

# Ka Hale Hula O Piliialohaokalani O Hilo

## Grass Valley Hālau Hula

Fall 2023

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### Upcoming Hālau Activities

- **Hula Basics Class**, Sunday mornings, 9:30 a.m. - 10 a.m. (contact us to register) at [grassvalleyhula.com](http://grassvalleyhula.com)
- **Indigenous People's Day** - Sunday, October 8, 11 a.m., Burton Ranch on Lake Vera Road

### 'Ōlelo Hawai'i

**Ha'aha'a:** Humility; to be humble. Ha'aha'a is an important Hawaiian value to hula dancers. When we live the value of ha'aha'a, we learn to come from a place of love and understanding; accept that things won't always work out, and it will still be okay; and learn to trust. It is the attitude of being unpretentious, modest, and open in your thoughts. ʻ

### Meet the Co-Founder of the GV Hālau, Michael 'Ikaikaloa Keene

It was Christmas, 1981, when Michael Keene was invited to run a passport photo shop in Honolulu while the owners vacationed. Thus began the first of many subsequent visits. By 1985, he was housesitting a condominium in Makiki, a suburb of Honolulu, when he made the pivotal acquaintance with Auntie Alice Nāmakelua\*. Through his friendship with Auntie Alice he was introduced to the world of Hawaiian culture, music, and hula. Auntie Nona Beamer and her sons, Keola

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'Ohia Lehua blossom, Big Island

### Celebrating the Hālau's 20th Anniversary in Grass Valley



Pine Tree Stage, Nevada County Fair

**K**a Hale Hula O Piliialohaokalani O Hilo is a traditional hālau hula established in 1988 by Kumu Piliialoha Christensen in Ventura County, California.

In 2003 Kumu Piliialoha was invited to conduct the first of what was to become many hula workshops in Grass Valley. Soon after, the Grass Valley dancers committed to becoming a sister hālau to Kumu Piliialoha's Southern California hālau in Camarillo. The sister hālau have joined forces to compete in Honolulu, Seattle, Pleasanton, and Sacramento, placing in all events.

Besides competing, the Grass Valley hālau performs at various community and private events in the Grass Valley/Nevada City area.

Both the Camarillo and Grass Valley hālau are dedicated to the preservation of Hawaiian culture and language, sharing Aloha, and increasing awareness of Hawaii's people and history.

For more information about classes, workshops, bookings, and more, click on [grassvalleyhula.com](http://grassvalleyhula.com) ʻ

### Ku'u's Corner by Kumu Alaka'i Dale Ku'umomialoha Deacon

#### The Awakening

Like a child waking from a long winter's nap, our hālau is up and running after all the challenges of the pandemic. Such joy and anticipation to be with our Kumu and my hula 'ohana once

again.

I recall with fondness when I first met our Kumu 20 years ago. From the moment she stepped onto the dance floor chanting, I felt the pull from deep within, and tears began to fall - from then

on, I became a haumana. Through the years, I was given more responsibility and was granted a leadership role as Kumu Alaka'i, which I have shared with three amazing Alaka'i. As a

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**Ka Hale Hula O  
Pilialoahaokalani O Hilo,  
Grass Valley Hālau Hula**

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**For details on classes and  
booking performances,  
email us at:  
[grassvalleyhula@gmail.com](mailto:grassvalleyhula@gmail.com)**

## Honu, Beloved Guardian Spirit

The *Honu*, a green sea turtle indigenous to the Islands, holds a special place in Hawaiian culture as an 'aumakua (guardian spirit) and symbol of spiritual strength (*mana*). They were thought to protect the gods of both land and sea. The sacred honu is dear to our Kumu Pilialoaha, as evidenced by the hālau logo.

