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**Kia'i Kanaloa statement regarding the importance of authentic relationship-building**

***4th Annual Sea Turtle Workshop  
October 4, 2024***

Last year, our statement focused on the issue of the disposition of honu. Kia'i Kanaloa will soon be in talks with NOAA NMFS PIRO & DLNR to formalize more culturally appropriate ways to care for our honu once they have transitioned to the pō. We are collectively making progress.

Our statement also advised you to develop authentic relationships with Hawaiian cultural practitioners and organizations such as ours who carry the kuleana of caring for our Kanaloa forms. Through these kinds of co-stewardship relationships, you, your departments, and your agencies can begin to rebuild trust with communities and build your own kahua (foundation) in understanding what it means to care for our Kanaloa forms here in Hawai'i. It would be interesting to note how many took that advice.

*'A'ohē hale i piha i ka hoihoi; hā'awi mai a lawe aku nō.  
No house has a perpetual welcome; it is given, and it is taken away.*

When invited into someone's home, how you treat and engage with that 'ohana and that home lends to whether you receive an invitation to return. The consequences of that kind of relational accountability are evident in this 'ōlelo no'eau (wise saying).

In these times of extreme environmental fragility, we must recognize that if individuals, organizations, & agencies do not immediately change course and bring the empirical knowledge and marginalized voices of Hawaiians who were the original and most successful stewards of this 'āina, the collective will not survive. It should not take federal mandates like the 2021 White House ITEK Memo or the 2022 Joint Secretarial Order 3403 for organizations and agencies not just to recognize but empower Hawaiians to fulfill our ancestral duty of caring for our Kanaloa forms such as the honu.

Hawai'i should lead this critical shift in research, conservation, and advocacy. In building authentic, collaborative relationships with Hawaiian cultural practitioners and organizations, you take the first steps toward manifesting the change that needs to happen here in Hawai'i. In support of that intention, we offer you this simple framework as a means to reflect, evaluate, and direct intentions, mindset, and actions toward building and maintaining authentic relationships with Indigenous practitioners and communities.

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***Ola i ke au a Kanaloa!***

*For questions or further consultation contact our Executive Director, Dr. Roxane Keli'ikipikāneokolohaka at [kiaikanaloa@gmail.com](mailto:kiaikanaloa@gmail.com).*