Cultural Immersion Weekend 2014

By Leslie Yap MPH

The cultural competency curriculum (C3) project once again held its annual cultural immersion weekend. This was our largest group to date with 17 first year and 2 second year JABSOM students participating in the 3 day, 2 night activity. We stayed at Camp Waia'ane, the Seventh Day Adventist campsite at the back of Waia'ane Valley.

Friday afternoon, after a pa'iu (purifying) ceremony at JABSOM, we headed out to the Westside! Our first activity was held at the Waia'ane Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC), where our host, Kauila Clark, and his kaikōlo' (assistant), Leticia, gave us a tour of the healing garden and an overview of the services provided at WCCHC. Later that afternoon at Pokai Bay, students got the chance to show off their paddling prowess courtesy of Uncle Joe Momoma and the Nu Keiki o Ko Me'i canoe club.

On Saturday, we spent about half the day at Ka'ala Farms learning from Uncle Butch about how Native Hawaiians practiced sustainable agriculture. We also learned about kalo (taro) and its importance to the Hawaiian people. Everyone pitched in cleaning up two loi kalo (taro patches) of weed overgrowth which allowed the irrigation water to flow freely through from one loi into the next. Saturday afternoon was traditional food prep time; under the instruction of Waia'ane cultural expert Kana'i Dodge, students prepared pa'i'ai (hard, pounded but undiluted taro), learned how to devein ti leaf and wrap lau 'au leaf for laulau, as well as make all the dishes to be enjoyed at the evening's pā'ina (meal). Participants and guests were in for a treat, as we had two recent crewmembers (including NHCOE's Dr. Dee-Ann Carpenter) of the Hokule'a and Hikianalia share with us their voyaging experiences and a bit of traditional star navigation.

Sunday morning, after kiawe bean pod picking and camp cleanup, we headed back to JABSOM. One last stop was made at Keawa Hei'au, a healing heiau, where Kauila and Leticia demonstrated how to make and use traditional la'au lapa'au (herbal medicine).

If it sounds exhausting, it was! There were early starts, full days, and late nights, and yet there are many more activities that could not be squeezed into this jam-packed weekend.

We know that the students had an enjoyable weekend, but most importantly, we know that this immersion in the Hawaiian culture will help them to better serve their Native Hawaiian patients in the future.

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Ke ‘Ano Hawai‘i o ka Nohona

By Tifnie Kakalia & Kawika Mortensen MD

Utilizing the bale as a metaphor for establishing a healthy and vibrant Native Hawaiian population, Nā Pou Kūhi (the corner posts) is the Department of Native Hawaiian Health’s framework for achieving social and health equity for Kanaka O‘iwi (Native people). The framework speaks to both our intended outcomes for our Native Hawaiian communities as well as the philosophy applied to growing and inspiring our own students and trainees. Like the corner posts of a solid house, each of these 4 concepts are essential to achieving optimal well-being. To review, the 4 Pou Kūhi are:

1. Ke Ao O‘iwi (creating a culturally nurturing space to thrive)
2. Ka Mālama ‘Āina (creating healthy, sustainable communities)
3. Ka ‘Ai Pono (creating opportunities to access healthier lifestyles)
4. Ka Wai Ola (improving the social determinants of health)

Ke Ao O‘iwi – creating a culturally nurturing space to thrive

The optimum health of Kanaka O‘iwi is achievable only when society values the sociocultural space for our modes of living and aspirations. Questions one would reflect upon when planning to create and/or maintain indigenous learning environments are:

1. How does this activity support positive cultural identity?
2. Is this activity culturally-based, incorporating Nā Kahua Hana (Academic Principles) of Ho'opili (to engage), Ho'omālamalama (to enlighten), and Ho'omana (to empower)?

