

OHA: A Celebration Of Ten Years

Reaching the community—Part 4

by Curt Sanburn

By 1986, the average Hawaiian was not too happy with the five-year-old Office of Hawaiian Affairs. Thus far, the beneficiaries of the agency created by the voters of Hawai'i in 1978 to ensure "the betterment of Hawaiians" had seen very little in the way of direct benefits from the agency, either for themselves, their families or their community.

Instead, they had been witness to endless newspaper accounts of public, often rancorous disputes among trustees, critical attacks on OHA from other Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians, and complicated legal battles that seemed to do nothing but create a lot of paper and keep a few lawyers employed.

To be polite about it, Hawaiians were losing their patience.

The OHA trustees were getting impatient, too. And frustrated. Auntie Frenchy DeSoto, the fiery, passionate woman who led the way for the establishment of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs during the 1978 State Constitutional Convention and became one of its first trustees, once suggested that the office should simply give each beneficiary \$30, a six-pack of beer and call it a day. Surely she was joking, but the comment made for a very sharp joke. (Quick arithmetic shows that OHA's annual budget during the 1980s, divided among OHA's 200,000 plus beneficiaries, figures out to about \$30 per beneficiary.)

"Then," she said bitterly, "then maybe they'll appreciate what we do!"

The frustration was understandable, even among OHA's most passionate and involved supporters, but OHA was, indeed, moving.

Looking back at OHA's first half decade, one can now see that the dreary legal fights were, in fact, a bold, aggressive, and ultimately successful defense of legal Hawaiian entitlements against a stingy state bureaucracy.

The ideological, sometimes personal differences among trustees forced them to mature as diplomats. The debates gave the trustees clear but difficult choices among the many paths the fledgling agency could take. The debates helped them refine OHA's mission.

The amateurish failure of some early programs compelled OHA's trustees and staff to establish rigorous planning and regular assessment of its work to ensure that future programs would be effective and efficient, and that they would match the needs of the Hawaiian community.

In 1986, five years after the first Board of Trustees was sworn in to office, the trustees took the first steps when they decided their young agency needed a complete "physical." A management audit, prepared by Arthur Young & Co. and completed in November 1986, was tough and honest about OHA's struggles to get itself organized, and specific about corrections that needed to be made.

According to the report's 200 pages of review and recommendations, the trustees can and should write the menu for OHA, but they should get out of the kitchen and let the Office Administrator and his professional staff do the actual work. Also, the report found, the trustees committee system should be simplified and there should be more joint ventures with other state and private agencies to avoid duplication of efforts. It said the office had too many ineffective programs

and few clear-cut priorities. Pick a few goals and meet them rather than trying to hit everything and missing, the report suggested. OHA trustees should think carefully about their public image and "perform advocacy in a positive manner that will unify native Hawaiians and Hawaiians as a cohesive ethnic group," the report said.

