

## I HEA NĀ KĀNAKA MAOLI? WHITHER THE HAWAIIANS?

*Kekuni Blaisdell*

Since we all have the same parents, we are all *'ohana* (family). Since Papa and Wākea are living, everything is living, conscious, and communicating. We include the wind, rain, light, shadows, rocks, fire and sounds. We have relearned that all of the natural elements are *la'a* (sacred). *No laila* (therefore), we cannot destroy, degrade, contaminate, pollute, and waste. We must protect, conserve, preserve, restore, and sustain our *la'a* environment for all *hanauna* (generations) to come.

**I** *hea nā Kānaka Maoli?* Whither the Hawaiians? A short answer is we are restoring our *lāhui*, our nation. Our revival today of our ancestral self-identifying name “Kānaka Maoli” is evidence of this rebuilding.

*No laila, e ho’omaika’i* (therefore, congratulations) to our host Shawn Kana’iaupuni for using the term *Kānaka Maoli* in the announcement of this year’s research conference at Kea’au\* and to the Kamehameha Schools trustees for using the term *Kānaka Maoli* in their recent media statements on the schools’ student admission policy.

## WHO ARE KĀNAKA MAOLI?

*Kānaka* means human being. *Maoli* means true, real, genuine. We have relearned that it also means to come from the *‘āina*, the land, and to return to the *‘āina*. *Akā* (yet), *‘āina* is more than *lepo*, the soil, for *‘āina* means “that which feeds.” No *laila*, *‘āina* is Papa, our Earth Mother, including *wai* (all waters), *kai* (all seas), *Ka Moananui* (Oceania), and beyond. *‘Āina* is also *Wākea*, our Sky Father, *ea* (air), *lani* (all heavens, all suns, all moons and all stars), and beyond.

Our oldest and longest *mele* (poetic composition; song), *He Kumulipo*, also tells us that from the mating of these dual primordial forces, Papa and *Wākea*, come everything in our sacred cosmos.

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\* From a talk given at the 2004 Research Conference on Hawaiian Well-Being at the Kamehameha Schools Hawai’i Campus.

We have relearned that Kanaka Maoli is the name by which our ancestors identified themselves. In pre-missionary 1809, English seaman and writer Archibald Campbell, who lived for a month in Kamehameha the Great's compound in Kona, described in his journal, "...two great classes: the Erees, or chiefs, and the Cannakamowree, or people."

Earlier, in 1778, British Captain James Cook, upon his chance arrival in our homeland, observed that his Tahitian interpreter readily conversed with our first-encountered Kanaka ancestors on Kaua'i. Asked Cook in his journal, "How can we account for this nation spread over this vast ocean?"

Kanaka Maoli, we relearn, is *Tangata Māori* in Aotearoa, and *Ta'ata Māohi* in Tahiti and Rapa Nui.

Similarly, we relearn that Ka Moananui does not separate us; it binds us! Moreover, since Ka Moananui covers one-third of our planet's surface, we are not merely "specks on the map," but, as Cook inferred, the largest nation on earth.

No laila, Kanaka Maoli is not only a deep, but a broadening, metaphor.

## ARE WE "INDIGENOUS?"

Since the 1970s, the word indigenous, meaning *arising within*, has gained prominence, sometimes replacing native or aboriginal. However, it is also problematic. For example, in currently pending U.S. congressional legislation, "Native Hawaiians" are considered "indigenous native people of the United States." Thus, intentionally analogous to "Native Americans," "Alaska Natives," and "Indian Tribe" members, and therefore, according to the 1831 U.S. Supreme Court, "wards...[of a] domestic dependent nation...under the plenary power of the U.S. Congress."

In the international community, "indigenous peoples" have begun to call themselves "First Peoples," but are reluctantly acknowledged by their colonizers to be only the dominated and marginalized emerging "Fourth World."

The United Nations (UN) in 1960 declared that “all peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.” These are noble and powerful words. However, to date, the world’s “superpowers” have refused to recognize this basic human right for indigenous peoples; for this reason, since 1994, the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples remains stalled with the UN Human Rights Commission.

