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UH Mānoa, UH Hilo students part of push for more kānaka in anthropology

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Azahrae Frazier implements 'āina field methods at Koholālele in Hāmākua. (Image credit: Anianikū Chong)

'Āina (land), culture and community generated an even deeper meaning for a group of students (haumāna) from the [University of Hawai'i at Mānoa](#) and [UH Hilo](#) this summer. After strictly attending classes during the pandemic from behind a computer screen, actually visiting wahi kūpuna or ancestral sites where Native Hawaiian royalty roamed centuries ago, sparked vivid emotions.

Haumāna participated in a [Wahi Kūpuna internship](#), a four week long program where college credits are earned while working with historical and cultural experts in the archaeology field. This summer, students spent time conducting field work in Hāmākua on Hawai'i Island in a region where famous high chief 'Umialīloa was born and raised. Haumāna focused on ethnography and ethnohistorical research and 'āina-field techniques such as mapping and recording boundaries using GPS at various wahi kūpuna in the area that will be used for restoration work.

UH Hilo junior **Lucon Route** completed the program feeling refreshed and recharged in his pursuit of an agroforestry and Pacific Islander studies degree.

“This internship has far surpassed my expectations and provided me with fortunate experiences with knowledgeable mentors and skills that influenced my decision of interest within my academic studies under agriculture,” Route explained. “I highly recommend those who are interested within the line of preservation history to try and apply.”



Bronson Palupe works on mapping to coordinate restoration work in Koholālele (Image credit: Anianikū Chong)

The paid internship program is spearheaded by [Huliauapa'a](#), a non-profit organization overseen by **Kelley Lehuakeapuna Uyeoka**, a UH Mānoa and UH Hilo archaeology alumna.

“The primary goals of this program are to develop leaders and advocates in Hawai'i's Cultural Resource Management field by training more Native Hawaiians and kama'āina in both the cultural and technical sides of heritage stewardship, so they have a strong cultural foundation, elevate their kuleana to our places and communities, obtain higher education degrees, and gain professional skills to eventually secure jobs,” said Uyeoka.

Visionaries behind the organization's steadfast mission also include Professor **Kekuewa Kikilo** ([Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies](#), UH Mānoa), Professor **Kathy Kawelu** ([Anthropology](#), UH Hilo) and **Tiffnie Kakalia** ([Native Hawaiian Health](#), John A. Burns School of Medicine) who are members of the board of directors at Huliauapa'a.

The internship program launched in 2010 with support from Kamehameha Schools and has mentored more than 70 haumāna through conducting community based research and has transported participants to wahi kūpuna across ka Pae 'Āina o Hawai'i Nei (Hawaiian archipelago), from Hawai'i Island to Kaua'i.

Restoring pilina (connection)

Research is also safely conducted inside the classroom to prepare for fieldwork. Haumāna were led by instructor **Kepo'o Keliipaakaua**, who is also a PhD student in the Department of [Urban and Regional Planning](#) at UH Mānoa. The face-to-face interaction was refreshing after an unparalleled year of social distancing.



Image credit: Anianikū Chong

The face-to-face interaction was refreshing after an unparalleled year of social distancing.

“It made such a big difference to be able to physically be in the same room with these haumāna where I could pick up on little cues, like a haumana letting out an audible sigh, that tipped me off to the fact that there was maybe some sort of research roadblock that I could help them through,” Keliipaakaua said. “It’s one thing for haumāna to learn about the different winds, rains and mo’olelo (story) connected to an ‘āina through lectures or readings, it’s a completely different experience for haumāna to be able to set foot on ‘āina and feel these winds and rains themselves while feeling, and smelling the landscape around them as they connect their own personal experiences in these places with mo’olelo of ancestors and akua (deities) who interacted with these ‘āina in the past.”

This summer, Uyeoka’s organization partnered with community-based hui (organization) [Hui Mālama i ke Ala ‘Ūlili](#) (huiMAU) which specializes in educating younger generations on wahi k̄puna restoration in Hāmākua.

“We understand that we may not see or taste the fruits of the seeds that we plant today in our lifetimes, but that is part of the exchange to restore balance,” said **No’eau Peralto**, huiMAU executive director and a UH Mānoa political science and Hawaiian studies alumnus. “That is why it is so important that we invest our aloha, our time and our mana (power) in cultivating the future generations of aloha ‘āina in our place. Ultimately, the future generations will inherit the fruits of our action or inaction.”



Image credit: Anianikū Chong

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