



Ka Wai Ola

NEWS FOR THE LĀHUI

kawaiola.news

Nowemapa (November) 2025 | Vol. 42, No. 11

BEHIND *the* FORCE ALOHA 'ĀINA ENTREPRENEURS

PAGES 12-14

Craig and Luana Neff are the force behind Hawaiian Force, a Native Hawaiian small business that has been on the forefront of the apparel business — and the Aloha 'Āina Movement — for more than 40 years. - Photo: Lia Mausolf

2025 KĀKO'O 'OIHANA 'ŌIWI | Special free ad section supporting Native Hawaiian-owned businesses

Ka ‘Aha Hula at Waimea The Gathering of Hula at Waimea

Nov. 1, 8, 15, 19, 22 & 29, 11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m. | Waimea, O‘ahu

Enjoy hula presentations by a variety of hālau. waimeavalley.net

Kanaka Culinary Explosion

Nov. 2, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Hilo, Hawai‘i Island

A free event connecting the community to local food resources and incorporating Hawaiian staples into creative dishes. kuakanaka.com/eaecoversity

Royal Hawaiian Band Performance

Nov. 7, 14 & 21, Noon - 1:00 p.m.

Honolulu, O‘ahu

Free concerts on the ‘Iolani Palace Grounds most Fridays. rhb-music.com

Made in Maui County Festival

Nov. 7, 1:30 - 6:00 p.m. *Buyers Exclusive*

Shopping Day

Nov. 8, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Wailuku, Maui

Shop Maui Nui vendors. First 2,000 attendees get a free tote.

madeinmauicountyfestival.com

Small Business Saturday Wai‘anae Business Resource Hub

Nov. 8, 4:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Wai‘anae, O‘ahu

Vendors, artisans, food and a Business Resource Hub with tools to help small businesses thrive. ‘Ohana Kāko‘o Resource Center. thewedc.com

Annual Lū‘au Scholarship

Nov. 8, 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Wai‘anae, O‘ahu

A fundraiser to support Mākaha Hawaiian Civic Club scholarships for students pursuing higher education.

Pu‘uhonua Mākeke

Nov. 8, 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

Kama‘āina Sunday

Nov. 9, 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

Makahiki Festival

Nov. 11, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Waimea, O‘ahu

Polynesian sports competitions, music and vendors. waimeavalley.net

Hawai‘i Island Steel Guitar Experience

Nov. 13-16 | Waimea, Hawai‘i Island

Live performances, workshops and more! Performances will be livestreamed on YouTube @HawaiianSteelGuitarShowcase.

hawaiiansteelguitarfestival.com

Celebrate King Kalākaua’s Birthday

Nov. 16, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Waimea, O‘ahu

Kama‘āina free admission to Waimea Valley in celebration of King Kalākaua’s 189th birthday. waimeavalley.net

Navigating by the Stars

Nov. 19, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Kapālama, O‘ahu

In the J. Watumull Planetarium. All ages. Online registration required. bishopmuseum.org

Keiki Surf Kontest

Nov. 28-30, 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Mākaha, O‘ahu

Free surf contest for 96792 keiki of all ages - bodyboard, short board and long-board one division. nakamakai.org

Honolulu City Lights Opening Night

Nov. 29, 5:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Honolulu, O‘ahu

Light Parade down King St. from Chinatown to Kawaiaha‘o St. Christmas trees and wreaths display at Honolulu Hale.

KAPU: Sacred Hawaiian Burials Film Screening & Discussion

Nov. 29, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Kapālama, O‘ahu

Outdoor screening at Bishop Museum of the film by ‘Ōiwi filmmaker Keoni Alvarez. Panel discussion to follow.



Lā Kū‘oko‘a - Hawaiian Independence Day

Nov. 28, 1843

Kamehameha III appointed Timoteo Ha‘alilio, Rev. William Richards, and Sir George Simpson as emissaries to seek the political recognition of the Hawaiian Kingdom as an independent nation. As a result of their efforts, England, France and the United States of America recognized the independence of Hawai‘i and Nov. 28, 1843, was declared Lā Kū‘oko‘a, the official Independence Day of the Hawaiian Kingdom celebrated annually until 1893. Learn more by watching “Pa‘a Ke Aupuni: The Reel History of Hawai‘i” at kamakakoi.com/paa.

Lā Kū‘oko‘a Celebrations

- Nov. 22, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Hale‘iwa, O‘ahu

Local vendors, ‘ono grinds, epic mele, and a chance to win prizes. lokoeka.org

- Nov. 28, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Waimea, O‘ahu

Kama‘āina enjoy free admission in celebration of Hawaiian Independence Day. waimeavalley.net

- Nov. 29, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Kea‘au, Hawai‘i Island

Speakers, mele, art activities, and local vendors at Ulumau Farm. koanalegacyfoundation.org



Kamehameha II

November 1797

Kalaninui kua Liholiho i ke kapu ‘Iolani was born in Hilo, Hawai‘i during the Hawaiian month of Hanaia‘ele‘ele, 1797.

His father was Kamehameha I and his mother was the high chiefess Keōpūolani. Liholiho was Hawai‘i’s second king, reigning from 1819 to 1824. In 1823, he and his wife, Kamāmalu, traveled to London. While there, they contracted measles and died.

Nov. 2, 9:30 a.m.

Kawaiaha‘o Church
Ali‘i Sunday Worship
Service



King Kalākaua

Nov. 16, 1836

David Kalākaua was born to Caesar Kapa‘akea and Analea Keohokālōle in a hale pili at the base of Punchbowl in Honolulu, O‘ahu. On the day he was born, canons were fired signaling the forced signing of a “treaty” between Kamehameha III and a British Naval captain. His name, Kalākaua (day of battle), records this event as a conflict rather than agreement. Kalākaua became king after Lunalilo, reigning from 1874 to 1891.

Nov. 16, 9:30 a.m.

Kawaiaha‘o Church
Ali‘i Sunday Worship Service



Ho‘ākoakoa 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.

‘Ōiwi Entrepreneurs are Modeling New Standards of Leadership

Aloha mai kākou,

In every corner of our lāhui — from rural homesteads to city neighborhoods, from Kānaka-led businesses in Hawai‘i to ventures thriving on distant coastlines — Native Hawaiians are building futures rooted in identity, culture, and community. And increasingly, they are doing so through entrepreneurship.

At the recent Hawaiian Council conference in Washington State, OHA leadership and staff connected with Kānaka from across the continent: business owners, educators, creatives, farmers, and more. Many had moved away in search of stability or opportunity for their ‘ohana. But what stood out was not their distance from Hawai‘i — it was their unwavering closeness to purpose.

These are Hawaiians still deeply connected to home, leading with ‘ike and aloha, and shaping lives and businesses that reflect who they are and where they come from.

We see this spirit in trailblazers like Auntie Tammy Smith, one of this year’s Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce ‘Ō‘ō Award honorees. For decades, her intergenerational food business has nourished our people — preparing ancestral staples like kalo, ‘uala, and ‘ulu; feeding hundreds of students daily at Hawaiian-focused charter schools and distributing over 250,000 meals during the pandemic alone. Grounded in the abundance of her beloved ahupua‘a of Hakipu‘u, her entrepreneurship reflects the best of Hawaiian enterprise: values-driven, resilient, and always in service to community.

This story is not hers alone. Across the pae ‘āina and beyond, Kānaka are creating value in ways that honor heritage while addressing modern needs. Through ‘āina-based ventures, wellness services, tech platforms, and cultural education, they are not just making ends meet — they are redefining what it means to be Kānaka ‘Ōiwi in this century.

Our kūpuna were systems thinkers, navigators, and stewards of abundance. Today’s entrepreneurs carry that inheritance forward. What’s evolving now is how we build

systems that actively support and sustain their efforts.

At OHA, our commitment is to do more than fund good ideas. While our grants and loans remain vital tools, we understand real transformation comes when we address the systems surrounding Native Hawaiian entrepreneurship. That means advocating for policy changes that normalize investment in our communities, influencing procurement practices, expanding access to capital, and creating space for public-private partnerships that prioritize Native Hawaiian ventures. When Kānaka rise, they lift their communities with them.

Many are shifting the definition of success — moving from individual achievement to collective wellbeing. They lead with values, embed culture not as branding but as core infrastructure, and create workplaces that reflect kuleana, care, and excellence. These aren’t just good businesses; they are modeling new standards of leadership.

At OHA, we believe in these leaders. We see their capacity not only to grow successful ventures, but to transform sectors, policies, and mindsets. They are not asking to be invited in — they are building their own tables, grounded in ‘ike kūpuna and 21st-century vision.

Our purpose is to walk beside them — to invest, to advocate, to remove barriers — and to help build the conditions where their success is expected, not exceptional.

This is how we strengthen our lāhui. Together. ■

Mahalo nui,

Summer Lee Haunani Sylva

Ka Pouhana Kūikawā | Interim Chief Executive Officer




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Sylva Appointed OHA Interim Administrator

By Bill Brennan, OHA Communications Director

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs Board of Trustees (BOT) has appointed BOT Chief of Staff Summer Sylva as the Interim Administrator (CEO/Ka Pouhana) of OHA.

Sylva's appointment follows the announcement of the need for personal leave by the current CEO, Stacy Ferreira, and the board's subsequent approval to place the CEO on paid administrative leave.



Summer Sylva
- Courtesy Photo

OHA Board Chair Kaiali'i Kahele said, "Summer brings a strong and steady professional background to OHA. Her previous leadership as the executive director of the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation and as the senior advisor for Native Hawaiian

Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior reflects her longstanding commitment to serving the Native Hawaiian community. She has worked across legal, policy, and governance spaces, with a focus on advocacy, stewardship, and self-determination."

As BOT chief of staff, Sylva has demonstrated a solid working knowledge of board governance, strategic operations, and interdepartmental coordination.

"The board has full confidence in Summer's ability in this interim role to lead with integrity, maintain organizational stability, and foster strong relationships with staff, partners, and the community," added Trustee Brickwood Galuteria, chairman of the Beneficiary Advocacy Empowerment Committee.

"I'm honored to serve as Interim Administrator and remain focused on providing steady leadership during this period," Sylva said. "My priority is ensuring continuity in OHA's work and supporting our staff and mission."

Sylva's appointment as Interim CEO was effective Sept. 23, 2025. ■

OHA Representation at the HC Convention

By Bill Brennan, OHA Communications Director

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) was well-represented at the recent 2025 Hawaiian Council Native Hawaiian Convention, held last month in Tulalip, Washington.

"This convention was more than a gathering—it was the beginning of a movement," said OHA Board of Trustees Chairperson Kaiali'i Kahele. "OHA's participation exceeded our expectations, and the feedback we've received has been outstanding. What we witnessed here is the strength, resilience and unity of our lāhui – a clear sign that our future is in good hands."

Kahele delivered the keynote address on the convention's second day. In his remarks, Kahele shared the story of Iosepa Kaho'oluhi Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u and encouraged Native Hawaiian to live their inherent sovereignty.

"This is what we are called to do now," Kahele said. "Not as individuals seeking recognition, but as a lāhui exerting our collective agency in every sphere of life - through the 'āina we heal, the institutions we build, the relationships we sustain across distance, and the hope we pass forward."

More than a thousand people attended the 3-day conference, held on Tulalip tribal lands north of Seattle.

OHA trustees, executives and staff members led and participated in workshops and panel discussions over the course of the convention. Topics ranged from housing challenges to

ceded lands and federal recognition.

OHA trustees and staffers also helped to lead the Aloha 'Āina Advocacy session for 'ōpio which included more than two dozen Native Hawaiian middle and high school students from Kamehameha Schools Hawai'i and Kapālama, Ke Kula o Samuel M. Kamakau, Ke Kula Kaiapuni o Pū'ohala, and from the youth advocacy organization 'Eko Mea Nui.

Haumāna discussed current topics, practiced their advocacy skills and created plans for issues affecting their community.

OHA Beneficiary Services staff assisted convention attendees with applying for and receiving their Hawaiian Registry Program (HRP) ID cards. A steady stream of participants kept the team busy throughout the event, as new on-site printing machines allowed staff to issue cards instantly. In total, OHA processed more than 70 new HRP cards and assisted over 150 conventioners with the registry process and other OHA programs.

OHA plans to take the Hawaiian Registry Program on the road to future events, including the upcoming Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs Convention in Keauhou, Kona, at the end of October.

OHA Interim Administrator Summer Sylva said, "Mahalo to the Hawaiian Council and CEO Kūhiō Lewis for their unprecedented partnership, and to the inspiring collective of Kānaka and allies from across the continent and Pacific who showed up with purpose and aloha. Our shared commitment to uplifting our lāhui – wherever we are – gives hope to our future generations." ■



OHA's delegation to the Hawaiian Council convention in Tulalip, Washington, included trustees, administrators and staff. Chair Kaiali'i Kahele delivered the keynote address. OHA staff led and participated in workshops and panel discussions, while Beneficiary Services staff helped convention goers sign up for OHA's Hawaiian Registry Program. - Photos: Nelson Gaspar

A Life of Service and Advocacy for Native Hawaiians

Louis “Lui” Hao

Jan. 2, 1935 – June 20, 2025

By Puanani Fernandez-Akamine

Lifelong community servant and social justice advocate Louis “Lui” Hao was born in South Kona on Hawai‘i Island in 1935 to Louis Kanoa Hao and Mona Doris Kaholo.

His father came from a long line of lawai‘a (fishers) from Kalapana. His mother’s ‘ohana worked as ranchers in the uplands of Pu‘uanahulu. When WWII started, the ‘ohana moved from South Kona to the ahupua‘a of Waiākea in the moku of Hilo.

Hao enjoyed a happy childhood in Waiākea. Athletically gifted, he was an outstanding basketball player at Hilo High School and, after leading his team to the Territorial Championship in 1953 his senior year, Hao was voted MVP.

His athletic prowess was noted by recruiters at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and Hao was soon offered an athletic scholarship. After graduating from UH Mānoa in 1958 with a degree in sociology, Hao began his long career in government service working as a recreation director for the City and County of Honolulu.

An opportunity to pursue a master’s degree presented itself when Hao won another athletic scholarship to Indiana University. So, after six years with the City and County of Honolulu, Hao moved his young family to Bloomington, Indiana.

However, his enrollment at Indiana University was short lived; low on finances, he put his education on hold to support his family. He took a job at the Chrysler Transmission Plant where he worked for three years. While delaying his educational pursuits to work full-time, Hao nevertheless used his athletic skills in service to his new community, coaching basketball at the Carver Community Center in the predominantly Black community of Kokomo.

Hao eventually enrolled at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, and in 1971, he graduated with two master’s degrees: one in sociology and one in counseling. While attending graduate school, he worked as the minority group counselor at the Indiana State Employment Agency. The agency eventually reimbursed him for his graduate school tuition expenses, noting that his studies complemented his work as a counselor.

Armed with his graduate degrees and practical experience, Hao returned to Hawai‘i. Preferring to work on the neighbor islands instead of on O‘ahu, he applied for a position on Moloka‘i and was hired as coordinator of the Progressive Neighborhood Program in Kaunakakai.

Hao went on to become administrator for the County of Maui, serving under four administrations – Elmer Cravalho, Hannibal Tavares, Linda Lingle and, briefly,

under Kimo Apana – for a total of 25 years. In his capacity as a Maui County government leader, he also served on the Maui Economic Opportunity Council and the Maui County Planning Council.

During his tenure with Maui County, Hao also served on various community boards on his adopted island of Moloka‘i including as chairman of the board of trustees of Moloka‘i Hospital, and chair of the Moloka‘i Task Force, providing training through the State Comprehensive Employment Act and the federally funded Comprehensive Employment and Training Act program, which ran from 1973 to 1984. Hao was also a member of the Moloka‘i Chamber of Commerce.

In 1980, Hao made a run for the Moloka‘i/Lāna‘i seat of the newly established Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) but lost to community activist Walter Ritte. Undaunted, he ran again four years later and, in 1984, was elected. Hao served as the OHA trustee for the islands of Moloka‘i and Lāna‘i for two terms through 1992.

After retiring from his position with Maui County in 1999, Hao left Moloka‘i and returned to Hilo. However, still an energetic and youthful 60-something, Hao did not settle into retirement. Upon his return to Hawai‘i Island, he was appointed as East Hawai‘i district manager for the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) – a position he held until 2017.

As he did everywhere he had lived, Hao was actively involved in his community. He was a member of Hale Pule o Ka Hōkū Ao Mālamalama, the Keaukaha/Panā‘ewa Farming Association, Hale o Nā Ali‘i, Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, and a board member of Hui Mālama Ola nā ‘Ōiwi, a Hilo nonprofit focused on community health and well-being.

