



Native
Hawaiian

LEGAL CORPORATION

NATIVE HAWAIIAN LEGAL CORPORATION

THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN | JULY 2023 – JUNE 2026



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INTRODUCTION

In late 2022, Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation (NHLC) embarked on a journey to create a new three-year strategic plan that envisioned the growth and success of the nearly 50-year organization. Formed in 1974 as the Hawaiian Coalition of Native Claims, NHLC initially fought for Native Hawaiians who encountered difficulties securing land under the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act. Since then, NHLC has expanded its services and programs to meet the growing legal needs of Native Hawaiians. From providing legal guidance and representation over land claims to hosting workshops and training sessions for Department of Hawaiian Home Lands beneficiaries and, more recently, supporting cultural practitioners asserting their traditional and customary rights, NHLC continues to be a pillar for Native Hawaiians throughout the pae‘āina.

To create this new plan, NHLC Board Members and staff participated in two hybrid meetings in October 2022 to learn more about the history of the organization, its mission, vision, values, and opportunities for growth. After several discussions and activities, a total of five goals, 13 objectives, and 26 action items were identified as guideposts to help NHLC achieve its vision over the next three years.



OUR MO'OKŪ'AUHAU



GENEALOGY

This timeline reflects the shared mo'okū'auhau that the NHLC staff and board members co-created during the two strategic planning workshops. In addition, it includes important social and political events in Hawai'i, significant court cases, and other notable milestones for NHLC. As the new strategic goals are achieved through NHLC's diligent work to protect and preserve Native Hawaiian rights and lands throughout the pae'āina, this timeline will expand and continue to grow.



1974

- NHLC was incorporated as a nonprofit in 1974, the outgrowth of the Hawaiian Coalition of Native Claims (NHLC's predecessor) and a consortium of grassroots organizations known as the Council of Hawaiian Organizations (COHO) whose constituents recognized the need for native rights legal advocacy.



1978

- Originally operated as a volunteer-run attorney referral service, NHLC assisted the Hawaiian Affairs Committee of the 1978 Constitutional Convention. Together they secured many advancements for Native Hawaiians throughout Hawai'i. This includes establishing constitutional amendments that recognize traditional and customary rights, creating the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and declaring 'ōlelo Hawai'i as an official language of the State of Hawai'i.



1980

- *Hustace v Kapuni* established that notice was required in quiet title lawsuits.
- NHLC expands services from providing legal assistance for housing and quiet title cases to supporting Native Hawaiians asserting their traditional and customary rights. In 1998, the two OHA projects were consolidated into a Native Hawaiian Land and Rights Project that NHLC has administered up through the present.
- Melody MacKenzie began working at NHLC.



1992

- *Pele Defense Fund v. William Paty, et al.* The Hawai'i Supreme Court ruled that a cultural practitioner's traditional and customary rights are not limited to the ahupua'a that the individual resides in, but may extend beyond those boundaries.



1998

- Two OHA projects were consolidated into a Native Hawaiian Land and Rights Project that NHLC has administered up through the present.



2001

- NHLC filed a petition on behalf of Nā Moku 'Aupuni o Ko'olau Hui (Nā Moku), Beatrice Kekahuna, Marjorie Wallet, and Elizabeth Lapena to amend the Interim Instream Flow Standard for 27 streams in East Maui.



2008

- A new generation of attorneys is hired to support NHLC.
- NHLC files a complaint on behalf of Nā Moku, Beatrice Kekahuna, Marjorie Wallet, and Elizabeth Lapena, alleging that Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company (HC&S) is wasting water.



2010

- Office of Hawaiian Affairs formalizes Native Hawaiian Legal Affairs program to provide sustaining funds for NHLC.
- Moses Haia is appointed Executive Director of NHLC.



