"Oi Ola Wai Honua" was the theme of the Pacific Region Indigenous Doctors Congress (PRIDoC) 2018 held in Hilo, Hawai‘i. After much discussion with ‘Ahahui ‘o nā Kauka, the host of PRIDoC, Dr. Pualani Kanakaole Kanahele gifted “‘Oi Ola Wai Honua," meaning “life is better while the earth has water.” This theme reminds us of the importance of caring for our resources, and not forgetting to care for ourselves, as we are also a resource (as kauka) for our people. The exchange of ideas and collective knowledge shared throughout the conference enable us and our communities around the Pacific to thrive physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially, and culturally.
Hoʻokuikahi i Puʻukoholā (Gathering at Puʻukoholā) 2018
by Dee-Ann Carpenter, MD

The ‘Ahahui o nā Kauka (AONK) and NHCOE partnership brings JABSOM medical students on a huaka’i (journey) to moku o keawe (Hawai’i island) each August for a cultural immersion at Hoʻokuikahi i Puʻukoholā (gathering at Puʻukoholā).

For the past 37 years, the birthday of King Kamehameha I has been celebrated with a commemoration of ancient practices at Puʻukoholā Heiau (sacred ceremonial site at Puʻukoholā) by organizations including Na Aikane o Puʻukoholā Heiau, Na Papa Kanaka o Puʻukoholā Heiau, Hawaiʻi Natural History Association, Hawaiʻi National Parks Service and friends of the park. Located in Kawaihae in northwest Hawaiʻi, the stone heiau is one of the last major sacred structures built in Hawaiʻi before outside influences altered ancient Hawaiian life permanently. Constructed in 1790-1791 under the rule of Kamehameha I, Puʻukoholā heiau is a “sacred temple honoring the unification of the Hawaiian islands and its people” by 1810.

AONK had participated in the ceremonies since 2004 when the celebration included a sham-battle between Na Koa (warriors) from different islands. Anticipating potential injuries, John Keola Lake, Kumu (master/teacher) and Kahuna Nui (High Priest) of Puʻukoholā heiau, asked AONK to provide first aid. Since then, AONK and Papa Ola Lokahi (POL)(Native Hawaiian Health Care System) have gifted the annual event with their kuleana (responsibility) as medical practitioners and health promoters. The JABSOM partnership arose as AONK physicians, who are also NHCOE faculty, invited JABSOM kauka haumana (medical students), medical residents, undergraduate and graduate students to the cultural and educational experience.

Participating in ancient Hawaiian protocol promotes personal growth and cultural understanding. Haumana are required to learn an oli (chant) and wear traditional malo/kikepa (loin cloth) and kihei (cloak) before entering a heiau or participating in ceremonies, and giving ho’okupu (offerings). Only kane (men) are allowed into Puʻukoholā heiau, whereas the wahine (women) go to the smaller Maile Kini heiau to haule lani (honor the ancestors). A special ‘awa ceremony is given for first-time attendees and a closing ‘awa ceremony is offered for special guests. A strict adherence to protocol rules and traditional dress is expected of all attendees.

As in the days of old, the Kahuna (spiritual leaders) are positioned atop the heiau. Ali‘i (Hawaiian royalty) and Royal Order of Kamehameha are on the incline leading up to the heiau, and groups giving hoʻokupu (offerings) to kahuna to place on the lele (altar for presentation), are located on the lower ground fronting Puʻukoholā. Na Koa surround the ceremonies. Na Wa’a Lalani (kahuna from Kumu Lake and Kumu Kapono’aii’s halau (hula and oli troup)), run all of the protocol, ceremonies and ho’okupu (offerings) at Hoʻokuikahi i Puʻukoholā.

More recently, AONK has partnered with Hawaiʻi Island Family Medicine Residency residents and faculty, Chaminade University Nursing students/faculty and UH Hilo Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy students/faculty to provide first aid and health screening throughout the weekend. This past year, NHCOE supported the attendance of several JABSOM medical students pursuing the Dean’s Certificate of Distinction in Native Hawaiian Health, including Kaleimomi Gomes, Kaeli Hosaka, Pi’imauna Kackley, Jerrick Laimana, Kathryn Roberts, and Kadee-Kalia Tamashiro. The students and faculty provide health screening for over 150 people and have tended to dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and, on occasion, major injuries sometimes requiring transfer to the emergency department.

