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State of OHA address focuses on building blocks of a new decade

HONOLULU -- Lessons learned from the challenges of the past 10 years should give Native Hawaiians greater resolve and a stronger foundation to move ahead at the dawn of a new decade, Office of Hawaiian Affairs Chairperson Haunani Apoliona told a gathering of hundreds today at the 7th address on the State of OHA and the Native Hawaiian Community. The annual State of OHA Address began in 2002 at the suggestion of Trustee John Waihe'e IV.

"Understanding these key issues from this difficult decade helps give insight to what our role as Native Hawaiians can and should be in the next decade," Chairperson Apoliona told the audience. "The painful challenges of this first decade of the millennium serve as building blocks to fortify our political will and renew our spirit to prepare for the actions that will need to be addressed as we move forward in the next several years."

The theme of today's address was "Hiki mai ka lā i Ha'eha'e. Ua ao ka pō; ua eo ka pō i ke ao," which translates to "The sun appears at Ha'eha'e. 'Tis the dawning; darkness is overcome by daylight."

The address was delivered by OHA Board Chairperson Haunani Apoliona at St. Andrew's Cathedral and was also attended by Trustees Walter Heen, Colette Machado, Boyd Mossman, Oz Stender and John Waihe'e IV, Administrator Clyde Nāmu'o, OHA staff and leaders and members of the Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian community.

The speech detailed some of the challenges since 2000 that “rocked the very core and foundation of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs” including several federal lawsuits such as the *Rice v. Cayetano* and *Arakaki I* decisions.

“It was the first time we were confronted with the reality that there were those who felt empowered by the Rice decision to finish the job to eliminate the Office of Hawaiian Affairs in total,” Apoliona said.

One unresolved issue that OHA will work to resolve in 2010 is the satisfaction of obligated but disputed public land trust revenue amounts owed between 1980 and 2009.

“For a third consecutive legislative session, the OHA Trustees are pursuing resolution of this 30-year-old issue by offering a reasonable process for completion. We ask for your support, the community’s support, when we renew our efforts at the 2010 Legislature in January,” Chair Apoliona said.

OHA now is “fine-tuning for the next decade, as we focus on the future,” she said.

OHA will begin 2010 with a new Strategic Plan that will cover much of the next decade through 2016 and will focus on “managing for results.”

OHA will continue to work with the community to build readiness for a Native Hawaiian governing entity with passage of the monumental and far-reaching Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act, also known as the Akaka Bill.

“When enacted, it will be up to all Native Hawaiians, whether residing in or outside Hawai‘i, to ensure the enabling process is one that includes all Native Hawaiians who wish to participate,” Chair Apoliona said.

OHA will also focus on advancing its limited liability corporations in the next decade to serve as incubators for new Hawaiian businesses and nonprofits to strengthen the economy of the State of Hawai‘i as a whole.

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meetings slated for Hawai'i in 2011 will be a tremendous opportunity for Native Hawaiians.

"As we look forward to this next decade, our focus should be on building. We as Hawaiians can become more fully aware and more fully a contributing partner for the future," Chair Apoliona said "We have opportunities in our hands. Let us not squander them."

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