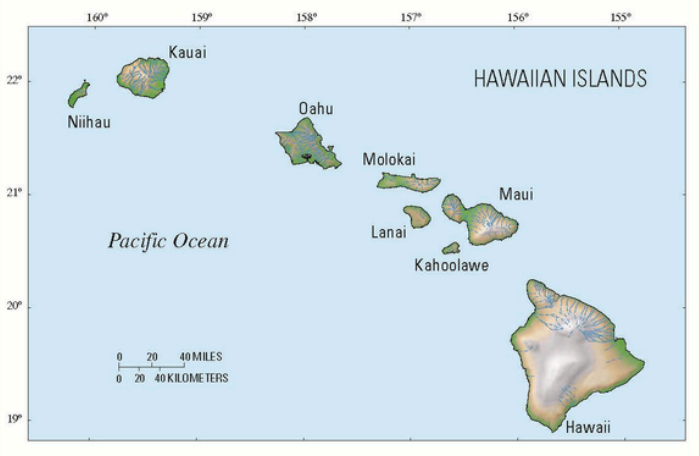
NATIVE HAWAIIAN HISTORY

NATIVE HAWAIIAN PHILANTHROPY

SUSTAINABILITY,COLONIZATION & CULTURAL VALUES

Who Are Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians)?



Native Hawaiians are the Indigenous people of Hawai'i with ancestral ties to the islands for over a thousand years. Their worldview is rooted in relationality, which includes a deep spiritual and genealogical connection to the land ('āina), ocean (moana), and all living beings.

Traditional society was highly organized, sustainable, and governed by natural laws (Kānāwai), particularly through the ahupua'a system, which ensured equitable sharing of resources from mountain to sea.

Hawaiians were expert farmers, navigators, scientists, and cultural practitioners, thriving in balance with the land for centuries prior to Western contact.

The ingenuity and holistic values of ancient Hawaiians are exemplified through their remarkable voyaging traditions and sustainable practices. Between 1000-1200 AD, Polynesians from the Marquesas Islands embarked on an adventurous journey over 2,000 miles across the ocean, navigating using their deep knowledge of the stars, ocean currents, and wildlife. They skillfully constructed double-hulled canoes, known as "Wa'a," which not only allowed for impressive travel but also facilitated the introduction of essential animals and crops to their new home. These settlers brought pigs, dogs, chickens, taro, sweet potatoes, coconuts, and bananas, which played a fundamental role in the development of a unique Hawaiian culture that thrived in isolation for nearly 500 years.

Ancient Hawaiian society revolved around a complex system, governed by strict laws known as kanawai that upheld cultural values, resource conservation, and social order. At the apex were the Ali'i (chiefs), followed by kahuna (professionals), who were custodians of spiritual practices and knowledge. The maka 'ainana (commoners) engaged in the daily sustenance activities. The concept of kapu (forbidden) guided behaviors and ensured harmony between the community and its resources. The division of lands into moku and ahupua'a—political and ecological districts—further illustrated the Hawaiians' profound understanding of their environment, allowing communities to thrive in balance with nature. This rich cultural heritage continues to inspire Native Hawaiians today as they work to preserve these ancient values amidst the changes brought by modernity.

Colonization & Historical Trauma

Key Timeline Events

1778 — Captain Cook arrives; foreign diseases kill 80% of Hawaiians within decades.

1819 — Traditional kapu system is abolished, opening the door to Christian and Western influence.

1848 — The Great Māhele privatizes land, leading to mass Native land loss.

1893 — The Hawaiian Kingdom is overthrown with U.S. military support.

1898 — Hawai'i is illegally annexed to the U.S

1959 — Hawai'i becomes the 50th U.S. state by a vote excluding most Native voices.

This timeline reflects not only political occupation but a pattern of health crises, population collapse, cultural suppression (such as banning 'Ōlelo Hawai'i in schools), and land dispossession that caused intergenerational trauma.

Contemporary Challenges

How do Native Hawaiians continue to experience the effects of colonization today?

Health Disparities

- Higher rates of diabetes, heart disease, depression, and substance use
- Infant mortality is nearly double that of other racial groups in Hawai'i

Economic & Housing Inequities

- Disproportionate poverty, incarceration, and underemployment
- One of the highest costs of living in the U.S.
- Long waitlists for Hawaiian Homelands and displacement from ancestral lands

Educational Barriers

- Colonial education systems led to language and cultural loss
- Lower graduation and college attendance rates
- Successful counter-efforts include Hawaiian language immersion schools, 'āina-based learning, and culturally grounded charter schools

Environmental Resistance

Native Hawaiians lead movements to protect sacred and ecological lands:

- Mauna Kea, Pōhakuloa, and Mākua Valley protests
- Legal advocacy against pollution and land grabs (e.g., Red Hill fuel leak, Lahaina fire response)
- Restoration of loʻi kalo (taro patches), fishponds, and watersheds

Resilience & Revitalization: The Hawaiian Renaissance

Since the 1970s, Native Hawaiians have led a movement to restore:

- **Language** (via Pūnana Leo schools and official language status)
- **Cultural practices** like wayfinding navigation (e.g., Hōkūleʻa) and hula
- **Land advocacy** (e.g., return of Kahoʻolawe)
- **Political activism** grounded in self-determination and ancestral knowledge

How Can You Support Native Hawaiian Communities?

1. Learn & Respect Hawaiian History
Understand that Hawaiʻi is a sovereign nation illegally occupied
Recognize the impact of U.S. colonization and systemic racism

2. Support Hawaiian-Led Efforts
Fund Native Hawaiian organizations and schools
Invest in long-term, community-led and culturally-driven solutions in health, education, and environment.

3. Stand in Solidarity
Show up for land and water protection movements
Use your platforms and privilege to amplify Native Hawaiian voices
Be aware of and reject disaster capitalism and speculative development

4. Embrace Strengths-Based Approaches
Value Native Hawaiian knowledge systems, cultural governance, and relational worldviews
Support frameworks like Kūkulu Kumuhana, which define wellness by identity, land connection, and community—not just Western metrics

Despite over a century of systemic oppression, Native Hawaiians have survived and continue to thrive through language revitalization, cultural resurgence, and self-determination. Supporting their efforts requires humility, historical understanding, and a commitment to equity and justice.