Legends tell us that, in the days of old, the brothers Kāne and Kanaloa would travel for pleasure throughout the islands of Hawai‘i. They were both gods, and Kāne was spiritually linked with fresh water, and legends speak of their many adventures involving water-finding activities. When they wanted refreshment, Kanaloa would tease Kāne, challenging his older brother to find water. Kāne could hear the water flowing beneath the ground, and when he struck the dry, rocky earth with his staff, fresh water would flow.

As Kealoha trudged up the rocky path toward her home on the slope of Pu‘u o Mānoa, she remembered these legends of Kāne and Kanaloa. She struggled with two heavy water gourds filled to the top with water, balancing them on either side of the pole she carried across
her stooped shoulders. It was a time of drought and famine on the Island of O'ahu. No rain had fallen for ages and the local spring had dried up long ago. The nearest place fresh water could be found was at Kāmoʻili'i, far from home, and Kealoha had to make the long, grueling walk every day.

“If only Kāne was here now with his water-seeking staff!” cried Kealoha. Swirls of dust blew up and stung her eyes. Stumbling on some loose pebbles, Kealoha nearly dropped her precious cargo. The stopper fell out of one of the gourds and some water spilled out. The thirsty earth instantly drank it up, leaving a damp spot for just a moment before disappearing. Exhausted, Kealoha stopped, carefully lowering the water gourds to the ground, and she sat on a large rock to rest. As she pulled her dusty hair away from her face, frustrated tears welled up in her eyes. There was still a long walk ahead.

“Aue!” she cried. “How much longer can Mūkākā and I live like this? If only there was a spring close to home.” She sighed, wiped away her tears, and took a small sip of water. Rising slowly to her feet, she said, “I must be strong.” But when she lifted up the pole with the hanging gourds, her shoulders and back ached terribly.

Since there had been no rain for so long, their garden was barren and Kealoha’s husband, Mūkākā, had to walk deep into Mānoa Valley every day to gather food. He would collect whatever he could find—some kī or ti roots and leaves, a variety of tender ferns, and uhi, wild yams. When Kealoha arrived at their hale, their small house, Mūkākā had not yet returned from his quest for food, so she put down the water gourds and entered the cool shade of the hale to rest and wait. Weary, she lay down on her sleeping mats and quickly fell asleep. She began to dream.
In her dream, a man stood close by her head. “Kealoha,” he asked, “why do you travel so far for water?” She answered, “All the streams nearby have run dry. Life is so hard for Mūkākā and me.”

The man said, “But Kealoha, he wai no, there is water! A fresh spring flows just behind your house under the hala tree.” Then he was gone.

Kealoha awoke and opened her eyes. “He moe’uhane! A dream!” she whispered. “It must have been sent by the god of the spring.” She rose and quickly walked behind the house. Standing before the hala, the old pandanus tree, her eyes scanned its graceful limbs extending in all directions. From the end of each branch sprang long leaves, like pointed green fingers. She admired its many aerial prop roots stretching down and gripping the earth below. The hala tree had been growing in that spot long before Kealoha and Mūkākā had settled on this land. It was like a friend whom she had never looked at carefully. She had made use of its supple leaves over the years in the weaving of baskets and sleeping mats. After a strong rain fell, the leaves held fresh water that she poured in her calabash for drinking. But she now observed the hala tree with new eyes, having never fully appreciated its strength and beauty. “Hala tree,” she said, touching the trunk, “you have always helped us.”

So deep was Kealoha’s concentration that she did not hear Mūkākā’s call. “Kealoha!” he cried. “Where are you, my wife?” He finally found her in front of the hala tree. “My dear,” he asked, “what is the matter?”

She blinked and turned to face her husband, her eyes alight. “I fell asleep after returning with the water and had a dream. A man came and stood right next to me as I slept. He told me that there was a freshwater stream hidden right beneath this hala tree. I think he might have been the god of the spring answering our prayers!”
Mūkākā looked upon the old tree, lowering his gaze to the dry, compacted ground around its aerial roots. He shook his head. “You hoped so much for relief from thirst that you had a wishing dream, a moemoea,” he said. “But, alas, it was not a moe hōokō, a dream fulfilled. I am sorry, Kealoha.” He walked away.
“He does not listen,” she whispered to the hala tree, but then she leaned closer, getting a better look at the hard, packed earth beneath it. She frowned. “Perhaps he is right and it was only my thirst.”

Mūkākā prepared their meal and the couple ate in silence. After they finished eating, darkness began to fall. As they lay side by side on their pile of mats woven from the leaves of the hala tree, Kealoha broke the silence.

“Husband, perhaps we should dig around the roots of the hala tree to see for sure that it was not a true dream.”

Mūkākā grunted and said, “Woman, I am too tired to talk.”