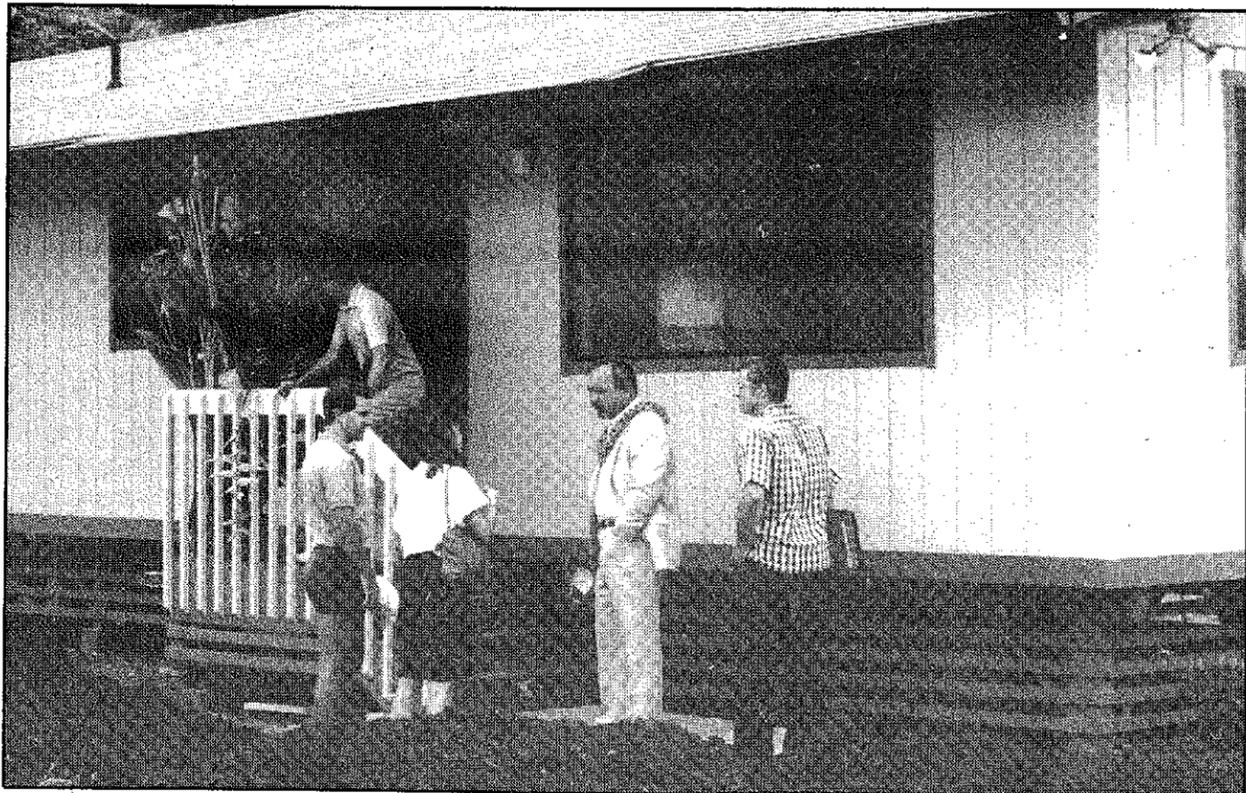
The report was like a cold bath — everyone was shocked by it, refreshed by it and ready to move on.

OHA's history from 1986 to 1989 was enlivened by this new-found, hard-headed thinking and these hard-learned lessons. "OHA 1986-1989: Reaching the Community" is a chronicle of the maturing agency's increasingly successful programs and services, many of which came to life during these years.

Hawaiian lifestyle, followed by being easy-going and generous, living off the land and sea, and using traditional culture (language, food, materials, religion) in daily life.

According to the survey, only three percent of Hawaiians polled grow taro and about five percent speak Hawaiian (18 percent said they would like to study the language). In general, the cultural surveys showed a distinct need for more educational opportunities to study and learn the various practices of Hawaiian culture.

Land and housing surveys showed that 82 percent of those polled had no housing problems (remember, this was 1984!). Of those who said they did have housing problems, three quarters said the problem was rent or house payments that were too expensive. One fifth said they "couldn't



Gov. John Waihee accompanies visitors to one of the homes built by homestead families as part of OHA's self-help housing project in Wai'anae, O'ahu.

A more deliberate OHA

In June 1986, OHA published the final report of the Population Survey/Needs Assessment (PS/NA) study began in 1984, and also published the Comprehensive Services for Hawaiians survey (CSHO) in April of the same year.

The two studies were complementary: the PS/NA, through face-to-face polling of 400 Hawaiian households throughout the state, measured the physical, sociological, psychological and economic needs of Hawaiians, while the CSHO surveyed existing public and private services throughout the state that could meet those needs. By matching the studies, analysts within OHA and elsewhere had a clearer idea of what gaps and barriers there are in the delivery of services to Hawaiians. The information was used to revise OHA's Master Plan, its comprehensive, 10-year planning document, in 1987.

Flipping through the PS/NA report is fascinating. For example, whether they have a Hawaiian lifestyle or not (69 percent said they do), those Hawaiians polled ranked "respect for elders" as the most important ingredient of a

afford to have their own place."

Of those polled, 24 percent lived on farm lots while 76 percent lived on house lots. Residential lots, leased or owned, averaged about 10,500 square feet while farm lots averaged 13.5 acres for leased land and nine acres for fee land. Among all leaseholders, 41 percent named the Queen Lili'uokalani Trust as lessor; 31 percent listed Bishop Estate; and 22 percent listed Hawaiian Homes.

