



2009 Kokua Awardee: Lisamarie Leina'ala-Pua'ala Ibarra

Leina'ala was born and raised in Oahu. Her hula career started with the traditional teachings but she was not introduced to *kahiko* until she was a teenager by her Kumu Hula Al "Pops" Makahinu Bacarse. That was when she truly fell in love with hula.



Moving to the mainland with her husband and sons, the family settled in Tucson. In 1999 she was asked to teach hula to a group of 5 dancers. After receiving the blessings and *halau* name from her *kapuna*, Auntie Kalima Burke, she began to teach.

"For me, it's ancient, it's my ancestors," Ibarra says. "(Hula) is an evolution, a history. It's not just a dance."

Her love and knowledge of the Hawaiian culture has brought the stories and myths behind each chant and *mele* to her students. She has a reputation for always showing the 'Aloha Spirit' both on and off the stage.

Anyone with a desire to learn is welcome to her knowledge. It is understood by all that these teachings must be respected as part of a long heritage. She also educates her audiences during performances for schools, churches, city community activities and private functions. Her public lectures bring a whole new awareness about ancient Hawai'i and hula.

Leina'ala has traveled all over southern Arizona to help with lectures, meetings, performances, workshops and even the preparation of Hawaiian food. Her *halau* has been asked to dance at concerts and performances of Hawaiian recording artists appearing at local venues. She has brought her *halau* to the Arizona Aloha Festival since 2000 to perform and volunteer.

One of her students tells us: "We are deeply grateful to have Kumu Leina'ala to keep hula and the Hawaiian culture alive for us in southern Arizona."