

I Ola Kohala, Kohala Lives

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:: NOHONA HAWAI'I: HONORING THE HAWAIIAN WORLDVIEW ::

To Hawaiians, aloha 'āina refers to a revered, inextricable relationship between the human body, the spiritual world, and the land on which we thrive.

—Shawn Malia Kana'iaupuni, PhD (Kana'iaupuni 2004, p. 54)

Native Hawaiian philosophy of life... I am this land; this land is me.

1. Know the cycles and rhythms of our universe, sit and feel.
2. Everything around us has a function.
3. Know your place as a human in this environment.
4. Survival is knowing that there is a hierarchy.
5. Hawaiian practitioners live comfortably in both worlds because they know who they are.

—Pua Kanaka'ole Kanahale (Kanahale 2005, p. 23, 28-29)

Kanaka Maoli philosophy stems from a clear and strong self-identity as Kanaka Maoli and that is being in constant communication and relationship with our ancestors who continue to be with us in this current temporal world in many forms such as Wākea, sky father and Papa, our earth mother. And by our basic anatomy we are constantly reminded of those three important connections...according to our own traditional concepts we haven't learned anything unless we can feel it and unless we can act on it. Concepts of Hawaiian medicine are basic concepts to our culture and way of life.

—Kekuni Blaisdell, M.D. (Cheng 2000. p. 1, 2)

:: THE I OLA KOHALA PROJECT ::

"I never really thought I would ever be in a program like this. No one in my family has ever gone to college. It helped hearing from Aunty and that she grew up with the same living conditions as me. If one Hawaiian like her can make it to the top, so can I. At least I going try!"

—Sione Ching, Kohala High School Senior and I Ola Kohala student

I Ola Kohala is an educational pilot project that strengthens opportunities for middle and high school students in North Hawai'i to explore opportunities in higher education and health professions through strengthening cultural identity and civic responsibility. The program is also focused on delivering quality rural health education for health professions students, including pharmacy students from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy (DKICOP) and medical students at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM). The project's purpose is to strengthen the pipeline for local students to pursue higher education and consider careers in health and promote physician retention in North Hawai'i by connecting with the medical community at JABSOM. Designed and funded by the medical school's Department of Native Hawaiian Health's Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence (NHCOE), the project worked closely with community partners to develop an educational curriculum that enabled participants to better understand the critical connection between cultural traditions and the importance of higher education as it relates to health concerns within their community. All activities took place in the Kohala district to strengthen participants' sense of place and nurture the practice of aloha 'āina.

The long-term goals of the I Ola Kohala project are to provide participants with connections to resources that further their education and potential to pursue careers in the health professions, increase the number of medical student experiences in North Hawai'i, and empower the Kohala community to build educational pathways to promote students' educational success. By having medical students serve as role models for the middle and high school participants, medical students help to generate student interest in medical careers while learning the rewards, strengths, and beauty of the people of Kohala. Our hope is that these types of programs will allow physicians in training to learn about rural communities and may potentially influence their desire to provide health care for underserved populations. As one of JABSOM's top priorities, eliminating the health care workforce shortage

faced by rural communities may be possible through educational models that help to grow future health care providers from rural areas who are more likely to return to practice in their home communities (University of Hawai‘i Foundation 2014, p. 3).

❧ **NĀ POU KIHĪ FRAMEWORK** ❧ Essential to program development within the Department of Native Hawaiian Health (DNHH) and Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence (NHCOE), it is necessary to implement activities that address Nā Pou Kihi concepts. Doing so affords the DNHH and NHCOE opportunities to advance toward Ka Wai Ola, systemic change in the way programs and services are provided to Native Hawaiian youth and families (Kaholokula 2014, p. 261–262).

This Native Hawaiian framework was utilized based on kanaka ‘āina relationship addressing the importance of Kanaka ‘Ōiwi well-being and sustainability in Kohala (Duarte 2009, slide 37). This culturally based approach to programming was based on experiences and outcomes from Project Kupulau, a mentoring program designed by University of Hawai‘i at Hilo’s Nā Pua No‘eau, Center for Gifted and Talented Native Hawaiian Children (Sing 2008, p. 2, 7, 11). Because of Nā Pua No‘eau’s 25-year history of success in advancing Native Hawaiian youth toward academic success, we chose to utilize their foundational methodology of mentoring. Activities were intentionally created to explore student interest in the health field while strengthening cultural identity and civic engagement as a contributing member of their community (Nā Pua No‘eau 2015, p. 7).

❧ PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS AND TEACHING FACULTY ❧

‘Ike Pono: “Promoting learning from a Native Hawaiian perspective. A philosophy optimizing learning conditions that are congruent with indigenous home and community experiences, perspectives and values.”

–David Kekaulike Sing, PhD (Sing 2008, p. 150, 152-153, 155)

Initial recruitment focused on students in the Hawi and Kapa‘au districts of Kohala, with most students attending Kohala High and Middle School (KHMS). Due to limited response from those attending KHMS, recruitment efforts continued with neighboring schools and community resources. A total of 10 students responded with high

interest, 7 applied and 6 participated in the pilot program. All participants resided in the Kohala district and expressed aspirations of higher education with a focus on serving their community in the future. An exception was made to accept two college students, one at University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and one at University of Hawai‘i at Hilo, based on their lineal connection to Kohala, area of study and life-long commitment to servicing the Kohala community.

