HO`OKUA`AINA empowers youth to realize the meaning and purpose of their lives by helping them develop life strategies and skills through the cultivation of kalo and Hawaiian cultural value-based coaching.
Oli Komo o Kapalai

Ua kāhea mai ka ‘uhane o ke Akua
E kū a’e mai a e ‘īmi i ’āina
*The spirit of the Lord called out
Rise up and find new land*

Ho’okele loa, hoe hoe mākou
I maliu mai a e lohe pono
*The voyage has been long, we have paddled and worked hard
To heed the call and obey*

Ma ka Malanai hō’ea mākou
I kēia ’āina moe, i ‘ini e ola
*On the breeze of the Malanai we arrived
This land asleep, dormant, yet desiring life*

Ho’oulu, ke ulu nei
I ka hana o kō kākou kūpuna
*Now things are taking root, things are growing, an abundance is being created
As we do the work of our ancestors*

Eia no mākou, nā kua‘āina e
‘Oli ‘ōli nō ho‘i mai Kawa‘a e
*We stand here before you, simple people, kua‘āina
Rejoicing indeed from the wisdom and guidance of The Canoe*

E komo mai, komo mai i loko
I ka nohona hoʻāno ‘o ke Akua e
*Come we welcome you and invite you
Into this sacred dwelling place of ke Akua*

‘O Kapunawaiolaokalai ka inoa ‘o kēia wahi
*The name of this place is The Living Spring of Kapalai*
HO`OKUA`ĀINA
“Rebuilding lives from the ground up.”

To our valued readers and supporters,
This portfolio was designed to reflect upon what we do and why we do it. It is a collection of beautiful photos and quotes that capture the essence and spirit of Ho`okua`aina.

Ho`okua`aina is a veritable cultural oasis nestled in the `ili of Kapalai in the ahupua`a of Kailua. It is a manifestation of the vision created by Dean and Michele Wilhelm to create a gathering place for people in the community to connect with and care for the `aina, perpetuate the Hawaiian culture through the cultivation and preparation of traditional foods, and be a place that would ultimately bring healing to people, especially at-risk youth. Since 2007, the Wilhelms along with their hui of community collaborators and thousands of volunteers have worked to restore 15 kalo patches back to abundance.

Presently Ho`okua`aina offers a variety of programs to a wide range of groups including youth, families, classrooms, businesses, organizations, and clubs. But the heart behind our mission is the Kukuluhou mentoring program. The overall goal of Kukuluhou is to promote the personal growth and development of youth on O’ahu by strengthening their cultural identity, pono decision-making, and the ability to contribute to one’s self, one’s family, and one’s community.

Program activities are centered on the traditional Hawaiian practice of cultivating kalo, including (but not limited to): cleaning of lo`i (removing overgrowth and building new patches), preparing lo`i for planting (mounding and fertilizing), planting, maintenance (weeding and caring for planted kalo), harvesting, and processing kalo into poi. In addition, program activities incorporate personal reflection time, one-on-one mentoring and interaction with kupuna, trained staff, peers and core “healthy” families from the community.

Each participant experiences all these activities over the course of their commitment on a weekly basis. While the production of kalo is integral to how Kukuluhou lessons are implemented, it is secondary to the goal of the program, which is to enhance the “life-effectiveness” skills of participants. Program activities are implemented in phases within which cultural values and skills, vocational competencies, and essential life skills are embedded. This portfolio reflects participants’ personal growth in five different areas: social competency, self-esteem, self-worth, cultural understanding, identity and belonging.

Please step inside for a glimpse of our programs in 2015-2016.

RESPECT
“WHEN YOU GIVE RESPECT YOU GET RESPECT.”
Israel Kukuluhou Participant
LEARN PATIENCE
“By working at the lo‘i I will learn to grow patience.”
Kaden, Kākulu,hi, Participant
MANA`O O KA LĀ

WEEKLY HAWAIIAN PROVERBS AND VALUES WERE USED AS LESSONS FOR PARTICIPANTS. HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF SIX CORE LESSONS THAT WERE GIVEN THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

NANI KE KALO
HELE NO KA`ALA, HELE NO KA LIMA
ALOHA KEKAHI I KEKAHI
MA KA HANA KA ʻIKE LAULIMA
HE WA`A HE MOKU, HE MOKU HE WA`A
Nani ke Kalo