Shortly after returning to Hilo, Hao, who was divorced from his first wife, Constance, rekindled a friendship with childhood acquaintance Leifi “Puna” Pratt, an ordained minister, musician, kumu hula and resource instructor in the Department of Education’s Kūpuna Program. The couple married in 2004.

In 2018, after retiring from DHHL the previous year, Hao, then in his 80s, was made the executive director of Hui Mālama Ola nā ‘Ōiwi after serving as a board member for six years. Hao held this position through the pandemic, stepping down in 2023 at the age of 88.

Following his third retirement, Hao and Leifi busied



Louis Hao was a lifelong community servant, social justice advocate, and two-term OHA trustee. - Courtesy Photo

themselves in their home garden, remained active in their church (Hale Pule o Ka Hōkū Ao Mālamalama) where Leifi served as a kahu and Hao as an assistant kahu (hope kahu), and in their community.

With his background in social services and aloha for his community, Hao was a long-time champion of economic and social change in Hawai‘i. He was concerned about the growing diaspora of Native Hawaiians and felt that the most pressing need of our community was to return Hawaiians to the ‘āina.

Hao was an advocate for diversified agriculture, aquaculture and vertical farming using techniques such as hydroponics to achieve economic stability,

sustainability and food security.

He also advocated for improved educational opportunities and the establishment of high-tech industries in Hawai‘i to lessen dependence on the military and tourism industries; for improved state investment in infrastructure for housing, economic development and social services; for incorporation of Hawaiian culture and values in the correctional system; and for OHA to be involved in the management of Maunakea to ensure its protection.

Hao was predeceased by his wife, Leifi “Puna” Leolani Keonaona’okupupio Pratt-Hao. He is survived by his daughters Bambi Lynn Kanani (Calvin) Eaton-Hao, Tracy Ann Kapua Hao, Lesley Mae Kalei (Matthew) Brittain, and Terry Lee Kala (Carl) Chapman; by his brother Lawrence K. Hao; by his former wife, Constance I. Hao; and by his 12 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

“As a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, I can speak from my experiences raising keiki,” Hao wrote in a 2018 message to Hui Mālama Ola nā ‘Ōiwi beneficiaries shortly after his appointment.

“One of the most important things we can pass along to our keiki is values. Of these values, I want to highlight the importance of respect. As a community, we need to respect our kūpuna, the ‘āina, and all that supports us. Families have to love each other and respect one another. If we take care of each other, the ocean, and the ‘āina, we will be a healthier and happy people.” ■

Some of the information for this ho‘omana‘o honoring Louis Hao was gleaned from a 2019 article published in “Ke Ola” magazine by writer Marcia Timbo.

The Kamae Archive: Carrying Forward a Hawaiian Legacy

Eddie and Myrna Kamae’s lifelong work of preserving Hawaiian music, stories, and wisdom continues through the Eddie & Myrna Kamae Collection at UH West O’ahu.

By Myrna Kamae

My husband, Eddie Kamae, understood the importance of preserving the wisdom of the kūpuna. Together, it was our hope to inspire the youth to learn Hawaiian ways of knowing through music and the teachings of the elders.

Three of Eddie’s teachers, Mary Kawena Pukui, Pilahi Paki, and Sam Li’a Kalāinina, guided him deeply. Collectively, they instilled in us a powerful message: “You must do it for the children, for it will live forever.”

At a Living Treasures luncheon in the early 1980s, Pilahi Paki asked Eddie about his long work on Sam Li’a’s life story and songs. Eddie replied, “I am still working on it.” Pilahi turned to him and urged, “Do it now, for soon there will be no more.”

The very next day, Eddie began filming *Li’a: The Legacy of a Hawaiian Man*. That was the beginning of 10 award-winning documentaries, numerous albums, and a legacy that continues to resonate with people today through new projects.

Our 10 films: *Li’a*, *Listen to the Forest*, *Slack Key*, *Words Earth Aloha*, *Luther Makekau*, *Hawaiian Voices*, *History of Sons of Hawai’i*, *Keepers of the Flame*, *Lahaina Waves of Change*, *Those Who Came Before*, along with most of the raw footage and music, have been digitized, cataloged, and are available for free at UH West O’ahu (UHWO)’s ‘Ulu’ulu, Hawai’i’s Moving Image Archive.

Soon, UHWO’s Campbell Library will house and dig-



The 10 award-winning documentaries produced by Eddie and Myrna Kamae can be accessed at UH West O’ahu’s ‘Ulu’ulu Moving Image Archive. - Courtesy Photo

itize the Eddie & Myrna Kamae Collection of print and photographic materials, allowing students, teachers, and the public to access it.

Today, a new chapter begins. At the end of December, the Hawaiian Legacy Foundation that Eddie and I founded in 1986 will close. Our mission has been to document, preserve, and perpetuate Hawai’i’s cultural heritage through music, film and video, educational programs, community outreach, and archival work.

Our focus will shift fully to supporting the Eddie & Myrna Kamae Collection at UHWO. Thanks to the strong leadership of Chancellor Maenette Benham, the UH Foundation Eddie & Myrna Kamae Endowment has been established. We are raising money to create student internships, fellowships, and faculty grants to ensure the Kamae archive is utilized by students, faculty, and the community.

We have already started this work. Faculty projects have brought Eddie’s music into new spaces: UHWO’s band, The Nāulu Winds, which includes students and community musicians, arranged four songs from the songbook for a 100-piece band, making Hawaiian music newly available for band students statewide. This kind of

work opens doors for students.

We have also had two UHWO undergraduate “E Ho’omau” student interns. They worked with me (our dedicated archivist) and the librarians and archivists at UHWO to process and digitize the collection.

Recently, their help has enabled us to establish a stronger social media presence, where we share short videos and stories from our archive. We reached nearly five million people worldwide this year. Soon, all 10 of our documentaries, shown each year on PBS Hawai’i will also be available to stream for free on the Hawaiian Legacy Foundation’s YouTube Channel.

Eddie would have loved this project, which brings Hawaiian music and values to more people in a new way.

This work would not have been possible without all the support and aloha from so many. Our friends, believers in this work, and Eddie Kamae & Sons of Hawai’i fans have contributed so much over the years.

The Alaka’ina Foundation, committed to supporting Hawai’i’s youth, has enabled us to digitize, catalog, and make accessible the Kamae archive. The Abigail Kawānanakoa Foundation has made it possible for us to translate the *Eddie Kamae Songbook: A Musical Journey* into the Hawaiian language. The English version, available since 2022, features 34 songs important to Eddie’s life and musical journey. The songbook aims to inspire families, students, and practitioners to connect with Hawaiian knowledge through music – and to encourage others to gather and share their own stories.

As I reflect on the closing of the foundation and a new beginning, I think about the parting wisdom that Kawena Pukui would always speak to Eddie every time he left her side: “E Ho’omau, Eddie. Ho’omau.” Continue on.

That is our mission now: To continue on. With your support, the Hawaiian legacy will remain strong, alive, and forever inspiring. E Ho’omau. ■

To learn more or to kōkua, please scan the QR code or email myrnakamae@gmail.com.





We want to hear from you, Hawai’i Island!

We invite you to join us this month for three Beneficiary Workshops, created as a space to uplift your voice and honor the needs of our lāhui.

