

# Celebrating Mahina 'Ōlelo Hawai'i 2024 (Hawaiian Language Month)

Since 2013, Pepeluali (February) is the official month commemorating the native language of Hawai'i, ensuring its preservation, sharing of learning and educational efforts to strengthen the language and ultimately a celebration Hawaiian culture. In 1978, after almost 100 years of suppression, 'Ōlelo Hawai'i was declared the official language once again and legislation was passed undoing the language ban in schools that had been in effect since 1896.



Did you know? To consider a language safe from extinction, about 100,000 people need to speak it. While there has been substantial progress made over several decades, much more needs to be done to ensure the language lives. How many people do you believe speak the language at home today? Answer on page 2.

## “Why is it important for you to honor the Hawaiian language and keep it alive?”

"The Hawaiian language is like an elder family member that should be treated with love, care, dignity, and respect by all who call Hawaii home. And in treating Hawaiian as a member of one's genealogy, honoring the language then becomes implied. This kind of aloha ensures that Hawaii's one and only native language lives."

- Andrew Pa'aluhī



"I commit to keep 'Ōlelo Hawai'i at the forefront of my life and to continue to plant seeds of knowledge in my 'ōhana and community to honor my kūpuna. I'd like to share one of my favorite quotes from an old Hawaiian language newspaper:

"I 'ike 'ia nō ke kanaka no kekahi lāhui ma kāna 'ōlelo. Inā e nalowale ana ka 'ōlelo makuahine o kekahi lāhui, e nālohia aku ana nō ia lāhui."

A person's ethnic/national identity is evident through the language he or she uses. If the mother tongue of a people were to disappear, so too would those people disappear."

Ka Pūhōnua o nā Hawai'i (The Hawaiian Refuge) on January 26, 1917"

-Mālia Kruger



# “Why is it important for you to honor the Hawaiian language and keep it alive?”

“What is language? According to Oxford Dictionary “It is the principal method of human communication, consisting of words used in a structured and conventional way and conveyed by speech, writing, or gesture.” By definition– this English word severed the entire Hawaiian culture and place in half, right before our eyes. Hawaiian language is much more than a “method of human communication”, it is thousands of years of observations made by Kupuna (elders) who then refined and capitalized on ecological knowledge, sciences, music, dance, the arts of all kinds, that culminated into this beautiful language referred to as our “Olelo Makuahine” One’s mother tongue. If you were to ask what is the definition of language or Olelo, in Hawaiian, there is not one mention of humans in any Hawaiian dictionary. Contextually, Hawaiians as a human species never placed themselves at the center, humans are equal to all of nature and together we create the state of the ecological world; not different, not separate. In fact, it is very much believed our ancestors have the capacity to transmute themselves and become Aumaku (deified ancestors). So the mountain you are living on whose iron runs through your veins is very much an ancestral source, the river that feeds all that feed you and grants you fresh water daily to drink, bath, take a poop– this river is a source of life to you and very much family to you as your grandmother or grandfather. Our capacity to communicate with our ancestors (in a Hawaiian lens: meaning all nature) relies so heavily in this language we call Hawaiian. I believe all sources of energy can be felt by another source of energy no matter their nationality, culture or organism. But the capacity, quality, strength in the communication relies heavily on the source of your communication. Love is a universal language; all can see when one loves another. But the capacity to show and receive this love is stronger when both parties can understand one another in a same language. Thus the importance of Hawaiian language to not only Hawaiians but to Hawaii. Hawaiian language holds key to portals of expression; english language just doesn’t have the capacity to hold. I do not have koko Hawaii (I say this to honor and respect Na Kanaka Maoli O Ko Hawaii Pae Aina), but I am privileged to have learned it through Hawaiian Immersion schools and thus I have a responsibility to this language, culture, people and place (which are all one-in-the same, none can survive without the other). For those Hawaiians out there who do not speak, or feel ashamed to try, I’d love to share with you the wisest words of Kaumakaiwa Kanakaole-Kanahahele. In reference to teaching the language of Hula: ‘I am not here to teach you anything new, I am here to help you remember who you are, and how to better communicate with the ecological world.’ Note: Pre-Western contact, Hawaiian Language was never written thus all the more the importance mnemonic memorization through, Hula, Oli, Song, Weaving, Carving, Tapa making, and many many more crafts or “languages” were formed to encapsulate these treasures, these wisdoms, these studies of ecological finances, time equity, food capital, sciences, politics, and all the majors, topics and genres the ancestors of Hawaii knew their mo’opuna (grandchildren) will need and deserve to have one day to not only survive but THRIVE. So for all us non-Kanaka Maoli O Ko Hawaii Pae Aina ( Non indigenous peoples of Hawaii) we likewise do have a duty to assist in this sustainability of place, space and people, because it feeds us, it nourishes our grandparents, and brings joy to our children and rains down beauty no other place in the world has. So Mahalo no kau manawa. Thank you for taking the time to read this. Me Ka oiaio, with all that I know is true within me, aloha Charlene ‘Kalena’ Holani”

Charlene 'Kalena' Holani



Answer: While numbers vary, according to a 2015 Census Data report, around 18,000 people claim to speak the Hawaiian language at home.



# “Why is it important for you to honor the Hawaiian language and keep it alive?”



"Perpetuating 'ōlelo Hawai'i is important to me in honor of my kūpuna. My grandpa was part of a generation that had the language taken from them in school, where they were humiliated and beaten for speaking it. As a result, much of his generation didn't pass on the language to their keiki. So whether it's making announcements on the plane, engaging members of our lāhui, or just walawala'au with the people in my life, for me to 'ōlelo today is to wipe away the tears of my kūpuna. It is a love song across time that says I will carry you on into forever."

-Halemano Kalahiki



## A FEW LINKS TO CHECK OUT

- [How to Celebrate Mahina 'Ōlelo Hawai'i](#)
- [How to take part in Mahina 'Ōlelo Hawai'i 2024 | Kamehameha Schools](#)
- [Mahina 'Ōlelo Hawai'i](#)
- [Hawaii State Public Library System | Learn the Hawaiian Language](#)
- [Hawaii delegation introduces Mahina Olelo Hawaii Month resolution](#)
- [Hale Kuamo'o](#)
- [Hawaiian E-Books and Resources- all levels](#)
- [Online Hawaiian Language Dictionary](#)
- [No ka Elepaio Kolohe \(Retold by our very own Mālia Kruger!\)](#)
- [No ke Kuene Mokulele \(Featuring our very own Mālia Kruger!\)](#)
- [NPR Code Switch Episode \(1\)](#)
- [NPR Code Switch Episode \(2\)](#)
- [Hawaiian Language Self-Directed Classes](#)
- [HPR Episode](#)
- [History of Hawaiian Education](#)

*Mahalo*

*To those that contributed either publicly and/or behind the scenes in the making of this newsletter!*