Through the night Kealoha slept fitfully, stirred by her dream of the hidden spring, but Mūkākā’s sleep was deep. In the early morning hours, after a restful night, he had a dream. A man stood next to him and said, “Mūkākā, why don’t you listen to your wife? Behind your house a freshwater spring lies hidden beneath the hala tree. When you pull up the tree, you will find the spring.”

Mūkākā protested, “But I am old and the hala tree is tall. How can I pull up the tree?”

“Catch some red fish,” replied the man. “Wrap the fish in ti leaves and broil them. Make offerings of fish and prayers to your family guardians, your ‘aumākua, and ask for the strength to pull up the tree. Then you will suffer no more.”

When Mūkākā awoke, he thought with excitement, “I had the same dream as Kealoha, so it was a true dream! It must have been the god of the spring after all!” When Kealoha stirred, Mūkākā lay very still, pretending to be asleep, for he wanted to keep the dream to himself, at least for now. Kealoha crept soundlessly from the house. She soon called out warily, “Husband, I am going now for more water.”
Mūkākā grunted sleepily in reply.

As soon as Kealoha’s footsteps could no longer be heard, Mūkākā rose and gathered his fishing gear. He rushed down the path. When he reached the sea, he pulled his canoe to the water. The words of his dream visitor filled his mind and Mūkākā felt his heart beating fast, keeping rhythm with the strokes of the paddle as he made his way out of the reef. When he reached his favorite fishing spot, Mūkākā stopped and prepared his net. The ocean was calm and gentle waves rocked the canoe. He lowered the net into the water but before he had a chance to drop in the bait, he felt the net moving violently this way and that. When he lifted the net out of the water, Mūkākā was astonished to find it brimming with kūmū, red goatfish. “The god of the spring is with me!” he cried and pulled the net filled with flapping fish into his canoe.

Back at the hale, Mūkākā started to make a fire. He rubbed the ‘au lima, the hard, pointed stick, quickly back and forth against the ‘aunaki, a piece of softer wood, until there was a small pile of dust. The friction from rubbing created heat and soon a thin curl of smoke rose from the wood dust, followed by a tiny flame. Mūkākā placed a strip of old dried bark cloth into the flame and when the cloth ignited, he placed it under the firewood. The dry wood burned well. While waiting for the wood to turn to coals, Mūkākā wrapped the red fish in some of the ti leaves he had collected the day before, preparing the fish for roasting.

Mūkākā cooked and made his offering of red fish. He prayed to his guardians and the god of the spring, asking for the strength to pull up the hala tree. Then he ate some fish. It tasted delicious and he realized he had eaten nothing since waking from his dream. Mūkākā began to feel strong.
Taking a deep breath, he walked to the *hala* tree. A slight breeze shook the *hala* leaves gently, as if beckoning him closer. Mūkākā smiled at the old tree and then held its trunk in an embrace. He spoke to the tree. “*Hala* Tree, thank you for providing Kealoha and me with the materials to make our bedding and baskets for so many years. Your leaves have produced the finest, softest mats, with such a sweet fragrance. And you have given us shade, protecting us from the hot midday sun. *Hala* Tree, thank you for all of your gifts.”

And then Mūkākā closed his eyes. He pressed his head against the trunk of the tree. He could hear the sound of rushing water deep within. He prayed to his ʻ*aumākua* and began to feel a flow of energy seeping into every muscle. He prayed to the god of the spring and felt vitality filling every fiber of his body. Then he felt the tree move. Slowly, the *hala* tree seemed to lift itself up. The aerial roots released their hold on the ground one by one and the deep roots wiggled themselves free. Soon Mūkākā held the full weight of the great *hala* tree in his arms like a sleeping friend, and he gently laid it down on the ground. Water bubbled up into the hole where the *hala* tree once stood.

Just then, Kealoha arrived. She cried, “Ka Punahou! The New Spring!” Standing together before the gurgling water, she and her husband talked about all the things they would do with this new spring. They would dig a bigger hole so the spring could grow into a pond. They would plant many *lo‘i kalo*, taro patches, and irrigate them with water from the spring. They would bring freshwater fish to the pond and the fish would thrive and multiply. They would always have fresh water to drink and share with their neighbors. They would never waste a single drop.

Never again would they suffer from thirst or hun-
ger, thanks to their guardians, their gods, and the hidden spring of Punahou.

Punahou School in Honolulu now stands where Kealoha and Mūkākā found the hidden spring. The school seal bears the images of two taro leaves and a **hala** tree with a spring of fresh water flowing beneath it.

N. B. Emerson, in *Pele and Hi’iaka*, describes a mythical **hala** tree from Puna called Manu‘u-ke-eu, its seed having been carried by Pele’s brother, Ka-moho-ali‘i, when they journeyed from Kahiki to Hawai‘i. After eating the fruit, Ka-moho-ali‘i planted the seed, and the tree grew to be a **kupua**, a supernatural being.