Kumu Keala Kahuanui was key to the success of the program. Her extensive experience in Native Hawaiian education, mainly focus on makahiki traditions (season of healing), maui ola (optimal health of kānaka ‘ōiwi), and ho‘okele wa‘a (non instrumental voyaging). She is a seasoned teacher and community resource in the Kohala district. Her 20-year work experience spans Hawai‘i Island, the archipelago and abroad. Kumu Keala was selected to teach all cultural enrichment activities, organize and facilitate ‘ohana days and serve as the Hawai‘i Island point of contact for participating students, families and community resources. In addition to teaching she also contributed to program planning, implementation, and student assessment. As demands of the program grew, an assistant coordinator, Loke Evans-Bautista, joined the team to support coordinating needs. Based in the University of Hawai‘i Hilo, Center for Gifted and Talented Native Hawaiian Children, Nā Pua No‘eau (NPN), Loke helped to bridge a partnership between I Ola Kohala and Nā Pua No‘eau. Loke’s extensive coordinating experience and personal connection to resources in Kohala were instrumental to the successful start up of mentor/internship planning.

Project members also included NHCOE faculty and staff, JABSOM students, Hawai‘i Island Family Medicine Residency Program faculty and residents, UH Hilo Pre-Health Advisor and students, and participants of the UH Hilo Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy.

❧ PROGRAM ACTIVITIES ❧

- Two events were held per month over an 8-month period. The program began with an ‘ohana orientation for student participants and families to meet NHCOE faculty and staff, review program details, schedules, and expectations. It also provided an opportunity for faculty and staff to address questions that parents and students had prior to the start of the program. ‘Ohana days were included as an essential part of the program to offer families opportunities to learn alongside their child

(Kana'iaupuni 2004, p. 54, 58, 67). The culmination of the program included a summer session held on O'ahu.

- Students were scheduled to meet with Kumu Keala Kahuanui twice a month starting in November and ending in February. Sessions included hui (cohort) meetings and 'ohana days. Hui meetings were developed to increase the cultural knowledge base of participants by exposing them to authentic makahiki traditions as related to Hawaiian healing practices including ceremony, protocol and chanting, significance of Hawaiian games and community service. 'Ohana days provided the family unit with cultural enrichment activities focused on the wellness aspect of traditional seafaring. Exposure to college planning was also included.
- Students met with NHCOE faculty, staff and medical school students between March and June to learn contemporary methods of healing. Educational enrichment activities were developed to focus on college readiness, understanding the "medical mindset" principles to enhance critical thinking skills, and exposure to learning experiences provided by medical school students.
 - A tiered teaching and mentoring method was involving multiple training levels of student participants and taking place in a diverse range of learning environments. Practicing physicians teaching medical students, who in turn are teaching undergraduates, who then turn around and inspire their community members to begin caring about their own health and wellness. By role modeling, demonstrating, and then practicing basic clinical skills in a community setting, the program empowered students to envision themselves as future health providers in Kohala.
 - A community of multi-disciplinary clinicians and students based on Hawai'i Island contributed to the project by demonstrating the value of community service with the hope those students and residents who are involved in service as part of their training are more likely to continue community service when they are practicing clinicians.
- A week-long summer session allowed for cohort participants to experience resources in health care on the island of O'ahu. This included orientation of place, site visits to educational institutions, and exposure to professionals in the health and wellness field.
 - Cultural enrichment activities were planned to maximize participant experience of resources in the moku (district) of Kona and 'ili (subdivision) of Ka'ākaukui in which JABSOM is located. Students honored ali'i nui (monarchs) at Mauna 'Ala with ho'okupu leo (offering of chants) and learned about the Royal Mausoleum in the chapel on site. Ho'okupu was also given at the Nu'uuanu Pali in honor of Konahuanui (highest peak of Kona). Each evening, time was dedicated to kilohoku (studying the stars) in relation to navigating life challenges and planning for the future.
 - Students were linked to resources relating to careers of interest, toured JABSOM, and explored resources on the medical school campus. A visit to the Queens Medical Center allowed students to experience the legacy of Queen Emma, her investment in Native Hawaiian health and how it continues to benefit many. Students had the opportunity to reside in the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa dormitories during the summer experience, providing them with a pre-view of residential college life on campus. Participants also toured the Waimānalo Community Health Center and engaged with medical and support staff to gain a firsthand understanding of health care in Hawaiian communities.
- The end of year hō'ike (demonstration of knowledge) was conducted as a community service give back at the annual Kamehameha Day Ho'olaule'a (celebration) in Kohala.
 - Kumu Keala coordinated makahiki games for event patrons and assessed students as they facilitated games and provided information on the makahiki season.
 - NHCOE faculty and JABSOM medical students provided health screening and a first aid station

at the event. Drs. Dee-Ann Carpenter, Malia Lee and Kawika Mortensen assessed cohort students as they examined patron’s blood pressure, height and weight and BMI. Students were assessed by faculty on personal and professional interaction and accuracy of information shared with attendees.