By ensuring Ke Ao O‘iwi is included in the lessons and activities we provide, we are not only able to achieve cultural resonance in the workplace but more importantly, we are able to provide service to our lāhui from a culturally-based framework that reinforces our traditional values, modes of living and goals. Understanding the importance of mind, body, spirit interconnectedness and its relation to oulo lokahi (balance in life) is essential to the well-being of our people. It is the belief that being physically, mentally, and spiritually connected to genealogy, place, and tradition that provides individuals with a solid foundation to Kūhīd 1 Ka Nuu, strive to reach their highest potential.

Nū ‘Oli o NHCOE

Department of Native Hawaiian Health
John A. Burns School of Medicine
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

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He Huliau 2014: A Turning Point
By Kimberly Spencer MPH

This past September, the Center of Native and Pacific Health Disparities Research, Dept. of Native Hawaiian Health at JABSOM was honored to once again host its conference series, He Huliau: A Turning Point. This year’s theme of “Community-Academic Partnerships for Pacific Health Equity” was well received by all, garnishing the honor of having 240 attendees, the most well attended Hawai‘i-based conference since its inception in 2004. The turnout spoke volumes to the necessity of the topics addressed, “Mahalo for providing a venue where community members and academics alike can come together to find real-world solutions for our people” one participant shared. “Seeing first hand the latest scientific advances in health care disparities among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and how we are working toward implementing these advances in culturally appropriate models and community programs to improve the health and wellness of our native people is really awe-inspiring”

This year’s conference truly had an international appeal, with workshops, lectures, and small group sessions lead by both local experts as well as from honored guest faculty from New Zealand and Australia. Keynote speaker, Sir Mason Durie, Professor Emeritus at Massey University in New Zealand provided an overview on Maori health disparities as well as the progress and advancements of their family-centered health initiative, Whinau Oraka. Likewise we were fortunate to have Professor Dennis McDermott from Flanders University, Australia share his knowledge and research on the impact of racism on indigenous health. Coupled with experts and community representatives that spanned the UH system, health care associations, and community organizations throughout Hawai‘i’s really made the conferences impact broad and pertinent. We at the Center of Native and Pacific Health Disparities Research strive hard to fulfill the needs of those we serve, and look forward to doing so with next year’s event.

Special thank you to NHCOE for their generous funding of Department faculty and staff to attend this year’s conference. Your continued support of our professional development does not go unnoticed, mahalo nui loa.

He‘eia Fishpond in Windward O‘ahu. Students working with community members to restore and preserve this historic and culturally significant site.

Native Hawaiian Health: Past, Present, and Future
By Martina Kamaka MD & Leslie Yap MPH

Hawaiian Health: Past, Present, and Future is a year round Community Health Elective offered to first year medical students here at JABSOM. With 10 medical students currently enrolled in the course, the goal of the elective is to expose our physicians in training to Native Hawaiian health issues that have formed our past, are present today, and those we face in the future. The hope is to provide students an avenue to better understand the factors that play into the health determinants of our people. The course, co-facilitated by Drs. Martina Kamaka and Vanessa Wong, features a variety of culturally grounded teaching methodologies, amongst them lecture-based learning, small group discussions, experiential modalities and service-learning. Keeping in mind the importance of community collaboration, course instruction is not solely placed on UH and JABSOM faculty but instead integrated with teachings from community cultural consultants, Native Hawaiian non-profit groups, government organizations, and traditional Native Hawaiian healers.

Throughout the year students participate in a wide variety of activities ranging from Makahiki games, fishpond/forest/stream restoration, working in the lio‘i kalo, traditional food preparation, lomilomi, la‘au lapa‘au, and visiting the cultural sites. The students also have an opportunity to serve the community during this time, taking advantage of service-learning projects at Papahana Kualoa, Kākāpō‘ō, Puea o Hē‘ēia and Native Hawaiian immersion charter school Ke Kula o Kāumakaiwa. The students are also fortunate to have guest speakers who are invited to share their mana‘o about what health and wellness means to them and their communities. Honored guest speakers include representatives from the Ali‘i Trusts, experts on cultural trauma and social determinants of Native Hawaiian health, as well as stewards of many of our cultural gems, like Makua valley, Kahaloe‘awe, and the Hōkūle‘a. The common thread that runs through all is that Native Hawaiian health must be looked at in the big picture, not only does there need to be a balance between having a healthy body and spirit, but the health of the land, ocean, and community is an integral and paramount component of health and wellness.