Kehau Kong, MD (JABSOM class of 2010 and founder of Ka Lama Kukui JABSOM’s indigenous student interest group) first visited Puʻukoholā as a medical student in 2007. Dr. Kong is an AONK board member and works in Kamuela on Hawaiʻi Island. She is now the kauka po’o (physician leader) for the hui ola (health group) at Hoʻokuikahi i Puʻukoholā and extends her deepest mahalo (thanks) to the many haumana, kauka (doctors), and JABSOM faculty and ‘ohana (family) for their unwavering help over the years, especially Geri Kaleiponi, Lani Ladoa, and Mona Cardejon. Volunteering has helped kauka and future kauka to learn valuable lessons in Hawaiian Cultural protocol, Hawaiian ‘ike (knowledge), camaraderie, inter-professionalism and community participation. Hoʻokuikahi i Puʻukoholā expands the educational setting to include culture-based, experiential learning in this unique outdoor classroom, and exemplifies Ma ka hana ka ‘ike (from the doing comes the learning).
A Nānākuli Student’s Pathway to Health in Nursing
by Marriah Tapia

I was first introduced to the Nānākuli Pathway to Health (NPH) program when I was a sophomore at Nānākuli High and Intermediate School (NHIS). At that time, I had the mindset that I would never be good enough to be accepted into a health-related degree-seeking program or university. So I never thought of going into that career. I only joined the health pathway at school to be with my friends.

During health class at NHIS, the first-year medical students from the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) sparked my interest in learning about adolescent and community health. My interest grew and I loved getting to meet the soon-to-be doctors but I still couldn’t see myself in a health career. When my Advanced Practice Biology teacher spoke about the NPH summer program it sounded so awesome that I considered it but the thought of giving up a week of my summer vacation to wake up at 5:00 am to do science stuff all day really dissuaded me. My teacher was insistent so I took a large leap of faith and signed up for JABSOM’s Summer Initiative: Medical Diagnosis and Treatment (MDTx). I was very nervous and could barely sleep the night before our first day. I stayed up thinking other students would be more prepared than me or that they had been considering a health career for most of their lives. I still had no idea why I was preparing for college.

At MDTx, I gained more knowledge and long-lasting friendships than I ever imagined possible. The minute I stepped foot in JABSOM I was in awe. I felt safe being around so many intelligent and welcoming individuals. I had always be very shy and introverted and I was very apprehensive about being split up from my Nānākuli friends but, at JABSOM, I made new friends fairly quickly. This was a first for me. I met people with all sorts of health interests. I had no idea that there were so many different health careers to choose from. I was simultaneously intimidated and intrigued with the idea of being in a cadaver lab used by medical students and learning how to interview a patient. At the end of the week, a voice remained in my head that said there really is a place in health care for me. It was a voice I could not ignore.

The week at JABSOM also allowed me to experience the care and support of Ms. Sachi Kaulukukui, a JAB-SOM faculty member who kept all the Nānākuli health class students very well cared for throughout the school year. From the moment I met her, she was a kind and caring soul who recognized the struggles associated with being from the Waiʻanae Coast. Recognizing health disparities among Native Hawaiians in cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, smoking and substance abuse, her goal was to bring awareness to students so that we could be part of the change. Later, I joined the Anatomia Club that met bi-weekly on Saturdays with Sachi’s medical students learning about anatomy, physiology, and basic medical skills. It has been several years since completing NPH and graduating from high school and Sachi has continued to keep in contact and support me in my college journey.

My search for a career in health care started with NPH and the JABSOM students but I knew that I was going to have to put up a good fight to prove the stigma that comes with being from Nānākuli wrong. Someday I hope to return to NHIS to show the students who were like me, and don’t believe they have a shot at getting where they want to be, that anything is possible. I am very proud to be a student in the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo’s Nursing Program and will graduate in the Spring of 2020 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. I believe that if not for the NPH program I would not have been able to discover my own potential and be the student I am today.

