

## Pi'opi'o Mural

completed May 2017

Pi'opi'o, an 'ili kūpono within the ahupua'a of Waiākea, is a wahi pana, or storied place. Once, this area was known for its wealth of food production, as well as being a home to 'ali'i such as Ruth Ke'elikōlani, and Kamehameha I. Yet today, it is an area we drive through often but do not give much thought to its historical and cultural significance. It is a place Hilo residents are familiar with but do not intimately know.

The mural at Wailoa Center seeks to share these stories of Pi'opi'o with our community. Lokelani Brandt, whose master's thesis is an ethno-historical study of Pi'opi'o, uncovered a list of place names recorded in 1925 by Mrs. Kaouli Kaai. It is these place names that are inspiration for the imagery within the mural. These wahi pana and the mo'olelo (stories) that take place within them are the backbone to the simple patterns and designs. While it may seem to be just a swirl or a triangle, each shape's simplicity contains the essence of a deep storied past. The images depicted act as a window into these mo'olelo and give a jumping-off point to the rich history of this special place.

Not all the place names of Pi'opi'o are included within the mural. It would not be possible to incorporate all of the wahi pana or mo'olelo. However, I hope that the representation of these names in this visual and public manner will encourage our community to question the history of Hilo that they already know, and then to look deeper. The mural is meant to give us a path towards the revitalization of Pi'opi'o, a central part of Waiākea, and Hilo by honoring those that have come before, and making us curious about Pi'opi'o's stories.

Each panel depicts place names within the area that the panel faces. The majority of names are within Wailoa or Pi'opi'o. The mountains of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa are also included as they are an essential part of our water gathering systems.

Below is a list of place names contained in each panel and a brief description of the significance of the place name and imagery. Panels are labeled starting from the Puna side of the mural at top of the ramp.

### **Panel A) Mauna Loa, Pu'u Kūlani**

Mauna Loa, the most massive of our island's mountains, is the source of water for the Wailoa and Waiākea rivers. As one of the starting points for the mural, it marks the beginning of this body of water. Pu'u Kūlani, a highly visible geographical feature on Mauna Loa's southern flank, is a meeting point for three different districts: Puna, Hilo and Ka'ū.

### **Panel B) Kalepolepo**

Kalepolepo is the name of fishpond and the land on the Hilo side of Waiākea River, near Kapi'olani School. This area was the birthing place of a shark by the name of Kuhaimoana. It is also home to an epic battle between Kamiki ma and Upeloa. Kalepolepo is also the site of the first battle in the war between Kalaniopu'u and Alapai.

### **Panel C) Mohouli, 'Ulu o Namu**

Mohouli is the second of the five fish ponds in this area. 'Ulu o Namu was a breadfruit grove found near the lower end of Mohouli fishponds.

### **Panel D) Waiākea, Piko o Wākea, Kapunakea, Kalimaalae**

Waiākea is the largest of the fishponds. Each of the other featured names is a spring within Waiākea. Kapunakea and Kalimaalae both are located near the back of Waiākea where the Waiākea Mill was at one time. Piko o Wākea is the deepest point of Waiākea Pond and is also a name given to a war club used by Upeloa when he battles Kamiki at Kalepolepo.

### **Panel E) Wailoa, "'Umi, Pi'ikea, Hua'ā, Halauwai, Ka'ōhia**

'Umi, Piikea, Hua'ā, Halauwai and Ka'ōhia are the names of the makaha or sluice gates in the Waiākea pond. The largest, called 'Umi is located where the most mauka of the arched bridges are today. The other four makahā are named for 'Umi's wives. 'Umi has great significance in this area. It is thought that he may have been responsible for designating this land as an 'ili kūpono when he created the ahupua'a system. The ponds of Waiākea and Pi'opio were famous for their fat mullet. It is

highly likely that is a reason the area was designated given this designation.

### **Panel F) Ku'ihili**

Ku'ihili is a promontory on Waiākea side of the Wailoa River where kukui bark was pounded to create a red dye that was used for dyeing kapa and fishing nets.

### **Panel G) Kanukuokamanu,**

Kanukuokamanu is the peninsula of land on the Hilo side of the Wailoa River mouth. This is a many storied place. One such story tells of 'Umi breaking the wiliwili necklace of the Hilo chief, Kulukulua, in order to instigate a conflict. As a result of the ensuing battle 'Umi killed Kulukulua and gained Hilo under his rule.

### **Panel H) Hilo One**

Hilo One is the sandy area we commonly call Bay Front. It sits between Hilo Paliku, towards Hamakua, and Hilo Hanakahi towards Keaukaha. It is where the waters of Waiākea, Waiolama and Wailuku meet. It was also an area where Kamehameha the First, a descendant of 'Umi, came to build a fleet of canoes.

### **Panel I) Waiolama**

Waiolama are the waters where the Aleniaio River once met the ocean during heavy rains. The water is now diverted to Wailoa River. This diversion causes heavy flooding during those same types of rain.

### **Panel J) Wailuku River**

This tumultuous river borders the Hamakua side of Hilo town and is known for its treacherous nature. It is the largest river in the Hilo area and marks the beginning of Mauna Kea watersheds.

### **Panel K) Mauna Kea**

Mauna Kea is the zenith of our island; a water collector; in one genealogy he is the first born of Wākea, the Sky Father. The woven pattern that holds the mauna (in this panel and on A, I and J) is meant to evoke the night sky, the stars above as well mimic the weave of lau hala.

The Pi'opi'o Mural was designed by Emily Leucht and painted by 50 volunteers. Born and raised in Waiākea, Leucht says, "I have spent the majority of my life living in Hilo One and Hilo Paliku. I left Hilo to study design, and received a BFA from the California College of the Arts and University of San Francisco. For the past 7 years I have worked with the environmental outreach and education program 'Imi Pono no ka 'Āina, under the watershed partnership Three Mountain Alliance. Through art and education I work to inspire awe and excitement for the magical place we call Hawai'i. I hope that through these pathways I can create a sense of connection to natural systems, which in turn leads to a feeling of belonging and commitment to stewardship of these lands."