LĀHUI PRIORITIES: BENEFICIARY WORKSHOPS

Hosted by OHA’s Community Engagement and Beneficiary Services Team

Kona Monday, November 3, 2025 6:00 p.m. ~~~~~ Kealakehe High School 74-5000 Puohulihuli St. Kailua-Kona, Hawai’i 96740	Waimea Tuesday, November 4, 2025 6:00 p.m. ~~~~~ Kanu o ka ‘Āina Public Charter School 64-1043 Hi’iaka St. Waimea, Hawai’i 96743	Hilo Wednesday, November 5, 2025 6:00 p.m. ~~~~~ UH Hilo - Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke’elikōlani 200 W Kāwili St. Hilo, Hawai’i 96720
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OHA BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Thursday
November 6, 2025
9:00 a.m.
~~~~~  
**UH Hilo - Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke’elikōlani**  
200 W Kāwili St.  
Hilo, Hawai’i 96720

 **TUNE IN LIVE!**  
[www.oha.org/livestream](http://www.oha.org/livestream)



# Faces of the Diaspora Bringing 'Ike Kūpuna to Genome Sciences

By Megan Ulu-Lani Boyanton

**K**eolu Fox, 38, is one of the faces behind biotechnology research company Variant Bio and, notably, the only Kanaka Maoli among its top advisors.

A human geneticist, Fox helped build the start-up which has been developing genomic drugs in Seattle since 2018. As in other areas of his life, he's driven in this work to further the lāhui in a field that lacks Pasifika representation.

"We don't need people to keep their heads down," said Fox, who lives in San Diego, California. "We need leadership. We need resources. We need aloha."

It's crucial to Fox to know history: the world's, his people's, his own.

The 'ohana of his mother, Laurie Makanani Fox, hails from Pololū Valley in Kohala on Hawai'i Island. Descendants of Kānaka Maoli and Portuguese immigrants, they moved from Kapa'au to Hilo and then to Kāne'ohe, O'ahu. Laurie and her sisters grew up dancing hula under Kumu Kau'i Zuttermeister.

On Fox's paternal side, his grandfather was a Belgian Sephardic Jew, and his grandmother was Prussian from Berlin, Germany. They met in a concentration camp in Mechelen, Belgium. Fox's father, Uziel Awret, grew up in an artists' colony in Safed, Israel.

Awret, a quantum physicist, met Laurie, a language student, at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Fox, an only child, was born in California's San Francisco Bay Area. He recalls moving around the U.S. throughout his adolescence when money was tight.

As part of the diaspora, "you become comfortable on the move," Fox said. "You kind of become addicted – just like our ancestors – to voyaging, moving, trading spaces."

He spent first grade in Alaska, the expansive state where his aunty and role model, Leslie Kaulehua Fox-Leyva, had resettled. Fox remembers seeing snow for the first time there.

Then, they moved to Hawai'i. Young Fox stayed active playing sports: basketball, surfing, martial arts, soccer. As a child, he wanted to grow up and become a postman so he could be outside and kōkua people.

While in Hawai'i he also learned about his culture and history – formally in Kamehameha Schools' Explorations program and informally from the 'āina and moana. "We are scientists, Hawaiian people," Fox said.

The family moved back to California before making the jump from West Coast to East Coast. Fox doesn't feel that he fit the mold of a budding academic, though he excelled at science, history and math. He graduated in 2004 from Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt, Maryland.

Fox intended to play college soccer at the University of Maryland, but as a freshman, his lack of focus meant that Plan A didn't work out. Instead, Plan B developed:



Human Geneticist Dr. Keolu Fox at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park in 2021. - Photo Courtesy of Keolu Fox.

Fox found himself in a biological anthropology class led by Dr. Fatimah Jackson, the biologist and anthropologist who taught him about human genetic variation.

As a Black woman, she empowered Fox to believe he could build a career in the field. She invited him to her lab. When Fox walked in and heard the smooth sounds of The Jackson 5 playing, he pictured himself working there.

Soon, he was starting to get research experience under his belt. Fox was hit with the realization that the future of preventative medicine wasn't including marginalized communities, and there was zero research on Oceania. His honors research project focused on triple negative breast cancer and minority health.

"I was like a pit bull on a bone at that point," Fox said.

When he graduated in 2008 with a bachelor's degree in biological anthropology and archaeology, Fox already had an opportunity lined up: He would complete a post-baccalaureate fellowship at the National Institutes of Health's National Human Genome Research Institute from 2008 to 2010 in Bethesda, Maryland. One of those years was spent as a research fellow in The Center for Research on Genomics and Global Health.

Fox was then faced with a choice: medical school or graduate school. He ultimately felt pulled to the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington, because of the groundbreaking leaders in the field that were based there.

From 2010 to 2016, he earned a Ph.D. in genome sciences. That span was a whirlwind of publishing scientific papers and code, writing grants and going to conferences. Despite the intensity, "it was easy to work hard there," Fox said.

He met his partner, Riley Taitingfong, at a grocery store in Seattle. They share Pasifika roots as Riley is CHamoru, with maternal ancestors from the Canary Islands. Their careers also have some overlap: Riley is a scientist and researcher specializing in environmental justice, Indigenous self-determination and emerging technologies.

After Fox completed his Ph.D., Riley was heading to the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) to complete her doctorate. Fox landed a postdoctoral fellowship at UCSD from 2016 to 2019. He was extended after two years as an assistant professor and is now an associate professor. His work there includes involvement in various programs such as the Department of Anthropology, the Global Health Program, the Climate Action Lab and the Indigenous Futures Lab.

Fox and Riley welcomed their daughter, Hōkūpa'a, in 2024.

Other big changes have been afoot. In addition to his work at Variant Bio, Fox earned tenure at UCSD this summer. He also has projects underway around Moananuiākea. "It's just like the culmination of so much hard work," Fox said.

He'd love to build an independent research institute on Hawai'i Island that prioritizes the needs and ambitions of the lāhui. With a keiki in his life and his mother back on Hawai'i Island, Fox yearns to one day resettle in Hawai'i.

"If I do everything right, I'll be moving back to the Big Island as soon as possible," he said. ■

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# Ka Wā o Ka Wai: Protecting the Waters of Kona

By Loke Aloua, Ashley K. Obrey, and Jonathan Likeke Scheuer

Since the Lahaina fires, our lāhui is increasingly aware of the Commission on Water Resource Management's (CWRM) legal duties to protect the public trust of water, including Native Hawaiian rights.

But Maui Komohana is not the only community that has been waiting for CWRM action. For decades, the kupa of North Kona, on Hawai'i Island, have asked for protection of their water.

Instead, CWRM is working to permit accelerated groundwater extraction for new developments. This planned exploitation comes even as we are experiencing historic and, perhaps, permanent droughts across Hawai'i. We are living now in Ka Wā o ka Wai – the time of water. How will we respond?

## Decades of pleas to protect wai

Dry on its surface, the northern part of North Kona was known as Kekaha wai 'ole o nā Kona. Underground, however, water sustains ecosystems, practices, and communities ma uka to ma kai.

Since the 1970s development boom, Kona groundwater has been exploited with almost no regard for traditional uses. While developers have benefited financially, the landscape and community have paid the price.

Kūpuna warned us. When Congress created Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historic Park, it mandated that the National Park Service (NPS) manage it in accordance with the 1974 "Spirit Report." Prepared by a Native Hawaiian advisory committee, it declared "good water quality is essential to fishpond culture, and since the source is almost entirely in the rainy ma uka areas, management of these and other lands adjacent to the park will have a direct impact on water resources within the park" and "cooperative planning efforts with the state, county, and private landowners is an important part of this proposal."

The state and county ignored this warning, and our kūpuna were proven right.

In 2014, Kona native Herbert Kai testified his 'ohana once practiced fishing, gathering, drinking and bathing practices but "flowing fresh water, fresh water springs, brackish water pools, and 'ōpae 'ula are gone – or at least not easy to find; they've been slowly diminishing."

After years of fruitless conversations, in 2013, the NPS petitioned CWRM to designate the Keauhou Aquifer System as a groundwater management area which requires water development decisions be made in public and include processes to protect Hawaiian rights.

Unfortunately, that designation was aggressively opposed by developers and the County of Hawai'i. The 60-day designation process was dragged out over three years. Ultimately, CWRM denied the petition, agreeing with a recommendation written by staff who now work for water development consultants.



Keiki at Kaloko Fishpond in North Kona. - Photo: Kim Crawford



Aerial view of the 11-acre Kaloko Fishpond. Since the 1970s North Kona groundwater has been exploited for development. - Photo: Sheldon Abril

## A failed "new approach"

When CWRM denied the petition, it attempted to meet its public trust duties by imposing a requirement to review impacts on cultural practices from new wells – a supposed "new approach."

The "Ota Well" was the first well proposed after that. The applicants were two state agencies working with private developers seeking to build market rate housing and an industrial park.

Disregarding CWRM's promise to review cultural impacts, in 2021, staff recommended approval of the Ota Well permit requiring only a symposium to "discuss traditional and customary practices."

CWRM rejected the recommendation after community opposition and instead directed staff to analyze cultural impacts. Consultation with stakeholders resulted in proposed permit conditions to address those impacts. For a moment, it seemed that the "new approach" would work.

Unfortunately, in 2022, the applicants opposed the conditions and requested a contested case hearing on their own application. After stalling, the applicants returned in 2024 to amend the conditions. A hui of kia'i loko i'a (fishpond protectors) and lawai'a (fishers) secured a promise from CWRM to instead synthesize hydrological data to better understand current impacts on

groundwater-dependent ecosystems and cultural practices along the coast.

## A "new" new approach?

Ignoring that promise, this year CWRM instead proposed another new "solution" – an adaptive management plan (AMP). While it looked good from afar, it was far from good.

CWRM initially tied the AMP's approval to the Ota Well construction permit, which was adamantly opposed by the community. It proposed only monitoring conditions while allowing unlimited new wells to go into production and ignored evidence of existing impacts to groundwater-dependent ecosystems. It also promised theoretical future management actions but never addressed how such management could be enforced in this non-designated area.

When the AMP was discussed in July, Commissioners Lawrence Miike and Aurora Kagawa-Viviani questioned CWRM's regulatory power to enforce it. Deputy Director Ciara Kahahane admitted "there's not much we can do besides ask nicely." Miike stated, "I just think it's nuts . . . Why don't we just designate the area already?" Chairperson Dawn Chang voiced agreement.

As of September, commissioners' comments on designation have been ignored. Little progress has been made on the AMP. Members of the AMP's cultural expert group have not been identified – though CWRM readily identified anti-designation scientists to participate. Meanwhile, there are a dozen wells waiting to be developed without any meaningful safeguards in place for Kona's wai.

Today's decisions determine the future of Hawai'i's public trust resources. Communities across the pae 'āina are experiencing the trifecta of extreme drought, over-extraction, and passive management.

In Kekaha wai 'ole, the community is left carrying the burden to protect the water that gives life to Kona's people. How will we and CWRM 'auamo the kuleana of Ka Wā o ka Wai? Will the state continue to ignore its duties, or will it stand with community to protect water and native rights? ■

*For AMP updates or to provide feedback go to: [dlnr.hawaii.gov/cwrm/planning/Keauhou-amp](https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/cwrm/planning/Keauhou-amp). To subscribe to CWRM's monthly meeting notices and track their activities, email [dlnr.cwrm@hawaii.gov](mailto:dlnr.cwrm@hawaii.gov).*

*Loke Aloua is a kia'i loko i'a at Kaloko Fishpond, the po'o of Hui Ola ka Wai and Hui Kaloko-Honokōhau, and a kupa of Kona. Ashley K. Obrey, Esq., is a senior staff attorney at the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation. Based in Kona, a significant portion of her legal practice is dedicated to advocating for Native Hawaiian water rights. Dr. Jonathan Likeke Scheuer is the principal of Kahālāwai Consulting. He works with clients embroiled in environmental conflict to seek shared, sustainable prosperity for the communities and the 'āina involved.*



# Innovating for Equity

By Donalyn Dela Cruz

When Hawai'i committed in 2014 to becoming 100% renewable by 2045, it signaled a new era of sustainability.

For Kanaka 'Ōiwi innovator Olin Lagon, then a member of the Hawai'i Clean Energy Initiative Steering Committee that pushed for the goal, it also revealed a deeper challenge: ensuring that the benefits of clean energy reached everyone, not just those who could afford it.

Lagon realized that underserved communities and renters would face major financial challenges.

"Upwards of 75% of Native Hawaiian families live under the ALICE poverty threshold, which is absolutely criminal. And when I'm talking about the underserved, I'm talking about our Hawaiian community," said Lagon. ALICE stands for "Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed."

Two years later, Lagon and his business partner, Forest Frizzell, founded Shifted Energy in his garage to enable widespread access to energy solutions. The company combines smart hardware and software to help utilities balance the grid using everyday devices like water heaters. Powered by advanced machine learning, the system automatically shifts energy use to lower-cost times and stabilizes circuits without users ever noticing a change.

The water heater was just the first of many devices Lagon and Frizzell realized they could manage and control.

"In Hawai'i, the water heater is the number one user of energy in most homes," said Lagon who explained that many underserved homeowners have cheaply made and inefficient electric resistance water heaters. Shifted Energy sought out to target lowering cost and ensuring quality products.

It took years of tinkering, testing and perfecting. Between pitching to investors and expanding the company, Shifted Energy remained focused on helping those who needed it most. They knocked on doors, talked story, identified issues and sought to solve them. This also included securing funds to get additional work done.

One Waimānalo homestead family had been spending more than a \$1000 a month on electricity. Lagon and Frizzell were puzzled. The home had no major electrical appliances such as air conditioning. They traced the issue to a leaking water heater and then identified grant funds to replace the water heater for the family.

"Their bill the next month dropped to \$100. There was a \$900 swing - and it stayed at that level," said Lagon.



At BIXPO in South Korea, the world's largest energy conference, Shifted Energy was awarded the prestigious "Best in Class: International Category" for their Grid Maestro software solution. Pictured here are Shifted Energy's Olin Lagon (left) and Forest Frizzell (right). The award was presented to them by EPRI Vice President of Innovation Mark McGranaghan (center).

- Photos: Courtesy of Olin Lagon and Shifted Energy

They also came across homeowners who were sold a bill of goods by unethical companies with no follow-up services. In other cases, Shifted Energy upgraded homes with energy-efficient heat pump water heaters and foresaw other issues.

"They were installed outdoors and started to get damaged," noted Lagon. "So Forest got some more philanthropy dollars, and we came back out and built enclosures for them, like we don't have to do that, but we want them to have that thing for 20 years."

Not only did they introduce their product to households, they also helped people in other ways.

In one house visit, Frizzell came across a kupuna who could not afford to furnish his home. Lagon said he received a call from his co-founder who was determined to find a bed for him to sleep on that night. After calling friends, they were able to deliver a futon.

Lagon calls this "leaning in" to the work they do. "It's not just about energy. It's about people and community. And we do that over and over and over again," he said.

Both founders practice traditional Native Hawaiian farming on weekends and volunteer with the state's largest technology education nonprofit, Purple Mai'a, which works in Native Hawaiian communities throughout Hawai'i.

Shifted Energy has grown to manage more devices, so they use energy when it is cheapest. Air conditioning



Shifted Energy uses smart hardware and software to provide access to energy solutions.

systems, electric cars, heat pumps, solar, and batteries can ramp up when power is abundant and ease off when it is costly. The mission never changed. Serve the people most often overlooked.

The company has completed thousands of installations in underserved neighborhoods in Hawai'i, on the continent, and in Canada. They have even expanded pilot programs to Europe and Aotearoa (New Zealand).

"I don't think there's another company on this earth that is better than us and we'll beat anyone in any RFP (request for proposal) head-to-head. That is our legacy of Indigenous innovation and here, like you know, we're the smartest people in the world and not smart in the 'western' sense but smart in the community sense. We lean into the strength of diversity," said Lagon.

Lagon's pride in what they've built is well-founded. On Oct. 9, 2025, Shifted Energy announced its acquisition by San Francisco-based Resource Innovations (RI), a major move to advance grid-edge technology and bolster energy equity.

"Adding Shifted Energy's capabilities to RI's offerings enables us to deliver scalable, end-to-end DSM (demand-side management) and grid-edge solutions to more customer segments than ever before," said Lauren Casentini, founder and CEO of RI.

Following the announcement, Frizzell said, "Tomorrow we get back to building solutions that are equitable, innovative, and rooted in the communities we come from."

Shifted Energy is Lagon's third social venture to grow from small Native Hawaiian nonprofit roots to national and international work. Two of his previous social ventures were acquired by larger firms.

"When Kanaka 'Ōiwi values guide entrepreneurship, solutions can scale here and then everywhere," said Lagon. "Of course, this is not easy but when you are doing the right thing, how can you not be inspired to bust your 'ēlemu (butt) for the community?"

He continues to lean in - inventing and building to solve problems in new ways that honor community and create equity. ■



**HAWAII ISLAND**

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**Waimea - November 7** | Parker Ranch Center, 67-1185 Hawai'i Belt Road

**Nā'ālehu - November 14** | Nā'ālehu Community Center, 95-5635 Māmalahoa Hwy.

**Kona - November 21** | West Hawai'i Civic Center, 74-5044 Ane Keohokalole Hwy. 1st fl. Bldg. B



# Kapa, Ready to Wear

By Christine Hitt

To Kale'a Raymond, kapa is something to be worn, lived in and loved.

"It is a reverent thing to have a piece of kapa," says Raymond, owner of La'ahana Creations, which sells handcrafted, wearable kapa accessories. "But a lot of Kānaka Hawai'i, when they receive a piece of kapa, or you know, they make a piece of kapa, it goes on the wall, or it goes into a cabinet. It's loved and it's precious, but it's not used, right?"

