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Living the consciousness: navigating the academic pathway for our children and communities

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ABSTRACT

This article chronicles how the authors, two Indigenous activist-academics, live into their consciousness, privileges, and responsibilities by realizing their roles through genealogical reflection. In particular, they focus on their responsibilities as change agents because of their reciprocal and interdependent roles as community members, as husband–wife partners, and as parents to their two children. Through the use of critical self-reflection, photography, and mo'olelo (a Native Hawaiian method of sharing interconnected stories), the authors present a radically different and Indigenous approach to leadership, scholarship, and engagement that is rooted in genealogical connections to people, place, and knowledge systems. Though the authors experience tension as their Indigenous values rub up against those of the Western wvvorld of academia, their story exemplifies their resilience as the result of the love and commitment they have to their families and communities.

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An introductory story: the work we do

Each Saturday morning, our family[1] piles into our gray Honda Civic and heads to town from the windward side of our island home of O'ahu. We drive over the mountain through the Likelike[2] Tunnel, across the city of Honolulu, until we finally arrive at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. There, awaiting our arrival is my (Kaiwipuni's) class of students.

In some ways, this story seems typical. We go to a university and I teach a class. What is unique, even precious however, is that my group of 'students' is comprised of mostly Native Hawaiian elders between the ages of 70 and 85 years old. Though raised in Hawai'i in Hawaiian households, many of them were physically punished for speaking Hawaiian language in their schools. This was a result of the 1896 law by the illegal white Provisional Government of Hawai'i[3] that sought to terminate Hawaiian language ('Aha Pūnana Leo, 2015; Benham & Heck, 1998) and all things Hawaiian (Kamins, 1998; Trask, 1992). Hence, my students were born into this era in which it was illegal to speak their mother tongue in school. It was not until 1978 that the Hawaiian language was finally recognized as an official language of the State of Hawai'i and in 1986 the Hawai'i State legislature allowed Hawaiian language to be a medium of instruction in public schools ('Aha Pūnana Leo, 2015). By the time this occurred, most of my students were well into their forties.

At the same time as being forced into Western assimilation through the public education system, my students were also deprived of their native tongue at home. Their parents, most of whom were native speakers of Hawaiian language, witnessed and experienced the racism associated with speaking

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Hawaiian in a quickly Americanizing Hawai'i. Hence, they consciously withheld Hawaiian language from their children – my students – in the name of love and hope for a future they saw as inevitably American and English-centric.

Although between 1896 and 1986 Hawai'i and Native Hawaiians were forced into assimilation, steadfast keepers of Hawaiian language and culture persevered often in secret. Over the last 40 years, with the help of these Hawaiian practitioners, Hawai'i has experienced a Hawaiian renaissance. Interest and revitalization of Hawaiian language, culture, and knowledge systems has resulted and there is now an upswing of children and families speaking Hawaiian and drawing strength from their Hawaiian identity.[4]

My students, though recovering from the intergenerational trauma of oppression and colonization (Minton, personal communication, ongoing), have witnessed this renaissance and intentionally decided to join in. Today, in the last dozen or so years of their lives, they are fearlessly engaging in learning Hawaiian language, hula,[5] music, and chant; all birthrights they were stripped of during their youth (Maunakea-Forth, personal communication, April 25, 2013).

I, a 32-year old Hawaiian woman, a 'baby' compared to their seasoned experiences, am their Hawaiian language teacher. I am a product of the courageous and revolutionary commitment of a handful of the Hawaiian Language and Studies educators who began organizing in 1983 for the survival of Hawaiian language ('Aha Pūnana Leo, 2015). During this time period, my mother was writing her doctoral dissertation focused around the question: How did Hawaiians lose control of our land?[6] Her groundbreaking research and analysis catapulted her to become one of the leading Hawaiian historians of her time and has contributed greatly to the Hawaiian renaissance through education. Thus, when my mother made the intentional decision to carry me in her womb at the time she did, she was positioning me to be born into a blessed and revolutionary time for Hawaiian people. This timing was a precursor for my current role as a Hawaiian language teacher to Native Hawaiian elders of the English-only generation. This timing was a gift.

I recognize the privileges and gifts I have been afforded each time I walk into my classroom with my class of Hawaiian elders. I have witnessed the tears they shed because of the shame, fear, humiliation, and brutality they have experienced through cultural genocide. Though I did not have to bear that same type of extermination firsthand, I connect so strongly to their feelings because of the experiences in my own household. My grandmother, Kathryne Leilani Labonte, whom I lived with most of my life until she passed in 2013 at the age of 92, shared her similar pain with me. She never developed the ability to speak, read or write in Hawaiian fluently for the same reason as the other elders. I held her hand on many occasions while she cried in both sorrow and anger. Then she would dry her eyes in pride and excitement for me and all that my generation represents in the timeline and revitalization of our culture and people.

Although my grandma did not learn Hawaiian language, she engaged in Hawaiian culture in any way she could. For example, she memorized Hawaiian songs phonetically and sang in a beautiful soprano one voice, accompanied by her 'ukulele[7] strums. Though she did not understand the words, she kept alive that Hawaiian poetry for the next generation who then rediscovered its meanings. She also farmed dozens of acres as did her Hawaiian ancestors. Similarly, my students come with so many wonderful experiences of being Hawaiian and living in a Hawaiian way. They were fortunate to live close to the land and eat her natural foods, stay connected to both immediate and extended family in ways that are difficult to do so today, and live by a code of reciprocity and interdependent relationships that are now often severed by the perceived necessity for speed, independence, and self-preservation.

