THE KCC ADVANTAGE

Hāpai Mānele (Honorably Carrying the Palanquin)

A week prior to the commencement of the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education 2014 (WiPC:E) on the night of AKUA, the trade winds from the Northeast ceased and the wind from the South began blowing. The kīhei of Pele slowly enveloped the islands and the sea of Māmala greeted sharks that came from afar. It was the ancestors of the indigenous people of the world clearing the path for their people to arrive. Kapi‘olani Community College was ready to “Umia ka hanu ke kipo‘ohiwi i ke kipo‘ohiwi,” Hold the breath, Walk abreast, shoulder to shoulder.

On the morning of May 19, 2014 by way of wa‘akaualua (double-hull canoe) and wa‘a kaukahi (single-hull canoe) the dignitaries and representatives of the indigenous peoples from all over the world paddled in four canoes and came ashore at Kapua (San Souci Beach). Delegations represented in the canoes included Māori, Ainu, Navajo, Blackfoot, Aboriginal Australians, Lapps and many more.

The canoes were guided by the call of conch shells (l) and the sound of drums. Amongst those playing the drums was our own Lehua Gaison-Tyler (3rd from l). It was the first of the opening ceremonies for the WiPC:E 2014, and it was being held at Kapi‘olani Community College (5/19 to 5/24/2014).

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Māla Māunuunu

Have you visited the māla (garden) located behind the Mānele building (l)? It was named by Kumu Nāwa’a Napoleon for the specific Māunuunu wind that blows in the Kaimukī area. Our Māla Māunuunu provides a variety of learning opportunities for KCC students, faculty, staff, and the neighboring community.

Upon visiting the māla, one can simply sit on one of the lava rocks amongst the plantings as a respite and enjoy the peace and quiet of KCC’s Kokohead view. However, there is much more available to be experienced at Māla Māunuunu. For example, you can become familiar with the names of indigenous plants and trees and learn how they are/were used by Hawaiians. In addition, you can explore the science developed by the ancient Hawaiians that allowed them to make use of every aspect of their environment - the plants and trees, the wind currents and local weather patterns, in order to meet the needs of their community. Finally, perhaps there is the opportunity for you to capture a glimpse of the wisdom contained in the unique world-view developed by the members of the Native Hawaiian community through their interaction with each other and their surroundings. This article provides information about some of the plants and trees found in Māla Māunuunu and their uses by our host culture. We hope that it will inform members of our KCC ‘ohana about elements of a Native Hawaiian sense of place being developed through the Kopo’oluku Program for Native Hawaiian Student Success and Kūlia ma Kapi’olani and the possibilities available to all for building an “intra-campus” community of learners.

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The Hawai‘i Marsbot Team

The Hawai‘i Marsbot Team, pictured (l to r): Holm Smidt, Liem Nguyen, and Steven Ewers, is a multidisciplinary team of Kapi‘olani CC and UH Mānoa students that have designed and built an innovative and tele-operated Martian excavating robot for the purpose of competing in the 2014 NASA Robotics Mining Competition (RMC). The RMC was held at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida this past May 2014 and the Hawai‘i Marsbot Team is the first team from Hawai‘i to participate in this event.

The team has displayed exemplary design and fabrication skills as well as coordinated spectacular outreach and mentorship programs with local elementary and high schools. At the competition, the Hawai‘i team was successful in collecting and depositing 1.6kg of simulated regolith within 10 minutes, a feat that only 50% of all teams were able to do. (Regolith is a layer of loose, heterogeneous material covering solid rock. It includes dust, soil, broken rock, and other related materials and is present on Earth, the Moon, Mars, some asteroids, and other terrestrial planets and moons.)

The team wishes to thank the Kapi‘olani CC STEM program, Hawai‘i Space Grant Consortium, UH Mānoa UROP, the State of Hawai‘i and sponsors, as well as their “devoted mentors, Dr. Aaron Hanai, Dr. Hervé Collin (both KCC), and Dr. David Garmire (UHM).” Team member Holm Smidt wrote, “With their help, we were able to best represent our colleges and State at this national competition.” Also, the team was invited to the first PISCES Robotic International Space Mining (PRISM) competition in July 2014 on the Big Island. On the day the above picture was taken our Hawai‘i Marsbot Team was making final improvements to represent our colleges and State internationally.
Hundreds of conference participants, local residents and visitors observed the first of the opening ceremonies called the kālī‘i. Makahiki is an annual season in Hawai‘i, roughly equivalent to a four-month period, set aside for peaceful endeavors, enlightening rejuvenation, artistic expression, and athletic pursuit. In traditional times, its conclusion was marked by the kālī‘i, a spear-hurling ritual meant to reestablish the high chief’s right to rule and govern over the land and to showcase his courage and dexterity. Upon the chief’s symbolic return to the ‘āina (land) from afar, the chief was confronted by a group of warriors awaiting his arrival at the shore. These warriors would hurl spears toward the chief’s body, whom would catch or dodge them. It was also appropriate on certain occasions for the chief to assign a proxy to stand in his place. As the high chief represented the gods on earth, and was himself a god on earth, his success and invincibility at overcoming the spear further substantiated his authority to reign. The kālī‘i was a challenge to the dignitaries and representatives of the many nations attending this international conference to see if they came in peace.