Christine Valles, a Los Angeles native who got her anthropology degree from the University of California at Berkeley, was hired by OHA in 1984 to help research and analyze the PSNA and CSHO studies.

After completing that task, Valles was asked to stay on at OHA. As a planner, research specialist and grant specialist in OHA's Planning and Research Division, Valles developed a good understanding of the methodical steps OHA must take if it was going to be effective.

Briefly, she explains the difference between OHA's key planning blueprints, the Master Plan,

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the Functional Plan and the Two-Year Biennium Budget: "The master plan is a 10-year-plan, real pie-in-the-sky stuff, the visionary view of where the agency intends to go," Valles says. "Then there's the functional plan, which has a six-year time frame. If the master plan says 'House all Hawaiians,' the functional plan says build 5,000 housing units over six years at such-and-such a cost with these staff requirements, some on each island, with the state or the county or Department of Hawaiian Home Lands.

"The functional plan gets broken down into two-year biennium budgets. These are the actual work plans for a two-year period. It would say specifically that OHA's going to do two housing developments, with real nuts-and-bolts details: these contractors and these families and this financing at these specific locations."

This new, deliberate approach to planning and project development paid off in OHA's 1987 pilot self-help housing project on Hawaiian Homes land at Lualualei in Wai'anae O'ahu.

"Model Programs"

Using a \$100,000 federal grant from the Administration for Native Americans (ANA), the OHA, working with the State Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL), contracted with the O'ahu Self-Help Housing Corporation, a private, non-profit agency, to build seven houses for low-income families, who had been waiting to get on their land for up to 30 years. Each of the homesteaders involved gave 32 hours of "sweat equity" each week to build the houses. For most of them, particularly the women, the construction work was a first-time experience. The only cost to the eventual homeowners was for actual materials.



Christine Valles

The Lualualei pilot project took a long two years to complete, but in the process the slow-moving bureaucracies were able to work out the bugs, and OHA convinced DHHL that the self-help housing concept was a viable one for getting its beneficiaries onto the land quickly and cheaply.

As Valles explains it, this kind of encouragement is exactly the kind of advocacy role OHA should play.

"We're not prepared to provide direct services ourselves," she says. "We don't have the staff for it. But we do want to encourage other service agencies to serve Hawaiians, so we try to come up with appropriate model programs to show how a recognized need might be met. Once we find that a particular kind of program works, we hope our partner service agency, whether it's federal, state or private, will institutionalize it."

In 1990, a second OHA-sponsored self-help housing project got under way on Hawaiian Home land at Keaukaha and Panaewa on the Big Island. OHA paid the administrative costs (supervisors, plans, blueprints, etc.), DHHL secured the bank loans, and, this year, 22 families will have built themselves new homes on homestead land. Currently, OHA is advising a group on Kaua'i who want to start their own self-help housing corporation and go after affordable Kaua'i projects, whether state, county, DHHL or private, on a competitive basis.

"If it gets done, it doesn't matter if we get the glory for it," Valles says modestly about OHA's low profile among the new homeowners. "It would be nice if Hawaiians knew what we're doing, because then they'd know the office, which is supposed to help them, actually does. But we don't have the visible role — we have the funding role. I just wish maybe once a construction supervisor out there on the line would say 'Hey, OHA's paying my salary!'"

The Native Hawaiian Revolving Loan Fund

In 1986, a group of Hawaiian leaders told Sen. Dan Inouye that one of the barriers to Hawaiian self-sufficiency or any kind of financial independence was the fact that there were very

few business loans available to Hawaiian small businesses, whether for start-up or expansion. No collateral . . . no assets . . . risky ideas . . . too manini . . . too unconventional . . . no credit record, etc. — these were given as the reasons the banks kept their distance from Hawaiian business loan applicants.

Inouye got to work in Congress and arranged a five-year, \$3 million demonstration loan program, funded by the ANA. Based on OHA's proposal to pay the administrative costs out of its own budget, so that all federal monies would be available to loan applicants, the low-interest loan program funding was awarded to OHA in October, 1988.