My students are anything but void of Hawaiian identity and culture. However, an assimilation and erasure process has taken a toll on my elders and often they do not recognize the dazzling Hawaiianness within them. Therefore, I recognize that I am not merely their Hawaiian language teacher. My privilege, as a product of the Hawaiian renaissance – fed by the wisdom of my grandmother, shaped by the brilliance of my mother, and prepared as an academic to deconstruct and dismantle colonization to help heal our people – positions me to bring much more. Therefore, while the class is an introduction to Hawaiian language, we not only learn how to speak Hawaiian, but we also collectively discuss, analyze, and critique areas including but not limited to the education system, politics in Hawai'i and throughout

the world, history as we know it and reconstruct it, childhood stories they are now just making sense of, and feelings they have long suppressed and discounted.

In order to do this work together, it is critical that we create a safe, gracious and inviting place for all of us (Hughes, Ruder, & Nienow, 2011). Kindness and empathy are key so that the elders feel comfortable to be open with me, themselves, and each other. In essence, we build aloha. Aloha is defined by Pukui and Elbert (1986) as 'love, affection, compassion, mercy, sympathy, pity, kindness, sentiment, grace, charity' (p. 21). My experience is that aloha is the result of the reciprocal nourishing and caring of one another. Hence, I nourish the group with knowledge of Hawaiian language and care for them with kindness. At the same time, I also invite them to nourish the group with their own knowledge, experiences, and stories and share their values and practices of caring for one another. This caring shows up in ways such as being patient with one other as they try new Hawaiian phrases out loud, celebrating each other's birthdays, gently helping each other through the Hawaiian lessons, and often bringing food to share. These are all ways that the group builds aloha.

For many of them, they will say their first complete sentences in Hawaiian publicly in my class. The idea of doing this in front of their peers is extremely frightening for them. Therefore, I always start the first class of each semester the same way. We sit in a circle and I begin by introducing myself. I tell the story of how I learned Hawaiian and that I recognize how fortunate I am. I follow up by saying, 'But I am still learning like all of you. I don't know everything there is to know about Hawaiian language. I still learn new things everyday like when I am trying to remind my daughter to "flush the toilet" in Hawaiian. So in this class, we are all on a journey of learning together.' They always laugh at the joke about my daughter. At the same time, I also see a hesitant smile of reassurance appear on their faces, calming some of their worries about lack of Hawaiian knowledge and experience. I remind them, we are all recovering from intergenerational trauma (Minton, personal communication, ongoing); that we did not ask for our language and culture to be stripped from us. I remind them that it is not their fault. And then I tell them the story of my grandmother. I end by saying that we are all healing (Minton, personal communication, ongoing) and I invite them to heal with me in our class together.

Then I invite each of them to share their stories. This inevitably takes the entire class period and continues throughout the semester. Many of them cry and tremble in sorrow and frustration regarding their past experiences with or without Hawaiian language in their lives. However, without fail, they each also talk about experiences that teach the rest of us about being Hawaiian and living in a Hawaiian way. When they share those stories, I call it out. I name it (Freire, 1993) as a beautiful contribution to what we know about being Hawaiian. This shift in framework, from deficits to assets, is key for how they view themselves as Hawaiians and how they come to class with more confidence and willingness to reclaim their ancestral connections.

Purposeful storytelling

As academics, parents, and community members, we (Bubba and I) are intentional about each of the stories we tell and how we deliver them (Chi'XapKaid, 2005). In particular, we utilize the stories of our lives to teach, learn, lead, and research through critical self-reflection. Guajardo, Guajardo, and Casaperalta (2008) describe this reflective ethnographic methodology, 'As the observed become part of the observing process, we use a different ontological reality that is congruent with the local ecology and its people yet distant enough where we can be reflective …' (p. 8). We draw from our lives and experiences that are intertwined with those of our communities to teach, learn, lead and research with and for our communities. We recognized that there is great knowledge and power right where we are from and in our daily lives. Hence, we are purposeful about sharing the story of the elders presented above because it illuminates the epistemological, ontological, and pedagogical foundations of our work as it plays out in real life.

We also choose to teach and learn through stories because that is the pedagogical practice passed down to us through our Indigenous ancestral DNA[8] (Kanahele, 2012). Our peoples, for generations, have been teaching, learning, and researching through stories (Kame'eleihiwa, 1996; Lipe, 2013; Wilson, 2008).

For example, in Hawaiian the word for story is mo'olelo, which derives from two Hawaiian words. The first is mo'o, which is translated as 'succession, series, especially a genealogical line, lineage' (p. 253). Mo'o is also described as each vertebra connecting the spine together. The second word, 'ōlelo, translates into English as 'language, speech, word, statement, utterance; to speak, say, converse' (Pukui & Elbert, 1986, p. 284). Therefore, mo'olelo describes the process of connecting life through words.

Noted Hawaiian scholar Mary Kawena Pukui (1983) transcribed a famous Hawaiian proverb, 'I ka 'ōlelo nō ke ola, i ka 'ōlelo nō ka make' (p. 129). Translated literally, this means that 'in speech there is life and in speech there is death' (Pukui, 1983, p. 129). Therefore, not only do Hawaiians place a heavy importance on mo'olelo, but specifically mo'olelo as they are spoken. Because Hawaiian language was a completely oral language until the mid 1800s (Benham & Heck, 1998) it makes sense that 'ōlelo was given so much emphasis and power, as the livelihood of the Hawaiian people – our entire knowledge system – depended on the continuance of mo'olelo.