Are we Kānaka Maoli *not* a people and nation? If we embrace being “indigenous” do we thereby deny ourselves the right to self-determination under current international law?

While we Kānaka Maoli are proudly indigenous to our homeland, how can we be “indigenous” to another country?

Similarly, the Western term “Hawaiian” has multiple meanings. In 1898–1900, when the United States forced the illegal annexation of our homeland, we Kānaka Maoli were called “Hawaiians” but officially grouped with other peoples in our homeland as “inhabitants,” labeled “citizens of the [illegal] Republic of Hawaii... [and] declared to be citizens of the U.S. and...Territory [colony] of Hawaii,” against our expressed *kū‘ē* (opposition).

In 1921, when Congress passed the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA), the term “native Hawaiian” was invented. With a lower case *n*, it meant “any descendant of not less than one-half part of the blood of the races inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands previous to 1778.”

What happened in 1778? Cook arrived. Consequently, our Western colonizer defined some of us, using the arrival of the first colonizer in our homeland as the standard. In Western law, this has become a criterion for “indigenous.” Note also the use of the term “races” and “blood-quantum.” Blood quantum divides our people into those eligible for Hawaiian Home Lands awards and those who are not. More than divisive, this is discriminatory and racist.

The 1921 HHCA imposed a U.S. federal “trust” relationship without our informed consent as a people. It defines the United States as trustee and “native Hawaiians” as wards.

In 1975 we began to see U.S. congressional legislation use the term “Native Hawaiian” defined as, “any individual whose ancestors were natives, prior to 1778, of the area which now comprises the state of Hawaii.” The terms “indigenous” and “trust relationship to the U.S.” also appeared in such acts that formed the basis for federal and state funding for Kanaka Maoli job training, religious freedom, health, and education programs. Akā, without our informed consent as a people.

## ‘ĒHIA KĀKOU? HOW MANY OF US?

Currently, in Ka Pae‘āina (the Hawaiian Archipelago), our total resident population is 1.2 million people, but only 20% are Kānaka Maoli. What was the population at the time of the U.S. armed invasion of 1893? Approximately 40,000 out of a total of 90,000. What was the population in 1778? About 400,000 according to Cook, but perhaps as high as 1,000,000, according to Stannard.

In 1984, a Hawai‘i household survey showed that only 8,134 island residents self-reported being “Hawaiian only” and no other ethnicity. In 1987, a U.S. congressional population projection study revealed that by the year 2044, there would be virtually no more *piha* (full-blooded) Kānaka Maoli.

Will we then be extinct as a distinct people? Is this genocide? Is genocide not an international crime?

In 2000, we were relieved and astonished to learn in a follow-up state household survey that the number of those who self-reported as “Hawaiian only” had *tripled* to 28,543!

*No ke aha mai* (why)? Our unconfirmed answer is that more of us are no longer ashamed to be Hawaiian, but instead are *ha‘aheo* (proud) to identify as Kanaka Maoli *wale nō*, as Kanaka Maoli *only*. No laila, we are *not* extinct!

## HE AHA KO KĀKOU PILIKIA? WHAT ARE OUR PLIGHT INDICATORS?

Since recorded data were first collected, we Kānaka Maoli have had the highest rates for the leading causes of death (heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and chronic lung disease) and the shortest life expectancy, compared with other peoples in our homeland. We also rank highest for behavioral risk factors such as tobacco and alcohol abuse, obesity, and high blood pressure.

Because U.S. colonial policy was, and still is, coercive assimilation, earlier adverse findings were intentionally suppressed and kept from the public.

The 1983 *Native Hawaiians Study Commission Report* and the 1985 *E Ola Mau Report* were the first modern reports to reveal not only the health, but also the social, economic, and cultural plight of our Kānaka Maoli. These data showed limited Western educational attainment, lower household income, and more family violence and prison incarceration as compared with non-Kānaka Maoli.

