

## Indigenous Resistance, Resilience, and Just Transition: Speakers

*The first in a Story/Skillshare Series on Food, Agricultural, Racial, and Land Justice*  
September 8, 2020



### **Jane Au**

*‘Āina Momona, Program Director*

Jane Lokomaika‘ikeakua Au was raised on the shores of Māeaea, on the island of O‘ahu. She is a daughter, sister, mo‘opuna, artist, and enthusiast of nature. She obtained her BA and MA in Religion at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, where she focused on Hawaiian Religious beliefs and practices. She has spent several years studying religious theory, focusing in particular on indigenous belief systems and their inherent messages of sustainability.

She strives to incorporate traditional Hawaiian aesthetics, genres, and epistemologies in her work. In 2018 she successfully defended her Master’s thesis on Kanaloa, the principle oceanic deity in Hawai‘i, using rarely accessed Hawaiian Language resources and materials. She currently works as the program director for ‘Āina Momona. Her goal is to work towards a more sustainable future, where humans live in harmony with natural and cultural resources.



### **Brenda Jo (BJ) McManama**

*Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN),  
Campaign Organizer*

BJ has been involved with Indigenous and environmental issues for over 28 years. Beginning in the early 1990s she worked with WV State agencies on NAGPRA issues, actively opposed mountaintop/strip coal mining & worked with public education officials to provide comprehensive Native American history and current events to high school curriculum. For the past 12+ years she has contributed to IEN’s mission in different capacities ranging

from graphic design/web administration to media coordinator and campaign organizer. BJ was a member of two Indigenous cultural delegations who traveled to Peru and central Mexico to meet with Indigenous community leaders. The focus of these exchanges was to share cultural information and current shared mitigation, restoration, and subsistence challenges centered on forest and aquatic resources. BJ is a member of the Campaign to Stop GE Trees steering committee and works closely with both Indigenous and Front Line community organizations on forest protection, climate justice, and subsistence rights. When not working on national and global environmental issues, BJ participates with local organizations whose focuses include maintaining food security and safety, and protecting water resources and forests from encroaching extractive industries.



## **A-dae Romero-Briones**

*First Nations Development Institute*

*Director of Programs: Native Agriculture and Food Systems*

A-dae became Director of Programs – Native Agriculture and Food Systems in 2017, after first joining First Nations as Associate Director of Research and Policy for Native Agriculture. She formerly was the Director of Community Development for Pūlama Lāna‘i in Hawaii, and is also the co-founder and former Executive Director of a nonprofit organization in Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico. A-dae worked for the

University of Arkansas School of Law Indigenous Food and Agricultural Initiative while earning her LL.M. degree in Food and Agricultural Law. Her thesis was on the Food Safety Modernization Act as it applied to the federal-tribal relationship. She wrote extensively about food safety, the Produce Safety rule and tribes, and the protection of tribal traditional foods. A U.S. Fulbright Scholar, A-dae received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Policy from Princeton University, and received a Law Doctorate from Arizona State University’s College of Law, in addition to her LL.M. degree in Food and Agricultural Law from the University of Arkansas.



## **Walter Ritte**

*‘Aina Momona, Executive Director*

Uncle Walter and Aunty Loretta Ritte have been pillars of social activism in Hawai‘i for over 40 years. Uncle Walter was recruited to activism at an early age by cultural icons like Uncle Charlie Maxwell and Aunty Frenchy DeSoto, who saw natural leadership in young Ritte, paired with immense dedication to his people and culture. Alongside his fellow activist wife Aunty Loretta, Uncle Walter joined

the kūpuna of Maui and Moloka‘i in forming Hui Alaloha (group of the long trail), a community organization dedicated to the preservation of Hawaiian rights and the protection of natural resources. Uncle Walter and Aunty Loretta are important visionaries in the Hawaiian community, and have been for decades. They both share their passion for culture and ‘āina with the organization and the broader Hawaiian community. They are the driving force behind ‘Āina Momona and provide daily leadership to the staff and beneficiaries. As kupuna and leaders, they are the greatest source of inspiration. Uncle Walter and Aunty Loretta personally work with the Aloha ‘Āina Fellows, and are committed to sharing their knowledge and experiences with talented young leaders, especially on their home island of Moloka‘i. They inspire youth and young professionals to be dedicated to a better Hawai‘i and worked with these leaders to develop sustainable, indigenous food systems and social justice. Uncle Walter and Aunty Loretta raised their family on the Ho‘olehua Homestead on the island of Moloka‘i, where they still reside today.