Mo'olelo Aku, Mo'olelo Mai methodology

Mo'olelo does not exist in isolation, however. The word itself teaches us that it comes to life when spoken and shared. Therefore, mo'olelo aku[9] refers to the sharing of mo'olelo with another. Mo'olelo mai[10] refers to receiving a story. Hence, the methodology of mo'olelo aku mo'olelo mai is the sharing – giving and receiving – of stories (Lipe, 2014). The methodology emphasizes the connections made and preserved through mo'olelo and the power of sharing those mo'olelo with each other by listening and hearing, internalizing, learning, and then re-telling with accuracy.

The significance of interconnectivity and exchange in mo'olelo aku mo'olelo mai is also illuminated in Freire's (1993) dialogical process. According to Freire (Freire & Macedo, 1995):

> In order to understand the meaning of the dialogical practice, we have to put aside the simplistic understanding of dialogue as a mere technique … dialogue characterizes an epistemological relationship … dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task. We have to make this point very clear. I engage in dialogue not necessarily because I like the person. I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing. In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensible component of the process of both learning and knowing. (p. 379)

Therefore, as Freire points out, the interchange of mo'olelo aku mo'olelo mai is key in the interdependent processes of learning and teaching that characterizes our work.

'A'ali'i Kū Makani framework

We intentionally present the story of elders to provide an example of the work we are committed to. One way to describe the 'work' is to do so through the 'A'ali'i Kū Makani Framework (Lipe, 2014). The 'A'ali'i is a Hawaiian shrub that is often known by the Hawaiian proverb, 'He 'a'ali'i Kū makani mai au, 'a'ohe makani nāna e kūla'i. I am the wind withstanding 'a'ali'i. No gale can push me over' (Pukui, 1983, p. 60). This proverb is further described by Pukui (1983), 'A boast meaning "I can hold my own even in the face of difficulties." The 'a'ali'i bush can stand the worst of gales, twisting and bending but seldom breaking off or falling over' (p. 60). Hence, the 'A'ali'i Kū Makani (Wind-withstanding 'a'ali'i) framework describes a type of leader who personifies the qualities of the 'a'ali'i plant (Figures 1 and 2).

Our work is committed to helping shape those human 'a'ali'i through various forms of educational engagement. First, as the 'a'ali'i is rooted in its island home of Hawai'i, we seek to shape leaders who are deeply rooted in the places they call home. We use mo'olelo aku mo'olelo mai (storytelling and conversation) to help folks connect to their home by sharing their own experiences and critically reflecting on those stories. We also make space and create opportunities for folks to engage in the Indigenous values, practices, and knowledge systems of their places. In the example of the class of elders, learning Hawaiian is a way they can become further rooted in who they are by connecting to their ancestral language. At the same time, by sharing stories, they begin to hear their own experiences out loud and those of others and recognize the rootedness they may have previously discounted.

Figure 1. ʻAʻaliʻi cluster.

Figure 2. ʻAʻaliʻi tree blowing in the wind.

Second, as the ʻaʻaliʻiʻs trunk grows strong yet flexible and is able to withstand high winds and periods of drought (Native Hawaiian Plants, 2009), we help to shape leaders by providing them with experiences to stand firm in their rootedness *and* have expansive minds. Much of our work is providing the space for folks to make connections between their many skills and knowledge systems so that they can use all of that to best serve their environments, families, and communities. In the case of the Hawaiian language class for elders, as we engage in conversation and share stories, they begin to realize how their experiences growing up in their tight-knit communities, learning to sing and play Hawaiian instruments, being punished in the educational system, and fishing with their grandparents are all integral to the resilient Hawaiian people they are today. Then they use all of that positive energy to give them confidence to learn to speak Hawaiian which propels them towards greater pride in being Hawaiian and contributing back to their Hawaiian communities.

Finally, just as the ʻaʻaliʻi has many uses, including how the wood is used for canoes and weapons and tools and posts, the flowers used for lei,[11] the seeds used for dye, and the leaves used for medicine (Native Hawaiian Plants, 2009), we help to celebrate and cultivate the many gifts within each person because of that rootedness and flexibility. Hence, we help folks identify opportunities to use their assets to create and transform the world with their intelligence, strength, and resiliency.

In short, this is our work: to help shape ʻaʻaliʻi kū makani transformative leaders. Many times our work is with young people who are beginning to blossom in so many ways. The story of the elders is an example of our work to make space for more seasoned ʻaʻaliʻi to continue to grow later in their life cycle. Though older, they are always looking for ways to become further rooted in Hawaiʻi, more expansive in their minds, and sharper with their tools. We see it as an honor to be a part of their continued growth.

A family commitment

Another reason we share the story of the elders is to demonstrate how we have committed to our work as a family. While I (Kaiwipuni) am teaching class on Saturdays, Bubba sets up a picnic in the back of the room for our two children. His main responsibility is to help keep the children quiet yet engaged so the elders can hear and concentrate. Our children listen in on the class, eat snacks, and color in their coloring books or put a puzzle together. They also sometimes play outside, go down to the loʻi,[12] and catch fish in the stream. When they are in the room, they are also included in the class just as children are included in a family living room. I often engage in a Hawaiian conversation with our seven-year old daughter to demonstrate a new sentence pattern. Our son frequently walks between the elders' chairs as they lovingly sneak him treats. He also likes to sit on my lap, nurse, and smile at the class. We believe that these are important experiences for our children in which they learn to be respectful of their elders but also loved by them. At the same time, the elders enjoy the children. If the children do not come because they are sick the elders immediately want to know where they are and why I did not bring them. The children give the elders joy and hope for the future. To be clear, our class has created a family as the result of the aloha we build in the reciprocal nourishing and caring. In this setting, Bubba helps to make this all possible.