2018

- Former NHLC attorney, Judge Summer Kupau, was sworn in as Judge of the District Court of the First Circuit.
- *Nelson v. DHHL* established that the Hawaii State Legislature is only required to fund the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) the amount that the delegates of the 1978 Hawaii State Constitutional Convention estimated it takes in administration and operating expenses, when adjusted for inflation.



2019

- *Clarabal v Department of Education* established that the State of Hawai'i has a constitutional duty to provide a Hawaiian language immersion education for public school students.



2020

- The COVID-19 pandemic alters our world and brings many changes to the political, social, and economic landscape of Hawai'i.



2021

- Summer Sylva is appointed by U.S. President Biden to serve as the first Senior Advisor for Native Hawaiian Affairs to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland.
- Makalika Naholowa'a is appointed Executive Director of NHLC.



2022

- NHLC moves into a new office and start to create the 2023-2026 strategic plan.



OUR MISSION +
VISION



MISSION

**E mālama a e kahu i ka loina me
ka mo‘omeheu Hawai‘i.**

Protecting and advancing Native Hawaiian identity and culture.



VISION

He Hawai‘i pono i alaka‘i ‘ia e ke aloha ‘āina.

A just Hawai‘i guided by Hawaiian values, customs, and ways of knowing.





OUR VALUES



OUR VALUES

1 PONO (JUSTICE + RIGHTEOUSNESS)

Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'Āina i ka Pono.

The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness.

We work to enable pono outcomes that foster life for the 'āina and lāhui.

2 KULEANA (PRIVILEGE + DUTY)

I kua na'u.

Let me help. – 'ōlelo no'eau 1218

Advocating for the lāhui and the 'āina is NHLC's kuleana. We are honored, committed, and focused on fulfilling it.

3 ONIPA'A (DETERMINED + STEADFAST)

E onipa'a i ka 'imi na'auao.

Be steadfast in the seeking of knowledge. – Motto of Queen Lili'uokalani

NHLC has stood 'onipa'a for Hawaiian identity, culture, people, 'āina, rights, and justice since 1978. We are proud to be a consistent, and reliable 'onipa'a advocate for the lāhui.

4 WIWO'OLE (BRAVE + BOLD)

Ua hele au me ka mana'o pa'a, Ua paio au me ka mana'o koa, Ua lanakila au me ka mana'o pono, Ua mākaukau au me ka mana'o wiwo'ole.

I went with conviction, I battled as a warrior, I prevailed through righteousness, I was prepared with bold belief – Joseph Nāwahī

Hawaiian justice requires huluhia – transformation. Though necessary and inevitable, change is inherently disruptive and often uncomfortable. We commit to being wiwo'ole as advocates for the huluhia the lāhui needs.

5 PILINA (RELATIONSHIPS)

E ala! E alu! E kuilima!

Arise, Come together, Join hand in hand – 'ōlelo no'eau 258

Our kupuna knew that pilina are necessary for success against formidable challenges and that respectful interdependence strengthens us.



GOALS, STRATEGIES,
+ ACTION PLAN



GOALS OVERVIEW

The Board Members and staff identified the following goals, objectives, and actions as strategic priorities for the next three years. Aligned with its mission and vision, NHLC will focus its time, talent, and treasures on accomplishing these goals.





GOAL 1

PRESERVE ‘OHANA PILINA TO THEIR ‘ĀINA, ‘OHANA, AND LĀHUI

OBJECTIVE 1 **Protect Hawaiian Homes**

ACTION

Provide legal services to Native Hawaiian families to maintain Hawaiian Home Lands and other government-managed land programs.

Hold the government accountable for its trust duties stewarding Hawaiian Home Lands by providing testimony and participating in consultations at state, federal, and international levels regarding proposed and completed government actions.

Defend Hawaiian families against the dispossession of family lands (other than lands in government-managed land programs) in eviction and quiet title actions.

OBJECTIVE 2 **Protect Hawaiian Families**

ACTION

Support ‘ohana and keiki to preserve parental and kupuna rights, maintain cultural and familial bonds, and decrease the overrepresentation of Native Hawaiian children among those removed from their families by the state child welfare system.

