



BISHOP MUSEUM

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Bishop Museum to Invest in Curatorial Practices rooted in Indigenous Frameworks with \$1 Million Grant

*The grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation will be used to fund
“Building a Pacific Pipeline: Bishop Museum & The Te Rangi Hīroa Pacific Curators
and Caretakers Program”*

Honolulu, Hawai‘i — Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a \$1 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The grant, which will be disbursed over two years, will be used to support the first of an anticipated three-phase, multi-year program aimed at developing a new leadership of curators trained with an Indigenous framework. The program, titled “Building a Pacific Pipeline: Bishop Museum & The Te Rangi Hīroa Pacific Curators and Caretakers Program,” aims to diversify the pipeline of future cultural heritage professionals, increase the number of historically underrepresented Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the field, and demonstrate how museums can change their practices and positively impact their communities.

“We are grateful to The Mellon Foundation for their generous support and belief in the power of the arts and humanities to fuel our imagination and sustain our spirit,” said Melanie Ide, Bishop Museum president and CEO. “As our Board Chair Wayne Pitluck said, ‘witnessing our transformation, with this grant we will step into the future, with our eyes to the past. The Bishop Museum has been caring for materials representing generations of ancestral knowledge. It’s time to open up, reconnect pathways and breathe new life into our work.’”

Phase one of the program, which is funded by the grant from The Mellon Foundation, will create new positions including two curators, one collections manager, and one collections technician to build capacity in Bishop Museum’s Cultural Resources Division. This infusion of staff positions will transform the Cultural Resources Division, which has been under-resourced for many years, and will jump-start The Te Rangi Hīroa Pacific Curators and Caretakers Program.

With this support, Bishop Museum will also bring together an International Advisory Group of key partners from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum, and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa to collaborate with its team and local partners. Together, Bishop Museum and its partners will be engaging community and integrating Indigenous frameworks into the curation and care of Hawaiian and Pacific cultural resources and materials.

“The Bishop Museum’s Te Rangi Hīroa Pacific Curators and Caretakers Program represents a fantastic opportunity to reimagine how future custodians of Pacific collections will be trained,” said Dr. Julie Adams, curator of Oceania collections at the British Museum and a member of the International Advisory Group. “Prioritizing Indigenous knowledge, values and practices, it will have a far-reaching impact upon museums within the Pacific and beyond. As a result of this Mellon-funded initiative, the Bishop Museum will once again be at the heart of shaping how Pacific collections are researched, nurtured and made meaningful for the future.”

“I am delighted to be involved in this exciting project to support and encourage a future generation of Pacific Islanders and community members in a pathway towards museums, collections care and scholarship,” said Dr. Maia Nuku, also a member of the International Advisory Group and the Evelyn A. J. Hall and John A. Friede associate curator for Oceanic art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. “My participation came about as a series of conversations about how the sector might build capacity and create more access for our own Pacific communities to pursue professional careers in museums.”

By curating, activating and sharing primary source materials, the museum hopes to help regenerate communities and cultures who have been historically severed by colonialism from their ancestral knowledge and cultural resources. The long-term impact of this program will be the creation of a “Pacific pipeline” of museum professionals trained with an Indigenous perspective for increased representation in the museum field and ultimately, to promote thriving communities and new possibilities for future generations.

The program is named for Te Rangi Hīroa, the first director of Bishop Museum (1936-1951) with indigenous roots, who was born in Aotearoa, New Zealand and was of Māori and Anglo-Irish descent. Hīroa was a scholar, physician, anthropologist, ethnologist, politician, author, military officer, Yale professor, and knight. The directorship of Te Rangi Hīroa represented a departure from the museum’s earlier history of leadership by white men educated in academic institutions perpetuating a Western pedagogy and worldview. The title of this program also positions the curator as caretaker. For Hawaiians, caretaking is a fundamental aspect of any relationship – caring for self, other, and the environment or place one calls home.

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About Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum:

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum’s mission is to inspire our community and visitors through the exploration, celebration and perpetuation of the extraordinary history, culture, and environment of Hawai‘i and the Pacific. The museum was founded in 1889 by Charles Reed Bishop in memory of his wife Bernice Pauahi Bishop, a royal descendant of King Kamehameha I. Today, the museum thrives as a research and educational center that is widely regarded as the world’s premier institution for Hawaiian and Pacific content. Its vast collections of more than 25 million objects and specimens represent nine disciplines and include more than 22 million biological specimens, over two million cultural objects, 115,000 historical publications, and one million photographs, films, works of art, audio recordings, and manuscripts. These collections tell the stories of the cultures and biodiversity of Hawai‘i and the Pacific as well as the proud legacy of scholarly research spanning 130 years. Bishop Museum serves more than 200,000 visitors each year, including 20,000 children on school visits. To learn more about the museum’s research, collections, exhibits, and programs, visit www.bishopmuseum.org, follow @BishopMuseum on Twitter and Instagram, become a fan of Bishop Museum on Facebook, visit Bishop Museum’s YouTube channel at youtube.com/user/BishopMuseum, or call (808) 847-3511. Bishop Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.