On other occasions, Bubba leads initiatives, usually related to Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK; Berkes, 1999) and Western science (Lipe, 2013) and I take responsibility of the children. For example, recently Bubba has been building partnerships between Native Hawaiian science and engineering students from the university with Hawaiian community land-based organizations. This work of bringing them together to share in assets, resources, and knowledge systems often happens in the evenings and on weekends. Even though it is Bubba's 'work,' I come along with the children to share in the experience. Our children benefit from having the opportunity to engage with the natural environment and create relationships with their new aunties and uncles: university students and community practitioners. Through this shared family commitment to the work, we are collectively establishing a familial network of mentors for our children.

Whatever the situation may be and whichever parent is leading an activity, we have made the conscious decision to enter into our work as a family. This is our shared commitment as husband and wife and our intention to use all of our experiences as a means for raising and educating our children. Much of their 'schooling' happens in these settings. We also recognize the positive energy that children bring to a setting. Adults become more aware of their actions and are inspired by youth. We cannot imagine doing this work alone or without our children.

A couple's survival

While we engage in the work of shaping ʻaʻaliʻi kū makani, we are constantly reflecting in conversation (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010; Wheatley, 2009) as a couple. Our time spent sharing is especially important as we meet challenges in our paths, particularly within the contentious confines of the university system (Alfred, 2004). During other moments, we share our excitement or new ideas after meeting with a brilliant student or reading alternative literature. In all these conversations, what we have come to

realize is that we are also shaping each other as ʻaʻaliʻi kū makani. We are constantly pushing each other to become further rooted, checking each other on our critical consciousness, and uplifting each other to encourage the work. Hence, we recognize that the guiding values and process that shapes us are the same values and processes we use to shape others. This cyclical process is embedded in the process of recognizing and making sense of our genealogies, realizing our roles based on those genealogies, assuming the responsibilities in those roles, and fulfilling the responsibilities by engaging in the work. In order to best describe this process, we share some stories below.

Shaping genealogies

Dr Pualani Kanakaʻole Kanahele (2012), revered Native Hawaiian hula master and scholar, says that our ancestors live within us. She states that the knowledge and experiences of our ancestors are passed down from generation to generation through our DNA. We build on Dr Kanahele's argument by recognizing that not only do our genealogies of biological family live within us and shape us, but so do other genealogies of knowledge systems, mentorship, and experiences. In our late night conversations, as we make sense of our work and seek paths of strength, we realize we descend from many nourishing genealogies.

Kaiwipuni's story

I am privileged to have been exposed to and engaged in many instances that have awakened ancestral knowledge within me and around me. For example, as a child at bedtime, I would drift off into the world of sleep as my mother recounted the amazing stories of our gods and goddesses. Some of my favorite stories include that of Tutu Pele's[13] hot temper, matched by her fiery lava flow, and of Hiʻiakaikapoliopele's[14] gifts as both a warrior and a healer. These stories taught me at least two lessons. First, that my ancestors had incredible power and knowledge. Second, that their strength and ability resided in me as their descendent. These stories were critical to my identity formation as a strong, intelligent, capable Hawaiian woman.

Growing up with my maternal grandmother, she reminded me of both her trials and triumphs. In the face of financial poverty, she kept food on the table, a roof over her children's heads, and even sent my mother to a private school. When all other schools failed my uncle and his struggle with dyslexia, my grandmother organized a new school for children needing special assistance with nearly no money but much determination. Her stories instilled in me a resiliency and a responsibility to care for all, not just our immediate family. I learned from her the true meaning of community and aloha.

I have also been influenced by my parents, two brown scholars and activists[15] who have always stood up for what they believed in despite the overwhelming opposition in their paths. I have been shaped by their commitment on the front lines, their academic scholarship, and their confidence to speak out. Witnessing their brilliance and bravery, their quest for social justice has become my own.

I have not only been shaped by the stories and spirit of both my ancestors as well as my immediate family, but also by many of my early educational settings in which Hawaiian ontologies, pedagogies, and epistemologies were a main focus. In my Hawaiian language immersion school experiences, we learned through songs that honored the land and ocean that surrounded us; we learned all the important aspects of the water cycle through traditional chants; and we spoke the same language that our ancestors did, which further connected us to them with each statement that we made.

When I was not in school, I was with my mother at work at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, where she is a professor in Hawaiian Studies.[16] Therefore, my education and identity formation as a young Hawaiian was further influenced by my role models at the University; by educated, outspoken, Hawaiian professors; by budding Hawaiian academics who looked like me and who could speak Hawaiian to me. I also stood side by side with these Hawaiian role models on protest lines, at rallies, and at community events fighting for the survival of Hawaiian language, culture, and education. Therefore, from an early age, I believed I would grow up to be an intelligent and strong Hawaiian woman just like my role models.

In addition to my influences at home and at school, I also grew up in a hālau hula[17] and a hālau wa'a.[18] These hālau provided me a canvas for practical application and further immersion in the Hawaiian values and customs I grew up with at home and in school. These hālau were also opportunities for me to further delve into ancestral knowledge, which was made relevant by my teachers for my life in contemporary Hawai'i.