## HE AHA NĀ KUMU? WHAT ARE THE UNDERLYING CAUSES?

In the above reports from 1983 to 1985, 5 underlying and interrelated historical, cultural, and social causal factors were postulated with implied remedies:

1. Depopulation, minority status and displacement from our ‘āina
2. Colonialism, with loss and degradation of our lands, waters, and atmosphere
3. Cultural conflict
4. Adoption of self-destructive foreign ways and despair
5. Racism

The diaspora of our people to the continental United States appears to be largely due to the increasing loss of lands and the unaffordability of remaining lands and housing in Hawai‘i, coupled with better economic opportunities on the

continent. The result: Census 2000 revealed that 40% of our Kānaka Maoli are settled on the continental United States, accounting for an expanded total Kanaka population of approximately 401,000.

In spite of this evidence of colonial dependency, we Kānaka Maoli insist that our homeland, Ka Pae'āina, is *our homeland*.

Colonialism is officially defined by the UN as “the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation...a denial of fundamental human rights... and an impediment to...world peace.” U.S. missionary-initiated commodification of our lands via the Mahele (land division of 1848 commonly referred to as “the Great Mahele”) and U.S. seizure of our national lands from 1893 to 1898 deprived us of our essential natural and cultural resources.

Western emphasis on materialism, individualism, capitalism, exploitation, militarism, consumerism, and waste are in conflict with Kanaka spirituality, collective holism, communal subsistence, mutual reciprocity, and the caring for—and sharing of—the bounties of our timeless, sacred, and sustainable cosmos.

Self-destructive foreign habits such as use of illicit drugs, tobacco, and fast foods, as well as cultural trauma, despair, and abuse of self and others call for cultural healing as the essential first step.

Early promising research findings came from the 1987 “Ka Ho'okē 'Ai Moloka'i Diet” of Emmett Aluli, Claire Hughes, and others, and later from Terry Shintani's 1990 Wai'anae Diet, a derivative to the Moloka'i Diet. These pioneers demonstrated that when we Kānaka Maoli return to our pre-Western traditional foods such as *kalo*, *'uala*, *ulu*, *'uhi*, *hō'i'o*, *mai'a*, *niu*, and *i'a* (taro, sweet potato, breadfruit, yam, fern shoots, banana, coconut, and seafood including fish) in an appropriate cultural milieu, in place of the high-fat, fast food American diet, we can control our obesity, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and high blood cholesterol.

During the 8-week study on Moloka'i, we relearned that eating is a special religious ceremony, expressing our special genealogical relationship to major foods. Kalo is the embodiment of our *hiapo* (eldest sibling), and *kinolau* (alternate form of a supernatural being) of the supreme deity Kāne. 'Uala is the kinolau of Lono; ulu and niu, the kinolau of Kū; and mai'a and *he'e* (octopus), the kinolau of Kanaloa.

## KŪ'Ē: THE KANAKA MAOLI MOVEMENT

In the 1960s, post-statehood tourism industry expansion and Vietnam war-related military building on dwindling rural and prohibitively priced urban lands provoked Kānaka Maoli resistance on all of our main islands. We Kānaka Maoli began to learn our history that had been suppressed throughout three generations of colonial school curricula and communications media.

In 1970, young homesteaders, organized as The Hawaiians, protested Hawaiian Homelands abuses. In 1971, Kalama Valley pig farmers, resisting eviction from Bishop Estate land, were joined by college students and community activists and were jailed. In 1972, Aboriginal Lands of Hawaiian Ancestry (ALOHA), founded by taxi driver Louisa Rice, sought reparations from the U.S. Congress. In 1974, 'Ohana O Hawai'i leader Peggy Ha'o Ross declared the Constitutional Hawaiian Kingdom restored. In 1976, Kaho'olawe Island was first occupied by activists in protest against U.S. occupation and military use of the island since 1941. In 1976, the new ocean-voyaging canoe *Hōkūle'a*, under the leadership of Micronesian navigator Mau Piailug, sailed from Maui to Tahiti, demonstrating that Kānaka Maoli could and did indeed navigate Ka Moananui, disproving existing Western theories. In 1977, squatters at Sand Island, Mākua, and Waimānalo were jailed. In 1977, Ho'ala Kanawai was founded by Black Ho'ohuli, Mitsuo Uyehara and others to educate the Kanaka Maoli community on sovereignty. And, in 1978, a State Constitutional Convention created the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) to co-opt the Kanaka Maoli Movement.

