to gather, fish, plant and exercise cultural practices in areas that have traditionally served Hawaiian communities. The protection of nā kūpuna ʻōiwi as well as traditional sacred sites is also a priority with NHLC.

**SOVEREIGNTY EDUCATION:**

As one of the most important issues facing the state of Hawaiʻi, NHLC believes more individuals and families need access to objective, clear and intelligent information on sovereignty. To this end, NHLC sponsored one of the first sovereignty conferences in the mid-1980s and continues to take part in forums and other educational efforts.

**PUBLICATIONS:**

NHLC published the *Native Hawaiian Rights Handbook*, a primer on the legal rights and related important issues associated with Hawaiian land and traditional practices. The book grew out of university law school clinic that NHLC attorneys helped staff. NHLC also co-published a *Dictionary of Hawaiian Legal Land-Terms*, a reference book of Hawaiian words and phrases found in documents from the turn of the century. These documents are still relied upon by the courts as evidence of title to real property.
SINCE 1974, THE NATIVE HAWAIIAN LEGAL CORPORATION HAS PROVIDED FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH AFFORDABLE AND EFFECTIVE LEGAL REPRESENTATION IN THE UNIQUE AREA OF NATIVE HAWAIIAN RIGHTS. Thousands of people who might not otherwise have been able to obtain legal advocacy have held on to valuable lands or received fair compensation for their lands. Others have been assisted in their efforts to obtain Hawaiian Homestead leases, water for taro farming or access to shoreline areas for fishing.

The law firm was originally founded by several grass roots leaders and initially operated as a volunteer-run referral service. But the high demand for direct help, especially from families who needed legal assistance in protecting their lands, transformed NHLC to where it now provides low cost legal help to approximately 700 clients annually.

As the only non-profit, public interest law firm specializing in Hawaiian land and traditional rights, NHLC’s expertise can be categorized into the following areas:

**QUIET TITLE DEFENSE:**

The scarcity of land in Hawai‘i and its unique history of who has come to own and use these lands has directly shaped the struggles facing many families today. These individuals and their ‘ohana are often named as defendants in a Quiet Title lawsuit and find themselves ill-prepared and outmatched financially to take on the legal challenges and costs of protecting their title interest. Since it began working on such cases in the 1980s, NHLC has represented at least 2,300 individuals in 400 Quiet Title cases.

**PROTECTION OF TRUST LANDS SUCH AS THE Ceded LANDS AND HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS:**

NHLC works to obtain full benefits for beneficiaries of the ceded lands trust as set forth in Hawai‘i’s Admission Act and recognized in the Hawai‘i State Constitution. Because the ceded lands trust is managed by the state, NHLC plays an important role in holding government officials accountable.

In 1920, the U.S. Congress created a land trust setting aside nearly 200,000 acres of marginal lands for native Hawaiian housing, farming and ranching. Today, approximately 20,000-plus beneficiaries are waiting for a homestead lot award; some have waited for 40 years or longer and many have died on the waiting list. NHLC has assisted Hawaiian Homes beneficiaries with a wide range of problems including lost applications, water rights, arbitrary decreases in lot size, evictions, construction defects, successorship criteria, and community-based planning and economic development, etc.

**PROTECTION AND EXPANSION OF TRADITIONAL AND CUSTOMARY RIGHTS:**

NHLC helps individuals, families and communities assert rights embodied in state law and the state Constitution. These include Kuleana rights – rights that are attached to fee simple awards issued during the mid-1800s by the Hawaiian Kingdom. Many of the individuals seeking help for their Kuleana lands are farmers who are losing access to traditional sources of water or access to their lands as more urban development occurs throughout the state. Another example of rights needing protection are Ahupua’a tenants rights which involve the right