

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is it important for us to have this Nation and for me to be a part of it?

Our own nation and government will allow us to do a great many things together. We can build a better future for our keiki and mo'opuna by directing our own resources toward what is important for our lāhui. If land is important, our government can secure it and establish the rules on how those lands can best be used for our people. If a culture-based education is important, our government can establish a Native Hawaiian education system that supports it! If hiring Native Hawaiians is important, our government can implement a Native-hire preference. We know the current system does not and cannot put our people's interests and concerns first, but our government can and will.

Will participation in the Nation affect my current citizenship?

Identifying as a citizen of the Native Hawaiian Nation does not impact your rights as an American citizen. A specific clause in the constitution guarantees this, and the result of that framework is dual-citizenship. Other indigenous people in the United States exercise dual citizenship.

Who wrote the Constitution and how was the group formed?

A Native Hawaiian governance convention or 'Aha was held in February of 2016. Any Hawaiian on the Native Hawaiian Roll's certified list of over 100,000 was eligible to run for delegate to the 'Aha and an election was held. A pending lawsuit funded by conservative outsiders challenging the right of Hawaiians to self-determine without direct input and voting by non-Hawaiians stalled the counting of the votes. To overcome this hurdle and keep moving forward, all those who ran for delegate were invited to participate in the 'Aha. Over 120 participants came together and met for four weeks in Maunawili. There were participants from throughout the state and even those who live on the continent and abroad. They ranged in age from 21 to 90 and included a broad spectrum of political ideologies and preferences of governance models from full independence to federal recognition. By the end of those four weeks, this diverse group worked together and found the common ground necessary to draft and adopt the Constitution with a vote of 88-30-1.

What does the Constitution provide for?

The document sets the purpose and structure for our government - including executive, legislative and judicial branches. It defines citizenship, lays out the rights of the collective as well as individuals among other substantive components critical to establishing our Nation. The document provides the structure necessary to stand up our government but also affords many options, ideas, and creativity allowing us to forge the best paths forward for our lāhui. It is also a living document, amendable as necessary as we move forward as a people.

Can I still participate in the process going forward?

Yes. The Native Hawaiian Roll is still open. Registering, having your ancestry confirmed, and keeping your contact current with the Roll at HawaiianRoll.org is the quickest and simplest way to ensure that you can participate in every step going forward. Outreach and education efforts are currently taking place. Resources and updates can be found at HawaiianNation.com.

Is this ongoing process and the adopted Constitution a guaranteed, direct path to Federal Recognition?

The language in the Constitution, especially the Preamble, ensures that if ratified, this document keep all options open for Native Hawaiians to pursue. This document was crafted with the intent to ensure that participation in any steps going forward, including but not limited to federal recognition, will be as open and inclusive as possible for all Native Hawaiians. Adoption and ratification of this document opens the options but it does not result in any automatic relationship per se with any government. Those decisions will be determined by the will of the people and the leadership of our government, whose job it will be to negotiate relationships with local, state, national, international, and other indigenous governments.

I am not Hawaiian. Why should I care? How can I engage and support?

Supporting the rights and the living culture of indigenous people - whether they be Native Hawaiian or the Anishinaabe of the high plains - enriches our future. Ancient wisdoms, brought forward into the modern world, teach us how to live together, work together, steward the land together and flourish together. Those who are not indigenous to a place are guests, becoming potentially friends and family. Just as native people traveling to other places are guests, becoming potentially friends and family. Everyone can engage and support by learning more, having conversations and bringing your kōkua and kākoʻo of time, money and voice.

I've read the 'Aha 2016 constitution. What is the next step?

Any constitution must be accepted and validated by the people it will govern. The people do this through a process called a ratification vote. The majority of the “yes” or “no” vote will determine whether the constitution will be ratified or not.

Who can vote to ratify the Constitution?

The constitution requires that those participating in the ratification be at least 18 years of age and eligible to be citizens of the Nation. Citizenry is defined as any descendant of the aboriginal and indigenous people who, prior to 1778, occupied and exercised sovereignty in the Hawaiian Islands and is enrolled in the Nation. Individuals who have been confirmed on the Native Hawaiian Roll meet this requirement.

When is the ratification vote?

Planning on the ratification vote is currently underway. Information on the timing and method of voting will be available soon. Please check HawaiianNation.com for updates.

Once the constitution is ratified, what happens next?

When the constitution is ratified, we can move forward to building the nation and government as defined in the constitution. The next major step will be the election of government leaders.

Who is moving the ratification process forward?

A small group of 'Aha participants started working after the 'Aha adjourned to plan the next steps, beginning with outreach and education as well as raising private funds necessary to move forward, building upon the foundation set by the constitution, to make our Nation a reality.

Why is there a private fundraising push? Why isn't OHA funding this?

OHA gets its funds from revenues generated from ceded lands, which were the crown lands of our former Hawaiian kingdom. The use of ceded land revenues for self-governance is currently under attack in a lawsuit funded by conservative outsiders who don't believe that Hawaiians have the right of self-determination without the direct participation and voting by non-Hawaiians. While we should be able to use these funds that are generated from the lands that rightfully belong to us and it would be pono to use them for programs, advocacy, and even self-determination, there is too much at stake right now to risk this historic process on our right to use OHA funding.

Where can people go to get updates on the progress of the process?

Ongoing updates and developments regarding the process will be posted here at HawaiianNation.com. For information on the fundraising effort and to donate, visit alohalahui.com.