The definitive goal of this course is to give our kaua‘ipo (young doctors) the tools to better understand their future Native Hawaiian patients and provide more culturally appropriate care and approaches to treatment.

Mālama Kou Piko
By Tifinnie Kakalia

Dr. David Sing (known to many as Uncle David), founding Executive Director of Nā Pua No'eau Center for Gifted and Talented Native Hawaiian Children, recently retired from UH Hilo this fall after 40 years of service. “I have been blessed to be part of many exciting initiatives and transformations - in the lives of children and their families, with our college students, with our University, in Hawaiian education, and in education in general,” he shared in a written statement to the community, “I am grateful to the people who have shared the vision and conviction, and have endured the challenges of the journey.”

For four decades, Uncle David has spearheaded leadership efforts in developing successful educational programs for Native Hawaiians, starting at UH Hilo and expanding throughout the 16-campus UH System. His work focused on creating educational environments that support and promote the diverse perspectives, learning styles, and goals of Native communities. He is credited with producing the widely adopted educational model that optimized learning with the utilization of culture in the context of education. “This may not seem like a lot but prior to the models I created, the education models demanded that students lose their culture in order to succeed in education and careers in Hawai‘i,” he shared. “In our model, culture is seen as a distinct and positive contribution, not as a separate idea.”

Uncle David’s crowning achievement is without a doubt the creation of Nā Pua No’eau. Established at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo in 1989, the Center was created to increase educational and enrichment opportunities for gifted and talented Native Hawaiian children in kindergarten through 12th grades. Over the course of the 25 years that followed, Nā Pua No’eau has provided educational enrichment to over 16,000 Native Hawaiian students. Now, as he retires from the academic system Uncle David can now reflect on two generations of students who have been guided by Uncle David, hundreds of Native Hawaiian students who have shared the vision and conviction, and have endured the challenges of the journey.

“Mālama Kou Piko is not just a saying but a way of life” he shared with many throughout the years. “This ‘ōlelo no‘eau is a family value originating from his mother as a reminder to nurture the center, or essence, of who you are as a Hawaiian and to never forget your connection to the past. This personal value strongly ties into the founding principles and philosophy of Nā Pua No’eau, which is that all ‘ōlelo are gifted and talented. As educators, it is our kuleana to help them identify such gifts and talents and nurture them toward reaching their highest potential. Nā Pua No’eau is not only a center for gifted children but more importantly, a place where Native Hawaiian youth and families can experience the beauty and dynamic of mālama piko in practice.”

Ho‘omaikaʻi i a ‘oe e ke kaaua ʻo Mala Lee
By Winona K. Lee MD, Director of DNHH Medical Education Division & Imm Hō‘ōla

I am pleased to announce that effective February 1, 2015, Dr. Mala-Susanne Lee has stepped into her new role as the Director for the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence! Mala has been working closely with me as the Assistant Director over the past year and I am confident that she will be a transformative leader for our NHCOE and community partners.

Dr. Lee first joined our ‘ohana in 2011 when she was selected to NHCOE’s 2-year Fellowship Program in Research and Medical Education. Prior to her work with us, she served as a Family Medicine Physician and Clinic Director for Waiola Coast Comprehensive Health Center - Wapahulu Family Satellite Clinic. As a former Native Hawaiian Health Scholar, her commitment to serving the Hawaiian community is long standing and we are indebted to her for accepting the call to lead us into the future.

“Mahalo nui loa for your confidence in me.” Dr. Mala Lee expressed, “It is my goal to live up to and exceed the expectations of the position and to become a great alaka‘i for our students and faculty. I am surrounded by an excellent team and together I am confident we will continue to make great strides. Holalaulima!”

Dr. David Sing

NHCOE Faculty and Staff in Hilo celebrating Uncle’s retirement

- Mahalo Uncle for the legacy that you have left -