In addition to the many elements of my world that grounded me in being a Hawaiian woman, I have also been nourished by genealogies within the Western academy. Some of my most influential mentors – professors from the academy – invited my confidence to use my own stories, experiences, and Hawaiian cultural knowledge as foundational material to inform and counter colonizing master narratives in education (Freire, 1993). For example, I recall one occasion in which one of my mentors and dissertation committee members suggested to the rest of my committee that they 'Stay out of her way and let her do her thing.' I recognize that this declaration of confidence in me by my mentor has a genealogy of its own; a line of interconnected mentor/mentee relationships that invites and empowers.

As an adult, I have also been shaped by my time witnessing and engaging in active participation within the academy. In particular I have been involved with faculty who do not take 'no' or 'there is no money' as acceptable answers. Instead they analyze budgets, organize conversations, and engage with both administration and the legislature until their voices and needs are heard and addressed. From this genealogy I have learned the power of pushing beyond what I might believe is possible (Hind, personal communication, April 25, 2013) for the good of the greater group and community.

Bubba's story

I was born and raised in a small town in the Pacific Northwest where my family had moved over 60 years prior. I am a descendant of the Cherokee Nation that comes from the eastern part of the United States. My Cherokee family traces from Oregon to Oklahoma. Before Oklahoma many of my family were and still are found throughout North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. I am registered as a Western Band Cherokee, a term imposed upon my people after the forceful removal of many tribes, including Cherokee, to 'Indian Country,' just west of the Mississippi to Oklahoma in 1838. Hence, those Cherokee who were re-located in the west were given the name 'Western Band Cherokee.' This forceful removal is often known as 'The Trail of Tears' (Pevar, 1992).

My great grandparents on my father's side were both very proud and strong Cherokee who lived most of their lives in Oregon after relocating from Oklahoma during the depression. They lived their lives and raised their family of eight children based on the Indigenous values and beliefs that had been passed down to them. One of these core values was to always have compassion for all things.

In order to earn some extra money my Great Grandmother took a job managing a hotel that mostly served the Indigenous people of the area. There was a reservation nearby, hence the large Indigenous population. Even though she was not from that area and was not part of that Native American tribe, she was known by all the local Indigenous families and soon was considered by most as an extended family member. Through her generosity towards others, Great Grandma created lasting relationships with many of the families. When I was young I remember going to my great grandparents' home to visit and a lot of the time they would have visitors. Many of Great Grandma's visitors became my mentors, teaching and sharing with me Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

Although I was not raised in my ancestral homeland on the eastern side of the United States, my family continued our genealogical practice of actively connecting with the natural environment. For my family, the woods have always been home. My earliest memories are being bundled up in my long johns with two coats and going waterfowl hunting with my family. I was three or four years old at the time. We would rise way before dawn and get all of our clothes on and pile into our old stick-shift Chevy truck, the five of us packed in like sardines, and our black lab named Mike in the back. I was just small enough that Dad would carry me on his shoulders down through the grass and across the creek to our duck blind[19] that sat directly between the Alkalai Lake and a shallow pond surrounded by grain fields. We sat in the dark waiting with anticipation for first light when the sky would awaken with the

sounds of waterfowl that would begin their trek from the lake to the pond and grain fields for feeding during the day.

This is where my education began. I remember my dad was very strict about what we shot for food and we were taught from a very young age that we could never shoot anything that we could not first identify by sight, sound, and habit. Simply put it was a matter of respect! Learning how to identify bird species was not the only thing I learned over the years hunting with my family in the duck blind. We learned how the world worked and where we fit into it; how the hawks, eagles, and coyote also hunted the same waters as we did and how the rabbits and neotropical bird species used the same vegetation as our duck blind for homes. We were taught that we were all connected and to see the world through a holistic lens where everything has a purpose and is equally important. We learned that we, as humans, are not more important than any other animal.

Using our senses we could connect with the environments through a much deeper relationship than trying to understand what a marsh is by reading it in a book. The connection was a spiritual one that filled all my senses. I can vividly remember the marsh and those experiences brighter and clearer than any HD video. I can smell the rushes and rabbit brush, I can hear the swans running across the water splashing their wings as they try to get enough thrust and lift to fly. I can see the ducks flying in formation and patterns. I can also see and feel the ducks my mom and dad shot, touching their bills and eyeballs after they fell. I remember the webbing of their feet and how soft the feathers felt. I remember how the water glided off the waterproof feathers and wondering how that is possible. Not only do I hold with me these memories, but these first-hand experiences were also the foundation for all of my later university work in the sciences (Figure 3).

In addition to being shaped by my family and the connections they continue to foster with the natural environment, I am very fortunate to have been nourished by the genealogies of many different Native American and Western educators. One of the most influential people over the years has been Dr. Frank Kanawha Lake. Kanawha is from Karuk, Cherokee, and Chicano heritage, and was working as a fish biologist in Northern California when we met. Kanawha was the first person I ever heard talk about environmental science through an Indigenous lens. He also shared with me how hard it was to be an Indigenous person studying Western science. He said what made it hardest for those of us Indigenous scientists who wanted to utilize both TEK and Western science was that we had to not only know the

Figure 3. Bubba with a steelhead on the Rogue River in Oregon.

ins and outs of both knowledge systems but we also had to know how to transit between and communicate across different worldviews. Listening to his stories and being mentored by him over the years validated who I was and the experiences I had growing up out on those lakes.