Within a year, the Native Hawaiian Revolving Loan Fund Demonstration Project (NHRLF) had its own manager and two loan officers installed at OHA's offices in the Pam Am Building on Kapi'olani Boulevard. The Bank of Hawaii signed on as OHA's technical advisor, prepared to work as occasional participating lender with OHA. In the NHRLF's first year, the office received over 1,200 inquiries resulting in 168 formal loan requests totalling \$9,400,000.

Among the 56 five-year loans made in the past two years are a \$50,000 start-up loan for a physical therapist in Waipahu; a \$22,000 start-up loan for a journeyman electrician on Kaua'i who wanted to become a self-employed electrical contractor; a \$50,000 expansion loan for a Big Island fruit-jam family business; a \$50,000 expansion loan so that an O'ahu sewage hauling business could buy a second-hand tractor rig; and a \$35,000 loan to a Honolulu music producer who had a big hit record and repaid his entire loan in 11 months.

The manager of the NHRLF, Ken Sato, who has a banking and small-business background, says, "Most of our loan applicants know what they want. They're business people, it's just that they don't have the assets that would allow them to qualify for a bank loan. They do a good job presenting their financial information and business plans when they come to us.

"Sometimes, though, applicants fail to realize that these are federal funds governed by federal lending standards. It's not by any means a give-away program."

To date, the Revolving Loan Fund has disbursed \$2.5 million to 65 borrowers. The program officially ends on Nov. 29, 1992, when, presumably, the entire \$3 million in ANA funds will have been loaned out. Sato says he's heard that the program is likely to be renewed; definite word should come by the end of 1991.

On being Kupuna

"I guess that as people get older they have time to look back and remember more things in terms of how unique or special their lives may have been.

