



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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5 HAWAII CULTURAL AMBASSADORS WHO WILL ENRICH YOUR GROUP'S VISIT TO THE ISLANDS

Introducing a few Hawaii residents embracing traditional Hawaiian cultural sustainable practices for modern times and sharing their knowledge and stories with others.

HAWAII – Over the past few decades, many modern-day Native Hawaiians have returned to the reciprocal relationship their ancestors shared with the *‘āina* (land), instilling practices born of that relationship throughout contemporary Hawaii life. These lessons in stewardship, initially localized, have since spread globally through the practice of *mālama honua* (caring for, protecting and preserving the earth.) As the global community nurtures new generations of citizens who increasingly embrace sustainability and connectivity as part of their daily lives, Hawaii and its cultural ambassadors practicing techniques of *mālama honua* have become role models for how humankind should conduct themselves while at home and abroad, whether traveling for business or pleasure.

The stories and experiences shared by the five Hawaii-based cultural ambassadors profiled below frame opportunities for meetings and incentive groups traveling to the Islands to immerse themselves in life-enriching cultural interactions, experiences and knowledge beyond their event spaces and Hawaii's world-renowned natural wonder. Deeply embedded in their individual communities and *wahi pana* (sacred spaces), these ambassadors provide opportunities for groups to connect with and experience Hawaii through a distinct lens of modern Hawaiian indigeneity.

O'ahu: Kyle Reutner, Brand Manager, Kō Hana Hawaiian Agricole Rum

Traversing through the underbrush and scarlet-hued muddy slopes of central O'ahu's legendarily fertile agricultural lands, Kyle cuts through stands of eight-foot *kō* (sugar cane) in search of *pakaweli*, a prized stalk of purplish-green sugar cane treasured for its sweet juiciness. Stalks of the ancestral *kō* varietal Kyle eventually locates will be hand-harvested, pressed into juice and distilled at Kō Hana's nearby distillery to create the spirit producer's sweetly earthy rum agricole, an artisanal rum crafted with pure cane juice. (Most modern rums are made from the sugar-processing byproduct, molasses.) Kyle and Kō Hana partner with noted Hawaii bars and restaurants – such as Bar Leather Apron, Harry's Hardware Emporium and The Pig and the Lady – to create craft cocktail recipes with their agricole rum as they revive other ancestral *kō* varietals and experiment with unique flavors. Groups are welcome to visit Kō Hana's distillery in the former pineapple plantation village of Kunia to enrich their O'ahu visit with a tasting of the distillery's agricole rums, and tour of its operations and native Hawaiian sugar cane garden.

To learn more:

- Experience a rum tasting tour at Kō Hana's central O'ahu distillery.
- Watch Kyle's story here: [Hawaii Rooted: The Nobility of Cane](#)

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Maui: Kau'i Kanaka'ole, Executive Director, Ala Kukui

The Native Hawaiian sense of being is believed to extend beyond the realm of human contact to also connect with nature – in essence, from the *wao kanaka* (realm of mankind) to the *wao akua* (realm of the gods) and beyond. Kau'i, *kumu hula* (hula teacher) of *hālau hula* (hula group) Hālau o Nakaulakuhikuhi, has always cultivated an intimate relationship with the forests surrounding her home town of Hāna on the remote East Maui coastline. In these forests, she recognizes that the flora stretching from floor to canopy are more than just plants, but also verdant companions of her *kūpuna* (ancestors), continuing to lend their strength and beauty as adornments worn by her hālau. As such, she takes special care to *mālama* (preserve and protect) these precious natural resources and honor their purpose. Kau'i brings her vivid understanding of place to her work at Ala Kukui, a Hawaiian cultural retreat in Hāna where she helps guests and visiting groups immerse themselves in and connect with the surrounding *'āina* (land).

To learn more:

- Book Ala Kukui for a group retreat and engage with traditional protocols of engagement
- Watch Kau'i's story here: [Hawai'i Rooted: Keepers of the Forest](#)

Island of Hawai'i: Keoni Kaholo'a'ā, Interpretive Ranger, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

With two of the five volcanoes that comprise its landscape still geologically active, the island of Hawai'i is undeniably alive. On occasion, Pele, the Hawaiian deity associated with all of the Hawaiian Islands' volcanoes, rises from her home in Kīlauea – one of those two active volcanoes – to again begin the process of creation in the form of a lava flow. Keoni, who claims to be a descendant of Pele's lineage, has experienced her ascendance to Earth's surface in the form of molten lava several times through his work. As a park ranger, he shares the tales of Pele with visitors. He explains that although the park's vast expanses of lava – frozen mid-flow into long smooth ropes called *pāhoehoe* and sharp, jagged sections called *'a'ā* – may appear barren, there is actually life everywhere on Kīlauea. The natural revitalization of ecosystems begins on this new land where slowly flora and fauna rebuild and repopulate. Visitors are welcome to hike the diversity of trails throughout Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, where Pele's creation and the natural world are sanctified and commemorated.

