-389-0743. \$10,000 or best offer.

**HOMES WITH ALOHA**-Paukukalo, Waiehu, Maui -Single level 4 bed/ 2 baths. Renovations throughout the home includes kitchen, bath. \$619,000 This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303

**HOMES WITH ALOHA**- Keaukaha/ Hilo- Single level 5 bedrooms/2 baths on 21,155 sq ft lot. \$450,000.00 This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303

**HOMES WITH ALOHA**- Papakolea two story home on Tantalus Dr. , 3 bedrooms, 3 baths, street parking. \$650,000.00 This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303

**LET'S MAKE HOMEOWNERSHIP HAPPEN!** I can help with Hawaiian Homestead and residential properties. Let's talk story! Call/Text Shavon Aluli, Realtor RS-87524 (808) 630-0554. Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303

**LOOKING FOR HAWAIIAN HOMESTEAD PROPERTIES FOR SALE ON O'AHU.** Helping clients find their homestead lot with care and Aloha! Call/Text Shavon Aluli, Realtor RS-87524 (808) 630-0554. Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303.

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