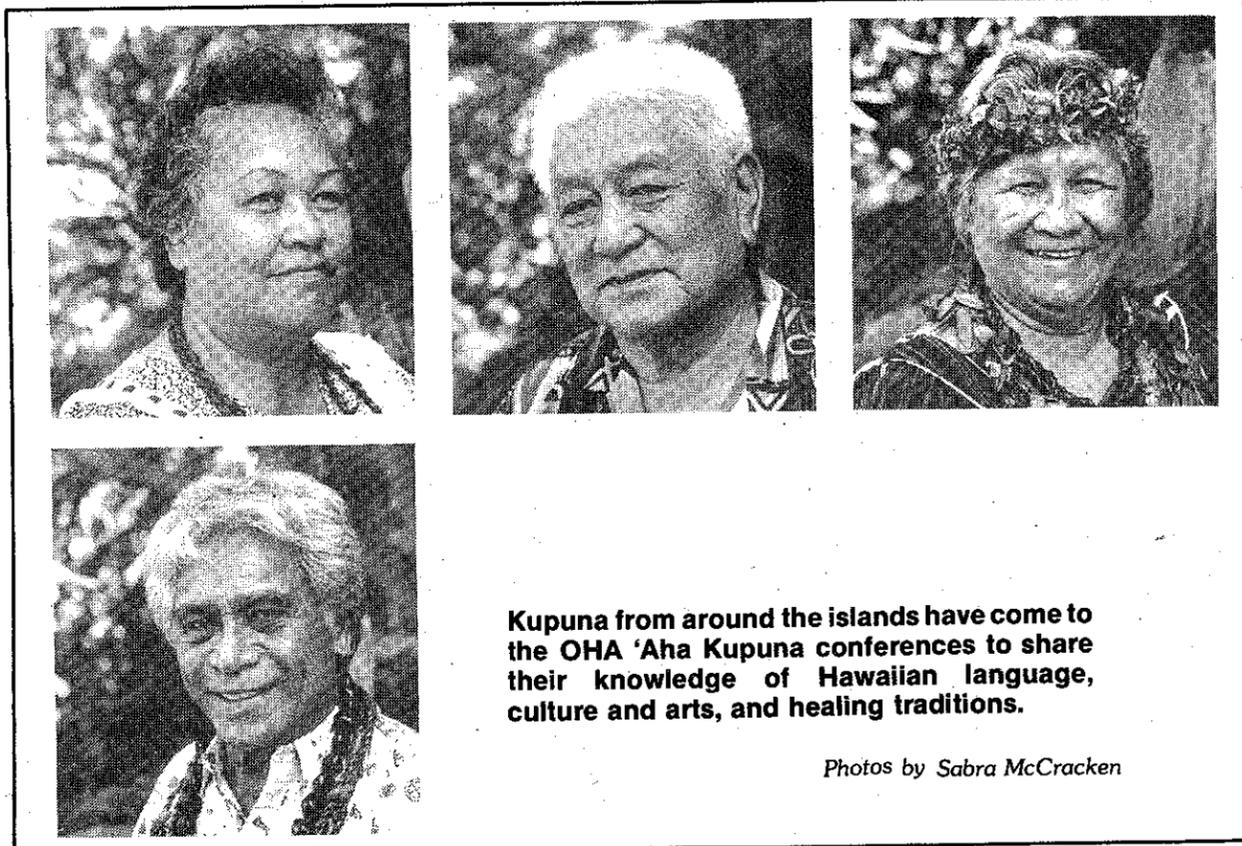


Terrace at Luluku, Kane'ohe.

Suddenly they realize that maybe their knowledge is rare. I think of Uncle Harry Mitchell . . . Kawika Kaalakea . . . Auntie Betty Jenkins . . . They are all individuals with individual talents and knowledge, but the combination of all our kupuna and all their manao is basically the piko, the source of our culture.

"What I'm talking about is the kupuna role. In traditional Hawaiian society, the kupuna played a very important role, not only as transmitters of culture, but as maintainers of society. Right now we're asking, has that role really changed? How can we, OHA, assist them in maintaining their importance in our modern society?"

For Rona Rodenhurst, a professional educator with a strong background in Hawaiian studies, these are not idle philosophical questions. As OHA's educational division officer and administrator of OHA's successful Kupuna program, Rodenhurst had the crucial task of strengthening the piko. Her job — and the job of OHA's kupuna team, headed by Kupuna Alaka'i Auntie Betty Jenkins — was to help the kupuna



Kupuna from around the islands have come to the OHA 'Aha Kupuna conferences to share their knowledge of Hawaiian language, culture and arts, and healing traditions.

Photos by Sabra McCracken



File photo

them are 18 or younger," Rodenhurst points out. "We'd do well to start taking care of the younger ones, in terms of providing them with opportunities to develop their leadership skills, because that's what we're going to need."

"We're going to need people to replace us," Rodenhurst says firmly. "We must train our young."

Jonah Kaaui, a native of Kapa'a, Kaua'i, and now a student at Boston College where he studies political science and philosophy, attended the second 'Aha 'Opio in 1989 as a delegate from the Kamehameha Schools. He says he didn't know how inspirational the program would be and vividly remembers some of the lessons he was taught during the session.

"There was a stuffed American barn owl sitting up on the main podium. The kupuna taught us that the owl was haole, that it was a foreigner in a foreign land but it had learned to adapt. And like the owl, we are foreigners in a foreign system, a system the Hawaiian people aren't used to. In order to survive, we must learn to adapt. Then the kupuna told us about the nene. Through the nene they taught us about our own uniqueness and how scarce our race really is."

"'Aha 'Opio exposed us to the legislative process and showed us how it really works. We learned about survival and how to survive in this type of society."

Among the "hot" issues Kaaui's youthful colleagues addressed during the mock-legislative session were Hawaiian homestead issues, the blood quantum question, leasehold conversion, initiative and geothermal energy development, which, Kaaui said, most of the delegates opposed.

The Land

Probably the most activist operating division at OHA is the Land and Natural Resources division. Under the aggressive and intelligent eye of former trustee Rod Burgess, the land division blazed many of OHA's most exciting trails, including the epic lawsuit against the state to recover OHA's legal share of the public land trusts. But that was only the beginning.

By the mid-1980s, the Hawaiian legal community had become sophisticated about the extent of Hawaiian land rights, from ceded land entitlements to kuleana claims, ancestral rights, access rights, and rights to historic and religious sites. As a result it became clear that all lands in the state should be subject to scrutiny by those interested in protecting Hawaiian rights.

OHA's land division since 1987 under officer Linda Kawaiono Delaney, took up this challenge with a vengeance. The division began to request review of Environmental Impact Statements for development projects throughout the state. Each EIS was studied for potential impacts on Hawaiian sites and rights. Increasingly, OHA was seen as an important and influential land-use review agency.