Another university genealogy that shaped who I am today resulted from the mentorship and work with Dr Judith Vergun at Oregon State University. Under her leadership, a small group of Indigenous graduate students I was a part of had the opportunity to work on the Warm Springs Sustainability Project, an Indigenous community-based action research project that looked at how to incorporate TEK into Western science. Much of what we learned came from listening and talking with mentors within the communities we were working with such as Kanawha, Robin Kimmerer, Dennis Martinez, Mavis Shaw, Bodie Shaw, Morrie Jimenez, Bob Tom, and Tom Happynook. We also had the opportunity to work with these Indigenous mentors by co-teaching a course with Dr Vergun that looked at natural resource science and education through an Indigenous lens. It was this course that changed my life and my thinking about science and how it is taught or not taught in the classrooms. When our group was not teaching we were researching, reading, and discussing issues and ideas about how to build bridges between what we were learning in our Western science courses with the teachings of Indigenous communities. We then took those connections and developed courses, curricula, and presentations that incorporated both Indigenous and Western perspectives in science education. We used this work to engage with K-12 schools, university students and faculty, and also community organizations and Native American tribes.

Many of those Indigenous mentors were telling us to look closer at what was being taught, or more importantly not being taught, in the sciences within the academy. This is when I first started to define who I was as a Cherokee man within the university. I was also learning where my childhood experiences and relationships to the outdoors I had gained over the years fit into Western science.

Reflecting on our genealogies

We both can and have been labeled by others, including academic researchers, as disadvantaged because of our socioeconomic status and because we both come from ethnic backgrounds that are underrepresented in higher education and other areas of economic opportunity. However, as we critically reflect on our genealogical stories in conversation as a couple and with others, we do not define ourselves as disadvantaged. We reject that label. This is the power of the ethnographic methodology defined by Guajardo et al. (2008) as described above. Through research on ourselves, our families, our communities, and our environments, we define ourselves as strong, resilient, and connected. We recognize those assets within us because we acknowledge, reflect, and make sense of the many genealogies that shape us.

The power of place

As is evident within our many genealogical stories, we both have been and continue to be shaped in very unique ways. On a geographical level, I (Kaiwipuni) was raised in my homeland. This reality has privileged me to be actively involved in my Indigenous language and culture. Bubba, on the other hand, was not raised on his ancestral lands because of forced removal (Pevar, 1992). Instead his resilient family brought values and practices embedded in their ancestral DNA (Kanahele, 2012) to their new home. I also spent much of my time in traditional academic institutions, either at my school or at the university with my mother. Bubba spent much of his time in the outdoor academic institution better known as the natural environment. In both our cases, the places where we grew up shaped us in different yet serious ways.

In our work we are careful to engage with others in spaces and places with intention. We recognize the power of the landscapes and ecologies of a place as critical shaping genealogies. For example, we hold our Hawaiian language and culture classes for elders at the university. However, those classes are in no way connected to university coursework and counted within the university system. Our classes are completely independent of the university; we are a community-based non-profit organization

who utilizes a university classroom at Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.[20] When the elders come each Saturday, they feel a part of the larger Hawaiian education movement because of the location of their classes. In addition, in order to utilize the space, our group is responsible for doing simple cleaning like weeding and plant pruning on site several times a year. In this way, we engage with the natural environment of the place, which allows us to further connect to the space that nourishes us.

Intentional mentorship

Each of us also has mentors from different parts of the world with unique specializations. At the same time, we both connect to genealogies of Indigenous mentorship within the academy and also in the community. It is especially important how different mentors along the way invited and included us in the teaching, learning, leading, and research processes.

We are deliberate about inviting and including our own students and mentees into the learning process with us. Something as simple as 'What graduate programs are you applying for?' invites and expands the imagination of what a student previously thought she was capable of. An inquiry such as 'Tell me the story of how your family hunts deer' recognizes a student's knowledge system that may have never before been of interest from an academic mentor. It is amazing how these simple yet intentional invitations build relationships and opportunities.

Realizing our roles

Our shaping genealogies have prepared us in very significant ways to assume particular roles in our homes, in our communities, and also in the academy. Our personal interests and skill sets also intersect with those genealogies to shape us. One way to describe these emerging roles is to look to the Hawaiian example. Specifically, in the Hawaiian worldview, when we know our genealogies – how we are connected through bloodlines, experiences, knowledge systems, and relationships – the familial order of kaikua'ana and kaikaina is established.

Kaikua'ana refers to the elder sibling or senior genealogical line while kaikaina refers to the younger sibling or junior genealogical line (Pukui & Elbert, 1986). Defining the relationship between the kaikua'ana and kaikaina is kuleana. Some of the English words for kuleana include responsibility, right, privilege, concern, and authority (Pukui & Elbert, 1986). Generations of Hawaiian ancestral knowledge teach us about the interdependent and reciprocal nature of this relationship (Kamakau, 1991; Kame'eleihiwa, 1992).

Specifically, the kuleana of the kaikua'ana is to nourish and protect (Kame'eleihiwa, 1992). For example, in Hawaiian tradition, the land and plants are born before humans (Lili'uokalani, 1897). Those plants feed the people and provide the tools necessary for protection and shelter. In our households we similarly see this responsibility carried out when the elder of the house nourishes the younger members with both food and knowledge and also protects them by providing them with a home.

Interdependently, the kuleana of the kaikaina is to mālama. English terms for mālama include to care for and tend to (Pukui & Elbert, 1986). Returning to the Hawaiian genealogy of the land, plants, and humans, humans are born last and are thus kaikaina to the land and plants. Hence, the kuleana of humans is to care and tend to the land and plants so those natural elements can continue to produce nourishment and protection. In a Hawaiian household, we can recognize this responsibility the way the young ones make sure the elders are well tended to, cared for, and kept comfortable.