Raymond, who learned kapa-making from her mother, kapa practitioner and teacher Lisa Schattenburg-Raymond, wanted to change that. "I wanted to start doing things where people could wear kapa again," she said.

Her vision was to make wearable kapa pieces, so she started by making hat bands in 2021 and then earrings in 2022. "I'm still expanding the things that I make," Raymond said, "but it's pieces that people can wear every day."

Each hat band features a uniquely patterned piece of kapa, set on felt and secured to the hat with a ribbon or Velcro. She offers the hat bands as custom orders, allowing her to tailor each one to the individual hat. The earrings come in different colors in wire frames, from circles to crescent moons to triangles to diamond shapes — each pair also uniquely patterned using native dyes.

Raymond is now experimenting with other kinds of products, such as belts, bracelets and necklaces, but wants to make sure that they stay affordable and wearable. "Everything that I make, I wear-test. I make sure that they're going to hold up," she says. One day, she would really like to add a lei hulu-style of kapa adornment.

Born and raised on Maui, Raymond attended a Hawaiian immersion school before earning a degree from UH Mānoa with a focus in costume design. She moved to California and lived there for seven years to pursue a career in costuming but felt a longing to return to Maui in 2019. It wasn't until she moved back that she reconnected with kapa and found herself drawn to it.

"The pandemic was a really unfortunate thing for many, but it was really fortuitous for me because being with my parents, and with my mom in particular, she gave me a deep dive into kapa," Raymond said with a



From clothing to hat bands to earrings Kale'a Raymond, owner of La'ahana Creations, is making kapa wearable. - Courtesy Photos

laugh, amused by the memory. "I did the full immersion experience with my mother. And I'm very grateful for that and I'm still learning."

The name of her business, La'ahana Creations, is in reference to a mo'olelo about two sisters who are kapa makers. Lauhu'iki is the one who is knowledgeable in harvesting and processing, while La'ahana is skilled in decorating.

"When I first heard that story, and I was first starting on my kapa journey, I realized that Lauhu'iki and La'ahana are my mom and I," she smiled, noting that her mom has the green thumb while she has a passion for art.

To make the kapa pieces, she and her mom grow, harvest, and process the wauke (paper mulberry) themselves.

"My mother and I, when we're making kapa, especially the watermarked pieces, we usually tend to do large sheets instead of just a small piece, and that can take between 20 to 30 hours of beating," Raymond said.

"We only do it in four-hour periods, otherwise your body just hurts." It takes focus, she explains, as they must listen and watch what they're doing to move the fibers over.

She uses traditional dyes to print the kapa patterns, harvesting plants and materials sustainably. "I make my



Raymond and her mom grow the wauke for their kapa and make traditional dyes. They print the kapa patterns using handmade ohe kapala (bamboo stamps).

own ink in a traditional way. I use all handmade ohe kapala (bamboo stamps) from Nalu Andrade of Nā Maka Kahiko. He hand-carves all my ohe kapala," Raymond said.

Because the kapa is delicate, she fully encases all the earrings in resin to protect them. The resin is see-through and preserves the kapa for longer wear.

Raymond has a strong passion for kapa making, and dreams of there one day being "a hui of kapa makers together to make a 10-layer, 12-foot-long hula pā'ū and have somebody perform in it," she said.

"With our growing connection back to our ancestors, we're having more men wearing malo, but we don't have a lot of women wearing pā'ū," referring to history books about hula dancers and the kapa pieces that were worn.

While that may be her lifetime goal, for now she would like to see more people making and wearing kapa — and that's what she's working toward through her business. ■

*La'ahana Creations can be found on Facebook and Instagram, and Raymond sells at various Maui craft fairs and cultural events. She most recently attended the Kū Mai Ka Hula competition at Maui Arts & Cultural Center and the Kamehameha Day celebration at Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea.*



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# Supporting Entrepreneurship on the Wai'anae Coast

By Hannah Ka'iulani Coburn

“I feel like people on the Westside have pride in their community – pride in culture, pride in entrepreneurship, and pride to be from the Wai'anae Coast,” said Wai'anae Economic Development Council (WEDC) Program Director Shavone Lave.

WEDC is a community-based corporation serving Wai'anae Coast residents. Its mission is to support community members who are passionate about entrepreneurship by offering business and financial services rooted in Hawaiian values.

Founded in 2015, the council is composed primarily of Native Hawaiians, and its leaders and staff are either from the Wai'anae Moku or have worked within the community for many years.

Lave herself has first-hand experience operating a small business in Wai'anae. In 2013 she founded The Sugar Hut, a bakery based in Mā'ili. She recalled that her first introduction to WEDC happened during the pandemic.

“While I was still operating my business, the [WEDC] CEO and business developer came into my establishment during COVID,” said Lave. “They were kind of going door-to-door on the coast and seeing what the businesses were going through. WEDC is definitely a ‘boots on the ground’ and community-based, community-focused organization.”

Lave shared that after she closed her business in 2021, *Westside Stories* published an article about how she had transitioned from business owner to business coaching and consulting for aspiring bakers.

“One of the staff members of WEDC learned about my experience and asked me if I was interested in a job, said Lave. “I actually said ‘no’ multiple times because I didn’t have a traditional job for so long, I didn’t know if I could do that again. But it was perfect because I really do love the business space and serving our community.”

As program director, Lave manages and oversees WEDC business support and financial literacy programs including the Wai'anae Business Incubator, Ho'okele Digital, Nonprofit Development, Pakini Loan Fund, and Waiwai Pathways.

WEDC also works with outside contractors who operate their financial literacy workshops and nonprofit development program.

Lave said that she has seen Wai'anae residents that go through their cohorts receive a boost of confidence and a feeling of community.

“Oftentimes, business owners feel like they’re going at



Members of the first Wai'anae Business Incubator cohort. The six-month-long program helps beginning entrepreneurs gain skills, resources, and confidence. - Courtesy Photos



Wai'anae Economic Development Council Program Director Shavone Lave (center) conducts a business development coaching session with the owners of KC Construction.

it alone and maybe their problems are unique to them – but these problems are very common. Every business owner goes through a similar journey. So just knowing that there’s support and guidance along the way and they’re not alone is a big deal,” she said.

“And within the cohorts, it’s nice; we really build each workshop or cohort so that they can talk more together. And the power is in them having conversations amongst each other and realizing that, ‘Hey there’s someone just like me who’s going through the same thing and we can do it together.’”

Through WEDC’s six-month-long Wai'anae Business Incubator, entrepreneurs in their early stages gain skills, resources, and the confidence to take their business concept to market-ready community events.

WEDC also emphasizes incorporating Hawaiian val-

ues in all its programming by using ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, sharing different ‘ōlelo no‘eau (proverbs), and mo‘olelo passed on generationally.

“What we’ve found is that when someone is able to relate to something that is deeply seated within their culture, they’re able to connect to the concept they’re trying to teach,” said Lave. “So, what we’re doing is trying to bridge the connection from culture, or what had happened with their own kūpuna, to today.”

Lave added that when looking at both financial literacy and business development, it is comparable to how we steward our resources today.

On November 8, WEDC and the Pakini Loan Fund will be hosting the first-ever Wai'anae Moku Made event from 4:00 – 8:00 p.m.

This free community event will celebrate the entrepreneurship of Native Hawaiians and Wai'anae-based businesses at the ‘Ohana Kāko‘o Resource Center.

Lave said that the event initially started as Small Business Saturday to create awareness around small businesses and entrepreneurship.

“When [planning for] the second year, we knew we needed to make a larger statement which is why we re-branded it,” said Lave. “So it’s more of an opportunity to uplift what [already] exists in the community because there are entrepreneurs everywhere.”

“When we go door-to-door and talk story with people in the community, someone always knows another business owner or someone with a side hustle. And I feel like that’s just who we are in Hawai‘i because of the cost of living. And so it’s truly just a way to see what exists on the Wai'anae Coast and how we support those businesses.”

The event will highlight small businesses, many of which are just starting out. It will also include a business resource hub for the community so folks can learn about how they, too, can start a small business – or how to support businesses in their community beyond purchasing a product or service.

Lave added that WEDC envisions a eventually exposing Wai'anae owned small businesses to different opportunities beyond their own community – such as major local events like the annual Made in Hawai‘i Festival or Merrie Monarch Hawaiian Arts and Crafts Fair. ■

*Find out more information about the Wai'anae Economic Development Center online or on Instagram. Join WEDC’s email list to receive free to low-cost business and financial resources for the community.*



# BEHIND *the* FORCE ALOHA 'ĀINA ENTREPRENEURS

CRAIG AND LUANA NEFF ARE THE FORCE BEHIND HAWAIIAN FORCE, A NATIVE HAWAIIAN SMALL BUSINESS THAT HAS BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE APPAREL BUSINESS - AND THE ALOHA 'ĀINA MOVEMENT - FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS.

BY PUANANI FERNANDEZ-AKAMINE

**"M**y mom always said you had to have the 'eye' – that ability to see and recognize beauty or balance," artist and entrepreneur Craig Neff recalls.

Art came easily to Neff who grew up in a creative home. His mother also had the 'eye,' and his father enjoyed working with his hands. He started dabbling in t-shirt making in middle school, and when the 1977 Kalani High School graduate learned how to silkscreen in an art class, he and his brother, John, made t-shirts for their Makapu'u body surfing club.

Neff came of age during the Hawaiian Renaissance – from the land struggles to *Hōkūle'a* to the resurgence of Hawaiian pride – and that influenced both his art and his life.

After high school, Neff went on to UH Mānoa where he was one of just two 'Ōiwi art majors. In college he explored a range of artistic mediums from painting to sculpture to ceramics, but expressed his politics through his t-shirt designs, which soon became a side hustle.

"At the time there were hardly any Hawaiian clothing companies – and no one was making the kinds of designs I was looking for, so I started making my own designs," Neff explained. "And then people would ask where I got my shirt and so I started making shirts for other people and then started to sell them on the side."

His first design influenced by the Aloha 'Āina Movement featured the Hawaiian flag. His second was his now iconic "Hawaiian Blood" t-shirt which is still a huge seller more than 40 years later.

While in college, Neff made his first visit to the island of Kaho'olawe – a *huaka'i* that proved transformational. "Kaho'olawe gave me a spiritual connection to 'āina and deepened my connection to pono. It changed my life," he said.

Neff quips that while he graduated from UH with a BFA degree, he graduated from the University of Kaho'olawe with an AA (aloha 'āina) degree, learning from revered kūpuna like Uncle Harry Mitchell and Uncle Les Kuloloio, and being mentored by Dr. Emmett Aluli.



In 2012, Craig and Luana Neff moved Hawaiian Force to its current location on the Hilo waterfront. Although best known for their iconic t-shirts, they recently added aloha apparel to offer the lāhui wearable art inspired by 'ohana, 'āina, culture and kuleana. - Photo courtesy of Luana Busby-Neff

## GROWING A BUSINESS WHILE GROWING THE MOVEMENT

By the time Neff graduated from UH in 1982, he was already producing t-shirts by the hundreds and selling them at craft fairs.

He also had a few early patrons who supported him, like Israel Kamakawiwo'ole. And while working at the Central YMCA, Neff met Palani Vaughan who encouraged his business pursuits – and backed it up by placing large orders of t-shirts for holiday gifts.

Neff's designs were inspired by his growing political

awakening, and his distinctive artwork and powerful aloha 'āina messaging soon found a devoted following. At the time, Hawaiian Force t-shirts were wildly popular – there was nothing else like them and customers eagerly sought them out at craft fairs.

He admits that his early designs were "a little bit radical," but usually offset with humor. His still-popular "Radical Hawaiian Tarorist" design was imagined while working in the lo'i kalo at Kānewai with some friends.

And when the phrase "Live Aloha" began being bandied about, Neff put his own spin on it. He produced a t-shirt design that said: "Live Aloha. Return Stolen Lands." It was a satirical response to a shallow and overused phrase.

The name for his burgeoning t-shirt business – Hawaiian Force – was only slightly influenced by the *Star Wars* movies that came out around the same time. "I wanted it to represent Hawaiians as being a force," Neff explained. "Like you wear the t-shirt, and you are part of that force and power. It wasn't just a nice shirt; the name was intended to hui everyone together."

Neff became increasingly active with the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ōhana (PKO) and was part of its first Makahiki celebration in 1982. It was also through his involvement in the Aloha 'Āina Movement that he met his future wife, Luana Busby, at a protest in Waikiki.

He was immediately smitten, but she already had a boyfriend. Undaunted, Neff bided his time. The two became friends, often working together as Kaho'olawe access coordinators for O'ahu. When Busby and her boyfriend split, her friendship with Neff grew into something more. By 1984, she was helping Neff with his t-shirt business, and they began to make a life together.

Hawaiian Force was established as a licensed business in 1984 – but for 15 years Neff's shirts were sold primarily at craft fairs, although he took phone orders too. It was a lot of work – especially during the holiday season, "but you know, I was young, and I could hustle, and I had a lot of family and friends that always helped," he said.

As Hawaiian political consciousness grew in the 1980s,

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## BEHIND THE FORCE

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people wanted t-shirts that made political statements – but the only available “Hawaiian” t-shirts were geared towards tourists. “The most local thing was ‘Crazy Shirts,’” Neff said. “There were no real Hawaiian t-shirts. It was a niche market, and we were able to ride it.”

Neff said that Hawaiian Force t-shirts make bold political statements, in part for their shock value, to spark dialogue and political conversations. “A lot of times at events when I was selling [my shirts], I would have discussions with people and try to educate them about what went down in Hawaiian history.”

In the mid-1980s, Neff began doing custom print jobs for Hawaiian organizations like Pūnana Leo. But a lot of effort goes into creating custom designs for clients and gradually he pulled back, preferring to focus on creating new designs for Hawaiian Force.

As his brand grew, buyers from stores like J.C. Penney’s and Sears approached Neff wanting to sell his shirts in their stores. But no matter how much money they offered, Neff declined preferring to retain full creative control.

“Craig has integrity. He’s unmatched when it comes to not selling out – to corporations or for the big bucks,” said his wife, Luana Busby-Neff.

By the late 1980s the couple had assumed leadership roles within PKO. Neff took the lead on building the hale halawai at PKO’s Hakioawa base camp and was training to become a mo’olono to help lead Makahiki ceremonies, while Busby-Neff was increasingly focused on the spiritual aspects of caring for ‘āina, studying under Pua Kanaka’ole and spending a lot of time in Hilo.

In many ways, their relationship was built around Makahiki and the healing ceremonies they were part of on-island. “We would always go together,” Busby-Neff recalled. “The Makahiki ceremonies held us, and the politics, together. Our pilina with the ‘āina was more real and more infused in the land. Makahiki was huge. It



The story of Hawaiian Force really begins with Kaho’olawe. In this classic 1987 photo by renowned photographer Franco Salmoiraghi, Craig and Luana Neff stand at the front of a procession waiting to offer ho’okupu at a Makahiki ceremony at Hakioawa, Kaho’olawe. - Photo: Franco Salmoiraghi

changed all our lives.”

In the early 1990s, the couple decided to move to Hawai’i Island. There, they continued to grow their business while working for the Aloha ‘Āina Movement, becoming active in efforts to protect Maunakea and to stop the bombing at Pōhakuloa while continuing their kuleana to Kaho’olawe.

Shortly after moving, they opened their first storefront on Kīlauea Avenue in downtown Hilo. It was a small store, a little off the beaten path, but it was enough. When online shopping became a thing, they created a website and began selling their t-shirts online.

In 2012, after 17 years on Kīlauea Avenue, Hawaiian Force moved to a new, larger location on Kamehameha Avenue on the Hilo waterfront which gets a lot more foot traffic. The increased foot traffic plus the popularity of online shopping continued to grow the business, but Neff says that the addition of aloha wear took the Hawaiian Force to the next level. “T-shirts are still a big factor for us, but our aloha wear does really good.”

Their aim in adding aloha wear, Busby-Neff explained, “was to dress the nation in wearable art deeply inspired

by what we value as Hawaiians – our ‘ohana, our cultural traditions, our ‘āina, our kuleana.”

“A lot of people come into the store, especially tourists, and they want something that’s real that comes from Hawai’i. They want to support the economy of the Native people,” Neff reflected.

“That’s why [the sign] on the store says, ‘Hawaiian Force – Native Hawaiian Artist.’ Hawaiian art is great, but art made by Native Hawaiians – that is Native Hawaiian art. That’s important to me, but it’s also important to the customer.”

“I ke aloha ‘āina ‘o ia ho’i! May the force be with you ... the Hawaiian Force!” Busby-Neff added laughing.

Most days, Busby-Neff minds the store. Her warmth and aloha create a welcoming space when customers stop by. This allows Neff to focus on creating new designs and hand-screening the t-shirts – which he still does in his workshop.

“Luana and I both have busy lives, so we balance out – you know, we take care of home and we take care of the business together,” Neff said.

## EA AND AUTHENTICITY

Unlike most modern designers, Neff still hand-draws all his designs.

“The sheer volume of work that he does, the mediums he uses – nobody I know does what Craig does,” said Busby-Neff. “Most people use computer generated designs. Craig doesn’t do any of that. It’s all hand-drawn, which I think is amazing. And even silkscreen – nobody does silkscreen anymore – it’s old school – but Craig does silkscreen.”

“It’s real. It’s authentic. It’s powerful in its simplicity. I appreciate Craig Neff and I’m not saying that because he’s my husband. I appreciated that when I first met him. He is a man of integrity.”

Not only is the fabric for Neff’s aloha wear printed here in Hawai’i, but every piece of clothing is sewn here as well.

Today, most Hawaiian wear is made in Asia, but Neff is

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Hawaiian Force's store on the Hilo waterfront draws both locals and visitors. - Photos: Puanani Fernandez-Akamine



The store is a comfortable, welcoming space where customers not only browse and buy, but often linger to talk story with co-owner Luana Neff.