OHA trustees and staffers found themselves

spending more and more time in hearing rooms, arguing land-use issues from the Hawaiian point of view. When necessary, the office would step in and act.

By negotiation with the state, the ancient Luluku taro terraces at the base of the Ko'olau pali in Kane'ohe were protected from obliteration by freeway construction. On Maui, OHA joined Hui Alanui O Makena to protect burial grounds at Hanohano from resort excavation.

The land division came up with something called "MOAs," memoranda of agreement. These were binding agreements negotiated between private parties and OHA to protect specific Hawaiian access and preservation rights from the impacts of development. MOAs were signed for developments at Wailea on Maui, Hulopoe on Lana'i, Kahuku on O'ahu, at Honokahua, Luluku, and at various developments in Kona and Honolulu.

"These are two important points that we should understand," Delaney says. "One is that self-government is inherent. The other is that a relationship with another government, as between the State of Hawai'i and OHA, does not mean that they've delegated your rights to you. In fact, you had those rights all along and you've finally discovered ways to exercise them."

A hard-working and visionary intellectual, Delaney relishes her division's wide-ranging role in land-use issues and, based on the direction of her division's work, espouses a rather revolutionary way for Hawaiians to consider their inherent rights regarding the aina. Rather than worry only about



Linda Delaney



Rona Rodenhurst

Hawaiian-owned land, she asks, why not look at the big picture?

"In the same way the state or federal government exercises sovereignty without holding title to the land, I would hope that Hawaiians can achieve the same thing. It seems to me that the Indian nations on the mainland made a fundamental error, in that the scope of their power is confined to their reservation. They've fallen for the ultimate western thought, which is that you only have sovereignty over what you own."

"Now, if I'm going to argue for traditional Hawaiian rights, then I can't buy that, because those rights know no boundaries, at least in Hawai'i."

The land division's biggest program is also its oldest. The Native Hawaiian Land Title Project

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recognize and share their knowledge with younger generations and thus bring traditional Hawaiian experience to the doorstep of the future.

"I have over 900 students and I love 'em all," Kupuna Kaimi Kealoha of Haleiwa told Ka Wai Ola O OHA in a 1985 interview. At the time, Kealoha, the grandmother of 12, was the kupuna at Wheeler Elementary School on O'ahu. "I have Chinese, Japanese, Caucasians, Blacks, Filipinos, Vietnamese and children of many other ethnic backgrounds who come together and learn Hawaiian. This is so beautiful, especially when they greet me with 'Aloha, kupuna!' and other words and sentences they have picked up."

OHA's kupuna program began in 1983 as a cooperative venture with the state Department of Education (DOE), which had begun to bring kupuna into the public schools in grades K-6. OHA's task at the time was to seek out and train kupuna who were willing and able to teach in the schools, and to arrange workshops, seminars, and other support services for the elders.

As the DOE program matured, OHA's kupuna program became more independent of DOE, focusing on the more general day-to-day preservation of the kupuna role in the family and society. On March 20, 1987, OHA co-hosted the first statewide Aha Kupuna with the DOE and Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate. Over 400 kupuna attended.

"Now we're working with the kupuna in general," Rodenhurst says, "not necessarily for the DOE. We believe in just being able to sit with our kupuna and talking story with them to generate their own ideas about preserving the culture so it comes from them, so it's kupuna owned. Then maybe we can begin to resurge and rebuild the ohana."

"We can't say that OHA will rebuild 'ohana, but OHA can meet with kupuna who may get inspired to talk to their own families and keep the knowledge flowing. That's where our program has evolved."

At the other end of the spectrum, Rodenhurst's education division scored another success with its 'Aha 'Opio program, an annual convocation of Honolulu high school juniors who come to Honolulu to participate in a week-long mini-legislature and to learn leadership skills with a pointed stress on Hawaiian cultural values. The first annual 'Aha 'Opio, held in June 1988 was attended by 52 students.

"There are 200,000-plus Hawaiians, and half of



File photo

A portion of a historic stone trail to be preserved under terms of a MOA signed by OHA and Kapalua Land Co.



File photo

For three years, OHA sponsored annual Makahiki athletic games, attended by 500 keiki each year. Two youngsters take part in uma, a hand-wrestling game.

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was first implemented in 1981 under contract to the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation (NHLC), a non-profit public interest law firm founded in 1974.

