OUR MISSION

Ka Huli Ao Center for Excellence in Native Hawaiian Law is an academic center that promotes education, scholarship, community outreach and collaboration on issues of law, culture and justice for Native Hawaiians and other Pacific and Indigenous peoples.

WHO WE ARE

Ka Huli Ao was established in 2005 at the William S. Richardson School of Law through a Native Hawaiian Education Act grant.

Ka Huli Ao focuses on education, research and scholarship, community outreach, and the preservation of invaluable historical, legal, and traditional and customary materials. It also offers new courses and supports Native Hawaiian and other law students as they pursue legal careers and leadership roles.

FACULTY, FELLOWS AND STAFF

Melody K. MacKenzie
Director & Assistant Professor

D. Kapua Sproat
Assistant Professor

Susan K. Serrano
Director of Educational Development

Leina'ala Seeger
Professor

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Community Outreach Fellow

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Ka Huli Ao inspires great and profound change through research, scholarship and the awareness brought about by knowledge and understanding.

Huli - means not only “turning,” as in turning towards the light, but also refers to the top of the kalo (taro) plant that is replanted to continue the growth of the next generation. Huli also means to search for, to seek, to study and explore.

Ao - means light, day, to dawn, enlightenment, and to come into consciousness. It can also mean world, earth or realm.

Ka Huli Ao reflects the concept that innovative research and scholarship can inspire profound change. Ka Huli Ao connotes enlightening the next generation in a traditional manner. Ka Huli Ao endeavors to take the best of Hawaiian culture and traditions to advance law and understanding that betters the greater community.

"Ka Huli Ao Center for Excellence in Native Hawaiian Law is breaking new ground in promoting legal research and scholarship, as well as by providing outreach and a forum for intensive examination of legal issues affecting Native Hawaiians."

Aviam Soifer, Dean

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NATIVE HAWAIIAN LAW AND RELATED COURSES

Ka Huli Ao’s course offerings include:

Native Hawaiian Rights: This course examines the evolution of Native Hawaiians’ rights to land and resources, and the laws affecting them. Areas of study include Hawaiian land tenure, public and charitable trusts established to benefit Native Hawaiians, and traditional and customary rights and practices.

Federal Indian Law: This course educates students in the general principles of Federal Indian law, giving special attention to those aspects of Federal Indian Law that are analogous to current issues in Native Hawaiian law.

Environmental Law Clinic: This course provides practical, non-litigation “lawyering” experience in the context of issues affecting Hawai’i’s natural and cultural resources, with an emphasis on water. Students assist clients on a range of issues, including legislative issues and potential cases before state water, land use, and other administrative agencies.

Second Year Seminar: This seminar is an advanced legal research and writing course focused on Native Hawaiian, social justice, and environmental issues.

ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY

Ka Huli Ao is transcribing and digitizing key legal and historical Hawaiian documents and materials. Ka Huli Ao also produced its first guide, Native Hawaiian Legal Research Guide: A Guide to Print and Digital Resources Available at the William S. Richardson Law Library. The guide—available on Ka Huli Ao’s website—provides an introduction to the Law Library’s Native Hawaiian legal resources and offers techniques for accessing those resources.

WHAT WE DO

Education, Research, and Scholarship

Ka Huli Ao facilitates wide-ranging programs to promote education, research and scholarship on the unique aspects of Native Hawaiian law, and the intersection between local, federal and international laws affecting Native Hawaiians. Ka Huli Ao also offers new courses on Native Hawaiian and Indigenous law, and offers the first-ever Pacific-Asian Legal Studies Certificate with a Specialty in Native Hawaiian Law.

Community Outreach

Ka Huli Ao facilitates discourse between the legal community, the Native Hawaiian community, and the community at large. Law students and faculty - through workshops, symposia, and meetings - inform and educate, and are educated and informed by, the community about significant Native Hawaiian issues, history and law.

Accessing Hawaiian Legal and Historical Materials

Because access to early Hawaiian legal and historical resources is currently limited, Ka Huli Ao is transcribing and creating an online archive of Hawaiian legal and historical materials for use by law students, lawyers, scholars and the community.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Ka Huli Ao, now in its fourth year, launches groundbreaking programs that support students and recent graduates in their research, scholarly writing, and discourse on legal issues affecting Native Hawaiians.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS


CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA


Hawai‘i State Historic Preservation Laws: Reclaiming the Past, Shaping the Future, Sept. 2008: A workshop featuring perspectives on Hawai‘i’s state historic preservation laws, and ways to respect and protect Hawai‘i’s iwi kūpuna (ancestral remains).

Maoli Thursdays: A popular lunchtime forum and speaker series on Native Hawaiian and Indigenous issues held every first Thursday of the Month.


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