

Laura Hokunani Edmunds Kaakua

SUMMARY

President & Chief Executive Officer of Hawai'i Land Trust with demonstrated management, conservation, and land acquisition project leadership results, with particular expertise in large and complicated real estate transactions for conservation purposes; community capacity building; facilitating diverse partnerships including conflict resolution; facilitating large scale ecosystem restoration planning efforts with diverse partners; and empowering local communities to steward cultural landscapes.

PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION, EDUCATION, CERTIFICATES AND HONORS

Membership, Hawaii State Bar Association, Honolulu, HI (Admitted June 2008)

Juris Doctor, University of Hawaii William S. Richardson School of Law, Honolulu, HI (2007)

- *Environmental Law Certificate*
- *Am. Jur. Awards in Legal Aspects of Water Resources and Control & Historic Preservation Law*
- *Best Oralist Award for Appellate Advocacy*

Bachelor of Arts, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA (2003)

- *Double Major in Political Science & Communications*
- *Founded the Society of Native American Peoples at Boston College*

High School Diploma, Punahou School, Honolulu, HI (1999)

Women Who Mean Business Honoree, Pacific Business News (2021)

Emerging Areas of Native Hawaiian Law Certificate Recipient, Hawaii State Bar Association (2018)

Native Hawaiian Peacemaking Concepts Certificate Recipient, Hawaii State Bar Association (2018)

Completed Strategic Planning Workshop, Pacific Center for Collaboration (2018)

Understanding the Basics of Land Court Certificate Recipient, Hawaii State Bar Association (2016)

Alumni of the Year Award 2014, Kupu, Honolulu, HI (2014) Award given for excellent service to the community in the field of conservation. (Served as a team leader in Kupu's Hawaii Youth Conservation Corps during the summer of 2005.)

Completed Facilitative Skills Workshop, Pacific Center for Collaboration (2012)

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

HAWAI'I LAND TRUST, Statewide, HI

President & CEO, March 2019 – Present

- Work in partnership with the Land Trust's Board of Directors to set strategic vision and goals that further its mission to protect and steward the lands that sustain Hawai'i for current and future generations.
- Manage a team of eighteen staff tasked with land protection, land stewardship of seven preserves and fifty conservation easements, and forming and strengthening lasting connections to land through place-based education and community caretaking of places owned and stewarded by Hawai'i Land Trust.
- Work with communities across Hawai'i to identify the special natural and cultural places and landscapes in need of permanent protection, the appropriate owners, managers, and stewards of those places, and the funding and capacity-building strategies to achieve reciprocal relationships between protected places and the local communities that care for them.
- Work in partnership with many government administrative leaders, legislators, and agencies at County, State and Federal levels to achieve shared land and resource protection goals through grant programs, land purchases and conservation easements, and collaboration as neighboring landowners and stewards.
- Raise significant funds that support the Land Trust's ongoing work and allow the Land Trust to begin new bold land protection efforts that will have a lasting positive impact on Hawai'i.
- Oversaw the permanent protection through purchase and/or conservation easement of nine irreplaceable lands and counting (Palikea at MA'O Farms, Wai'anae, O'ahu; Mokae I, Mokae II, and Maka'ala, Hāna,

Maui; Hakipu'u Ma Kai Lo'i Kalo, Ko'olauloa, O'ahu; Kahumana Farms, Wai'anae, O'ahu; 'Ulupalakua Bat Habitat, Maui; Kawa'ewa'e Heiau & Cultural Complex, Kāne'ohe, O'ahu; 'Ōpelu Point, Kīpahulu, Maui), and oversaw strides in native ecosystem restoration and community involvement on HILT's lands.

WILLIAM S. RICHARDSON SCHOOL OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII, Honolulu, HI
Lecturer, *January – May 2017*

- Co-taught Conservation Transactions to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year law students.
- The course covered basic real estate, finance, strategic principles, land due diligence assessment, and practical lessons about community consultation, working in Native Hawaiian communities, and the need for cultural and historic sensitivity when doing land transactions or management in Hawai'i.

TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND, Honolulu, HI

Native Lands Program Manager, *April 2010 – March 2019*

- Project managed and completed MA'O Organic Farms' second conservation purchase in Wai'anae, Hāwea heiau complex and Keawaawa wetlands in Maunaloa, Ka Iwi Coast Mauka Lands in Maunaloa, Ka'ehu Bay and wetlands in Wailuku, Kauhola Point in North Kohala, Kauleolī in South Kona, and Kānewai Spring in Kuli'ou'ou. Assisted in completing the purchase and protection of Kuamo'o battlefield and burial grounds in Kona. All properties are now owned by public agencies or nonprofit stewards.
- Project management included identifying and researching potential projects (landowners, land history, community sentiment and interested parties, risk and liability), structuring the transaction and target ownership and stewardship scenario, drafting legal agreements (Letters of Intent, Purchase/Option Agreements, Professional Service Agreements, MOUs, etc.), securing commitment from current landowner and conservation partners/future owner/steward, engaging lineal descendants and Hawaiian organizations and kupuna, securing significant private and public acquisition funds, overseeing due diligence (appraisals, Phase I Environmental Site Assessments, boundary surveys, title, archaeology, biological surveys), and coordinating all parties and funders to complete projects.
- Made significant progress in eleven active land protection projects across Hawai'i working with Native Hawaiian and broader local communities to protect open space lands of critical cultural importance, including Aina Haina Nature Preserve Expansion on O'ahu, Kaunāmano, Kawala, and Waikapuna on Hawai'i Island, and Kaluanono, and Halulu Fishpond Access on Kaua'i.
- Played a lead role in developing the O'ahu Greenprint in partnership with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, which maps the conservation values most prioritized by O'ahu residents to help land managers, government agencies, and conservation organizations prioritize land protection and stewardship actions.
- Identified strengths and weaknesses of partner organizations and government agencies, helped partner organizations and agencies to create land management plans, and helped to build their capacity to own and manage resource properties for the betterment of Hawai'i and the perpetuation of Hawaiian culture.
- Worked in partnership with philanthropy staff to write numerous successful grant proposals to support Trust for Public Land's work in Hawai'i and with indigenous peoples in other states.
- Represented Trust for Public Land at press conferences, as a panelist or speaker at public and private events and conferences, and in TV and radio interviews. Wrote press releases, and other articles and media materials.

ENVISION HAWAII, Honolulu, HI

Coordinator, *October 2009 – March 2010*

- Six-month contract to coordinate annual Envision Hawai'i conference bringing together, supporting, and increasing the agency of young public servants and social entrepreneurs in Hawai'i.
- The Envision Hawai'i Conference met and surpassed all set goals.
- Coordinated Board activities and tasks, and worked with a fiscal sponsor O'ahu Economic Development Board to coordinate and document all conference income and expenses.

HONORABLE GREG K. NAKAMURA, HAWAII CIRCUIT COURT, THIRD CIRCUIT, Hilo, HI
Law Clerk, August 2008 – September 2009

- Conducted legal research and writing focusing on motions to suppress, and civil procedure.
- Drafted trial orders and monitored upcoming motions and other court documents.
- Managed the court calendar and jury panels, and prepared the courtroom for trial and daily hearings.

EARTHJUSTICE, Honolulu, HI

Legal Assistant & Law Clerk, October – December 2007, May – July 2006

- Conducted research and drafted memoranda on environmental and water law issues.
- Prepared witnesses and created exhibits for contested case hearings; prepared clients for testimony.
- Wrote petitions to governmental agencies; created materials for a public education campaign.

THE HONORABLE DAVID A. EZRA, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT, Honolulu, HI
Judicial Extern, January – April 2007

- Drafted orders on various civil and criminal legal issues.

OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, Honolulu, HI

Independent Contractor to Department of Native Rights, Land and Culture, July – October 2006

- Prepared research and responses to agencies and private companies' involved in development projects or land transfers impacting Native Hawaiians and Hawai'i's natural and/or cultural resources.
- Researched and drafted memoranda on property law issues.

KUPU, Honolulu, HI

Team Leader, Hawai'i Youth Conservation Corps, Summer 2005

- Led a team of 13 high school and college students through hands-on conservation field work at DLNR and nonprofit sites throughout O'ahu including trail building and maintenance with Nā Ala Hele, Kawaiui wetland restoration, native plant propagation in DOFAW nurseries, and a service trip to Kaho'olawe with the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission.

RECENT COMMUNITY SERVICE

LAND TRUST ALLIANCE, National

Land Trust Leadership Council Member, August 2022 – Present

Advise the Alliance President, senior staff, and board on strategies for addressing emerging issues in land conservation; create a forum for dialogue, collaboration and innovation amongst top conservation leaders in the country; share land conservation models and lessons with the Alliance for dissemination to the broader conservation community.

NA PUALEI O LIKOLEHUA, UNDER KUMU HULA NIULII HEINE, Honolulu, HI
Alaka'i (leader), Olapa (dancer), Playwright, and Grant Writer, October 2005 – 2015
Co-Teacher of Keiki Class and Alaka'i (Leader), January 2017 - Present

PROTECT KAHO'OLAWE 'OHANA, Kaho'olawe, Maui, and O'ahu, HI
Volunteer, January 2004 - Present

ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION, Honolulu, HI

Appointed Member to the Committee on Initiatives to Enhance Civil Justice, October 2008 – 2015
Authored Hawaii Bar Journal article (July 2009); coordinated initiatives and meetings; worked with other committee members on initiatives such as foreclosure mediation and mobile law clinics; distributed minutes.