In 1983, hearings on the Native Hawaiians Study Commission, particularly the Minority Report—which was compiled with input from community Kānaka Maoli—provided the first official U.S. colonial historical, cultural, and legal documentation for Kanaka Maoli sovereignty. In 1987, Ka Lāhui Hawai'i, a constitution-based native government, led by Mililani Trask as *kia'āina* (governor), appealed for, but was denied, U.S. recognition.

In January 1993, the 'Onipa'a sovereignty gathering brought 15,000 Kānaka Maoli to 'Iolani Palace. In August of that year, the People's International Tribunal called upon the United States and the world to recognize the inherent sovereignty and

right to self-determination of the Kanaka Maoli people and nation; to acknowledge their right to decolonization; and restoration by the United States of all claimed lands and jurisdiction to Kānaka Maoli without delay.

In November 1993, U.S. President William Clinton signed the historic U.S. Congress Apology Resolution (PL 103-150), which acknowledged America's role in the conspiracy, armed invasion, intimidation and deposition of our Queen Lili'uokalani and her government. It also recognized that these acts violated existing treaties and international law and were committed without consent of the people, therefore suppressing their inherent sovereignty and right to self-determination.

## KŪKULU HOU I KA LĀHUI KANAKA MAOLI: REBUILDING OUR NATION

Kanaka Maoli input to the 1983 U.S. *Native Hawaiians Study Commission Report* led to the 1985 *E Ola Mau Report* and the 1986 foundation of E Ola Mau, an organization of Kanaka Maoli health professionals tasked with implementing the report's recommendations. For the first time, these proposals addressed underlying historical, cultural, and social factors, as well as direct health remedies. As a result, the 1988 U.S. Congress Native Hawaiian Health Care Act (re-authorized as the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act in 1991) created Papa Ola Lōkahi, a coordinating health consortium; 5 community-based Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems that serve 7 islands, and a Native Hawaiian Health Professions Scholarship program.

In 1991, the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine established the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence to improve the health of indigenous Hawaiians through research, education, service, and training of Native Hawaiians in medicine. In 2003, the Department of Native Hawaiian Health was created, the first such department devoted to Kanaka Maoli research, education, and quality health care practices.

## E ŌLA NĀ KINI Ē

No laila, it is with such *‘ike iho hilina‘i* (self-confidence) that we celebrate our future through the words of kupuna Pilahi Paki:

*Hawai‘i loa, kū like kākou  
Kūpa‘a me ka lōkahi ē  
Kūkala me ka wiwo‘ole  
‘Onipa‘a kākou, ‘onipa‘a kākou  
A lanakila nā kini ē  
E ola, e ola, e ola nā kini ē*

It is now and forever we courageously proclaim  
To raise our voices, hold our banners high  
We shall stand as a nation  
And guide the destiny of our generations  
Sing and praise the glory of our land

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Kekuni Akana Blaisdell was professor emeritus of medicine and a consultant in the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence and Department of Native Hawaiian Health of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa John A. Burns School of Medicine. His research interests included blood disorders, history of medicine and Kanaka Maoli health. He was a consultant to Papa Ola Lōkahi, chair of the Native Hawaiian Institutional Review Board and kupuna (emeritus) member of ‘Ahaui o nā Kauka (Native Hawaiian Physicians Association). He was convenor of the Pro-Kanaka Maoli Independence Working Group and Kanaka Maoli Tribunal Kōmike and coordinator of Ka Pākaukau.