To learn more:

- Experience cultural programs regularly offered at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, or explore the landscapes of the many trails throughout the park.
- Watch Keoni's story here: [Hawaii Rooted: Descendant of the Volcano Goddess](#)

Moloka'i: Greg Solatorio, Cultural Practitioner, Hālawā Valley Falls Cultural Hike

Hālawā Valley, tucked into Moloka'i's remote east side, is home to Pilipo and Greg Solatorio, father and son, respectively, and direct descendants of the vast, emerald valley's first settlers, who are believed to have arrived there in 650 A.D. While both are owner-operators of Hālawā Valley Falls Cultural Hike, Greg is the lead in safely and properly shepherding visitors through his family's sacred lands, sharing his *'ike* (knowledge) of Hālawā and his ancestors who once resided within the now largely unpopulated valley. A successful model of what a sustainable tour can and should be, as well as one of the first such tours launched in the Hawaiian Islands, the Hālawā Valley Falls Cultural Hike has Greg and Pilipo sharing an authentic Hawaiian cultural experience with visitors to Moloka'i while managing community expectations and tourist impact to the Solatorio's Hālawā *'āina*. Pilipo believes that culture is sacred but should not be kept a secret; that once the practice and sharing of culture stops, *'ike kupuna* (ancestral

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knowledge) also begins to fade away until it is lost forever. The Solatorios are assuring that never happens in Hālawā.

To learn more:

- Experience the Hālawā Valley Falls Cultural Hike
- Watch Greg's story here: [Hawaii Rooted: Living a Cultural Legacy](#)

Kaua'i: Lyndsey Haraguchi-Nakayama, Kalo Farmer, Ho'opulapula Haraguchi Rice Mill
Kalo (taro) is a staple food grown in the tropic and subtropic regions of the world. The story of *kalo* is intricately woven into their origin of the Native Hawaiian people as a part of their genealogy. *Kalo* was one of the few sacred plants they traveled with across the Pacific Ocean and each part of the *kalo* plant has various uses. *Kalo* leaves are used in local dishes such as *lualau* and the *kalo* corm is mashed and pounded into *poi*, a local superfood, nutritiously dense and delicious. This is why to Native Hawaiians, the *kalo* plant represents more than just a plant and culinary delicacy.

Her work as a *kalo* farmer is physically demanding and her days off virtually nonexistent. But Lyndsey thrives in the intense momentum to continue a legacy, passed down through five generations of her family, to work its acres of *lo'i kalo* (irrigated taro terraces) in Hanalei on Kaua'i's north shore. She works the very same fields as her great-great grandparents, who founded the family farm and initially grew and milled rice there. Her passion for what she does drives her entrepreneurial work ethic as she continuously engages with Kaua'i's resident and visitor communities. Lyndsey wears several work hats besides *kalo* farmer. She is the co-owner of Hanalei Taro and Juice Co. – a farm-to-table food truck parked across from the family farm – as well as the educational coordinator of Ho'opulapula Haraguchi Rice Mill, an agrarian museum, tucked behind the *kalo* fields, within the structure of her family's old mill. At the rice mill, groups can book a guided ecotour exploring Hanalei Valley, experience *poi*-pounding demonstrations and learn about Hanalei through the stories of her family's successes and challenges as longtime area farmers.

To learn more:

- Visit Ho'opulapula Haraguchi Rice Mill or Lyndsey's popular food truck, Hanalei Taro and Juice Co.
- Watch Lyndsey's story here: [Hawaii Rooted: Seeds of Perseverance](#)

Enjoyed the videos shared here and wish to connect with these Hawaii cultural ambassadors or learn about others like them? Watch the complete **Hawaii Rooted** series of short films spotlighting an array of Hawaii residents sharing the traditions of Hawaii and Native Hawaiian culture and customs. You'll find all of the videos at www.hawaiirooted.com.

Additional information, photos and interview opportunities are available upon request.

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About Meet Hawaii

Meet Hawaii is a collaboration of the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA), HTA's Global Marketing Teams and the Hawaii Convention Center (HCC) to reinforce the brand of the Hawaiian Islands as a world-class destination for global business meetings, conventions and incentive programs. The marketing efforts of the Meet Hawaii team are overseen by HTA, the state of Hawaii's tourism agency. HTA was established in 1998 to ensure a successful visitor industry well into the future. Its mission is to strategically manage Hawaii tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with the state of Hawaii's economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural

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resources, community desires and visitor industry needs. For information about Meet Hawai'i and the hosting of meetings, conventions and incentives, please visit MeetHawaii.com.

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