With this said, as I (Kaiwipuni) reflect on my many genealogies, the kaikua'ana/kaikaina relationship is especially useful for me as I think about how to engage in the world through a Hawaiian worldview. At the same time, although Bubba did not grow up with these particular Hawaiian concepts, he was raised with very similar roles and responsibilities. He recognizes that he has been nourished and now assumes the role to nourish others. In particular, two contexts in which we now recognize our role as kaikua'ana include the context of parenthood and the context of educator.

Becoming parents

The most relevant context in which we have arrived as the kaikua'ana or the one responsible for nourishing is within the context of becoming parents. This is a journey we have indeed been on together, constantly learning, reflecting, and engaging in conversation with each other, our parents, and other mentors. As parents of two children, our seven-year-old daughter Hā'ena and our four year-old son Lamakū, the conversion of all our genealogies could not be more clear and yet complex. As all parents do, we want everything for our children. Our 'everything' includes all that we have been nourished within our genealogies, including but not limited to Hawaiian language, hula, a critical consciousness, hunting, fishing, and a spiritual connection to mother earth (Figure 4).

In addition, as we get to know their unique personalities, we recognize Hā'ena's love for art, story, and theater and Lamakū's physical strength and agility. We know that their skills and interests will continue to grow and develop. Therefore, we look to our genealogical stories to inform us on how to shape them and recognize that we have to connect with other genealogies when we need help.[21] Undoubtedly, we strive to utilize all that has nourished us – both in the academy and also from our Indigenous knowledge systems – to nourish our own children.

Education beyond our family

As we reflect on our genealogical stories, one of the things that has become evident is that we would not be who we are today if we were only fed by our biological genealogies. Many of our mentors come from outside our families, outside our own cultures, and from across oceans and continents. Therefore, we recognize that part of our responsibility in having been nourished by those different genealogies is continuing the life of that genealogy; we must continue to teach and share beyond our own children.[22] Interdependently, we know that when we nourish our students, we are building a healthier community for our children.

The weight of the responsibility

While our role and responsibility as educators with students and colleagues is both exciting and invigorating, we admit that sometimes it feels overwhelming. Searching for paid work in an academy that does not value our work can be exhausting. Juggling an internal consciousness towards moral courage

Figure 4. Kaiwipuni and daughter Hā'ena performing a hula together.

and the reality of paying rent in Hawai'i can be draining. Sometimes all we want to do is run away to the forests of Oregon or to the beaches on Moloka'i.[23] On occasion, we do sneak out for a few days. Using that time away to rejuvenate, we return to our responsibility to continue our work in the place we have been mentored to occupy: the space in and between the academy and our communities. We recognize the privilege of being a part of genealogies situated within the university setting and also stemming from Indigenous cultural practice. Hence part of our responsibility in our role as educators is to be border crossers, translators, and transitors; to help create the space for more diverse connections and conversations to occur across multiple borders.

Caretaking and stewardship

In addition to coming into our roles as kaikua'ana as parents and mentors, we also recognize that there are some relationships in which we will always be the kaikaina as a student, mentee, and steward. For example, we will always be our parents' children. We are also children of the land and recognize that no matter where we live, mother earth sustains us with each breath we take, each step we tread on her bosom, and each drink of water we consume. As kaikaina, we recognize our role to tend to our elders and senior genealogies by utilizing our Indigenous knowledge as well as our academic skills. With our parents our responsibility can be as simple as ensuring their health, both physical and spiritual, amidst all the distractions and busyness of the world. Within this responsibility we also teach our children how to tend to their grandparents such as by sending them to check that their grandma and grandpa have eaten dinner and making sure to kiss them goodnight.

Our relationship with the land is also critical and sometimes made complicated by our limited access on a daily basis.[24] However, how can we teach about cultural practice and environmental stewardship if we do not live it ourselves? Therefore, through our late night conversations and also partnering with our neighbors and nearby community groups, we find ways to practice our role as stewards of the environment and to teach that value and practice to our children (Figure 5).

On other occasions, we rally with others from the university, our families, and also our communities to protect our land. This sometimes includes sit-ins, protesting, and testifying on behalf of our mother earth.[25] Our recognition of this important role as caretaker is tricky in the world of academia, which often does not value that kind of constant tending and caring required. Also, universities are often

Figure 5. The taro plant (staple food of the Hawaiian people) and our son, Lamakū, learning about how to care for it at Ka Papa Lo'i 'o Kānewai taro garden at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

involved in the desecration of mother earth and our Indigenous sacred places in the name of science and knowledge creation.[26] Hence, we recognize our responsibility as heightened in this role to use multiple pedagogical approaches to help inform and invite academia into our world and value systems to create a shift in consciousness and praxis within the academy for our environments and communities. We have learned and continue to be mentored by elders in our community as we emerge as ʻaʻaliʻi kū makani in this critical area and also begin to shape future ʻaʻaliʻi, including our children and students, who will sustain this work.

Scholarship for our children

We see our role as parents as defining the work we do because ultimately, we are trying to shape the ecology by preparing transformational leaders who will positively impact our children and the many generations yet to come. We look to our students – future educators, scientists, and policy-makers – to be ʻaʻaliʻi kū makani so that they make decisions and engage in praxis (Freire, 1993) that cultivates our children's joys and gifts and sustains the natural environments for future generations. We acknowledge that the academy is a great place to engage in this work because it provides so many opportunities for both mentors and mentees to engage in the teaching and learning process. We also know that higher education benefits our students in multiple ways that afford them promising futures.

