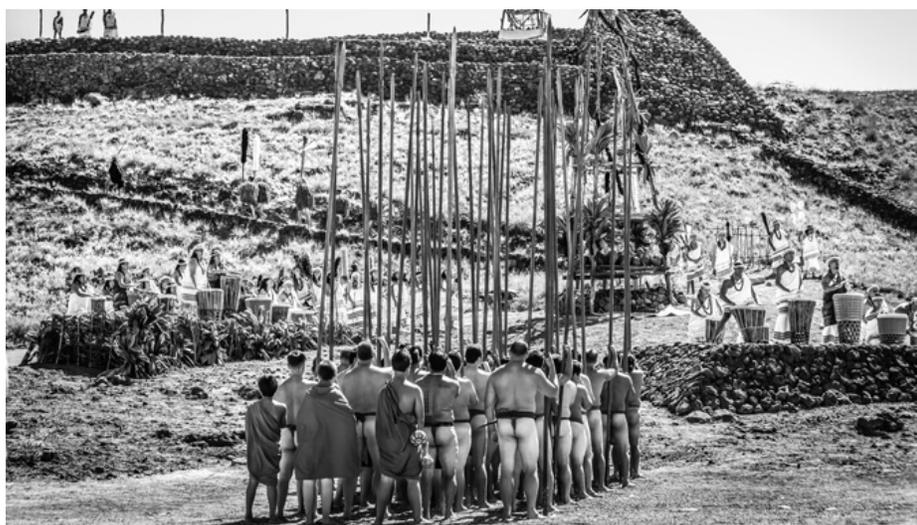


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# UH kumu re-envision stewardship of Hawaiian ancestral sites

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August 17, 2021 [UH News](#)



Cultural practices being observed at Pu'ukoholā Heiau, an ancestral site on Hawai'i Island. (Photo credit: Kai Markell)

A new [collaborative report](#) aimed at revamping the protection of wahi kūpuna or ancestral sites across Hawai'i has recently been released to the public. Kumu (teachers) from [University of Hawai'i at Mānoa](#), [UH Hilo](#) and [UH West O'ahu](#) stemming from a wide umbrella of departments, ranging from anthropology, Hawaiian and American studies and marine and natural resource management participated in developing fresh strategies to safeguard Hawai'i's cultural sites and practices.

"For decades we have witnessed wahi kūpuna, wahi pana (storied or legendary places) and iwi kūpuna (ancestral remains) impacted and destroyed at an alarming rate," said UH Mānoa and UH Hilo archaeology alumna **Kelley Lehuakeapuna Uyeoka**, who helped organize a wahi kūpuna stewardship Think Tank in 2019 through her non-profit organization Huliauapa'a. "Even today, the news is filled with stories on development projects destroying our sacred places and the bones of

our ancestors. Wahi kūpuna are ancestral spaces and places where we maintain relationships to the past, fostering our identity and well-being in the present.”

Collaborators of the newly published [Kali'uokapa'akai Collective Report](#) are encouraging the public to read the document to understand what can be done to expand the protection of ancestral sites.

On August 17, an [endorsement campaign](#) was launched to encourage people to support the Kali'uokapa'akai Collective's vision of empowering communities, professionals and agencies to work collaboratively to protect, restore, reinvigorate and appropriately steward Hawai'i's wahi kūpuna.

In April 2019, more than 100 participants from UH and across 15 different sectors attended the two-day Think Tank to discuss a range of challenges, opportunities, and solutions for wahi kūpuna stewardship. Real-time data was compiled through topic area panels, facilitated breakout discussions and live surveys. Participants shared, documented, evaluated and prioritized existing and new information, knowledge and practices. Potential strategies proposed at the event were compiled and published in the report, a first-ever analysis of the current state of cultural resource management and historic preservation in Hawai'i.

“Much was accomplished and the Kali'uokapa'akai Collective hopes to hold these types of ‘conferences with kuleana (responsibilities)’ every two to three years to continue to tackle systems change in Hawai'i's cultural resource management field,” said [Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies](#) Director **Kekuewa Kikilo**, who helped spearhead the event.

The report highlights four topic areas contributors believe Hawai'i is facing such as restoration, proper care of burial sites, improvement of consultation with the community and the expansion of 'ike Hawai'i (Hawaiian knowledge or thought). The report also lists systemic shortfalls in the current handling of wahi kūpuna which include the lack of digital access to ancestral sites data and severe staffing shortages within the state's historic preservation division.

Kānaka 'ōiwi (Native Hawaiians) propelled to defend the handling of ancestral lands refer to an array of controversial sites such as the destruction of heiau to make way for the H-3 freeway in Kāne'ohe, construction of a luxury home on top of burials at Naue, Kaua'i, and the continued push for development on Maunakea.

"This report aims to bring awareness to specific wahi kūpuna stewardship issues and highlight ways that individuals, organizations, professionals and others can take action towards greater stewardship," Uyeoka added.

### **E pū pa'akai kākou, a resilient people that can survive together.**

According to Kikiloi, the translation of Kalī'uokapa'akai breaks down to the deeply symbolic term, "the essence of salt" which illustrates the powerful Hawaiian metaphor of pa'akai (salt) as an agent of protection, preservation, healing and bringing people together. The term was coined by the late Uncle Eddie Kaanana.

"The concept of pa'akai also calls to mind the historical landmark legal case, Ka Pa'akai o ka 'Āina,, that reaffirmed the traditional and customary rights of Native Hawaiians," Kikiloi explained.

[For more information on the collaborative report and endorsement visit the Kalī'uokapa'akai website.](#)



UH kumu and alumni make up a big portion of the report's collaborators that crafted strategies at the 2019 Think Tank.

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