



NA'IAUPUNI

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, February 1, 2016

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'AHA OPENING STATEMENT FROM KUHIO ASAM, PRESIDENT OF NA'IAUPUNI

Aloha

Aloha, welina, aloha mai kakou and good morning.

I am Kuhio Asam, the president of Na'iaupuni. The directors invite all of you in acknowledging na akua, na aumakua, na alii, and na kupuna for having guided us to and travelled with us to the 'aha. We honor and respect their presence among us.

Standing with me are the individuals who had the kuleana to set this path to the 'aha and who have worked diligently as volunteers, for over a year, to get us all here. They are the directors of Na'iaupuni. I proudly and respectfully introduce:

- Pauline Namuo
- Kealoha Ballesteros
- and Lehua Sheulke
- Gerry Miyamoto – was unable to join us today

Thank you Pauline for providing the pule wehe this morning.

Mahalo Vicky Holt Takamine for your opening the 'aha with an oli pale to protect us, an oli aloha to share our aloha with all of you, and oli to grant us knowledge, strength, intelligence, understanding, and foresight so that we may continue to be empowered.

The directors of Na'iaupuni would like to extend our mahalo (gratitude, appreciation, praise, esteem) to the many people who have made today possible.

We are especially appreciative of all of you – the participants – who have travelled from many continents ranging from Europe and the Americas to Asia, as well as most of the islands of Hawai'i. You have committed your time, energies, resources, and knowledge to gather here in Maunawili and to further exercise Hawaiians' inherent right to self-determination.

We are thankful, blessed, and honored to be here in Maunawili, the area that Queen Lili'uokalani composed "Aloha 'Oe". The directors believe that it important to honor the 'aina that welcomes us with its lush scenery, pleasant breezes, and warm sunshine. We are in the ahupua'a of Kailua, in the moku of Ko'olaupoko, on the mokupuni of O'ahu in the pae'aina of Hawai'i nei.

We are on the slopes of Mauna Olomana – in actuality, five peaks:

- Olomana
- Paku'i
- Ahiki
- Hauli
- Makawao

Olomana – as the collective five peaks are now known – is an erosional remnant of the caldera of the volcano, Ko'olau.

The peaks are named after five legendary people who dwelled on the Windward side. One mo'olelo shares that they were the only ones living in Kailua ahupua'a and that they were the esteemed attendants for the earth goddess Haumea. She is said to have gifted the five with ki (ti) and popolo (black nightshade) for planting in Maunawili so as to nurture their good health and well-being.

Ki and popolo still grow in the lushness of Maunawili and as we are embraced by their nurturance. It is in this setting, on this 'aina, that you will be nurtured with good health and well-being.

We are from a long lineage of strong, brilliant, resilient, and proud people who navigated oceans, inhabited and thrived in an archipelago in the middle of the Pacific, who developed a rich and vibrant culture, living in harmony with our environment, and advancing through various forms of adversity. This is who we are and you are tasked to utilize that foundation of our heritage to move us forward.

The path to this 'aha has not always been a smooth one – but the bumps, detours, and criticism – many of which were expected – did not deter the director of Na'i Aupuni from steadfastly keeping its eye on attaining the goal of convening today. The 'aha, while viewed by some as flawed, none-the-less represents a unique time, place, and great range of perspectives. We celebrate that even those opposed to this process have actually joined the conversation and through their voices have added substance to this important period in our history. We respect and thank them.

This room is filled with many voices, many opinions, many perspectives, many very intelligent people. We are confident that the ensuing exchange of ideas will be informative, thought provoking, and reflective of the desire to advance the common good of all Hawaiians.

Na'i Aupuni believes that, though passions run deep and that styles of communication vary, that you will each extend to the other (kekahi i kekahi), the common and courteous respect (ho'ihi) that we all deserve – with determined tolerance for divergent points of view.

Na'i Aupuni believes, as well, that your collective wisdom, which is much stronger than any individual's intelligence, will prevail and that each of you will experience the confidence and strength from our kupuna to address the many hewa that our people have experienced – and rise to move our lahui forward.

Na'i Aupuni has achieved its goal of setting the path and having Hawaiians gather and assemble in what may be considered a great and unprecedented manner. The kuleana is now yours.

Before we excuse ourselves, please know the following:

- You have 20 days to make as much progress as you can. Use that precious time in a wise, efficient and effective manner.
- Budgetary constraints are real – additional resources are not available – and therefore, we are not able to support any changes to the venue, per diems, or days of operation.
- We appreciate that each of you has agreed to attend the daily sessions and remain respectfully engaged throughout the process.

The directors of Na'i Aupuni will not attend any of the sessions of the 'aha.

In our stead, we have asked a facilitation team to support your discussions, to collectively adopt rules for engagement, and to assist you in identifying a leadership team or structure that will advance your work.

They are:

- Peter Adler
- Linda Colburn
- Ku'umeaaloha Gomes

We support them fully and are confident in their skills, are aware of the significant advanced work that they have completed for you, and trust that you will appreciate them, as well.

The path is now yours – and just as Na'i Aupuni was conceived and guided by the mele Ka Na'i Aupuni, we ask that you heed its translation:

Great Hawai'i with its verdant country
The bays of Pi'ilani
Great Maui of Chief Kamalalawalu
O'ahu of Kākuhihewa
Kaua'i of Manokalanipō

Come all of you, stand together
Deeds are not yet complete
Hawai'i must have a pono foundation
The free breathing life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness

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Be of one mind

Be of one heart

Be of one love

The free breathing life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness

Na 'oukou a pau keia kuleana maoli. Yours is this true and genuine responsibility.

Mahalo – Aloha Piha – Aloha

Airing on 'Ōlelo channel 53 at 9:30 a.m. and repeats at 1:15 p.m.

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