Legend tells the story of *Honupo'okea*, who lived in the waters surrounding the Islands. In time, she met the handsome Hawksbill turtle, *Honu'ea*. They travelled to the black sand beach of Punalu'u



on the Big Island, where Honupo'okea birthed a special egg that was dark like the color of the wood of the kauila tree. Kauila wood is said to be so strong that it can be used in place of metal. The proud parents named their baby Kauila. After carefully burying the egg, Honupo'okea and Honu'ea dug a hole next to the nest so deep a fresh water spring pond was created. When baby Kauila emerged, her head was as white as the snow on Maunakea. She made her home in the pond her parents had made and became known as *Ka Wai Hu O Kauila* (Rising Waters of Kauila). Kauila could change into a young girl who watched over the children playing at the beach of Punalu'u. *Nā keiki* (children) visiting Kauila's pond continue to look for Kauila's white head when bubbles rise up from the bottom of the pond, a signal Kauila is nearby.

As many know, Hawaii's green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) are on the endangered species list due to fibropapillomatosis, which causes internal and external tumors, and the adverse effects of pollution/destruction of honu habitats and nesting sites.

If our beloved honu, a symbol of the connection between people, land and ocean, is to continue, the time is now for us to become its 'aumakua - its guardians. 🐢

*Co-Founder of the GV Hālau  
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and Kapono, were good friends of Aunty Alice. Back then, he had no idea who they were, but remembered the great impact it made on him. [The 70's and 80's saw the beginning of the Hawaiian Cultural Renaissance, where individuals and families like Aunty Alice and the Beamers played a significant role. This time of extraordinary growth in all things related to Hawaiian language, culture, and music, has continued to today.]

In July 1993, he and Rich Shipley created the *Kanikapila*\*\* Hawaiian music program on KVMR, a Nevada City based station. In 2000, Rich moved to Maui, and Michael was running *Kanikapila*, which had grown from a once a month show to a weekly Sunday morning feature. Over the years, he connected with Sacramento based hālau and nā kumu hula, with whom he has remained friends to this day.

His connection with Leokane Pryor, a Hawai'i born singer, musician and hula dancer, led to relationships with an array of popular Hawaiian music artists, who have held

concerts in Grass Valley. These relationships along with his ever growing collection of Hawaiian music old and new, and broad knowledge of Hawaiian music artists prepared him well to host *Kanikapila*.

### **Hula Comes to Grass Valley**

Leokane Pryor was scheduled to perform a concert in Grass Valley with his band and hula dancer. That hula dancer was Kumu Pilialoaha Christiansen. To promote the show, Michael conducted a radio interview with Kumu Pilialoaha, who offered an introductory hula workshop - thirty-six people showed up! Kumu was so impressed by the response, she proposed to come back for a second workshop if at least 24 participated. It was January 2003 when the first of many monthly hula workshops was held.

*Ku'u's Corner (Continued from page 1)*  
team, we keep the hālau active and on track while our Kumu is in Southern California.

With what the world has experienced these past few years, we realize how fortunate we are to be part of this amazing hālau in Grass Valley. We are blessed each time our Kumu visits to teach

Thus was the start of what was to become the Grass Valley hālau of Ka Hale Hula O Pilialoahaokalani O Hilo.

### **Reflecting on the 20th**

In the beginning, Michael, whom Kumu named 'Ikaikaloa, was not sure about the sustainability of the hālau. But as the hālau celebrated its 10th year, and now its 20th, he remains eternally optimistic about its future. 🐢

*\*Aunty Alice, who passed at the age of 94 in 1987, was inducted into the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame in 2011. Born in Kīhalani on the Big Island, she was a composer, Kumu Hula, expert slack key guitar musician, and native speaker. Aunty Alice mentored many musicians and wrote over 180 songs of her own.*

*\*\*Kanikapila is a style of Hawaiian music produced in an impromptu jam session, most commonly taking place at a beach, or family gathering. The term comes from kani which means sound, and pila which means any string instrument in the Hawaiian language.*

us hula, *oli*, Hawaiian culture and language, and guides us on the proper protocol associated with being part of a hālau .

This is a rebuilding year for us: we welcome newcomers to experience Ka Hale Hula O Pilialoahaokalani O Hilo, Grass Valley! In the coming months, we will be

performing in the community at events such as Indigenous Peoples Day. If you are interested in learning hula and about Hawaiian culture, contact us at [grassvalleyhula.com](http://grassvalleyhula.com); ask about our Hula Basics Class and future workshops planned.