In fiscal year 1988-1989, the Land Title Project was funded by OHA to the tune of \$350,000, which paid for the full-time services of three lawyers. Their job was to represent Hawaiian families in defense of their lands against legal challenges, called "adverse possession" suits. As of 1989, over 1,500 clients have been served and over \$8 million in Hawaiian property was protected or recovered.

Heiau, Halau and Ho'olako

Malcolm Naea Chun, a former editor of the Ka Wai Ola O OHA newspaper, became OHA's Culture Division Officer in 1986. "At that time," he says, "there was a real change at OHA and in the Hawaiian community in general. People were looking more at prolonged effects rather than at simple events."

Chun was charged with revising OHA's Cultural Plan to emphasize Hawaiian values, language, genealogy, historic preservation of important cultural sites and the performing arts.

"What people began to realize was that culture was not just a hula show," Chun says. "Culture was language, culture was thinking. Culture requires active maintenance, not mindless preservation under glass, like a museum. That's why the immersion programs starting with Punana Leo and Halau Likolaulani in Waimanalo were so important."

Other activities of the division included publication of scholarly booklets on Hawaiian subjects such as genealogy, Hawaiian hospitality and protocol and a book of laws pertaining to historic preservation of Hawaiian sites. In 1985, OHA adopted Pahua heiau in Hawaii Kai, and helped in the restoration of a second heiau Pahukini in Kaneohe. For three years, OHA sponsored annual Makahiki athletic games, attended by 500 keiki each year. OHA's archeologist, culture specialist Earl Buddy Neller, spent a lot of time rediscovering heiau, burial sites and other material remains of the wa kahiko (the old ways) and also reviewed environmental impact statements for historic site preservation.

Eventually many of the functions of the culture office were being incorporated by other divisions: Education had its own cultural component, and the Land Division had a firm cultural basis for its land-use actions . . . in fact, each division could hardly help but consider the *Hawaiianess*, that is, the uniqueness, of everything they're doing.

As Delaney says, "If we're being Hawaiian, then everything we do will have the proper cultural component."

In late 1985, OHA Trustee Uncle Tommy Kaulukukui went to Lt. Gov. John Waihee and told him he wanted to have a big, special celebration for Hawaiians. He says he didn't want the celebration to commemorate any particular historical occasion, but rather that this would be a time to remind everyone that the

Hawaiians were here today — the native people of Hawai'i, strong and proud.

Waihee thought the celebration should last a whole year, and, on July 3, 1986, Gov. George Ariyoshi proclaimed the following year, 1987, as the Year of the Hawaiian, a time for Hawaiian enrichment or ho'olako.

Plus, Kaulukukui says, it looked to him like Waihee was going to run for governor in the November 1986 elections and might win ("That was the 'if' part," he says), which meant that Hawaii's first elected Hawaiian governor might be inaugurated during the Year of the Hawaiian. It seemed to Kaulukukui that circumstances were aligned for a very special year in Hawaiian history.