For more information on the MDTx JABSOM Summer Session, July 8-12, 2019 go to https://www.outreach.hawaii.edu/summer/features/FEA-JABSOM.asp

About the Author:

“Marriah Tapia is one our shining stars from Nānākuli Pathways to Health (NPH). A native of Makaha, Marriah graduated from Nānākuli High School in 2015 and will soon be one of the first graduates of the UH Hilo’s Satellite Nursing Program out of UH West O‘ahu. She personifies Nānākuli High’s motto, Kūlia I Ka Nu‘u...Striving for the Highest.”

- Sachi Kaulukukui M.S.

Photo from: Sachi Kaulukukui
Medical Students Promote Indigenous Health
by Maggie Mei Ling Kwock and Dillon Kapena Tacdol

The Ka Lama Kukui Indigenous Health Interest Group (KLK) at JABSOM was founded in 2007 by then medical students Kehau Kong and Marcus Iwane. The name “Ka Lama Kukui” translates into “light of the kukui and is a symbol of enlightenment,” and illustrates our goal of passing on the knowledge shared with us to others. In the fall semester, KLK kicked off the year with our traditional Hawai‘i Night event. We were fortunate to have Dr. Naleen Andrade as our guest speaker. Choosing a talk story format, she encouraged and challenged students to learn more about their cultural roots and to discover career passions which can improve Native Hawaiian health as well as the overall health of the people of Hawai‘i. Our talented first and second year students also put on beautiful hula performances for the evening program, using dance as a language to showcase our appreciation for the opportunity to celebrate the culture and people of our beautiful island home.

In December we delivered our annual caroling and bingo event to the residents at Lunalilo Home. Lunalilo Home is located in Hawai‘i Kai and is dedicated to providing a comfortable, secure, and supportive environment for kupuna (elders) of Hawaiian and Non-Hawaiian ancestry. 22 medical student and JABSOM faculty brought the Christmas spirit to kupuna as we sang songs about sleigh rides in the snow, jingle bells, and the most famous reindeer of all. We filled the halls of Lunalilo Home with cheer then proceeded to play an intense round of Bingo where we had five blackout winners at one time! We had fun singing and playing with kupuna and were able to listen to their stories to learn more about them.

Maggie Kwock is the co-chair for KLK and says, “Joining KLK stems from my desire to learn more about the culture and the people of my home in Hawai‘i. I truly believe that cultural mindfulness encourages me to see healthcare through a different lens. By acknowledging patient’s culture and tradition, my patients and I can thoughtfully consider how to incorporate various healing methods in a treatment plan while respecting traditional healing practices. As a part of a leadership team, I am involved in event planning, and I have a say in the direction the interest group is moving towards. It is quite rewarding to witness the growth and maturation of an event from planning and preparation stages to event-day to post-event evaluations. Seeing the participants’ smile is the best part and brings joy to the event planning process. I also love how KLK events increase medical students’ awareness of Native Hawaiian and other indigenous cultures.

Dillon Tacdol felt he did not know much about his Hawaiian culture and joining KLK offered him opportunities to learn and participate in Native Hawaiian activities while learning to balance life in medicine. He states, “Being a leader in KLK has been great. Our board members work well with each other and we function as a family. It is an honor to be in this position and know that my mentor Dr. Kehau Kong was actually the founder of KLK.”

KLK membership is opened to all those who sustain an interest in learning more about Native Hawaiian culture. Email klkatuhm@hawaii.edu to express your interest in becoming a part of our KLK ‘Ohana!

For Our Native Hawaiian Students

1) NHCOE supports NH JABSOM students preparing for USMLE Steps 1 and 2. Stipends for Native Hawaiian JABSOM students are disbursed through reimbursement and are due by April 30th. A community service component of 5-10 hours is required in Native Hawaiian initiatives. Please contact Sachi Kaulukukui at sachi@hawaii.edu for more info.

2) SAVE THE DATE: Friday, May 10th (9:30 - 11:30 am) Kihei Ceremony Honoring the 2019 Native Hawaiian Students

Photo by: Mai Smith
Ka Lama Kukui Indigenous Hawaiian Night