

# Halau i Ka Pono

The Hula School of Chicago



## Dancing in the Sea of Life Hula Newsletter



Na Hulu Kupuna, Aumakua of the Earth by Calley O'Neill and RAMA The Elephant  
*Pueo* -- *Asio flammeus sandwichensis*, Endemic Hawaiian Short-Eared Owl

CALLEY O'NEILL, by Kumu Hula June Tanoue

Artist Calley O'Neill in front of her recently completed stained glass mosaic mural, "Na Wao A'o Pi'ilani for Pukalani Elementary School on Maui

Calley O'Neill was born and raised in New Jersey, and graduated Summa Cum Laude with a BFA from the Pratt Institute in New York. She received a Masters in Social Ecology and Public Art from Goddard College in Vermont.

She lives in Waimea on the Big Island of Hawaii and has been busy creating exquisite murals for public art all over the state of Hawaii. Her public art is displayed at Kipapa Elementary School on Oahu, University of Hawaii at Manoa, The Lodge at Koele, Hawaii Maritime Center, and The Kings Shop in Waikoloa to name a few places.

She just completed a State Foundation on Culture & the Arts funded forest mural for Pukalani Elementary School on Maui. Its entitled Na Wao Pi'ilani - The Life Giving Forests of Maui. Calley told us about the mural.

Calley: The mural is about the fact that Maui has lost so many forests. All the islands have lost most of their forests, as have so many places on Earth - due to deforestation - starting with burning the forest for energy in the 1800's. The mural is about the call of the forest through Lilinoe, the goddess of mists, all water in all forms. She shows up in the Wao Akua (sacred realm). It's about the bringing back of the forest in order to bring back the clouds, to bring back rains, and the life of the land. Because the rain follows the forest.

I worked with almost 200 children and 75 adults to do the border - the native lei aloha - that surrounds the image. It calls for the awakening to take care of nature as all indigenous people know. It's about listening to indigenous wisdom.

June: Tell me about the PUEO (owl) painting that is the main image of this newsletter. You painted this with Rama the Elephant from the Portland, Oregon zoo?

Calley: The Rama Exhibition had its World Premiere at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) at the World Conservation Congress in Honolulu in September. It will be a world-traveling exhibition on endangered species until it finds a home. The PUEO painting is part of this exhibit. The color underneath the owl was done by Rama the Elephant - just his breath - an elephant painting on behalf of Hawaiian endangered species.

The piece with the PUEO is called Na Hulu Kupuna - Our Feathered Ancestors, Aumakua (Protectors) of the Earth. Everything around us in the natural world is literally our ancestors

because they all had to come together to create a living biosphere where we could actually breathe and eat. Owls are always looked upon as wise. They're aumakua of the Hawaiian and local people. Even though they're not on the endangered species list federally, they are on the state endangered list on Oahu. They're disappearing at rapid rate.

I've had wise ones tell me from Kanu O Ka 'Aina (Hawaiian immersion school in Waimea), that the kupuna (elders) said the pueo used to darken the sky when they flocked. That's certainly not happening anymore. There's been such a massive loss of habitat for them. Their population has declined and very little is known about those birds and we need to protect them.

One reason that pueo die because they've been poisoned by eating the mice and rats that have eaten rat poison. The wise owl is asking us, as it looks at us, to behold the earth and the living world as what sustains us - that we are the endangered species and nobody wants to say this.

When painting this, I was thinking that I would put the earth up in the dark area up above the pueo. And one day I heard this loud sound, this voice in my head that said, "What do you think I am pointing at?" This was a revelatory moment when the pueo was actually speaking to me clearly.

The painting would have had no purpose if I didn't stop, pause and listen to where the earth was supposed to go in the painting. It was a wake-up call from a very wise owl - like the little wise owl within us - that knows. It's about saying something important, not about being pretty.