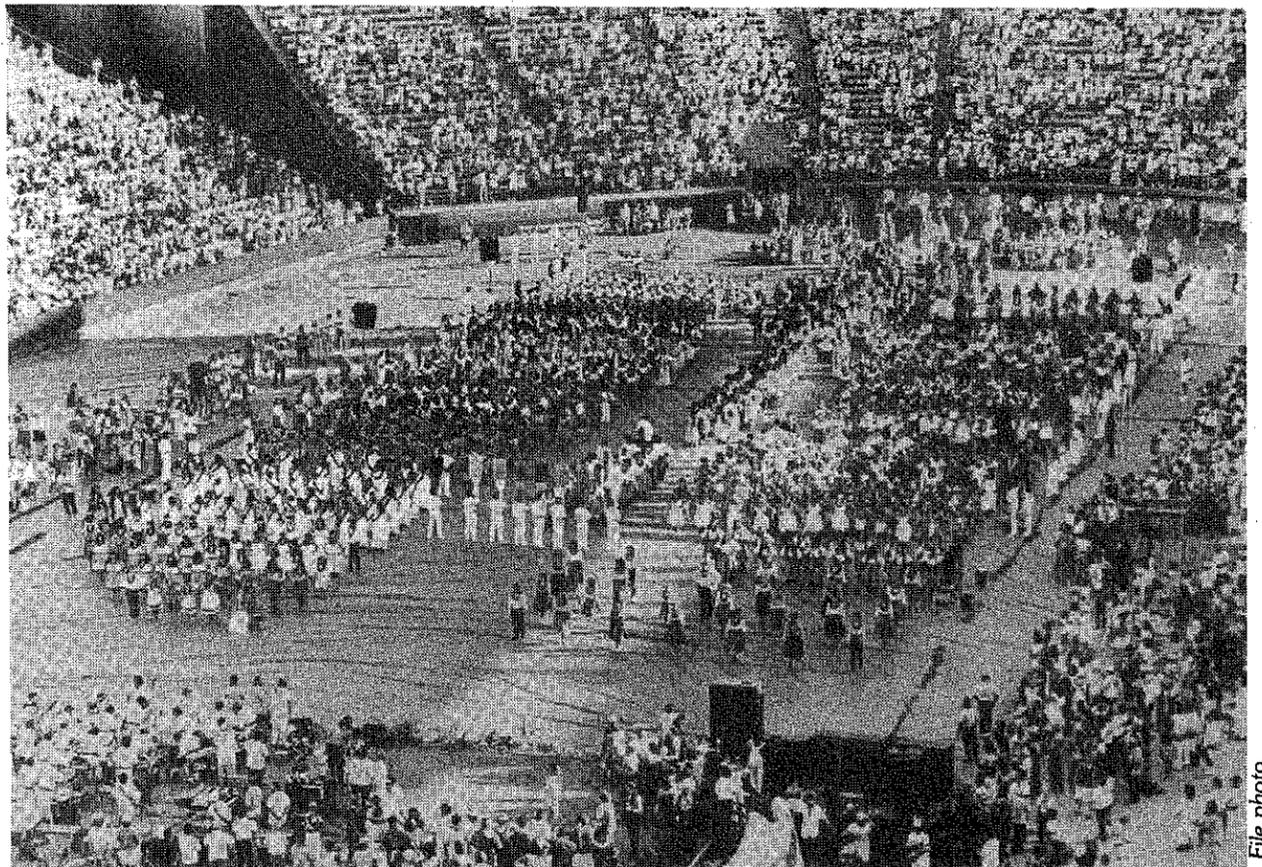
Ho'olako, the Year of the Hawaiian, was a great success. A massive amount of information reached the general public in Hawai'i about the native race and the host culture. According to Malcolm Chun, "The articulation of Hawaiian issues, the widespread discussions of sovereignty, the liveliness and seriousness of the music, dance and arts demonstrations, the avalanche of general publicity . . . these things really made a difference. For non-Hawaiians, wanna-be Hawaiians and for Hawaiians who were just rediscovering themselves and their heritage, Ho'olako brought sharp awareness and some understanding of the issues facing Hawaiians today."

But Uncle Tommy wasn't finished. He told OHA's then administrator, Kamaki Kanahele, that he wanted OHA to stage Hoolako's grand finale, but he wasn't sure what he wanted.

"We had this idea that we wanted to bring everyone together, something big, maybe at the stadium, maybe a university field, a big gathering of people together. Something to culminate the Ho'olako, something big enough so that people would not forget it."

Kanahele assembled a huge slate of volunteers to achieve Kaulukukui's dream, now called "Ho'olokahi," which means to join together, to unify. The gathering was scheduled for Aloha Stadium, Jan. 23, 1988.

About 50,000 people joined Uncle Tommy and his fellow OHA trustees at the huge stadium that day. Dancers from scores of halau formed a bright patchwork on the field, almost covering it with the strict lines and fluid movements designed by their kumu. In solemn procession, kahili raised, the royal societies, the civic clubs, trustees of the major Hawaiian land trusts, and other representatives of the Hawaiian people joined together in a glorious demonstration of the belief that the Hawaiians had survived and that they were once again setting sail, following the stars above the ocean.



File photo

Over 50,000 Hawaiians and "Hawaiians at heart" celebrate Ho'olokahi, Hawaiian Unity Day, at the Aloha Stadium on Jan. 23, 1988. The event, which capped the "Year of the Hawaiian," was sponsored by OHA.