

Native Hawai'ian Health and Wellness Summit: *Ka 'Uthane Lokahi*

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Introduction

On March 7 and 8, 1998 the first Native Hawai'ian Health and Wellness Summit was held at the Kapi'olani Community College Campus on the slopes of the famous landmark Diamond Head in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Over 600 participants from across the Hawai'ian Islands came to identify models of success, critical issues and action plans.

The Summit built on a series of *'aha* (meetings) held earlier in the year on each of the eight islands of Hawai'i. Participants at these meetings identified the most pressing health challenges to individuals, *'ohana* (families), and communities. Even on the uninhabited island of Kaho'olawe, the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, stewards of the island, held two *'aha* and identified critical causes of chronic diseases and solutions for these conditions. While each of the islands' *'aha* identified issues prevalent in their respective community, issues common to all islands were identified. There was consensus that solutions to improve health and wellness must be imbedded with: 1) cultural revitalization, 2) spirituality, 3) education, and 4) *'ohana* (family). The common issues identified served as themes for the Summit and included: improvement of chronic disease conditions; caring for and cultivating *'aina* and *kai* (land and sea); accessibility and availability of health care, and human revitalization.

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The Summit was composed of focused discussion sessions. Sessions were also designed for special groups including *'opio* (youth), Native Hawai'ian physicians, and Native Hawai'ian veterans. Supplementing vigorous work sessions were informal cultural seminars on traditional crafts, oral literature, culinary practices, and physical fitness.

Models of success

Summit presentations and discussions focused on developing recommendations and actions plans to insure health and wellness for the next generation. Models of success were identified in historical keynote speeches and discussion sessions. A highlight of the Summit was a panel discussion, "Kaho'olawe, Hokule'a and Health" featuring 1) Noa Emmett Aluli, M.D., a Hawai'ian rights activist who serves as the Co-Medical Executive Director of Moloka'i General Hospital, and Chair of the Kaho'olawe Reserve Commission; and 2) Nainoa Thompson, navigator of the Polynesian voyaging canoe, *Hokule'a*, and leader of the Polynesian Voyaging Society. The panel presentation commenced with an introduction by United States Senator Daniel K. Inouye and was

moderated by Maui County Council member Sol Kaho'ohalahala.

Senator Inouye ... "relationships to one another, the land, to the water and to the air, to the environment and all of the living things in our environment — each of those relationships play a role in whether we are healthy."

Senator Inouye emphasized that, especially among indigenous cultures, "one's physical health is only one aspect of a whole system that includes one's spiritual, emotional, and mental well being." He went on to elaborate

that "relationships to one another, the land, to the water and to the air, to the environment and all of the living things in our environment — each of those relationships play a role in whether we are healthy." Senator Inouye acknowledged the important role that the Kaho'olawe effort and the Hokule'a has had and continues to have in helping young Hawai'ians develop a strong sense of self which is critical in determining their health and well-being as adults. He also conveyed that revitalization of indigenous health will be achieved only when homelands and the natural environment are restored.

Critical elements

Three critical tenets were identified at the Summit as essential to rebuilding health and wellness among the Native Hawaiʻian population.

1. Wellness must begin with one self. Assuming individual responsibility and initiative is central. This includes education and implementing behavioral and attitudinal changes.

2. Political influence is pivotal. In order to establish systemic solutions, governmental and institutional changes must be included. Hawaiʻians must become integral to the decision-making process. This includes the allied issues of water and land rights, health insurance, and economic development.

3. ʻAina, wai and kai (land, water, and ocean) are key to the well-being of Hawaiʻians. Stewardship and use rights and responsibilities for land and water resources must be re-established to perpetuate the cultural foundation of health and wellness activities.

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instructive education in health, and allied issues. Development of education programs must be predicated on the Hawaiʻian epistemology. Including:

- a) Hawaiʻian values
 - b) experiential based learning
 - c) inclusion of ʻohana (family)
8. Support initiatives that facilitate role definition of Hawaiʻians in contemporary society and the development of positive role models with a strong cultural foundation.
 9. Develop *puʻuhonua* (places of sanctuary and refuge) that are resources and *punana* (nests) for the culture. Utilize Kahoʻolawe and the efforts of the Protect Kahoʻolawe

ʻOhana and the Kahoʻolawe Reserve Commission as model of a contemporary *puʻuhonua*.

Action Plans

1. Require private and public health and wellness services to be physically, culturally, financially, and emotionally accessible and acceptable. Mandate accountability to participants.
2. Require health insurance plans to review and incorporate cultural competency into their services and plans.
3. Fund initiatives that facilitate collaborative relationships between traditional Hawaiʻian healing practitioners and western-trained health providers.
4. Develop referral mechanisms to facilitate access to traditional Hawaiʻian healing practitioners.
5. Resolve legal standards of practice and issues regarding the utilization of traditional Hawaiʻian healing practices.

Summit recommendations are currently being compiled in more detail to reflect the collective knowledge and creativity of the participants.

Summit recommendations

1. Support community-based activities and projects. Which include:
 - a) community and family business enterprises
 - b) community planning activities
 - c) community management of environmental resources
2. Facilitate and perpetuate Hawaiʻian cultural identity. This encompasses a spectrum of areas including: arts, agriculture, business, Polynesian ocean voyaging, spirituality and the sciences.
3. Ensure Hawaiʻian cultural values are incorporated into new and existing programs.
4. Initiate and perpetuate efforts to strengthen the ʻohana (family). ʻOhana refers to the family-at-large, which may include the family, the extended family and others who are regarded with affection. Activities and programs should facilitate:
 - a) inter-generational bonds and relationships,
 - b) a sense of unity and sharing of love, responsibility, and material goods,
 - c) cooperation, inter-dependence, and reciprocity.
5. Increase programs that incorporate a holistic approach to health and wellness. Programs will include development of health of the spirit, mind and body.
6. Acknowledge and develop the importance of spirituality in health and health-related programs and activities.
7. Establish educational components in all programs to facilitate capacity building of participants, staff and administrators. Components should focus on historical and

References

Available from the authors on request. □