Hawaiian Force founder and designer Craig Neff’s popular t-shirts make bold political statements to spark dialogue and educate.



BEHIND THE FORCE

Continued from page 13



Craig Neff with his original "Hawaiian Blood" screen. The design is more than 40 years old, but still a top seller. - Photo: Luana Busby-Neff

committed to his clothing being 100% made in Hawai'i. "Seamstresses are a dying breed," he shrugged. "Labor here is more expensive and there's a shortage. No young kids want to sew as a job now. It's hard work."

Despite their commitment to "Made in Hawai'i" product integrity, Hawaiian Force aloha wear is competitively priced.

In so many ways, Hawaiian Force is a model for 'Ōiwi

entrepreneurship – a successful business with a higher purpose. "Hawaiian Force has supported our activism all these years. It has supported our work for aloha 'āina because the Hawaiian Force is all about aloha and its expression and its reality in practice. It's not just cerebral. It's the act of doing and being present for the kuleana at hand," Busby-Neff said.

"Kaho'olawe and the movement were the inspiration for the Force, but the Force has supported me so I could do all of those things," added Neff. "I'm not the richest guy in town, but I have the freedom to go where I need to go when I have to go."

"When we talk about sovereignty and self-determination, the fact is that we've lived off of our own work," noted Busby-Neff. "Hawaiian Force has paid our bills, paid for our house, and afforded us a comfortable lifestyle."

A LEGACY OF ART

Although Neff is trained in multiple mediums, he wanted to make a living from his art, and knew it was "easier to sell a t-shirt than fine art." However, he continues to paint and draw and work in other mediums, transforming some of those images to his shirt designs.

"Art is the way Craig expresses himself. He shares what he is passionate about – his Kanaka-ness, his Hawaiian-ness, through his artwork. That's very important to him," said Busby-Neff.

"We've always been part of the Hawaiian movement,

always been advocates for aloha 'āina, from the time it was unpopular. We helped make it popular because of the work we've done from the get-go. Seriously, I will claim that," declared Busby-Neff. "We were a big part of the movement – and Craig depicted that movement through his art."

In fact, Neff's artwork and t-shirt designs have so uniquely depicted the history of the Native Hawaiian political movement, that they have been exhibited at Disney's Epcot Center, at the Smithsonian Institution, and at Te Papa, the national museum of Aotearoa.

"His messaging was always pro-Hawaiian, and he addressed the issues in either a funny or serious way – the good, the bad, the ugly and the funny – he put it on a t-shirt when no one else was doing that," said Busby-Neff.

Having stayed the course for more than 40 years, Neff is now contemplating the future.

"I'm living a good life; still living the dream. I recognize how lucky I am, with the skills and ability to have this business. But I'm 67 now. I can see the light at the end of the tunnel already and I'm open to options – but I'm also open to just closing the Force. Someone might want to buy it, but I'd rather close it than have it go off into the wrong direction."

Neff pauses. "The Force is me. I am the Force. Maybe my lifetime is its lifetime." ■

[WWW.HAWAIIANFORCE.COM](http://WWW.HAWAIIANFORCE.COM)

A photograph of a young man with dark hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt, sitting at a desk and working on a laptop. He is looking down at the screen. The background is a blurred indoor setting with plants and windows.

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## Kualono i ke Alo o Kēhau

By Lisa Kaponi Mason



A palila enjoys the early morning dew. - Photo: Ann Tanimoto Johnson

**H**ahai nō ka ua i ka ululā'au. The rain follows the forest, the forest follows the rain, and the birds follow them both. Temperature and rainfall, the two foundations of climate, shape the vegetation of an area and in turn, designate which forms of nature may endure.

This year, over 40% of Hawai'i is abnormally dry, and conditions are expected to worsen as drought becomes more frequent and intense. Some places, like the leeward slopes of Maunakea, have weathered these dry spells for too long. The mountain has faced widespread deforestation, the loss of native vegetation, and the long-lasting impact of grazing ungulates. Yet even in the face of so much change, these forests remain abundant.

Within the kualono of Maunakea's western slopes, resilient pockets of māmane-naio forest still cradle the last wild population of Hawai'i Island's endemic Palila, the finch billed honeycreeper.

Only about 500 birds remain. Their steady survival is linked to isolated moisture-rich refuges, pockets of veiled forest where the kēhau mists and

nāulu rains sustain growth even in the driest years. It is here where Ka'ohē, the ahupua'a that encompasses all of Maunakea, still resounds each year with Palila songs.

Rehabilitating and expanding these refugia will help buffer the remaining population against enduring drought and safeguard Palila's ancestral home. Ola i ka wai a ka 'ōpua, from the water of the clouds, life continues. ■



Water rising at Ka'ohē ma uka. - Photo: Lisa L.K. Mason

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

## OHA Hosts Aloha 'Āina Advocacy Workshop for Youth

By Ku'uleianuhea Awo-Chun

**Y**outh from Hawai'i and abroad gathered at the Don Hatch Youth Center in Tulalip, Washington, for an Aloha 'Āina Advocacy Workshop hosted by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA). As the registration sponsor for the Hawaiian Council's annual Native Hawaiian Convention, OHA facilitated a special session for the 'ōpio (youth) track.

OHA Board Chair Kaiali'i Kahele, Vice Chair Keoni Souza, Chair Emerita Hulu Lindsey, and O'ahu Trustee Kalei Akaka, along with members of their teams, joined staff from Strategy and Implementation, Hawaiian Cultural Affairs, Community Engagement, and Research and Evaluation to work with over 30 youth participants.



OHA Chair Emerita Hulu Lindsey meets with a student. - Courtesy Photos

'ohana, schools, and communities. Groups included haumāna from Ke Kula o Samuel M. Kamakau, Ke Kula Kaiapuni o Pū'ohala, Kamehameha Schools' Kapālama and Kea'au campuses, and 'Ekolu Mea Nui.

Sr. Director of Hawaiian Cultural Affairs Kumu Hailama Farden opened with a presentation on

OHA's creation, followed by Kū'ike Kama'akea-Ōhelo, director of 'Ōiwi Wellbeing and 'Āina Momona, who shared stories of aloha 'āina advocacy. Director of Economic and Business Resilience Poni Askew guided 'ōpio through persuasive speaking exercises – skills she likened to pitching a business.

Trustees met in small groups with youth to share their 'ike, answer questions, and discuss challenges facing the lāhui in alignment with OHA's Mana i Maui Ola Strategic Plan.

Students then created advocacy plans using templates developed by OHA's education team. An action-planning worksheet – using the imagery of a rock wall and inspired by the prophecy of Kapihe, which ends with "e kū ana ka paia" (the walls shall stand upright) – helped youth ground their plans in 'āina, kaiaulu (community), and mo'okū'auhau (genealogy). Topics included support for kaiapuni [Hawaiian medium] education, housing initiatives, and curriculum ideas.

The session concluded with creative expressions of advocacy, including art and haku mele (song composition). One group of haumāna composed additional lyrics to *Kaulana Nā Pua* that they performed at the closing of the session.

According to post-workshop surveys, 86% of participants felt prepared to address an issue in their community – a promising sign of the next generation carrying forward the

spirit of aloha 'āina.

In that spirit of advocacy, if you are an alumni of OHA's 'Aha 'Ōpio programs, please complete our survey at [oha.org/aha-opiosurvey](http://oha.org/aha-opiosurvey) to share your experiences. ■



One group of haumāna composed additional original lyrics to *Kaulana nā Pua* and performed it at the end of the session.

Together, they explored OHA's history, connected the agency's kuleana for advocacy with aloha 'āina actions from past to present, and offered tools to inspire culturally grounded advocacy in students' own



# No ka Pono o Papahānaumokuākea!

By J. Hau'oli Lorenzo-Elarco

The past month was marked by advocacy to protect Papahānaumokuākea from commercial fishing. On September 16, members of the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group (NHCWG) stood in solidarity with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), scientists, conservationists, and community organizations, to deliver powerful testimony to the federally funded Western Pacific Fishery Council (WESPAC).

Together, we spoke in defense of one of the world's most ecologically and culturally significant marine protected areas. Papahānaumokuākea's protections were not created overnight – they were built over years of public engagement, cultural leadership, scientific collaboration, and international cooperation.



View of Papahānaumokuākea, a place worthy of protection, as seen from the Island of Nihoa. - Photo: Brad Ka'aleleo Wong

Today, those protections face an unprecedented threat. WESPAC has repeatedly attempted to weaken marine safeguards, advancing proposals to reopen marine monuments and sanctuaries, including Papahānaumokuākea, to commercial extraction.

Acting under federal directives, NOAA Fisheries is now "reconsidering" key regulations through the so-called "seafood competitiveness" strategy. Framed as "modernization," this process paves the way for commercial interests to override conservation efforts and Indigenous stewardship, undermining decades of work to protect these sacred waters.

In my testimony I emphasized that traditionally, Hawaiian families only fish in within the coasts and waters of our own land division. Fishing beyond one's borders is considered disrespectful and a breach of protocol. I expressed severe disappointment at rhetoric perpetuated by WESPAC insinuating that "these are 'American' waters, and 'American' fishermen have the right to fish there."



Papahānaumokuākea is in Hawaiian waters; no one has the right to fish there.

It is among the largest marine protected areas in the world. For perspective: if the Pacific Ocean were a football field, Papahānaumokuākea would be the size of a postage stamp. Yet, WESPAC and its allies are focusing on fishing in this tiny part of the ocean.

The ecosystem found within Papahānaumokuākea is an ancestral legacy from the *Kumulipo*, our cosmogonic chant. As Native Hawaiians, the salt waters of Papahānaumokuākea run through our veins, its waterways are our memories of oceanic migration paths connecting us to every living creature and island in this vast ocean of Moananuiākea.

For a thousand years, our kūpuna manifested Papahānaumokuākea's pristine beauty and sacredness for the benefit of today's generation and for the next thousand. This is true foresight. Yet, in just a few short years, it could all be destroyed through extractive activities like commercial fishing and deep-sea mining. Let us not be the shortsighted generation.

Final comments and a petition with 2,600+ signatures advocating for the fullest protections for Papahānaumokuākea has been sent to the federal government. As we await the forthcoming decision on commercial fishing policies in Papahānaumokuākea and other marine protected areas, we must remain vigilant and ready.

Mahalo nui to everyone who came together in support of this massive undertaking. When the opposition says no community exists in Papahānaumokuākea remember: We are the community! ■

*Stay updated on this issue and other opportunities to amplify the story of our kūpuna islands by following the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group (alohacwg.com) and the Papahānaumokuākea Coalition (papahanaumokuakeacoalition.org) on FB and IG.*

*J. Hau'oli Lorenzo-Elarco was raised by the cold Kīpu'upu'u rain of Waimea, Hawai'i. He is an assistant professor of Hawaiian language at Honolulu Community College and coordinator of the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group (CWG), serving as chair of the Nomenclature Subcommittee. He is also a Ph.D. candidate in the Hawaiian and Indigenous Language and Culture Revitalization program at Ka Haka 'Ūla o Ke'elikōlani at UH Hilo.*

# Honoring Our Living Culture: The Power of Word Choice

By Mālia Sanders



The words we use to describe Native Hawaiians, our culture, and our history carry deep meaning. They can honor our ancestors and affirm our identity – or unintentionally suggest that we belong only to the past.

One word we encourage people to avoid is "ancient." While often used respectfully, it can imply that Native Hawaiian culture and people no longer exist. That we are relics of another time.

Referring to our kūpuna (ancestors, elders) as "ancient" risks separating them from who we are today. In truth, our kūpuna are not distant figures. Their knowledge, values, and practices are alive in us, in the way we care for 'āina, raise our families, and practice our traditions.

Similarly, the phrase "Hawaiians of antiquity" may sound formal or scholarly, but it creates the same problem. The word "antiquity" is often used in academic settings to describe civilizations that no longer exist.

That framing does not reflect our reality as Native Hawaiians – a people whose ancestral line, cultural systems, and identity remain unbroken. Our kūpuna are not just of the past; they are our foundation and continue to guide our present and future.

This same understanding applies to wahi kūpuna, our ancestral places. In a Hawaiian worldview, these are not "ruins" or "relics." They are

living landscapes, imbued with the spirit and presence of those who came before us.

Wahi kūpuna connect us genealogically and spiritually, reminding us that our relationship to place is ongoing and alive. Just

as our ancestors are not gone, their places are not forgotten. They are part of the same living continuum.

When referring to the time before Western contact, we prefer words that express the vitality and continuity of our people and culture. Terms like "kūpuna," "early Hawaiian society," or "early Hawaiian practitioners" honor the depth of our traditions while recognizing that they continue to live through us today.

Another word we encourage avoiding is "Hawaiiana." This term became popular in the mid-20th century to describe Hawaiian-themed objects, stories, and practices. However, it often commodified and romanticized Hawaiian culture, turning it into a product rather than a living expression of Native Hawaiian worldview.

Today, we use "mo'omeheu Hawai'i" or "Native Hawaiian culture" instead. These terms center Native Hawaiian identity, sovereignty, and lived experience.

Language shapes understanding. When we choose words that reflect the living nature of our culture, we honor the resilience and strength of our people. Our history is not frozen in time, it moves with us, breathes with us, and continues to grow within us through every generation guided by the wisdom of our kūpuna. ■

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**Ka Wai Ola ?**

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# Nā Makawai: Ka Wai Ola no ka Lāhui

By Nakia Nae'ole

I loko o nā mo'olelo kahiko, he makawai ka puka li'ilī'i o ka 'auwai e kahe ai ka wai i ka lo'i, e hānai ana i ka kalo a e ola ai ke kanaka. Papa Ola Lōkahi carries this kaona forward through Nā Makawai, a program that directs wai ola — life-giving waters — into the hands of our community mahi'ai who cultivate health, resilience, and identity for our people.

He 'ōlelo no'ēau e 'ōlelo ana: "I ola ka wai, I ola ke kānaka" — when the water lives, the people live. Nā Makawai stives to embody this truth.

The program was born in 2021, during the height of ka ma'i ahulau COVID-19, when Congress set aside \$20 million to support Native Hawaiian recovery. Papa Ola Lōkahi launched Nā Makawai to ensure these resources flowed i nā wahi kūpono loa — into the hands of organizations already serving our lāhui.

Guided by the recommendations of E Ola Mau and grounded in 'ike kūpuna, Nā



Makawai became more than funding. It is he hale ulu, a house of cultivation, and a pūnana — a nest — where pilina, culture, and innovation can take root and thrive.

The philosophy of Nā Makawai affirms ola kino, ola na'au, ola 'ohana, ola 'āina — a health that is inseparable from body, spirit, family, and land.

Participation asks for more than compliance. Partners come together to share mo'olelo, waiwai 'ike, and aloha. In this way, Nā Makawai strengthens ka 'i'o o ka lāhui, the very flesh and fiber of our people.

Its impacts are visible across pae 'āina and throughout the diaspora. In Oregon, the Roots in the Diaspora project cultivated kalo gardens that became wahi hānai for 'ohana to learn, eat, and heal. Lo'iloa, KALO, and the Pacific Islander Health Partnership gathered lāhui in Oregon and California to carve papa ku'i 'ai, ku'i kalo, and connect once more to Hāloa, kō kākou kaikua'ana. These are not mere deliverables — they are ho'omau 'āina a ho'oulu lāhui.

As Nā Makawai enters its fifth year, we look ahead to expanding culturally grounded interventions, strengthening diaspora engagement, and advocating for policies that ensure ola pono for future generations. At the 'Aha Ho'olōkahi Summit, partners were reminded of another 'ōlelo no'ēau: "A'ohe hua o ka mai'a i ka lā ho'okahi" — no banana fruit ripens in a single day. Real growth takes time, patience, and collective nurturing.

E holo mau ana nā makawai — the waters will continue to flow. With each partner, each 'ohana, and each lo'i kalo tended, Nā Makawai nourishes our lāhui for generations to come.

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

*Nakia Nae'ole, of Lā'ie-wai, Ko'olauloa, serves as project coordinator at Papa Ola Lōkahi, coordinating the Nā Makawai initiative that supports Native Hawaiian health and community resilience.*



A makawai (small waterway) in a lo'i at Niuli'i, Hawai'i Island. - Courtesy Photo

# Līhu'e Café Serves Up Aloha

By KipuKai Kuali'i

Kawika Kuali'i and Kaina Lovell have been serving up Aloha at "Aloha Craft Café" in the Old Līhu'e Plantation building for over three years now.

The Café's beginnings go back to "Plantation Coffee," the former employment program for recovering addicts operated by "Love the Journey." Kawika went through the program himself and quickly became the lead manager.

So, it was only natural when the former owners moved away that Kawika and his spouse, Kaina, would seize the opportunity to create Aloha Craft Café. Kaina was already a food crafter along with his sister, Nalani Kaneakua, sourcing their salad and sandwich creations to health food stores like Vim & Vigor.

Both young entrepreneurs had been wanting to create something of their own — to take the next step and become business owners. They knew their potential, given their background and years of experience in hospitality and



food service. Their goal was to build something thoughtful and authentic, a place that celebrates quality, craftsmanship, and the aloha spirit. They refer to their small, close-knit team as family rather than staff — saying everyone plays an important part in keeping things running smoothly and upholding the Café's standards

for quality and consistency.

They both wear many hats. From day-to-day operations and menu development to overseeing catering partnerships and customer experience, they're very hands-on. They take pride in being involved in every detail to make sure everything they serve lives up to their "crafted with aloha" philosophy.

Their coffee service focuses on quality beans, careful preparation, and friendly service. Their breakfast highlights fresh, satisfying favorites — like breakfast burritos served with their signature creamy garlic sauce. For lunch, their craft club is a standout: turkey, avocado, bacon, and cheese often enjoyed with a side of that same creamy garlic sauce.

Another favorite (and my favorite) is their house specialty tuna melt, which has become a go-to for many regulars. I like to add avocado and tomato to mine! The Café also partners with several tour companies across the island to provide ready-to-enjoy meals for guests on the go — it's their way of extending the "Aloha" beyond the "Café."

The Café's following includes a loyal mix of local residents and repeat visitors. County, state and other workers from all over Līhu'e Town stop by to grab-and-go or hang out in the cozy lobby dining room.

The Café is quite the gathering place — especially on Fridays when the kūpuna come to kanikapila. Come check it out! ■



Entrepreneurs Kawika Kuali'i and Kaina Lovell have operated Aloha Craft Café in Līhu'e for the past three years. - Courtesy Photo