The theme of the conference, E Mau Ana Ka Mo‘olelo: Our Narratives Endure, was meant to encourage the participants to look to their own ways of learning and to use them to help their children strive in today’s society. The conference program stated, “We believe our traditional ways of learning are as valid today as they were in the past, and we encourage all to share cultural knowledge with each other as a way to promote indigenous education.” The program also stated, “We are also thankful to Chancellor Leon Richards and all the staff at Kapi‘olani Community College for hosting WiPC:E 2014.” (http://wipce2014.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/WiPCE-2014-Program.pdf).

The conference theme is supported by research, e.g., Views and Perspectives of Native Educational Success: A National Survey of American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Others Associated with Indian Education identified factors influencing educational success for Native students, such as: culturally responsive curriculum and teachers who are Native and/or culturally respectful and caring. This theme was reflected in reported responses, such as the need for “curriculum and pedagogy that build on indigenous students’ linguistic, cultural, cognitive, and affective strengths,” and “honoring native place, culture, language and history should be evident in curriculum.” (http://www.niea.org/data/files/native%20student%20success%20final%20report.pdf).
Although the māla began as a small project between KCC faculty and students in 2008, it has evolved into a cultural center for various kinds of learning and knowledge sharing. Today, the māla serves as an official site for Service and Sustainability Learning at KCC and is also an approved Mālama I Nā Ahupua’a site. Activities held at Māla Māunuunu include service and sustainability learning, group visits, tours, interdisciplinary learning, outdoor classroom purposes, community service events, and undergraduate research.

Māla Māunuunu includes a variety of plants, both indigenous and introduced to Hawai‘i. One of the trees readily visible as you walk behind the Mānele building (l) is the mānele (Sapindus oahuensis), also known as a’e, with common names, such as Hawaiian soapberry, or soap seed. The beautiful black seeds of the mānele were, and still are, strung by Hawaiians as permanent lei or necklaces. The pulp of the fruit (r) was used as a soap for shampooing hair and washing clothes in the past.

You can also find the namesake of the ʻIlima building, the ʻilima plant (shown below) in Māla Māunuunu. ʻIlima (Sida fallax) is in the same family as hibiscus, Malvaceae. Most people are aware of the prostrate ʻilima (ʻilima papa) that grow on or near beaches but are not aware that there are also bushy types of ʻilima (ʻilima kula) that are more often found in the uplands. This is an indigenous plant, but is also native to other parts of the world, such as other Pacific Islands and China.

The best known use of ʻilima is as a lei flower. ʻIlima lei are expensive, as it can take 500 to 1,000 flowers to make one lei (r). It used to be that only Hawaiian royalty could wear an ʻilima lei.

According to Hawai‘i Horticulture, Hawaiians used ʻilima in traditional medicine. It was used to treat female ailments, to prepare for birth and to keep newborn children healthy. In addition, ʻilima flowers were used to increase the production of milk by new mothers. Finally, ʻilima flower buds were said to relieve thirst and concoctions from flowers, leaves and taproots were used to treat heat stroke.

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On Thursday evening of the conference the participants shared the music and dance of their cultures with each other. This photo (l) and the Ainu and Blackfoot dance photos shown earlier (p.3) are some of the examples of the beauty, grace, and joy exhibited that evening.

In keeping with the WiPC:E theme and the findings of research on educational success for Native Hawaiians, and indigenous peoples in general, Nāwa’a Napoleon, Chair of the Kalāualani and its representative to the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee (CAC), discussed the document Hawai‘i Papa O Ke Ao with Chancellor Richards and distributed it to the CAC at its September 9, 2014 meeting. Included in the Leadership Development section of this document is the objective to “develop and expand system-wide training programs in Hawaiian values for all levels of faculty and staff.”

Goals for Community Engagement in Hawai‘i Papa O Ke Ao include: Intra-Campus Development – building Community on each campus by creating a Native Hawaiian place/building; Building and sustaining a community of learners; and Developing and implementing a plan to recruit and hire qualified Native Hawaiian faculty in all disciplines. Kapi‘olani CC actively and purposely has been developing as an indigenous serving institution by providing facilities and services earmarked for Native Hawaiian students and by implementing programs that provide all of its students the opportunity to learn about Hawaiian values, culture and language and integrate these into their daily lives, using classroom and service learning formats.

Also in Māla Māunuunu is the kukui, or candlenut tree (below). In 1959, the state legislature officially recognized the candlenut tree as the state tree of Hawai‘i. One major reason this tree was chosen was because of its multiple uses in Hawaiian culture. The kukui was brought by Polynesian settlers to the islands, and is native to Malaysia and Polynesia.

