

## KAHO‘OLAWE HEALING

Though Kaho‘olawe has no permanent human population, its people—Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana members, Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commissioners and staff, clean-up workers and others with special connections—want to ensure the island is included in the statewide process of identifying health issues and themes, and successful healthy models. Healing was the theme that emerged most often. The healing of Kaho‘olawe is often used as a metaphor for healing oneself.

Forty-eight Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana members participated in the initial Kaho‘olawe ‘Aha held Saturday, January 17, 1998 in Hakioawa during the final kükäkükä session of the Closing Makahiki access. On Sunday, February 15, 1998 twenty Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana members continued discussion at Lae‘ula Canoe Club, Kanahä Beach Park on Maui. More input was gathered from commissioners, staff, and other participants on Thursday, February 19, 1998 at the Kaho‘olawe Island Reserve Commission meeting in Honolulu. Emmett Aluli, MD lay the foundation for all three discussions.

### Central health themes

Patterns emerged as each shared his or her mana‘o. Culture and spirituality were prioritized in the reports of all islands, but appeared to be the most broadly assimilated into Kaho‘olawe’s practices and issues. There are several issues common to all islands; but unique to Kaho‘olawe is the concept of wahi pana as essential to good health.

1. **Healing.** Kaho‘olawe represents healing; island and self. Emphasized by most, the physical healing of Kaho‘olawe is closely associated with individual physical and spiritual healing. Healing cannot occur unless there is a giving of time, energy and self. The island is healed and the individual benefits, too. Ho‘oponopono is practiced on island.
2. **Lökahi.** As at other island ‘aha, the interrelationship among the physical, mental and spiritual sides of a person need to be in balance to be truly healthy.
3. **‘Ohana.** Family togetherness, intergenerational support and caring were emphasized.
4. **‘Äina and kai.** Nature is our religion. Central to our health individually, as an ‘ohana, and as a people is our relationship to our gods, from whom we descend, and how we care for their kinolau to take care of our families. The health of the ‘äina and kai is the health of our people. We need to keep our environment and natural resources healthy in order to be healthy as Hawaiians. We need to promote stewardship of our natural resources to have healthy diets and sustain the health of our people.
5. **Wahi pana.** Kaho‘olawe is a wellspring to renew ourselves—physically, mentally, culturally and spiritually. Kaho‘olawe is important as a pu‘uhonua from the distractions of the material world; to connect with ‘äina, ‘aumakua and akua; and for reflection. As a wahi pana, it is a place where culture can be practiced without inhibition. There are no such places on our home islands.
6. **Simple living.** A quality life doesn’t depend on material goods. Exercise (such as hiking, swimming and nurturing the land), personal interaction (no TV, radio or walkman) and hi‘uwai (for physical, mental and spiritual cleansing) keeps us healthy.
7. **Eating.** What we eat (for nutrition and the kaona of specific foods), how we eat (traditional eating protocols, such as “poi bowl attitude”) and why we eat (to honor the gods) are all elements that determine us as Hawaiians. Eating Hawaiian will keep us healthy.

### Kaho‘olawe’s successful models

The first two models describe the types of accesses which are facilitated by the ‘Ohana. The second two correspond to the type of projects taking place on island which involve people from the ‘Ohana, KIRC, the U.S. Navy and other workers. Last, but certainly not least, the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana itself is seen as a model grassroots organization; but its members will be the

first to tell anyone who tries to replicate it that it is a living, breathing, ever-changing entity—one that isn't ready to be preserved in time.

1. **Education** (9-10 accesses a year). The Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana takes student groups, halau, environmental organizations and other groups and individuals to Kaho'olawe. Practicing Hawaiian values, as opposed to reading about them, is the primary component which makes these accesses successful:
  - rites of passage—the physical accomplishment of getting to the island and surviving without electricity, running water or other modern conveniences; breaking mental barriers
  - 'ohana/kauhale-style living—no private campsites; everyone eats together; gathering is for the whole community
  - kōkua and laulima—everybody helps as appropriate to age and ability
  - alcohol-free, drug-free environment
  - history—house site remains, petroglyphs and other remnants give us insight into the lives of po'e kahiko
  - cultural practice—heiau and other sacred shrines are ever-present and honored; on-island protocol includes oli, pule and kükäkükä
  - resource management—understanding and obeying fishing kapu, reducing waste, composting and recycling
  
2. **Wahi pana** (Makahiki accesses 2 times per year). Kaho'olawe is a wahi pana for those who go, but not everybody can. It is a model for special places on other islands where kanaka maoli have a place to practice, to cleanse, to reflect and connect with the land and water, and to heal all of which enhance and provide balance among the physical, mental and spiritual areas of our lives. Are there other such areas on our home islands?  
The successful components include:
  - focus—as Makahiki accesses are not educational, this gives the core members, or kua, the opportunity to focus on the Makahiki celebration and renew their commitment to Kaho'olawe, rather than being teachers
  - hi'uwai—cleansing of mind, body and soul
  - self-reflection and renewal—kua have the opportunity for meditating, prioritizing, and renewing oneself and one's commitments to family, work, school, Kaho'olawe, etc. without distraction
  - rites of passage—completing the hike across the island, spending the night at Keanakeiki and overcoming the unpredictable winter waves can inspire us to overcome the challenges in our everyday lives
  
3. **Stewardship training** on Kaho'olawe can provide a model for stewardship training on our home islands. Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana kua understand the responsibility it has for the island, and for passing the values on to others, especially 'öpio. Stewardship practices on island can be practiced at home, as can the resource management described in #1. Healthy environments derive healthy people.
  
4. **The Kaho'olawe Clean-up** is a model for the clean-up of toxic wastes on indigenous lands. Components include interagency collaboration, innovative technology, hiring indigenous people and incorporating cultural protocol into the process. It should be noted that this is really a first-time effort and will take years before final success can be measured.

5. **The Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana** is a living model for grassroots organization bringing together people from all islands as an ‘ohana with a common cause, or shared goal. It was organized intergenerationally, and had unprecedented support from kupuna, therefore had a built-in spiritual base. Everyone has a place on island. The ‘Ohana has always been on the cutting edge, sometimes even crossing the line. The ‘Ohana—with a reputation of 20+ years of leadership—has always been made up of leaders from Hawaiian communities, and it continues to mentor and produce new generations of leaders.

### **Issues of concern**

- Investigate why the Queen’s Medical Center and Kapi‘olani Women’s & Children’s Medical Center no longer provide free health care to Hawaiians in need. Reaffirm the original intent of Queen Emma and Queen Kapi‘olani to provide health care for Hawaiians in need, and if necessary, protest the abandonment of the original missions of these ali‘i trusts.
- Hawaiian service agencies and ali‘i trusts should collaborate to address the important issue of financing health insurance for uninsured Hawaiians.
- Improved access and availability to preventive health care is essential for Hawaiians.
- Consider establishing a Hawaiian sperm bank to preserve the gene pool.
- Hawaiians need to be healthy; no leader wants to take sick kanaka into a future sovereign nation.

Reports from each of the three mana‘o sessions and a copy of the final report can be obtained by contacting Davianna McGregor or Kim Birnie.

*March 1998*