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## Ka Palupalu o Kanaloa

### When the salvation of a species depends on a single seed

By Bobby Camara



On 'Ale'ale, kanaloa sprawled over vesiculated (puka-laden) blocks of pōhaku, as waves ricochet below. - Photo: iNaturalist

An epic example of noho i waho, a maliu ... be outside, pay attention. In 1992, botanizing botanists, incorrigible plant people, while climbing around, with permits, on 'Ale'ale, a sea stack off Kaho'olawe, happened upon a sprawling plant they came to realize had never been seen before.

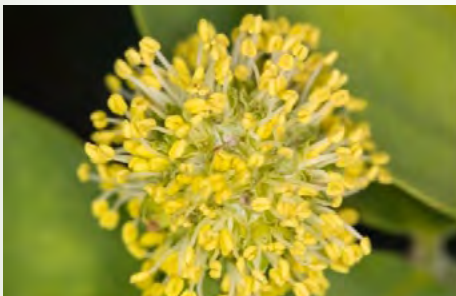
And good thing Ken Wood and Steve Perlman, working for the National Tropical Botanical Garden, did because in 2015 kanaloa (*Kanaloa kahoolawensis*) became extinct in the wild. But before that fateful day, two seeds were found and collected. One germinated and became the founder of the surviving nursery population.

The late Parley Kanaka'ole bestowed its inoa Hawai'i, referring to Kanaloa, a traditional name of Kaho'olawe, and the gentle flexible nature of the plant. Kanaloa, studied and classified, became the only species

in its Genus, and is an endemic member of the pea family, a relative of koa, wiliwili, and māmane, as well as invasive ēkoa.

And now, for our word of the month: tergeminate, or thrice-twinned, a reference to the arrangement of leaves on a stem. Liko, young leaves, are bronze colored, and globular flower clusters bear a resemblance to those of koa. The discovery of kanaloa led to solving the "Riddle of the Mysterious Pollen."

Archaeologists working on O'ahu, Maui, and Hawai'i found an unidentifiable pollen in cores taken from wetlands. It turned out to be kanaloa and, along with 'a'ali'i and loulu, the trio formed a vegetation zone on leeward lowlands until the late 1500s. By then, people had impacted native ecosystems so much that kanaloa disappeared from the pollen record. But, it lingered on 'Ale'ale. Tenaciously waiting... ■



Many pollen-producing anthers create a globe of yellow, as pua bloom. - Photo: Zach Pezzillo



Very young bronze liko, a globular cluster of stamened pua, and tergeminate lau: 'elua, māhoe, māhoe: thrice-twinned. - Photo: Zach Pezzillo

## Nā Mo'olelo Wānana no Kamehameha, Mahele 2

Na Kalani Akana, Ph.D.

Aloha e nā makamaka heluhelu o kēia kolamu. Ke nānā nei kākou i nā wānana e pili ana iā Kamehameha me kāna na'i 'ana i nā mokupuni i aupuni ho'okahi.

Maopopo paha iā kākou 'o Pu'u Koholā (Kohola) ka heiau nui ā Kamehameha i kūkulu ai. 'A'ole maopopo paha iā kākou i ke kumu o ka heiau no ka mea 'o Mo'okini ka heiau nui a Alapa'i mā i ka wā a Kamehameha e 'ōpio ana.

Eia ke kumu: Ua hele huaka'i 'o Ha'alo'u, ke kaikamahine a Hā'ae-a-Mahi, i Kaua'i e huli iā Kapoukahi, he kilo a he makaula ia a he hoa no Kāneikahealani, kona kupunawahine. Ua nīnau 'o Ha'alo'u iā Kapoukahi e pili ana i ke kumu o ka lilo 'ana o ke aupuni i kona haku 'o Kamehameha.

Pane mai 'o Kapoukahi, "Eia ka mea e lilo holo'oko'a ai ke kumu o Hawai'i ko haku, i hale no ke akua. E kūkulu a nui, a hana no ho'i i nā palena a pau a maika'i."

I ka nīnau 'ana a Ha'alo'u i kāhi e kūkulu ai ia heiau kulu 'ā, pane 'o Kapoukahi, "'O Pu'u Koholā... 'o ka hale auane'i kēia o ke akua o ko haku [Kūkā'ilimoku], puni ka moku. 'A'ohe he 'eha ka 'ili. 'O ka mā kāhā nō ia he niuhi ka i'a e mānalo ai. Ma ka hoa paio; pau ka pula o ka maka [Keōuakū'ahu'ula]; moe le'ale'a ka



pō. Puni Hawai'i."

Ma ka mo'olelo 'o Kekūhaupi'o, ua kauleo nā kākā'ōlelo me nā kuhina iā Kamehameha e kūkulu i kona hale akua ma Pu'u Kohola ('a'ole Koholā) no ka mea he kai kohola ma mua o ka heiau. Inā papa'u ke kai

kohola e ma'alahi ana ke kaua. Inā hohonu ke kai (e like me ke kai ma waho o Mo'okini), e pa'akikī ana ke kaua. Ua kō ka wānana a Kapoukahi a me nā kākā'ōlelo. Aia 'o Pu'u Kohola/Koholā ma laila a hiki i kēia lā.

'O Kaua'i me Nīihau wale nō, nā mokupuni i kūna'ina 'ole 'ia e Kamehameha. Eia kekahi wānana no kēlā. Ma hope o ke kaua o Lele'anae ma Nu'uau, ua ho'omaha iki 'o Kamehameha ma O'ahu e ho'omākaukau i ka ho'ouka kaua 'ana i ke aupuni o Kamuali'i o Kaua'i.

Ma mua loa, iā Kamehameha e kaua ana ma Hawai'i Mokupuni, ua kāmālū ke kahuna 'o Lonohelumoa iā ia penei: "Mai hele 'oe i ko huaka'i [i Kaua'i], e noho no kāua i Hawai'i nei, he 'ai no ko uka he i'a nō ho'i ko kai, he lani nō i luna, he honua nō ho'i lalo, a 'o Hawai'i nō ne'i noho iho." ■

*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*

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# Breast Cancer and Hawaiian Women: Lifestyle Matters

By Jodi Leslie Matsuo, DrPH, RDN

Thanks to earlier detection and better treatment, breast cancer deaths nationally have fallen. Yet Native Hawaiian women continue to face a heavy burden.

Between 2014 to 2018, Native Hawaiian women had the highest rates of breast cancer and breast cancer deaths in Hawai'i - higher than Japanese, Filipino, or white women. Many cancers are still found at advanced stages, when treatment is harder and recovery slower.

Traditionally, breast cancer has been seen as a disease that mainly affects older women. Yet in recent years, doctors are seeing more cases in women under 50, with rates in younger women rising faster than in older age groups. This makes prevention and the adoption of healthy habits important early in life.

Studies worldwide show that 30-50% of breast-cancer cases could be prevented through healthy lifestyle choices. Lifestyle factors that increase cancer risk are:

- **Excess body weight:** Extra fat tissue raises estrogen, insulin, and inflammation, all of which increase breast cancer risk. Recent U.S. data show that excess weight accounts for about 30% of advanced-stage cases in postmenopausal women. In Hawai'i, 73% of Native Hawaiians are overweight or obese, the strongest modifiable risk factor women can change. For those already diagnosed, maintaining a healthy weight can help lower recurrence risk.
- **High breast density:** Dense breast tissue increases risk, explaining nearly 40% of advanced cases in younger women and up to 47% in Asian and Pacific Islander groups. Alcohol use and low physical activity raise density, on top of genetics.
- **Alcohol intake:** Every alcoholic drink per day raises breast cancer risk about 10%, with each additional drink increasing risk further. One drink equals



one can of beer, ½ cup of wine, or one shot of liquor. In short, there's no health benefit to drinking alcohol. Avoiding it is one of the simplest protective steps.

The following are lifestyle choices that lower cancer risk. Together, these everyday choices can prevent roughly one in three breast cancers:

- **Physical activity:** Regular exercise – about 150 minutes a week of brisk walking or equivalent – lowers risk by 20-30% and improves hormone balance and immunity. Among those already diagnosed, it can reduce death from breast cancer by 48%. Yet about 24% of Native Hawaiians report no regular physical activity.
- **Healthy diet:** Eating more fruits, vegetables, soy, beans, and whole grains is linked to lower breast cancer risk. In contrast, higher intakes of red and processed meat, saturated fats, and processed foods are associated with more deaths and recurrences.
- **Breastfeeding and limiting hormone therapy:** Each 12 months of breastfeeding lowers risk about 4%; minimizing menopausal hormone therapy also helps.
- **Regular mammograms:** Screening can detect breast cancer early, often before symptoms appear, when treatment is most effective and survival rates are highest. Studies show that regular mammograms lower the chance of dying from breast cancer by 25-40%.

Lifestyle medicine isn't a replacement for medical care, it's a partner. Combined with timely screening and treatment, positive daily choices can protect, heal, and empower Hawai'i's wāhine for generations to come. ■

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

# AHCC Conventions Empower

By Pa'ahana Bissen

From October 26 through November 2, 2025, the Mainland Council of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs and its member clubs will voyage to the 66th Annual Convention of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs (AHCC) on Moku o Keawe.

Joining fellow district councils, we will converge on Keauhou, Kona, to host Hawai'i Council's kāhea: "E Mau ke Ea" (sovereignty continues).

By tradition, district councils rotate hosting the annual AHCC conventions. Over three years in the planning, Hawai'i Council will welcome some 63 Hawaiian Civic Clubs from the shores of Kaua'i all the way to Washington, D.C.

AHCC conventions are purposeful and include everything from policy-making and cultural preservation to community unification and advocacy. Founded by Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole, AHCC is a grassroots, non-profit volunteer group dedicated to the perpetuation and cultivation of Native Hawaiian culture.

The Hawai'i Council site selection at Keauhou aligns with the Hawaiian Civic Clubs' commitment to cultural preservation and education.

Keauhou is the birthplace of King Kamehameha III, the longest-reigning monarch in Hawaiian history. After being pronounced stillborn, he was revived in a nearby spring, an event of great cultural importance.

The burial grounds at Lekeleke just south of Keauhou are the resting place of Hawaiian warriors who fell in the Battle of Kuamo'o in 1819. And a portion of the Kāneaka Hōlua Slide, made famous by the *Chief of War* series, is also located in Keauhou.

Mo'olelo from lineal descendants share the history of the restoration of Ke'ekū, Makole-a, Hāpaiali'i, and Kapuanoni Heiau and the removal of the Keauhou Beach Hotel.

Every annual AHCC Convention, delegates seize the kuleana – the sacred responsibility and privilege – of policy-making and advocacy.



Before the 2025 AHCC delegation are 94+ proposed resolutions, here are but a few:

- Hawaiian Homeland Issuance of undivided interest to all living beneficiaries
- Teaching of Pre-1959 Hawaiian History across all grade levels
- Strong support to maintain vote-by-mail system
- Affirming support for Kamehameha Schools' admissions policy
- Affirming Federal Trust responsibilities to Native Hawaiians
- Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana
- Urging the City and County of Honolulu to enact a percentage-based homeowner exemption
- A ban on commercial aquarium collection in State of Hawai'i waters
- Calling for the restoration of land to Native Hawaiian stewardship after U.S. Army leases expire in 2029
- Supporting Hawaiian immersion as a vital component of Hawai'i's education system

AHCC conventions are instrumental in empowering clubs throughout the pae 'āina and the diaspora. By convening all clubs, the conventions reinforce a shared sense of purpose, solidify Hawaiian identity, and advance the collective mission of strengthening the lāhui.

Details of AHCC Convention with host Hawai'i Council can be found: [aohcc.org/2025convention](http://aohcc.org/2025convention). ■

*Pa'ahana Bissen served as the third pelekikena (president) of the Mainland Council of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs from 1995-1998 and the first female elected. She also served as the second vice president of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs from 2000-2004 – the first non-Hawai'i resident elected to the AHCC. She currently serves as a board member of the Las Vegas Hawaiian Civic Club.*



## E NHLC...

The real property taxes for my 'ohana land are so high. How can I get it reduced?

By Li'ulā Christensen, Esq., NHLC  
Senior Staff Attorney



**R**eal property taxes are burdensome but must be kept current to avoid tax liens and foreclosures. Counties offer a variety of exemptions that may apply to your property to reduce real property tax amounts.

The four counties offer a kuleana property tax exemption that reduces the real property tax on kuleana lands to at least the minimum real property tax. To qualify, the kuleana land must be owned in whole or in part by a lineal descendant of the person that received the original title to the kuleana. This lineal descent can be proven by court order or through the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' genealogy verification services.

For the exemption, "kuleana land" means those lands awarded to native tenants pursuant to the Kuleana Act of 1850. These Land Commission Awards allowed maka'āinana to claim lands that they were actively cultivating plus an additional ¼ acre for a house lot but required a survey and two witnesses to validate the claim. As a result, only 28,658 acres of kuleana lands were awarded to maka'āinana.

Only Maui County recognizes that many maka'āinana took advantage of a provision allowing them to purchase government lands at a minimum of 50 cents per acre, resulting in 167,290 acres being purchased by maka'āinana. The County of Maui calls these lands "Kuleana Act government grant land" and offers the same tax exemption for these lands as well. Maui County is progressive in exempting the qualifying land from real property taxes, delinquent taxes, and penalties.

The other counties require payment of the minimum tax and provide no retroactive relief.

Maui County also offers the 'Āina Kūpuna exemption for land located in the special management area owned in whole, or part, by one or more descendants of the person who owned the property at least 80 years prior to the application and assessed over \$10,000 in taxes over the prior 10 years.

The owner may dedicate the property as 'Āina Kūpuna for a period of 10 years to qualify to pay the minimum tax. Like the kuleana exemption, descendancy can be proven by court order or through OHA verification. The dedicated property cannot be conveyed to a non-descendant or used for commercial purposes for the 10-year period, or it will be subject to retroactive taxes and penalties.

Finally, real property taxes are based on the assessed value, tax classification, and any applicable exemptions for the property, which may be appealed if you disagree with the county's assessment. Deadlines to file appeals are short: Maui's and Hawai'i's assessment notices are mailed by March 15 with appeals due by April 9; for Kaua'i, appeals are due by December 31 preceding the tax year; and for Honolulu, notices are mailed by December 15, with appeals due by January 15. If successful, an appeal may result in lower real property taxes for your property. ■

*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).*

## Mainland Group Sues Kamehameha

**O**n October 20, a conservative organization from Virginia calling itself "Students for Fair Admissions" filed a lawsuit challenging Kamehameha Schools' admissions policy which gives enrollment preference to students of Native Hawaiian ancestry.

In response, Kamehameha Schools' Board of Trustees emailed a statement to parents and alumni that evening saying, "We are ready for this challenge. We are resolved to vigorously defend our admissions policy and will engage every legal and operational resource to protect Ke Ali'i Pauahi's kauoha (will).

"The facts and the law are on our side, and we are confident that we will prevail. In kapu aloha, we will stand strong together."

The lawsuit announcement generated a quick community response. On the morning of October 21, hundreds of Native Hawaiians and supporters converged on 'Iolani Palace for a rally and show of support for the schools while another 20,000 tuned into the event's livestream.

And later that day, the Hawai'i State House of Representatives issued their own statement in support of Kamehameha which read, in part, "We stand in support of Kamehameha Schools' mission and its unwavering commitment to the Native Hawaiian people. When Hawai'i's Indigenous community thrives, all of Hawai'i thrives."

"Students for Fair Admissions" is headed by Republican activist Edward Blum who has made it his mission to dismantle school admissions policies he perceives as "race conscious." He normally targets colleges and universities (e.g., Harvard), but in September turned his attention to Kamehameha.

Blum's organization solicits individuals who claim to have been rejected by university admissions departments because of race, and then files lawsuits on their behalf. With assembly-line speed and precision, on September 4 the organization launched a website seeking plaintiffs for the lawsuit against Kamehameha - just two weeks after concluding a lawsuit against West Point and the Air Force Academy in mid-August.



About 500 people gathered at 'Iolani Palace on October 21 to show their support for Kamehameha Schools after a lawsuit was filed on October 20 challenging its admissions policy. Photo: Jason Lees

In a press release announcing the lawsuit Blum writes, "Kamehameha can keep its mission, its culture and its curriculum but it cannot bar children because of their race," adding "America's civil rights laws and Constitution do not permit any public or private school to operate a system in which race or bloodline determines who may be admitted."

The Indigeneity of Native Hawaiians, Hawai'i's history of Native dispossession, and Native Hawaiian political status are not considerations in the lawsuit.

Kamehameha's admission policy was last challenged in 2006, at which time the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals voted to uphold the preference policy, ruling that it did not violate federal law and that the admissions policy was part of a unique remedial mission.

"Let us draw strength from our faith in Ke Akua, our ancestors, and in one another," Kamehameha's statement read. "Together, we have the collective resolve to defend Ke Ali'i Pauahi, her kauoha and Hawai'i. E ola koa, e ola ke ea!" ■

*For more information and to sign a petition in support of Kamehameha Schools go to:*

[ksbe.edu/ola-pauahi](http://ksbe.edu/ola-pauahi)



## Celebrating Excellence at the 'Ō'ō Awards



The Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce held its annual 'Ō'ō Awards Gala on October 17 at the Sheraton Waikiki. The prestigious 'Ō'ō Award is presented to Native Hawaiians who have made significant contributions to the lāhui. This year three individuals were honored: Community leader and 'ai pono advocate Tammy Smith; Honolulu Community Action Program CEO and Executive Director Robert Piper; and former Hawaiian Homes Commission chair and public servant Ray Soon. Pictured at the gala (l-r) are musician Mele Apana, honoree Tammy Smith, OHA Interim Administrator Summer Sylva, and OHA BOT Vice Chair Keoni Souza. - Photo: Courtesy of Mele Apana

## Hawaiian Midwifery Practices Protected

In October, the State of Hawai'i agreed to settle a lawsuit brought by the Center for Reproductive Rights, Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation (NHL), and the law firm Perkins Coie. The case challenged the Midwifery Restriction Law, which effectively limited midwifery in the state and threatened Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners of traditional Hawaiian birthing practices with criminal liability.

The law, which was effective July 2023, prevented anyone from providing advice, information, or care during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum without a specific state license. However, there were no such licensing programs available in Hawai'i, meaning that Native Hawaiian midwives already trained in traditional practices would need to travel to the continent at their own expense to be re-trained in western midwifery practices.

With the case now settled, Native Hawaiian midwives can continue providing culturally

informed care without being threatened with prison. The agreement also ensures that prospective midwives can train locally through traditional pathways without having to travel to the continent for western training programs.

While this protects Native Hawaiian traditional birthing practices, financial penalties remain for midwives who practice in Hawai'i without a license.

"We finally have a way forward to protect and pass down our sacred practices. I can continue to serve my community with the compassionate, culturally informed care they deserve," said Ki'inaniokalani Kaho'ohanohano of Maui a practicing midwife for more than 20 years.

## Gabriel Named NFL Starting Quarterback

'Ōiwi professional football player Dillon Gabriel became the second Native Hawaiian and the first Hawai'i public high school graduate to become a starting quarterback in the National Football League (NFL).

As a freshman player at Mililani High School in 2015, Gabriel took over for an injured McKenzie Milton and went on to set the Hawai'i high school passing yardage record with 9,948 yards, according to *Hawai'i Prep World*. He held that record until 2024 when Campbell High School's Jaron-Keawe Sagapolutele, finished with 10,653 yards following his senior season.