The ancient Hawaiians used kukui nuts to make torches, used for light at night. These nuts have a very high oil concentration and burn for a long time. The Hawaiians would put several on a stick and light the first one on fire, letting it burn down the line of nuts (r). This also became a way to tell time, or how much time has passed.

(Source for kukui nut photo: http://data.bishopmuseum.org/etnobotanydb/images/niu_and_kukui_light_7745.jpg)

Kukui nuts are also used to make leis, and the oil is used to make wood preservatives, varnishes and soaps. The oil is very healing to the skin and can be used as a natural moisturizer. It soothes sunburns, and is beneficial for many skin problems. Hawaiians used the soot of burned nuts as black ink for tattoos; fishermen would chew the nuts and spit them on the water to create a lens on the water and remove reflections, giving them greater underwater visibility; the wood of the tree was used to make lightweight canoes and fishnet floats, while the inner bark gave off a red-brown dye used for the tapa cloth.

Another plant of significance found in Māla Māunuunu is the kalo, the Hawaiian name given to the cultivated plant, taro (Colocasia esculenta). C. esculenta was initially introduced to the Hawaiian Islands by Polynesians migrating to Hawai‘i. Kalo specifically refers to the name of the first taro that grows from the planted stalk. Taro is considered by some to be the world’s oldest cultivated crop.

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To Native Hawaiians, kalo is supreme in importance—it is defined in the Kumulipo, or Hawaiian Creation Chant, as the plant from which Hawaiians were formed. When the first voyagers arrived on the shores of the Hawaiian Islands nearly 1,500 years ago, kalo (taro) was one of the few sacred plants they carried with them.

The corm of the kalo plant is used to make poi (a product of steamed kalo which has been peeled and pounded into a thick paste (pa‘i ‘ai) and mixed with water until the desired consistency is achieved, as demonstrated at right. Some of the other uses of kalo include table taro, which is steamed kalo that is best served like a potato and lū‘au, the leaf blades of the taro plant, washed, cleaned, and boiled, baked, or steamed for consumption. Also, laulau consists of pork, chicken, salted fish, or kalo tops wrapped in kalo leaves and baked in an underground oven (imu), steamed, or broiled.

One final plant, here being identified by Bradley Hughes (l), a student worker for the Kapo‘oloku Program for Native Hawaiian Success, is the wauke plant. Canoe Plants of Ancient Hawai‘i states, “Imagine the days when all of the cloth that was worn as garments, slept under as bedding, used for ceremonial occasions, wrapped around the iwi (bones) of the ancestors, every imaginable use we now have for loomed fabric...all of this cloth came from the inner bark of trees, the most cultivated and useful of which is wauke, the paper mulberry tree.” Wauke is the principle plant used in the making of kapa, or tapa cloth.

Māla Māunuunu is managed by the Kapo‘oloku Program for Native Hawaiian Student Success, Michaelyn Nakoa, Coordinator, and Katherine Coelho, Student Support Specialist, Manele 105, (808)734-9714. You are invited to visit and participate in activities centered on the māla so that you can enrich your knowledge and understanding of our host culture and your world. ✪

Life in Colors of the World

“Life in Colors of the World,” a Fiber Art exhibition, was featured at KCC from September 15-25. Akihiko Izukura is shown here with Linda Fujikawa and KCC student Yuka Wade, who is modeling an Izukura garment as part of a KCC mini fashion show. Izukura also introduced students from the International Café and JPNS 290 to the world of silk art by providing them the opportunity, along with other KCC students, faculty and staff, to make silk squares from dyed cocoons. For Izukura, making silk textiles is based on the harmony of all living things and their environment. He states, “Natural textile – vegetation and insect – revives giving suitable environment by man’s hand.”

Reiko Brandon also exhibited a variety of her works of Fiber Art. Brandon stated, “This exhibition showcases my recent works created directly from silk cocoons colored with natural dyes. Inspiration for these pieces came from the one-year silk workshop given by Mr. Izukura in 2012-2013.” Concerning working with silk as the medium for her fiber art, Brandon stated, “It was a most remarkable experience for me to observe the amazing life cycle of silk cocoons, from minute eggs to caterpillars, then to cocoons.” One cocoon produces extremely fine, lustrous threads as long as 3,000 feet. Fragile, yet strong silk fiber responds beautifully to all natural dyes. It has been a delightful adventure working with silk cocoons.”

The square pieces in her show were made by hand-stretching cocoons softened by being immersed in water for several months. The largest, perhaps the most significant piece of this type, Square Cocoons, White (above) was made of 220 squares stretched from approximately 3,500 silk cocoons. Brandon remarks, “Working with cocoons is a repetitious, time-consuming endeavor. It requires enormous patience, but it gives me a special pleasure, seeing and feeling the mysterious rhythm of nature.” ✪