



COUNCIL FOR NATIVE HAWAIIAN ADVANCEMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

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NATIVE HAWAIIAN CONFERENCE KICKS OFF

Honolulu – More than 900 participants gathered for the start of the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement's (CNHA) 4th Annual Native Hawaiian Conference in Waikiki. Native leaders from across the state and nation began discussions of issues of critical importance to Native Hawaiian communities, from challenges to alii trusts to Native Hawaiian sovereignty.

Highlights from today's conference sessions included a luncheon celebrating the diversity and strength of Native Hawaiian communities, led by Thomas Kaulukukui, chairman of the Queen Lili'uokalani Trust; and a roundtable on "Native Economies" with hundreds of participants from the Alaska Federation of Natives, the Inter-Tribal Economic Alliance, congressional offices, Native Hawaiian organizations and others.

"The level of participation at this conference is a testament to the deep commitment of our community to perpetuate our culture and move forward," said Robin Puanani Danner, CNHA president and CEO. "Those here realize that we must accept our kuleana and collaborate to build a future rich with the knowledge of our ancestors and a wellness throughout our communities."

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In traditional Hawaiian style, the conference started with an oli by Kumu Hula Leina‘ala Kalama Heine, and a workshop to share its significance in Hawaiian protocol.

In his keynote address, Kaulukukui spoke about sovereignty and leadership in the Hawaiian community. With decisions pending on the Akaka Bill and the 9th Circuit Court ruling against the Kamehameha Schools’ admissions policy, Kaulukukui described the need for unity in what is probably the biggest battle the Hawaiian community has had to face. “I don’t think we ever will be unified on everything,” he said. “The important thing is that we unify on the big issues – to be respected in our own land, to have control over our land and resources, to uplift each other in our quest for self-determination.”

In another unprecedented event, hundreds of people from across the country participated in a roundtable to celebrate the success of a three-year economic development collaboration to create jobs in rural American Indian reservations, Alaska Native villages and Native Hawaiian homeland communities. In 2002, CNHA partnered with eight Indian and two Alaska Native tribes to create the Inter-Tribal Economic Alliance to identify economic opportunities to help their native communities. Starting with the Native American Document Conversion Program that created technology centers throughout the country, the Alliance is now working on new developments in multiple industries including ranching, forestry restoration and energy. Currently, ITEA is made up of 12 native groups, employing more than 250 individuals in rural native communities across the country, including Waimanalo, Oahu, and Anahola, Kauai, in Hawaii.

Today’s conference and “Native Economies” roundtable will wrap up with a reception tonight featuring Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native groups sharing their respective cultures in performances.

The theme for this year’s conference is “Na Wai Ke Kuleana? Na Kakou! – Who is Responsible? We All Are!” The conference continues tomorrow at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel and wraps up on Friday, September 2.

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CNHA is a national, member-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides support services to organizations serving native communities. CNHA's primary expertise is in community development technical assistance and training, public policy initiatives, and the coordination of events and conferences focused on native community development issues. For more information on CNHA call 521.5011 (800.709.2642 toll free) or visit www.hawaiiancouncil.org.

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