Gabriel attended the University of Central Florida in 2019 before transferring to Oklahoma. He finished his college football career at Oregon in 2024, where he broke the NCAA Division 1 Football Bowl Subdivision record with 155 touchdown passes and became a Heisman Trophy finalist.



Dillon Gabriel - Courtesy Photo

In April, Gabriel was drafted by the Cleveland Browns in the third round of the 2025 NFL Draft - the 94th overall selection. He was originally named backup quarterback and played in only two games this season prior to his first start on October 5.

The late Joe Naekauna Francis, Jr., a 1954 Kamehameha Schools graduate, was the Native Hawaiian to start an NFL game as quarterback, doing so for the Green Bay Packers in 1958. Saint Louis graduates Marcus Mariota and Tua Tagovailoa are also NFL starting quarterbacks.

## Sonoda-Pale Receives Catalyst Award

Activist, educator, and community leader Healani Sonoda-Pale has been selected as one of six recipients of a 2025 Rachel's Network Catalyst Award. Now in its seventh year, the Catalyst Award honors women leaders of color for their commitment to a healthy planet, and provides them with financial and leader-



Healani Sonoda-Pale - Courtesy Photo

ship support, and public recognition.

Named after Rachel Carson, an ecologist and advocate whose work led to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and modern environmental movement, Rachel's Network is a nationwide community of women environmental funders.

For years, Sonoda-Pale has been an outspoken advocate for issues affecting Hawai'i's Indigenous people. She is a spokesperson for Ka Lāhui Hawai'i and a lead organizer for O'ahu Water Protectors which successfully called for the shutdown and defueling of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage facility. Her advocacy has covered women's safety, intellectual property rights, iwi

kūpuna, climate change, environmental justice, and militarism.

Women of color are leading the environmental movement. Despite this, most do not receive adequate funding, support, or recognition; less than 1% of foundation giving goes to women of color and organizations led by people of color receive less than 1% of multiyear operational budget grants. Rachel's Network aims to address this disparity.

The Catalyst Award was launched in 2019 to spotlight and honor women of color working in the environmental movement. Each year, for three years, awardees receive a personal prize (\$10,000); a wellbeing stipend (\$5,000); and an organizational grant (\$10,000).

## Soon Honored by JABSOM

The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) celebrated its 60th anniversary on Octo-

SEE NEWS BRIEFS ON PAGE 29

## Alvarez Wins Emmy for Work on PBS Documentary



Keoni Alvarez, an 'Ōiwi filmmaker and iwi kūpuna advocate from Hawai'i Island has won an Emmy for his contribution to a documentary film about the 2023 Lahaina wildfire: *Maui's Deadly Firestorm*. Alvarez served as Hawai'i field producer for the film which was produced by Frontline PBS and CNN. The film is the result of a year-long investigation into the August 2023 wildfire that claimed 102 lives and devastated the historic town of Lahaina. Alvarez' work helped to amplify voices from Lahaina and ensure accountability from institutions. - Courtesy Photo



# Mysteries of Hawai'i Voted No. 1



Mysteries of Hawai'i, a Hawaiian-owned ghost tour company dedicated to exploring the eerie and unexplained, has again been named No. 1 on *USA Today's* 10 Best Readers' Choice Awards for "Best Ghost Tour" in 2025. Run by husband-and-wife duo Lopaka and Tanya Kapanui, the company has taken the top spot for three consecutive years. Founded in 1997, Mysteries of Hawai'i offers tours and storytelling events in Waikiki and Honolulu and has been among the top five ghost tours in the nation for six consecutive years. "This recognition means so much to us ... our business is not just about ghost stories," said Lopaka in a written statement. "It's about making connections. Storytelling builds bridges, reminding us that we're all connected through shared history and human experience." - *Courtesy Photo*

## NEWS BRIEFS

Continued from page 28



Dr. Reni Aukai Soon - *Courtesy Photo*

ber 11 and more than 500 guests packed the Royal Hawaiian Hotel ballroom for the occasion. As part of the celebration, JABSOM unveiled its first-ever Distinguished Alumni Awards.

Dr. Reni Aukai Soon, MD, an obstetrician, gynecologist, and 2001 JABSOM graduate was the inaugural recipient of the Hōkūho'okelewa'a Distinguished Alumni Award, for being "a fierce warrior for reproductive rights" and a leading advocate in Hawai'i for women's health. Only JABSOM MD alumni from the 2000 graduating class and

forward are eligible for this prestigious honor. Soon was selected for her research and innovation in family planning, reproductive justice, Native Hawaiian health, and clinical excellence at The Queen's Medical Center.

Soon, a Kamehameha Schools Kapālama graduate, completed her undergraduate training at Stanford University before attending JABSOM, where she currently serves as a professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Women's Health, as associate chair of Native Hawaiian Health, and as the Complex Family Planning Fellowship Program director. For more than a decade, Soon provided women's health services at the Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center.

Also honored was Dr. Neal Palafox (JABSOM 1980) with a Hie Distinguished Alumni Award. Palafox was selected for his innovation in improving health capacity and reducing health disparities in the Pacific region, and in particular for his work in cancer research and the

consequences of nuclear testing in the Pacific.

## Wright Recognized as a "Pillar of the Profession"

Dr. Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright joins a distinguished line of leaders from the University of Hawai'i Mānoa who have been recognized nationally as "Pillars of the Profession" by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA).



Dr. Erin Wright - *Courtesy Photo*

Wright, who serves as interim associate vice provost for Student Success and as dean of students, was honored this year for her sustained contributions to service, teaching, leadership and mentoring. She says the recognition is not just her own, but a reflection of the collective work of the UH community toward student success, especially those leaders also recognized as Pillars of the Profession.

"It's a kind recognition of the work I've invested in student affairs and higher education...I'm proud, and honestly, very surprised to get it. It's humbling to be recognized," Wright said.

Wright began her career at UH Mānoa in 2008 as the founding director of Native Hawaiian Student Services and later served as an associate professor of educational administration in the College of Education. There, she taught courses and published on research design, research methodologies and Indigeneity in higher education.

Individuals selected as Pillars of the Profession are nominated for designation by colleagues and students for creating a lasting impact and a legacy of extraordinary service at the institutions at which they work. ■

# Rock Wall Constructed to Secure Burial Vault at Pearl Harbor



Construction of a rock wall surrounding a burial vault at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam was finished in late September by Native Hawaiian organization Pu'uhonua o Pa'āiau Kauhale along with volunteers from the Navy and Air Force. The wall was constructed using traditional Hawaiian wall-building methods and will serve as a barrier to preserve and protect the Halealoha Haleamau burial vault. Built in 1997, the vault replicates a traditional Hawaiian burial platform and serves as a secure repository for iwi kūpuna inadvertently disturbed by development on base. - *Photo: Jonteil Johnson, U.S. Navy*

# 500 Show for Alakoko Workday



About 500 people showed up for a community workday event at Alakoko Fishpond on October 18. Hosted by Hawaiian nonprofit Mālama Hulē'ia, the volunteers helped to rebuild and cap a section of Alakoko's 2,700-foot-long wall. Folks of all ages and skill levels came out to help, working under the guidance of traditional stonework experts. Located in Līhu'e, Kaua'i, the 600-year-old Alakoko Fishpond is a now a protected historic site stewarded by Mālama Hulē'ia. Alakoko is also known as the "Menehune Fishpond." - *Photo: Courtesy of Mālama Hulē'ia*



# 'Ōlelo Hawai'i in the Brain: Why Representation Matters

By Noelani Kong-Johnson

More than 40 years ago, our kūpuna and community leaders fought to bring 'ōlelo Hawai'i back to life. They dreamed that our language would once again be spoken in homes, schools, and on playgrounds. Today, that dream is alive in our keiki who grow up speaking Hawaiian and English side by side.

But while Hawaiian is strong in our communities, there is one place it has not yet fully reached: the world of neuroscience. Around the globe, researchers study how bilingualism shapes the brain. They measure how language learning changes memory, attention, and even how our minds age. The problem is that almost all this research focuses on big languages like English, French, or Chinese.

So far, Hawaiian voices have largely been left out of that story. Each language interacts with the brain in unique ways. Without Hawaiian, we are missing a critical part of the story of what it means to be bilingual, and we lose an opportunity to see how Hawaiian strengthens our minds as well as our identities.

That's what my work hopes to change. I grew up at Pūnana Leo o Kawaiaha'o, went on to Punahou and Princeton University, and now I'm a Ph.D. student at UH Mānoa. My research looks at what happens in the brain when people grow up bilingual in Hawaiian and English.

With a team from linguistics, psychology, and the medical school, I'm using MRI technology to see what happens in the brain when Hawaiian-English bilinguals play simple language games. Our goal is not only to learn about the science of bilingualism, but also to put Hawaiian into the same global conversation that already includes other languages.

Why does this matter? Because speaking Hawaiian is not the same as speaking another language. When Hawaiian is included in neuroscience research, it affirms that 'ōlelo Hawai'i is more than just a cultural treasure. It carries our history, our worldview, our lāhui. By putting Hawaiian in the center of this research, we are saying clearly: Hawaiian belongs in every conversation — cultural, political, and scientific.

But this work depends on community participation. We are looking for adults (ages 18-45) who started speaking Hawaiian before the age of six, and keiki (ages 5-10) who are growing up speaking Hawaiian. Participants are compensated for their time, and keiki receive a small toy. More importantly, every person who joins helps make sure Hawaiian is seen, heard, and valued in a global space where it has long been missing.

Our kūpuna revived 'ōlelo Hawai'i so it could thrive again in our mouths and hearts. Now we have the chance to show how it also lives in our minds. This research is

for our lāhui, and the only way we can do it is together! ■

'O kōu komo 'ana mai, he mea  
hau'oli nō ia no mākou!  
Inā hoihoi 'oe i ke komo mai, e leka  
uila mai iā: Noelani Kong- Johnson  
ma cnmkj2@hawaii.edu



Ai 'ole, e kau inoa mai ma ke QR code

Noelani Kong-Johnson is a Ph.D. candidate at UH Mānoa. If you're interested in participating in her research study, please contact her at cnmkj2@hawaii.edu.

## Addressing Veterans' Toxic Exposure Burden

By Christina Johnson

For decades, November has carried profound significance for veterans as it marks two national observances. Held on November 11, Veterans Day was established in 1919 to commemorate the armistice of World War I and was later expanded in 1954 to recognize all military veterans. November is also National Veterans and Military Families Month, created in 1996 to recognize the sacrifices of spouses, children, and caregivers who share in that service.

These recognitions resonate in places like Hawai'i where the value of 'ohana emphasizes collective responsibility. Yet for the thousands of Native Hawaiian veterans and their families, these annual events are also a firm reminder that countless military personnel and households continue to endure the lasting health consequences of their military service, mainly due to prolonged toxic exposure. Such hidden costs of service demand more than symbolic gratitude.

Toxic exposure has long been an inevitable risk in military service. And though this encompasses a range of hazardous contaminants, asbestos remains among the most widespread and devastating. For much of the 20th century, asbestos was built into various military infrastructure, especially Navy ships and shipyards, because of its fire and heat resistance. In Hawai'i, its presence was documented in bases like Pearl Harbor Naval Complex and Aliamanu Military Reservation.

It's this heavy reliance on asbestos that made service members alarmingly vulnerable to deadly conditions, including mesothelioma, asbestosis, and lung cancer. Similarly, their families were also put at risk, as tiny asbestos fibers can cling to their uniforms and belongings, carrying them back home unknowingly. Data indicate that roughly a third of mesothelioma cases stemmed from such second-hand exposure. This toll has been particularly evident in Hawai'i, where asbestos-related deaths have exceeded 740

between 1999 and 2017.

The observances held each November are more than symbolic — they are a call to fulfill the crucial responsibilities owed to veterans as well as their supportive families. Federal measures such as the Honoring Our PACT Act of 2022 have already demonstrated progress by expanding health services and compensation to toxic-exposed veterans. Yet despite all these, much remains to be done.

Both state and federal governments must strengthen their outreach efforts so that many will be aware of the benefits available to them. They must likewise prioritize easing access to specialized care, streamlining claims processes, and extending coverage even to military families. Only by materializing these needs can the nation and Hawai'i truly honor the sacrifices of its veterans and their 'ohana — transforming ceremonial commemorations into meaningful protection and, especially, justice. ■

Cristina Johnson is a Navy veteran advocate for Asbestos Ships Organization, a nonprofit whose mission is to raise awareness and educate veterans about the dangers of asbestos exposure on Navy ships and assist them in navigating the VA claims process. For more information, visit [asbestos-ships.com](https://asbestos-ships.com).

By Ka'imookalani Muhlestein

## Ka Moloka'i Hoe

Ma ka 2025 Moloka'i Hoe - World Championship - ua hō'ike 'ia ke kūpa'a o ka mana o ka hoe wa'a, kekahi o nā hana ku'una aloha o Hawai'i. 'Ākoakoa mai nā kanaka ho'okūkū a me nā po'e māka'ika'i i ka ho'olaule'a. 'Ike 'ia ka ha'aheo Hawai'i, ka hana no'eau o ke kālai wa'a, ka mākaukau o nā hoe wa'a, a me ka ikaika o ka pilina kaiāulu.

Kaulana nō kēia heihei- a holo nā wa'a mai ke one o Moloka'i, i ke kōwā o Ka'iwi, a i ke kahakai o Kālia, Waikīkī. He 40-mile ka lōihi. He mea kupaianaha! Ua lanakila nā hoe wa'a mai Tahiti mai, a kau lākou i nā kūlana ki'eki'e o ka ho'okūkū. I ka pani 'ana hīmeni mākou a pau i ka mele *Hawai'i Aloha*. Ua nani nō ho'i.

Ke hoihoi ka 'īini e kipa mai i kēia makahiki a'e - e hele mai. Manuahi ka hele 'ana, a kono 'ia ka lehulehu. He wā e ho'onanea, e a'o mai i ke kumu hohonu o ka mo'omeheu Hawai'i, a e hō'ike i ke aloha Hawai'i i ke ao holo'oko'a.

The 2025 Moloka'i Hoe World Championship showcased the enduring spirit of Hawai'i's cherished canoe racing tradition. Competitors and spectators alike gathered to celebrate this sport. Within this event, you could see the shared pride of Hawai'i, the depth of craftsmanship knowledge, the preparation of the athletes, and the strength of the community's support/relationship.

SEE KA MOLOKA'I HOE ON PAGE 31



## KA MOLOKA'I HOE

Continued from page 30



Team OPT from Tahiti won first place at the 2025 Moloka'i Hoe- Photo: Kaimo Muhlestein

This is a famous race – that travels from the sands of Moloka'i, through the Ka'iwi channel, and arrives at the shores of Kālia, Waikīkī. The race is 41-miles in length. It is an amazing feat! Crews from Tahiti dominated the competition, capturing top honors among the elite entries. As the event was approaching the end, we all came together to close by singing *Hawai'i Aloha*. It was beautiful.

If you are encouraged to join in next year – please come. This event is free and open to the public. The event is a time to relax, to learn about the deep foundations of Hawai'i's cultural heritage, community pride, and demonstrate the spirit of aloha with the world. ■



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## Reviving 'Āina, Identity, and Economy The Heartbeat of Native Hawaiian Small Business

Across Hawai'i, a quiet renaissance is taking place, led not by large corporations, but by Native Hawaiian entrepreneurs weaving culture, 'āina, and innovation into the fabric of their businesses. Grounded in ancestral knowledge yet oriented toward the future, these enterprises represent a powerful form of economic self-determination.

For Native Hawaiian small business owners, entrepreneurship is more than a career path – it is a cultural imperative. It restores balance between people and place, advances community wellbeing, and ensures that Hawai'i's economic future reflects its Indigenous values.

Since 1974, the Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce (NHCC) has championed Native-owned business development through advocacy, networking, and education. Over the years, NHCC has awarded more than \$160,000 in scholarships to Native Hawaiian students pursuing business and entrepreneurship, cultivating the next generation of 'Ōiwi leaders.

Yet challenges persist. A report by the Department of Business and Economic Development and Tourism found that over a quarter of Native Hawaiian entrepreneurs earn less than \$9,700 annually – and more than half earn under \$39,475. These disparities highlight persistent barriers to capital, land, and markets – issues rooted in Hawai'i's colonial and economic history.

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) is committed to ensuring that Native Hawaiians and their 'ohana have access to resources to pursue their financial goals. Through caring, supportive growth, OHA's lending program strengthens economic wellbeing, empowering individuals, families, and small business owners alike. Two flagship programs anchor this effort: 1) The Hua Kanu Business Loan Program for established Native Hawaiian-owned businesses seeking to expand through working capital, equipment, or real estate investments; and 2) The Mālama Business Loan Program for smaller or newer ventures needing flexible financing to launch or grow.

OHA's mission is to enhance access for all persons of Native Hawaiian ancestry to credit, capital, and financial services and skills to create jobs, wealth, and social well-



**Kaiali'i Kahele**

CHAIR  
Trustee,  
Hawai'i Island

being for all the people of Hawai'i. Through these programs, Native Hawaiians have expanded businesses, improved homes, and pursued higher education. Unlike traditional lenders, OHA's approach is rooted in aloha and empowerment, recognizing that economic health and cultural integrity are inseparable.

Native Hawaiian small businesses are flourishing across industries, from agriculture and food to design and fashion, with big impact. Kamaka 'Ukulele, founded in 1916, continues a century-long tradition of craftsmanship, blending sustainability, and Hawaiian ingenuity. And in fashion, businesses like Sig Zane Designs, Manaola, and Kealopiko have redefined what modern Native Hawaiian design can look like, rooting their work in genealogy, symbolism, and stories of place. Their garments embody cultural pride and carry the essence of Hawai'i onto runways and into daily life.

These enterprises remind us that Native Hawaiian businesses are not only economic engines but cultural anchors. They prove that profit and purpose can coexist when guided by kuleana and aloha 'āina.

If Hawai'i is to thrive, its economy must move beyond extraction and tourism dependency. Native Hawaiian small businesses model a more sustainable future; one built on relationships rather than transactions, reciprocity rather than exploitation.

An 'ohana economy is one where success is shared, where the prosperity of one uplifts the many, and where commerce becomes a conduit for cultural continuity. To achieve that vision, Hawai'i must:

- Strengthen access to capital through Native-focused loan programs like OHA's;
- Promote land access and affordable workspaces;
- Foster mentorship networks across generations; and
- Amplify Native Hawaiian success stories to inspire future entrepreneurs.

