

## Acceptance speech

*Given by Joan Lander on behalf of Puhipau, on the occasion of Puhipau being named as one of Na Mamo Makamae o ka Po'e Hawai'i - Living Treasures of the Hawaiian People. Awarded by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, with support from the Pa'i Foundation.*

*Monday (Kamehameha Day), June 12, 2017  
Pomaika'i Ballrooms, Iwilei.*

Aloha kākou! My name is Joan Lander. I was Puhipau's partner for the last 34 years of his life as we produced over 90 educational and documentary films. Puhipau was always the "talking chief" for Nā Maka o ka 'Āina and there's no way I can fill his shoes.

But I'm sure he would be honored to be among this remarkable group of honorees, some of whom shared their images and mana'o with our cameras over the years. Sam Ka'ai always tells us that we have kept him forever young, capturing him on video at Kaupō, Maui, in the prime of his life. Marie Leilehua McDonald welcomed us into her life, graciously sharing her wealth of information about lei-making and weaving the most beautiful lei just from Hawaiian plants found along the roadside in Waimea. Nainoa took us to one of his favorite star-viewing areas on the south shore. We got there so early we had to start shooting in the dark. For about an hour, the only image we could capture was a silhouette of Nainoa against the pre-dawn sky, as he talked about voyaging, time and space.

Puhipau's mother, Caroline Aku from Keālia, Kona, wove lauhala hats and is part of the ulana tradition of Josephine Fergerstrom and Elizabeth Lee. And as filmmakers who were constantly researching the archives of Bishop Museum, we honor the work of Namaka Bacon in keeping those records alive and accessible.

On behalf of Puhipau and his 'ohana, we mahalo all of the honorees today. As Puhipau used to say, we the filmmakers are not the stars: the stars are the people like you and many others in our programs who keep alive the culture and history, who string together lei of flowers and lei of islands and continents, who strive to protect sacred ancestral places, and who struggle against the powers that be to bring about aloha 'aina.

Puhipau was not born with this name; he took it after finding the name at the top of a family tree. He was happy to finally have a Hawaiian name, as his given name, Abraham Ahmad, from his Palestinian father, always threw people off

when he introduced himself. People would peer at his face and ask, “Are you Hawaiian?”

Originally interpreting the meaning of puhi pau as “the last breath,” he named one of the first productions we did together “Puhipau”. It was a program we did for the Physicians for Social Responsibility who won the Nobel Prize for trying to rid the world of nuclear weapons, and Puhipau considered the title a perfect description of our collective “last breath” if those weapons were ever used.

During the production of that program, we were guided to look up the term puhi pau in the earlier edition of Pukui’s dictionary. Amazingly, we discovered it means “blown away, completely burned.” Which turned out to be an even better description of nuclear war!

In my years with Puhipau, I saw him blow people away constantly with his words. He had the 5-minute rap he would give to people we would run into briefly at the airport, the 10-minute rap he would give to people at the open market, and the 15-minute rap he would give to journalists and audiences at international film festivals. But no matter the occasion, his main message was: the Hawaiian Kingdom exists. We never gave it away. Our kūpuna never gave it away.

I would notice that with the people he spoke to, a certain expression would come into their eyes, almost as if he were saying things they knew deep down inside but had never heard expressed.

And this is where the kaona, or deeper meaning of the term puhi pau comes out. In the dictionary it says “Puhi pau i nā mea huna” — all the secrets were blown away (revealed). Puhipau liked to think that with our videos, he was blowing away the dust and revealing the secrets. The secrets were actually in plain sight, but were just not taught any more in the schools, and did not appear in the media or in public discourse.

With Puhipau’s passing, the work now is to digitize and archive the thousands of hours of video recordings on our shelves. It is a huge task, but needs to be done, so that the secrets revealed by those in our programs will be known by generations to come. Mahalo.

**Na Mamo o ka Po'e Hawai'i**

Charles Nainoa Thompson

Sam Ka'ai

Marie MacDonald

Josephine Kaukali Fergestrom

Pat Nāmaka Bacon

Elizabeth Malu'ihi Lee (posthumous)

Puhipau (posthumous)