Dec 7, 2021

Re: Announcement of New Executive Director

Aloha e nā hoa kākoʻo i ka pono o ka lāhui,

Warmest greetings of the season to all as we approach the end of 2021 and usher in the New Year. We are thankful for your continued support of our mission, work and people. As we celebrate over 47 years of service as Hawaiʻi’s premier Native Hawaiian rights non-profit law firm, the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation (NHLC) is honored and humbled to continue its noble mission of perpetuating, through legal and other advocacy the rights, customs and practices that strengthen Native Hawaiian identity and culture.

In so doing, we are proud, privileged, and excited to announce that effective this week Makalika Naholowaʻa is NHLC’s new Executive Director. In this role, Makalika will work with the NHLC team to ensure the continued, effective delivery of legal services to individuals and communities in need across the lāhui, and lead the organization’s long-range planning, program evaluation, business and finance operations, communications, governmental and community relations, and fundraising and development.

Makalika is an experienced practitioner and legal leader. For the last eight years she’s worked for Microsoft Corporation, and there she held numerous positions, including service on the legal department’s senior leadership team as the Chief of Staff for the General Counsel. Across four roles, Makalika led and managed the company’s groups responsible for legal operations, legal procurement, trademarks, legal business management, and the department’s pro bono, summer internship, and business continuity management programs. As a part of this work, Makalika gained experience leading strategic and complex legal projects requiring deep cross-functional collaboration and diverse disciplines such as government affairs, finance, human resources, communications, engineering, compliance, tax, auditors, and enterprise risk management.

uluʻa – to stand erect, stand upright; ulu – to grow; oʻa – support beams, uluoʻa – grow the support beams of a hale
Before working at Microsoft, Makalika practiced at the law firm Perkins Coie LLP in Seattle. Makalika studied law at Columbia Law School and holds a degree in Computational Mathematics from Arizona State University.

Makalika is committed to NHLC’s mission to protect and advance Native Hawaiian identity and culture. She has been a long-standing supporter of NHLC and a leader in the indigenous legal community. Her past service includes nearly a decade of leadership roles with the National Native American Bar Association and work as a legal clerk serving Tonya Gonnella Frichener, a former North American Representative to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. She is a lifetime member of the Native Hawaiian Bar Association. As a part of the NHBA, Makalika has participated for the last three years in a cohort of haumāna that studies ho’oponopono with Kumu Lynette Paglinawan.

Makalika replaces NHLC’s former Executive Director, Summer Sylva, who we previously announced was leaving to join the Biden Administration as a Presidential appointee to the U.S. Department of Interior, serving as the Senior Advisor for Native Hawaiian Affairs to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland. We, again, congratulate and support Summer’s work in the Biden Administration as she strengthens its ties with indigenous communities across the country. Summer’s appointment will surely help the federal administration navigate the complexity of Native Hawaiian issues and address both quality of life issues and redress past wrongs related to land and self-governance.

On behalf of the NHLC Board and staff, please join us in welcoming Makalika to our organization. I know she is excited to continue advancing our work and get to know all of you who support us.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

Kawika Patterson