When Native Hawaiian entrepreneurs thrive, Hawai'i thrives. Their creativity, discipline, and aloha are shaping a new model of progress grounded in identity, guided by culture, and driven by community. Supporting them is not just good economics. It's an act of restoration. ■

## SHARE YOUR MANA'O IN



Share your mana'o on issues affecting our pae 'āina and Kānaka Maoli by submitting:

*a letter to the editor*

or

*an "OpEd"  
(opinion piece)*

For more information guidelines go to:  
[kawaiola.news/about/submissions](http://kawaiola.news/about/submissions)



## Aloha 'Oe e Kumu Leinā'ala Pavao Jardin

Our hula community mourns the passing of a woman whose light illuminated so many of our paths — Kumu Hula Leinā'ala Pavao Jardin. Her departure leaves a deep ache in my heart and a silence that lingers where her laughter and presence once filled the room. Yet even through the sadness, I find comfort in knowing that her spirit lives on — in every dancer she taught, in every mele she inspired, and in every heart she touched with her aloha.

I was blessed to know Kumu Leinā'ala both as a teacher and as a friend. Over the years my group, Nā Hoa, had the honor of playing for her hālau (Hālau Ka Lei Mokihana o Leinā'ala), from Kalāheo, Kaua'i. For the past few Merrie Monarch festivals, we worked together exclusively, sharing unforgettable moments and traveling to Japan together.



Trustee Keoni Souza and Kumu Hula Leinā'ala Pavao Jardin with 2025 Miss Aloha Hula, Jaedyn Janae Puahaulani Pavao. - Courtesy Photo

Watching her teach was like watching grace in motion. Every gesture, and every word of encouragement, carried the weight of generations of knowledge and the warmth of her aloha.

Kumu Leinā'ala didn't just teach dance, she taught meaning. She reminded us that hula is more than movement; it is language, prayer, and connection to 'āina and kūpuna. She instilled in her haumāna a deep sense of kuleana — to dance not for applause, but to honor the stories and people who came before us.

Her ability to blend discipline with



**Keoni Souza**

VICE CHAIR  
Trustee,  
At-Large

love made her truly exceptional. Working with her pushed me to grow as a singer. I can still hear her voice at practice, "No! Higher, sing higher, we need that note!" She held every one of us to high standards because she believed in what we could create together.

This past spring, before the Merrie Monarch Festival, I spent precious time practicing with Kumu Leinā'ala and her niece, Jaedyn Janae Puahaulani Pavao. We shared laughter, nerves, and moments of gratitude as Jaedyn prepared for the competition.

When she was crowned 2025's Miss Aloha Hula, it felt as though the entire island of Kaua'i was smiling. I felt deeply honored to be part of that moment — a celebration of Jaedyn's mastery and of Kumu Leinā'ala's teaching, legacy, and love. Little did I know then that it would be one of the last times I would see her in person.

Beyond her brilliance as a kumu, she was a dear friend — genuine, funny, fiercely loyal, and devoted to Ke Akua. Kumu Leinā'ala carried a divine gift — the ability to make everyone feel seen and valued, whether you were a seasoned dancer or someone first learning to 'ami.

Through her, I learned that leadership is aloha — quiet strength, humility, and service to others. We shared many talks about advocacy, leadership, and Native Hawaiian issues; she was always a positive and guiding force within our lāhui.

Kumu Leinā'ala's passing reminds me how vital our kumu are to our Hawaiian culture — the keepers of our language, stories, and spirit, guiding us to remember who we are and where we come from.

Her voice will continue to resonate in her hālau, her teachings alive in every mele and every kaholo. We will carry her mana'o in our hearts, and her legacy will forever be part of Hawai'i's history — a lasting testament of love, culture, and hula.

Aloha 'oe, e Kumu Hula Leinā'ala. A hui hou. ■

## Restoring 'Āina, Restoring Ourselves

Last month, I had the privilege of representing the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) at Mālama 'Āina Kākou, a benefit hosted by the Hawai'i Land Trust (HILT). The event reminded me that land in Hawai'i is not just something we own. It is part of who we are. 'Āina feeds us, connects us to our past, and shapes our future.

As I listened to stories of conservation and community care, I thought about OHA's kuleana as a landholder. We must ask ourselves: How can our lands better serve our people today?

OHA's strategic plan, Mana i Maui Ola, calls us to that very purpose. It prioritizes the restoration of cultural sites and traditional food systems. This work helps strengthen our communities and cultivates resilience. When we care for our land and culture, we care for our health, identity, and future.

Across Hawai'i, many lands remain unused. Some belong to OHA, others to families or nonprofits. When land is idle, we lose more than income. We lose the chance to grow food, teach future generations, and restore balance to our environment. These neglected spaces can also attract invasive species, dumping, and increase the risk of wildfires.

One powerful way to restore land is through agriculture. Hawai'i currently imports most of its food. That leaves our families vulnerable to high prices and supply shortages. But our kūpuna once sustained large populations by farming in ways that worked with the land. We can learn from those systems and adapt them to meet today's needs.

Revitalizing farming empowers local families to work the land, cultivate prosperity, and nourish their communities in ways that honor both heritage and innovation.

Bringing agriculture back to OHA lands offers far more than economic potential — it represents an opportunity to flourish. When our people can rely on the land to meet the most basic need of nourishment, we create the foundation for something greater: the ability to heal and thrive.



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

Trustee,  
At-Large

True flourishing arises when essential needs are met, giving one the ability to live with purpose. Restoring food security allows Native Hawaiians to reach higher levels of wellbeing — to create, to innovate, and to fulfill their potential as individuals and as a lāhui.

That's why I am encouraged by OHA's new Kūlana 'Āina program. This initiative supports farmers, food workers, and chefs. It helps them find good jobs and grow their businesses. It also invests in training and development.

Combined with the thoughtful use of our legacy lands, this program can help build a new generation of food leaders connected to place and culture.



Trustee Keli'i Akina and 'Olu Campbell, president and CEO of Hawai'i Land Trust, at the Mālama 'Āina Kākou event on Oct. 4, 2025. - Courtesy Photo

As an OHA trustee, I am committed to expanding the use of our lands for agriculture. This is about more than farming. It's about helping our people reconnect with their roots. It's about building strong communities and honoring the land as a living part of our identity.

By investing in food systems, OHA can help create a more self-sufficient Hawai'i. A Hawai'i where the land supports us, and we support the land. If we do this work with care and commitment, our legacy lands can truly live up to their name — for the benefit of our lāhui now and into the future. ■



## E Ho'oulu Kākou i ka 'Imi Waiwai: Growing Hawaiian Enterprise

**A**loha kākou! This month in *Ka Wai Ola*, we celebrate the strength, creativity, and resilience of Native Hawaiian small businesses. Across our pae 'āina, Hawaiian-owned enterprises continue to reflect the values of our people — ingenuity, aloha 'āina, and a deep sense of kuleana to community.

Our cover story features Hawaiian Force, a Hilo-based apparel company that, for more than 40 years, has done more than sell clothing — it has carried the message of Hawaiian pride and unity. Their work reminds us that business can be an extension of our identity, a way to uplift our culture, and a platform to support the broader movement for Hawaiian empowerment.

But this story is also an invitation — a call to every Kanaka with a dream, a skill, or a passion waiting to be shared. Now is the time to build your vision. Whether your heart is in farming, design, food, music, or technology, there is room for you in Hawai'i's economy.

You don't need to wait for permission — our kūpuna were entrepreneurs long before the term existed. They cultivated, traded, innovated, and prospered through resourcefulness and collaboration. That same spirit lives in us today.

Starting a business can feel daunting, but you are not alone. Across our islands, the Native Hawaiian Chambers of Commerce — on O'ahu, Maui, Kaua'i, Hawai'i Island, and Moloka'i — are here to support you. Each chamber offers mentorship, training, and opportunities to connect with other Native Hawaiian



**Brickwood Galuteria**

Trustee,  
At-Large

business owners. They are networks of shared vision and collective strength.

If you haven't yet joined your island's chamber, I encourage you to do so. Membership is more than access to resources — it's about belonging to a movement that sees business as a form of community building.

As Native Hawaiians, supporting each other's businesses is also an act of sovereignty. Every time we buy local, hire local, and invest local, we keep wealth circulating in our communities and sustaining our 'ohana. We build pride in our work and resilience in our economy.

At the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, we remain committed to Native Hawaiian economic empowerment through grants, programs, and partnerships that foster opportunity and self-determination. But I believe the greatest power lies within each of us — in the courage to take that first step, to act on an idea, and to transform passion into purpose.

So, to every Kanaka who has ever dreamed of owning a business: E hele kākou. Step forward with confidence. Your ideas matter. Your talents are needed. Your success strengthens our entire lāhui.

Our ancestors built thriving systems of trade and cooperation — we honor them by continuing that legacy today. Let us grow enterprises that not only sustain us but also uplift our culture and future generations.

"E lawe i ke a'o a mālama, a e 'oi mau ka na'auao — Take what you have learned and apply it, so your wisdom may grow."

To all Kānaka enterprise owners — mahalo nui for your courage, creativity, and commitment to our lāhui. ■

## Protecting Our Lands and Returning Them to the People

**F**or generations, our 'āina has been the source of life, identity, and strength for our people. It feeds us, shelters us, and grounds us in our history and traditions. Yet after the overthrow of our kingdom in 1893, vast tracts of Hawaiian land were taken, sold, and leased for purposes that have nothing to do with caring for our people or honoring our culture. Among the most troubling, is the long-term occupation of Hawaiian lands by the U.S. military.

Today, military installations in Hawai'i cover more than 200,000 acres of land and include wahi pana, wahi kapu, and lands zoned for agriculture or conservation. Even when no longer used for defense purposes, much of this land remains under federal or state control. The continued military misuse of Hawaiian land not only reflects the political legacy of the overthrow, but also the deep wounds of dispossession that Native Hawaiians continue to feel to this day.

The call to protect and return these lands is not simply a political demand — it is a moral and cultural necessity. When Queen Lili'uokalani was overthrown, our government and our lands were taken without consent. The Queen's message was always one of peace, dignity, and steadfast hope for her people. She trusted that justice would prevail. Today, we continue that legacy by asserting our right to protect our 'āina and to use it for the wellbeing of Native Hawaiians and all who call these islands home.

Land formerly used by the military remains fenced off and forgotten. Reclaiming these lands could provide opportunities for Hawaiian stewardship as well as to address community needs. For example, the housing crisis in Hawai'i has reached alarming levels. Our young people — the future caretakers of this land — are being priced out of their ancestral



**Carmen "Hulu" Lindsey**

Trustee,  
Maui

homeland as thousands have been forced to leave for the continent in search of affordability, separating 'ohana and weakening our cultural foundation.

Reclaiming land from the military offers a pathway toward healing and rebuilding. Restored lands could be used for affordable housing, community-based agriculture, education, and cultural preservation. They could become places where Native Hawaiian families once again live close to the 'āina, care for it, and draw sustenance from it

— physically and spiritually. Imagine our keiki growing up in communities where they can learn their language, tend their own gardens, and walk the same paths their kūpuna once walked.

But protecting our lands also means holding the military accountable for the environmental damage caused by decades of abuse. From unexploded ordnance to contaminated water sources, the scars left behind remind us that the true cost of occupation is borne by the 'āina itself. Restoration and cleanup must be a condition of any lands return, ensuring that what is given back is safe for our people and future generations.

The time has come for serious, transparent discussions about returning Hawaiian lands to Hawaiian hands. State and federal governments must work in partnership with Native Hawaiian leaders and communities to create a plan for restoration, affordable housing, and sustainable development grounded in aloha 'āina.

Our kūpuna taught us that when we take care of the land, the land takes care of us. Returning Hawaiian land is not just an act of restitution — it is a promise to future generations that the heart of Hawai'i will remain Hawaiian. By protecting our 'āina and restoring it to our people, we can begin to heal the wounds of the past and build a more just and thriving future for all who call these islands home. ■


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**CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND KA PA‘AKAI ANALYSIS: HAWAIIAN CEMENT NEW MINING AREA PROJECT, PŪLEHUNUI, MAUI**

Cultural Surveys Hawai‘i (CSH), on behalf of Hawaiian Cement, is conducting a cultural impact assessment (CIA) and Ka Pa‘akai Analysis for the proposed Hawaiian Cement New Mining Area Project, Pūlehunui, Wailuku, Maui (TMK: [2] 3-8-004:001). Hawaiian Cement proposes to develop a new mining area of approximately 125 acres adjacent to their existing quarry area within a portion of TMK: (2) 3-8-004:001 CPR 2. The subject portion of the parcel is currently owned by MP Central A LLC and Hawaiian Cement. CSH seeks your knowledge, insight, and input on the following topics:

- Your knowledge of traditional cultural practices within the proposed project area and Pūlehunui Ahupua‘a
- The different natural resources associated with your specific cultural practice
- Referrals to other kūpuna, kama‘āina, and traditional cultural practitioners knowledgeable about the proposed project area and Pūlehunui Ahupua‘a
- Your comments or thoughts on the potential impacts the proposed project may have on cultural sites, practices, and resources within the proposed project area and Pūlehunui Ahupua‘a

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact CSH Cultural Researcher, Chantellee Spencer by email at [cspencer@culturalsurveys.com](mailto:cspencer@culturalsurveys.com) no later than Monday, November 17.

**KA PA‘AKAI ANALYSIS: PROPOSED KO OLINA WELL, HONOULIULI AHUPUA‘A, ‘EWA MOKU, ISLAND OF O‘AHU**

Pacific Legacy, Inc., on behalf of The Resort Group, is conducting a Ka Pa‘akai Analysis for the Proposed Ko Olina Well Project in Honouliuli Ahupua‘a, ‘Ewa Moku, O‘ahu [TMK: (1) 9-1-056:015 (por.) and (1) 9-1-056:01745 (por.)]. The project is for the development of an irrigation well

in Ko Olina (KO-1 Well) that will connect to the Board of Water Supply’s Barbers Point non-potable system. 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](mailto:bell@pacificlegacy.com).

**CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: PROPOSED WAIKĪKĪ REEFRAPE PROJECT**

On behalf of Conservation International, LLC, Pacific Consulting Services, Inc. (PCSI) is preparing a Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA) in support of a HRS Chapter 343 Environmental Assessment for the proposed REEFrape project to be located in waters off shore of Waikīkī in the Kona District, on the island of O‘ahu. REEFrape is a project designed to foster the recovery of a severely degraded coral-reef ecosystem, thereby restoring reef fisheries, providing vital food sources for endangered monk seals and green sea turtles, and enhancing local community livelihoods. The REEFrape project team will install permanent, structurally resilient, 3D printed, concrete reef frameworks that will serve as both coral nurseries and foundations for structurally complex natural coral reefs. All of the concrete reef

frameworks will be placed on sand at depths of 40 to 60 feet below the ocean surface, starting approximately ½ mile off shore, and at least 100 feet from existing coral habitat. PCSI seeks to consult with individuals and organizations possessing knowledge regarding cultural resources, practices, and beliefs within the Waikīkī ahupua‘a and the Kona District that could potentially be affected by the project. Additional project information is available at [www.pcsihawaii.com/reef](http://www.pcsihawaii.com/reef). A link is available at that site to contact the project team to request more information or volunteer to share your knowledge. You may also email us directly at [info@pcsihawaii.com](mailto:info@pcsihawaii.com). Mahalo!

**CONSULTATION FOR SECTION 106 OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT OF 1966, AS AMENDED (SECTION 106)**

The City and County of Honolulu, Department of Design and Construction (DDC) seeks to utilize funding from the Federal Highway Administration for the construction phase for the Replacement of Waialua Beach Road Bridge (Bridge No. 605) over Ki‘iki‘i Stream located within Kamananui Ahupua‘a, Waialua District, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, Tax Map Keys: Waialua Beach Road Right-of-Way; (1) 6-6-022: 001 por., 004; 6-7-001: 010 por., 014, 017; 6-7-009: 002. The project is considered a federal undertaking pursuant to 36 Code of Federal Regulations §800.16(y).

The project consists of the replacement of Waialua Beach Road Bridge with a new concrete bridge supported by drilled-shaft abutments and single center pier. The new bridge will be located along the same alignment as the existing bridge. A temporary bypass bridge will be constructed along the upstream side of the existing bridge to maintain traffic flow during the project’s construction.

Pursuant to Section 106, Native Hawaiian Organizations and Native Hawaiian descendants with ancestral, lineal or cultural attachments to historical resources within the area of potential effect, as well as other individuals and organizations with demonstrated legal, economic or historic preservation interest in the under-

taking are requested to contact DDC with any information.

Please submit responses within 30 days of this notice to our planning consultant, Jim Niermann, R.M. Towill Corporation via email at [jimn@rmtowill.com](mailto:jimn@rmtowill.com) or mail to R.M. Towill Corporation, Attn.: Jim Niermann, 2024 North King Street, Suite 200, Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96819. ■

**HO‘OHUI ‘OHANA**  
FAMILY REUNIONS

*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.

**KELEPOLO** - Calling the descendants of Maika‘alua 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 Kaua‘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](https://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 (Kaalani Kekiwi); and Joseph Kaleohano (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). ■





## 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 Kanoeluhua 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: 808.582.0516

### 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)

## MAKEKE THE MARKETPLACE

Nowemapa 2025 35

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**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

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**HOMES WITH ALOHA** - Nanakuli/ Mokiawe St. 7,500 lot- house has no value. \$120,000/ offer. This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller

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**HOMES WITH ALOHA** - Nanakuli/ Series 7 -2 bedrooms / 2 baths ( 3 bedrooms model), 7,650 lot-This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303.

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