Often, however, the academy is slow in its response to knowledge systems, values, methodologies, and genealogies such as our own. Although all universities in Hawai'i and across the United States of America are situated upon Indigenous land (Justice, 2004), the institutions do not descend from genealogies whose values align with those of Indigenous peoples; that are responsive and reciprocal in their aloha to communities and environments. We also recognize that institutions are comprised of people. We believe, because we have witnessed it, that people can change. The example of the elders reminds us that even late in a life cycle people can grow and transform. Hence, we have hope for our university and others like it that they can become populated with more ʻaʻaliʻi kū makani who can transform the campus culture (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012) to reflect Indigenous values and ways of knowing and being.

We recognize that our genealogies put us in a position to help shift the consciousness of the academy. We believe that the principles and values that have guided our own journeys and arrival – the critical reflection through auto-ethnographic research including the connecting and sense making of our genealogies and the recognizing of our resulting roles and responsibilities – can also shape and transform those who comprise the university. While we want to become professors at our university so that we can work with students, other faculty, and engage in the process of research and knowledge creation with community, that is not our current reality. I (Kaiwipuni) am in a temporary one-year non-teaching faculty position and Bubba's position at the university is terminating with the end of a grant cycle. However, that does not mean that the work stops. When we look at our children, we are reminded that we must be more creative. There is not a minute to lose. We also know from our own experiences that the academy is not the only place where ʻaʻaliʻi kū makani can be nourished and cultivated. The community is fertile ground. Therefore we engage in this work where and with the people we have access to: our children, families, and communities. As we do so, we invite the academy into this work through various partnerships so that they can witness and be transformed by our engaged scholarship for our children and communities.

Notes

1. The authors of this piece are husband and wife and together have two children.
2. Likelike is a Hawaiian word (pronounced Lee-kay lee-kay).
3. In 1893 a small group of white businessmen performed a coup d'état and overthrew Queen Liliʻuokalani, the reigning Hawaiian monarch (Liliʻuokalani, 1897).

4. In 1983 less than 1% of all Hawaiians could speak Hawaiian and there were approximately 500 native speakers left. Today, 3–5% of Hawaiians can now speak Hawaiian. Therefore, there has been a increase in the last 30 years and yet there is still much work to do.
5. Hula: Hawaiian dance.
6. Her dissertation was later published as the book Kame'eleihiwa (1992).
7. An 'ukulele is a Hawaiian musical instrument resembling a small guitar.
8. Kaiwipuni is Native Hawaiian and Bubba is Western-Band Cherokee. We will describe this in more detail later in the piece.
9. Aku: 'Expressing direction away from the speaker' (Pukui & Elbert, 1986, p. 15).
10. Mai: 'Towards the speaker, this way' (Pukui & Elbert, 1986, p. 220).
11. Lei: Garland, wreath; necklace of flowers, leaves, shells, ivory, feathers, or paper, given as a symbol of affection (Pukui & Elbert, 1986).
12. A lo'i is a Hawaiian taro garden that is fed by streams. There is a lo'i adjacent to the building where our class is held.
13. Tutu Pele is the affectionate name my family (and many others) gives to Pele, the Hawaiian goddess responsible for volcanoes, lava, and new land (Handy & Pukui, 1998; Kame'eleihiwa, 1999).
14. Hi'iakaikapoliopele is a Hawaiian goddess who is famed for her ability to battle large dragons and also bring someone back to life (Ho'oulumāhiehie, 1905–1906).
15. My father, Dr James Anthony, is a Fiji born East Indian. He earned his PhD in History from Australia National University. My mother, Dr Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa, is a Hawaiian academic. She earned her PhD in History from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.
16. My parents divorced when I was six years old and I grew up primarily with my mom.
17. Hālau hula: A hula school.
18. Hālau wa'a: Canoe paddling school.
19. A duck blind is a place where we hide from the ducks while we hunt them.
20. For more information and photographs of this building, visit http://manoa.hawaii.edu/hshk/kamakakuokalani/
21. Examples include early childhood education and development and social entrepreneurialship. These are not our areas of expertise yet we see the value and importance of them so we partner with others who are experts to stregthen the work we do.
22. We recognize that there is knowledge that should be kept within the family and knowledge that can be shared out. We also recognize that our mentors who are not from our own families teach and share certain things only with their own families and other things with mentees such as ourselves. Therefore, when we suggest cotinuing the genealogy of mentorship and knowlege from our mentors, we mean it in the sense that is appropriate and does not defy any type of familial privacy.
23. Moloka'i is a small island within the Hawaiian archipelago. It is still very rural and has beautiful places to return to a more traditional way of living close to the land.
24. We live in a town house with a front-yard that is 4 feet by 8 feet and a small backyard on a steep slope. Hence, there is not much space to interact with the natural environment within the vicinity of our house.
25. In Hawai'i, especially, there is constant overdevelopment and devastation to our natural environments and resources in the name of tourism and Western science. There are many land struggles to cite. A current issue right now is the desecration of the Hawaiian sacred mountain Mauna Kea to build a 30-meter telescope.
26. The academy uses science and knowledge creation as the reason for desecration of sacred sites is necessary though we know from both experience and research that Indigenous science and knowledge creation has occurred for generations in harmony with the environment rather than by destroying it.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Daniel 'Bubba' Lipe, PhD, is a registered Western Band Cherokee. His research and work focus on Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Western science. In particular he is interested in how the two knowledge systems are unique and also compatible, and how both knowledge systems can be utilized in the education system to prepare teachers who will shape the next generation of scientists to use multiple knowledge systems and worldviews to manage natural resources.

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