Beautiful the Taro

Nani ke kalo (beautiful the taro) sets the tone for everything that takes place at Kapalai. As the main staple of the Hawaiian people, kalo was considered sacred. Hence, when working with or preparing kalo to be eaten, great respect must be given and demonstrated. Because everyone’s life has purpose and meaning, loving, caring for and respecting oneself is essential to being able to respect anything else. Students are challenged to contemplate their own thoughts about themselves and shift their perspective, if needed, to consider the great value of their life. All participants are to use the expression “nani ke kalo” as a reminder that they are sacred and must carry themselves accordingly. In addition, this expression is to be used to encourage others who may not be thinking, speaking or acting in such a way.

From a Hawaiian cultural perspective, only by having a sound relationship with God, our fellow man and the land and sea can one attain a sense of unity, harmony and balance in life.

“I feel calm when I’m over here. I feel calm, good.”

Duwayne, Kualalhou Participant
Kalo
kaˈloʊ | ˈkɑ(ˌ)ləʊ
Taro, Colocasia Esculenta

Kalo is the Hawaiian name given to the cultivated plant, taro. Kalo specifically refers to the name of the first taro growing from the planted stalk. Taro is considered by some to be the world’s oldest cultivated crop and is grown throughout the tropics for its edible starchy corms.
Kalo has always been a most important food crop for the Hawaiian people and has a special place within the culture of Hawaii. Most Hawaiian grown taro is allocated to four major uses: Poi, table taro, taro chips, and luau leaf. Taro for poi is cultivated by both the dryland and wetland methods. Varieties commonly used are the Lehua Maoli, “Maui” Lehua, and Moi, which holds true at Kapalai but over two dozen different varieties of Hawaiian kalo can be found growing at Kapalai as well.

Kalo or taro is an ancient plant that has been cultivated by many different people groups all around the world for thousands of years. Arguably, Hawaiians took the cultivation of kalo to the highest level where it became their main staple. Through the Hawaiian creation story of Hāloa, who is the first kalo plant and older sibling to the first man, kalo is elevated to a place of sacredness having the respect and esteem of Hawaiians far beyond that of any other plant. One could say kalo is one of the primary foundations of Hawaiian culture.

Kalo is being farmed because it has a history of cultivation here at Kapalai and because the microclimate of this specific place allows for it.

Hāloa is symbolized by the kalo plant, and represents the original ancestor of the Hawaiian people.

Hoʻokuaʻaina is fortunate to have been given stewardship of this land, and uses the growing of kalo as a means to growing young people. An earlier participant in one of Hoʻokuaʻaina’s programs once commented, “You think we are growing the kalo, but it is really the kalo growing us.” Indeed numerous life lessons rich in values covering a variety of subject areas are learned here, all through the cultivation of an extraordinary plant called, kalo.

“Do what needs to be done, when it needs to be done. Be prepared and in the mind set ready to work.”

Israel, Kūkuluhou Participant
Aloha Kekahi I Kekahi

*Love one to another*

Aloha kekahi i kekahi (love and respect one to another) is the standard and expectation set at Kapalai of how all are to treat one another. This expectation operates by not demanding love and respect from others, but rather by first giving it to others being confident that it will be returned. Because unfortunately so many people in the world have been under-loved and disrespected, being purposeful in exercising the value of aloha kekahi i kekahi while at Kapalai is at the forefront of what is practiced. The peaceful and serene environment of Kapalai enables students to feel safe where they need not posture and be afraid to aloha kekahi i kekahi.

*You’ll be respected only when you first give RESPECT*

*So far the lo`i has been a really great experience. The people are more different. They treat you with more aloha. We learn more, more hands on experience.*

Jordan, Kūkuluhou Participant

The emphasis is to not first demand respect, but rather to give it.
"I created a definition of mālama ʻāina that is not to just care for the land. I now know what it means to live mālama ʻāina."

Alieni Wong, Volunteer

"The work that I did felt like such a tiny drop in a bucket, but it felt great to work in a team and feel like there is so much meaning even when you just are able to chip away a little piece of the work."