Disrupt the foster care to juvenile corrections to adult corrections pipeline for Native Hawaiian families with legal services and advocacy.

OBJECTIVE 3

ACTION

Provide legal services, advocacy, and education that communities and descendants need to mālama iwi kūpuna.



GOAL 2

EMPOWER CULTURAL PRACTITIONERS TO PROTECT SACRED PLACES AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

OBJECTIVE 1 Enable Practitioners to Protect and Enforce Their Rights By Providing Direct Legal Services

ACTION

Represent practitioners in legal matters to protect, assert, and enforce their rights to aloha 'āina, traditional and customary practices, and traditional knowledge.

OBJECTIVE 2 Amplify Practitioner Voices Out of Court

ACTION

Participate in meetings, public comment processes, task forces, working groups, and Native Hawaiian consultations to ensure that Native Hawaiian rights, needs, and points of view are heard.

OBJECTIVE 3 Empower the Community to Self Advocate

ACTION

Develop educational programs and resources that empower communities to successfully aloha 'āina as advocates.





GOAL 3

CULTIVATE RESPECT AND ALLYSHIP FOR 'ŌIWI PEOPLE AND JUSTICE

OBJECTIVE 1 Increase Awareness of Hawaiian Rights and Justice Issues

ACTION

Provide educational programs and resources that create greater awareness of 'Ōiwi communities and justice issues.

Deliver frequent, compelling communications that tell our client stories.

OBJECTIVE 2 Create, Support, and Encourage Allies

ACTION

Offer varied and meaningful opportunities to volunteer and contribute to NHLC's work.

Participate in hui, coalitions, and mission-aligned partnerships to accelerate our progress and increase impact.

Recognize and award impactful allies.

OBJECTIVE 3 Serve as Thought and Community Leaders

ACTION

Contribute information, insights, opinions, and recommendations regarding community needs, law, and policy to influence progress towards 'Ōiwi justice.

Serve as leaders in other organizations impacting the lāhui to generate influence and allyship.



GOAL 4

NURTURE AN 'AUWAI OF INDIGENOUS RIGHTS LEADERS

OBJECTIVE 1

Build the Pipeline of Indigenous Advocates

ACTION

Facilitate experiential learning programs that train and inspire the next generation of indigenous and Native Hawaiian rights advocates.

OBJECTIVE 2

Increase Awareness of Hawaiian Rights and Justice Issues

ACTION

Nurture relationships and opportunities that enable indigenous rights advocates to learn, grow, and thrive in the legal profession, including fellowships, inter-organizational working groups and collaborations, and meaningful early-in-career and continuing legal training experiences.

Support indigenous practitioners externally, including alumni, with partnership, amplification of their work, and support as they grow professionally and pursue excellence in indigenous rights and the law.





GOAL 5

**SECURE THE LĀHUI'S ACCESS TO HAWAIIAN RIGHTS
ADVOCATES FOREVER**

OBJECTIVE 1 Increase Net Income Annually and Diversify Income Sources

ACTION

Increase staff capacity to pursue grants and other financial support from philanthropic and government sources.

Evolve operational capacity to execute “pay what you can” sliding-scale fee services.

Maintain excellent governance and operational stewardship of organizational resources.

Research and build a database of unrestricted fund sources and private donors

OBJECTIVE 2 Create an Endowment to Provide Long Term Investment Income to fund NHLC's Mission

ACTION

Conduct diligence into endowment structures.

Stand up the endowment using existing savings from unrestricted donor gifts and other earned income.

Develop a campaign plan to grow endowment so that investment income in the fund can meaningfully contribute to NHLC operating budget.



WAHI MAHALO

Mahalo Nui to Our Contributors

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NHLC mahalos DTL Hawaii for facilitating
our strategic planning process