

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
PRESS RELEASE**

**MEDIA CONTACT**  
Adrian Kamali'i - (808) 330-3342  
Amy Kalili – (808) 927-0343

**NATIVE HAWAIIAN 'AHA PARTICIPANTS BUILD STRUCTURE, LEADERSHIP AND TRUST**  
*Native Hawaiian governance convention sets a solid foundation in first two weeks.*

**HONOLULU, Hawai'i** — February 12, 2016 – The Native Hawaiian Governance 'Aha wrapped up the second week of its four-week long convention with a new leadership team in place, greater structure to the process, a focused purpose statement, and a body ready to draft a governing document.

Less than two weeks ago, over 100 Native Hawaiians gathered for the first day of this historic convening, many never having met before, but tasked with working together to develop a framework for a reorganized government. "Aha" is a Hawaiian word for "convention" but the word also refers to a strong cord created by braiding individual pieces of fiber together. After 10 days together, individual participants are seeing this 'Aha becoming stronger as they weave their individual thoughts and goals together.

'Aha Participant Alani Apio shared, "Every day I feel that we are getting more ma'a to each other and more trusting of one another. Not that we agree but we can really start to talk about the tough issues with each other without jeopardizing the ability to literally stay together and talk. And to me that is huge!"

Building on this growing foundation, participants solidified a structured process, including ground rules for engagement and interaction, and appointed an internal leadership team to take over the reigns from the initial facilitators. Brendon Kalei'aina Lee is serving as Chair of the 'Aha along with Vice Chairs Karen Awana and Makana Paris. They are supported by Dreanna Kalii and Catelin Aiwohi, the 'Aha secretaries and Roscoe Kahumoku and Katie Kamelamela who are serving as Sergeants-at-Arms.

"I think it's been an excellent decision moving forward with the leadership that we have now," shared 'Aha Participant and Secretary, Catelin Aiwohi. She went on to say, "They have really embodied all of the characteristics that we would like as a body. I feel like they are really there to serve us and give us the benefit of sharing our mana'o in an equal and fair process."

This process has created momentum. In week two, the body deliberated over and approved a purpose statement to focus activity going forward. A communication committee has been formed that is now providing a daily bulletin to the media that is also uploaded and archived with a gallery of images at [aha2016.com](http://aha2016.com). Participant presentations were added to the agenda allowing the 'Aha to hear from some of its own internal experts. Caucuses and focus group delved into issues from citizenship to economic drivers as well as individual and collective rights. Participants also explored current governing documents from countries around the world to gain insight and ideas on provisions such as the preamble, prohibitions and legislative authorities.

The 'Aha moves in to week three with structure, purpose, leadership and a increased knowledge base. Committees are begin formed that will continue with drafting the various components for the governing document aimed at advancing the self-governance of the Native Hawaiian people.

**CONTINUE**

**'Aha Purpose Statement**

The purpose of our 'Aha is to advance the self-governance of kānaka maoli (the Native Hawaiian people) through:

1. Drafting a governing document(s) for ratification by our Native Hawaiian people that establishes a Native Hawaiian government;
2. Affirming our national identity and preserving our rights therein; and,
3. Advancing the hopes of our people around land, language, culture, justice, and economic and political identity.

**Access to 'Ōlelo Coverage:** For the 'ohana and kaiāulu that are interested in following along, the plenary sessions are being broadcast on 'Ōlelo channels as well as livestreamed. They will also be available on demand within 48 hours of the event. For details, visit [olelo.org](http://olelo.org)

**# # #**

Please route all media inquiries to Adrian Kamali'i (808) 330-3342 or Amy Kalili (808) 927-0343.