Christy Tao, Volunteer
Ma Ka Hana Ka ‘Ike

Through doing and working one learns

Ma ka hana ka ‘ike (through doing one learns) is the Hawaiian proverb for the current day educational term “experiential learning”. This mode of teaching is emphasized at Kapalai. In order for students to begin to see the Hawaiian cultural significance of kalo and gain an understanding of what it takes to cultivate it, they must get into the lo‘i (kalo patch) and work. While books can be read about kalo and video documentaries can be viewed, there really is no substitute for learning than the growing and cultivation of kalo first hand by students. Through the participation of students in this work, innumerable lessons are taught and learned.

“I felt very accomplished looking back at the clear lo‘i patch. It felt so good to be able to make such a big change in a short amount of time. I realized that, as a group, we were able to accomplish so much more than we would have individually. I know that if I were to clear that lo‘i all by myself, I would’ve given up so easily. Having support of friends around me helped me persevere.”

Mehana Piena, Volunteer
Laulima

Many hands working together can accomplish much

Laulima (many hands working together can accomplish much) is a concept that is core to the Hawaiian psyche and way of doing life. Laulima reflects the communal nature and value mindset of Hawaiians. By taking part in tasks that would overwhelm one person such as clearing and opening up a new kalo patch, students experience and take pride in results that can only be accomplished collectively as a group. They are able to make the connection with how their individual efforts combined together with that of others can lead to a community accomplishment where all gain a sense of ownership and responsibility. Through the exercise of laulima students grow in understanding the importance of being a community minded individual.

"I’ve learned to respect myself. I learned laulima."

Duwine, Kūkuluhou Participant

"I learned that it’s not that easy in the loi and I learned that TEAMWORK makes things faster if you have more hands in. I used to just do it myself to get it over with. If you get more work done in a handful amount of time you can do more fun things after."

Koa, Kūkuluhou Participant

"We built this new patch and had fun and got it done really fast. We pulled the taro out with everyone’s help."

Koa, Kūkuluhou Participant
`OHANA DAYS

After 9 years of restoration, Hoʻokuaʻaina is now a place of abundance. Located in the ʻili of Kapalai, it is a kipuka, or oasis, nestled at the base of the Koʻolau mountain range in the heart of the Windward side of ʻOahu. As a community gathering place, Hoʻokuaʻaina hosted 59 community/ʻohana days with over 2084 visitors in 2015 including families, neighbors, businesses, clubs, and teams for a variety of activities.

“Working together as a grade level with all the children was very powerful. I saw kids that told me ahead of time they were scared of getting dirty and may not go in the water, but by the end, they were shoulder deep in the water, pulling weeds and having a blast!”

Erin Bishop, Teacher

`ÄINA-BASED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Hoʻokuaʻaina provides an ideal outdoor classroom for various K-12 classrooms from all over the island of ʻOahu. Hawaiian values and `āina-based lessons are woven into the hands-on learning to give students a wealth of knowledge covering a variety of subjects. Most importantly they connect with a place that is real and relevant to the island in which they live making the subject matter come to life.
“We are so grateful for the opportunity to spend time with your family, as well as the many others in Maunawili. The sentiment shared amongst the neighbors that I talked with was a deep appreciation for your ongoing effort to restore a connection with the land, as well as to bring the community together in a shared vision across generations.

It is these connections with the people and culture of Hawaii that are so valuable to us, and we are grateful for access to this kind of community and cultural interaction in our own neighborhood. We are especially excited about the opportunities this brings to our everyday lives, particularly in teaching these values to our children. We look forward to helping and supporting Hookuaaina moving forward.”

Lisa Keilley, Maunawili Resident

POI PRODUCTION

Kūkuluhou Project participants and Interns are instrumental in cultivation, production and processing of the kalo into poi. Poi production began in May of 2015 and provided an additional opportunity for skills training in a structured environment where they learn positive habits that contribute to their future education and employment. Bi-weekly, the interns helped in the processing and distribution of poi into the community. All proceeds from the sale of kalo, poi, and other kalo value added products are reinvested into the organization.

“As a neighbor in Maunawili valley, I’ve known about the long history of Kalo farming in this pristine valley. After tasting your amazing poi, I’m hooked. This is the best poi our ohana have ever had (and we’ve eaten all the major varieties). You must put some special mana in your poi. Thanks for bringing the Kalo back to this aina and for all you and your entire family do in our community.”