- The context of makahiki was selected as the cultural focus because it includes kanaka, ‘āina, akua components and is recognized as a season of healing (Lum 2003, p.31–32). This approach also allowed for the coordination of medical school student participation that was conducive with JABSOM course schedules and rotations.

❧ **PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK** ❧ Preliminary program feedback was obtained through verbal and written methods. Pre and post assessments were administered to cohort participants and faculty feedback by observation and discussion with students were conducted. Overall, middle and high school students appeared to have an increased knowledge of cultural traditions and an increased awareness of and access to community resources that address Native Hawaiian health. Middle and high school students also demonstrated an increased awareness of educational/ career pipelines in the health field and an increased knowledge of introductory topics of clinical medicine including the steps involved in taking a medical history, use of medical equipment such as a stethoscope and developing a medical mindset.

Medical students have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to interact with middle and high-school aged youth throughout the program. The medical students also preliminarily showed an increased awareness of makahiki traditions and community service experiences that benefit Native Hawaiian communities.

Middle School and High School Students

“I was so happy to receive all the learning materials I got from this trip. My mom can’t wait to look through all the books I told her about. I called my mom when we were at Queens Hospital. She told me that she was proud of me and that I am here for a reason. She said that this program is very important...and will help me reach my goals.”
 —(Kanu o ka ‘Āina 8th grader, Kau’i Malakaua-Blanco)

“I am so happy to have this opportunity. It has inspired me to pay better attention to my schoolwork now. I want to get that A.A. before I graduate from high school!”
 —(Kanu o ka ‘Āina 9th grader, Pualilia Dudoit)

“I can see the improvement in my confidence. I was very shy and nervous to speak to anyone. Now I like it. I think I’m good at it too!”
 —(Kamehameha Schools, Keaau 8th grader, Auli’ilani Hoopii)

Health Professional Students

“I believe that the program is beneficial for the children in fostering their desire to not only pursue higher education, but in promoting critical thinking skills development and a desire to learn. I went into the day thinking I would be the one doing the teaching to the children, but it was I who learned from the children. The program provides the children with the resources and environment to better themselves as individuals in addition to setting achievable life goals and how to realistically find ways to achieve those goals. I hope this program continues to stay and grow over the years. As a Native Hawaiian, I am confident that this will not only produce successful Native Hawaiian individuals in health careers, but also promote a spirit of servitude for generations to come.”
 —(N. Ferreira, 4th year pharmacy student)

“The experience I felt in the program was extraordinary. Allowing young adults to be exposed into the health field is a great thing. I believe this program really allows high school students to experience what different fields have to offer. Personally, I wish I had a program like this to see how different health careers come together to help people. This program has allowed these students to see how their personal interests translate into health care providers. I hope in the future that this program expands to a farther audience because the encounters these students’ experience is unique and is a great center for furthering themselves as professionals.”
 —(R. Higa, 4th, year pharmacy student)

“Programs like these in which students are merely exposed to the medical school and students can influence them to choose a career in healthcare or at least begin to look into it. They may have not looked at medicine or healthcare as a viable option afforded to them prior to this program and the

opportunities like these that the program offers.”
—(A. Morisako, 2nd year medical student)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Native Hawaiian philosophy of healing is life. “Spirituality is the basis for our cosmic view of life and therefore as to how illness comes about and how it needs to be prevented and treated.”

—Kekuni Blaisdell, MD (Cheng, 2000)

- All Department of Native Hawaiian Health outreach and workforce training programs should utilize the Pou Kihī framework in planning, implementing and assessing programs that impact Native Hawaiian students, families and communities. This promotes a mechanism toward systemic change in higher education and within medical education.
- To create sustainability for the project, a program coordinator based on Hawai‘i Island is needed to provide ongoing program planning and implementation support and to facilitate solidifying community partnerships through clear communication that involves the community’s voice in future program development and evaluation.
- Given initial feedback, efforts to expand the program components that have shown early success such as mentoring and ‘ohana days are recommended.
- For sustainability of manpower and resources, synergize efforts of the I Ola Kohala project with other JABSOM and community programs such as the Lau Hawai‘i Project, Nānākuli Pathways to Health and the Dean’s Certificate of Distinction in Native Hawaiian Health.
- Explore ways to solidify working agreements with on-island resources with plans to eventually adopt the program in its entirety, including the long-term responsibility of stewarding the program and securing support and resources to ensure sustainability.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS Plans are to continue the I Ola Kohala project as an educational model that may be used by other Hawaiian communities interested in promoting Nohona Hawai‘i based wellness education

initiatives. Our community partners, Kanu o Ka ‘Āina, NCPCS Head of School, Mahina Paishon and North Hawai‘i Community Hospital Physician Liaison, Michelle Aikau, have expressed interest in moving forward with potential partnerships to expand support of this program. It will be important for community and institutional resources and organizations to be expanded in order to ensure sustainable support for this impactful community-based health education and pipeline program.

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