David K. Laeha, Maunawili Resident

INTERNSHIPS

Participants that work up through the Kūkuluhou program phases have an opportunity to return to the farm as an intern and earn a wage. In 2015, Ho’okua’aaina hired 5 regular interns during the school year and 10 seasonal interns during the summer. They work several days a week in the lo’i cultivating kalo and learning a traditional Hawaiian practice that dates back centuries. Important job skills are learned to prepare young men and women for related positions in agriculture or natural resource management. Interns work closely with peer mentors and a life coach to gain additional life-skills including leadership, social entrepreneurship, protocol, hospitality, food safety and food production.

“I feel I have grown as a person and in my work ethic...I am self-motivated and focused.”

Deon, Kūkuluhou Participant
He Wa’a He Moku, He Moku He Wa’a

*The canoe is an island, the island is a canoe*

He wa’a he moku, he moku he wa’a (*the canoe is an island, the island is a canoe*) is a Hawaiian proverb that highlights the finite resources found on a voyaging canoe as well as on an island. Having students imagine sailing thousands of miles with limited drinking water and essential supplies helps facilitate student contemplation of our island resources and the necessity of being good environmental stewards. Likewise they are prompted to think of ways we need to work together as a community to best steer our canoe in a pono or right direction. They then are challenged to envision their role in their everyday canoes, most specifically their families, and how they are helping to ensure that their voyage together goes well and is successful.

"Kapalai is a place to return, to remember, to perpetuate and to celebrate. This is truly the most important thing—love and celebration. It is a refuge, a place fostering life for those maka luhi (tired eyes) of the land."

Kimani Stone - Volunteer

"The lo‘i has been pretty fun since day one cause I honestly like getting hands on dirty work and I like doing mud wars when we are done."

Koa, Kūkuluhou Participant

"TEAMWORK. We work together to get the job done faster. We broke down this patch together."

Isah L., Kūkuluhou Participant

"I feel like a different person every time we come here. I’m a little more positive."

Dawine, Kūkuluhou Participant
“It makes me feel good cause it cleanses my mind. I like being here because I have big respect for Uncle Dean and the other people who are helping me in this program.”

Landon, Kūkūluhou Participant
ʻĀina Momona
Na Ke Kanaka Mahiai Ka Imu o Nui
The well filled imu belongs to the man who tills the soil

The Hawaiian concept of Aina Momona can be likened to the biblical expression of “land flowing with milk and honey.” Momona can mean rich, abundant, plentiful, sweet and fat. The traditional concept was a land that abounded in and produced much food. If we call Hawaii our home, then we all have the kuleana or responsibility to care for and malama this place. Developing a list and plan of action as to how we malama is essential to being the stewards we are called to be. Aside from growing more food, we are challenged to envision other ways we can make our island home more momona in ways that benefit the collective and not just the individual.

“I felt very accomplished when we cleaned up a whole patch and it made me feel proud knowing that I did what my ancestors did long before us and helped to keep the land clean.”

Tori Keioka-Albert, Volunteer

“Before I came into this program I kept to myself and wasn’t a hard worker. Then I came into here and it brought me back to good places every Wednesday.”

Kana, Kukuluhou Participant
My name is Kapomaikai, I am a descendant of these uplands, these mountains, these forests. I am completely joyous and grateful to the Wilhelm family for revitalizing lo‘i kalo here in Maunawili. It is a place for me to return to the work done by my ancestors. This is the same mud that grew my ancestors’ food. When I go up to Kapalai, I am in the same mud that fed my ancestors. That is so beautiful. There are not a lot of lo‘i right now. This is a refuge that inspires me to farm my own ancestral land. So my gratitude to the Wilhelms is immeasurable. Because creating such a place as this, is hard work and takes courage, but the fruit is so sweet, none else can compare.

Pomai Stone - Volunteer
“Ho`okua`aina” is the name given to us by Kupuna Kawaa. It means an organization dedicated to keeping the traditions and values of our kupuna alive by restoring the `āina to abundance, sharing the traditions with our community and passing on the ancient knowledge to future generations.

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DESIGNED BY: CASSANDRA NICHOLS WWW.CREATEDBYKAUI.COM