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Resource Paper

# Sustaining University-Community Partnerships in Indigenous Communities: Five Lessons from Papakōlea

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## Abstract

This resource paper draws lessons from a twenty-year partnership between the Native Hawaiian community of Papakōlea, the Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development, and the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Hawai'i. Key players and co-authors describe five principles for sustained partnerships: (1) building partnerships based upon community values with potential for long-term commitments; (2) privileging indigenous ways of knowing; (3) creating a culture of learning together as a co-learning community; (4) fostering reciprocity and compassion in nurturing relationships; and (5) utilizing empowering methodologies and capacity-building strategies.

## Introduction

Universities have a mixed reputation in respect to effective partnerships with indigenous communities. In some cases, the university represents an avenue for support of indigenous knowledge and a pathway for self-determination and advancement for indigenous people, including to the university. Unfortunately, the historic narrative reflects the university as a tool of settler colonialism, one that excludes indigenous people and their epistemologies while using their communities as research laboratories. This article presents five lessons for sustaining university-

community partnerships in indigenous communities based on what we feel has been a successful example of a sustained partnership with an urban Native Hawaiian community on the Hawaiian island of O‘ahu. For more than twenty years, a unique grouping of community advocates, nonprofit professionals, and university faculty have worked together to grow resources, organizational capacity, and leadership opportunities in the Papakōlea Hawaiian Homestead community (Papakōlea).

Papakōlea has a rich and unique history as one of the first Hawaiian Homestead communities resulting from the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921 where leaseholders are required to be of at least 50 percent Native Hawaiian ancestry.<sup>1</sup>

Papakōlea is home to the largest concentration of Native Hawaiians in urban Honolulu and consists of approximately 1,800 residents. It is situated in Honolulu’s Punchbowl area on the hillsides and base of the Ko‘olau mountains only minutes north of Honolulu’s downtown civic center and financial district. Papakōlea’s proximity to the flagship campus of the University of Hawai‘i has created many opportunities for university-community collaboration over the years. Residents of this community are known for their history of community involvement and leadership to advance their economic, cultural, educational, physical, and environmental well-being in community and among the larger Native Hawaiian population. In the sections that follow, co-authors and organizers of a long-sustained university-community partnership provide an evaluative reflection on their history of collaboration and offer five key lessons for future university-community partnerships.

The community of Papakōlea, the Hawai‘i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development (HACBED), and the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) worked in partnership on a variety of projects over a twenty-year period. For this article, we will refer to this “tripartite” relationship as the PHD partnership (Papakōlea-HACBED-DURP partnership). The PHD partnership was a place-based approach to community development in which the strong connections were mutually constitutive—the place-based approach and attachments developed as the relationships deepened and vice versa. In a previous article on community planning in Papakōlea, Umemoto (2001) wrote about the early stages of the PHD partnership by focusing on the need to understand the history and epistemology of a community, especially when it is different from one’s own. This article provides lessons on developing sustained and comprehensive partnerships over time by providing a retrospective look twenty years

after its formation.

The co-authors have been community leaders, capacity-building professionals, and university faculty directly involved in the work or evaluative discussions of the work. The aim is to provide insights using examples drawn from the partnership, along with critical reflections on what worked and what could have been done better. True to an indigenous model of building knowledge, storytelling and the use of metaphors will ground this narrative and provide applicable lessons for other place-based approaches to community building. Our collective reflection centered on questions of concern that we shared: What were the factors that helped us sustain a partnership relationship over the two decades? What was essential to the partnership from the perspective of building a strong native community with greater capacity to define its future. What aspects of the relationship-building process was organic and what parts were deliberate? What can we learn from our experience together that is valuable for continued work in community development through university-community partnerships?

Using a capacity-building approach to planning, faculty and students from the DURP worked with the staff and residents of Papakōlea, sometimes independently and sometimes in tandem with the nonprofit community-based intermediary, the HACBED. This article privileges the voices of Dillard and Kekauoha, two of the co-authors, from the community who played a leadership role and continue to serve the community at the time of this writing. It is important to note that the organizations in Papakōlea had developed extensive working relationships with other agencies in the state as well as other departments at the University of Hawai'i that were also valuable partners throughout this period. Illustrations here are limited to those between Papakōlea, DURP, and HACBED.

### Collaboration between a Native Hawaiian Community, the University, and a Capacity-Building Intermediary

*'Āina as origin, 'Āina as mother, 'Āina as inspiration... 'Āina refers to the environment.*

*How this shapes how one experiences the world is an important lens through which to view cultural epistemology.*

Manulani A. Meyer (2001, 128)

Stories of adverse interactions between university researchers and indigenous communities are quite common (Christopher et al., 2008; Cochran et al., 2008; Davidson-Hunt and O'Flaherty, 2007; Santos, 2008).

Native American communities have been “analyzed, stereotyped and exploited” by outside groups, leading to mistrust when new individuals come to their communities to conduct research (Christopher et al., 2008, 1398). Feelings of distrust and disappointment from university research projects also exist in Native Hawaiian communities, along with perceptions by the community of having been treated as “guinea pigs” that are harmed by research (Fong, Braun, and Tsark, 2003). Often, research findings are not shared with the community, nor utilized in a way that indigenous communities feel are beneficial for them (Christopher et al., 2008; Cochran et al., 2008; Fong et al., 2003). Accounts describe various challenges in university-community partnerships, including shortcomings of university researchers with building multiple levels of trust, respecting indigenous epistemologies, recognizing problems linked to past research experiences in communities, sharing resources and power, and effectively disseminating findings to community members (Christopher et al., 2008; Cochran et al., 2008; Fong et al., 2003).

One approach to building collaborative relationships between indigenous communities and researchers is posited by Davidson-Hunt and O’Flaherty (2007) in what they call Place-Based Learning Communities (PbLC). They propose “the creation of dialogic networks that engage researchers and indigenous people as collaborators in a process of knowledge production” (291). They propose an important set of aims in working with Native American communities through the creation of PbLCs, described as follows:

The goals of a place-based learning community are to support people in responding to their own needs, developing a capacity to generate their own research projects, creating supportive relationships with other actors through the building of dynamic processes for the coproduction of locally relevant knowledge. (295)

The acknowledgment of “other actors” and the production of “locally relevant knowledge” are important in thinking about the partnerships that have an impact beyond a specific research project. The PbLC approach presents a valuable model for community-based research in its recognition of contextual, temporal, and spatially specific knowledge; emphasis on developing internal capacity to define one’s future; and recognition of locally relevant knowledge that is coproduced while privileging indigenous knowledge.

Successful research collaborations in Native Hawaiian communities, described in the context of Community Based Participatory Action

Research (CBPAR), share several key characteristics with PbLC. 'Imi Hale, the Native Hawaiian Cancer Awareness, Research and Training Network, was established in April 2000 as a CBPAR project that has been successful in developing partnerships that foster “bi-directional learning and capacity building” (Fong et al., 2003, 138). Nā Liko Noelo, part of the 'Imi Hale project, had core components that include “information, training and mentoring, internships and research stipends, access to research funds, technical assistance, and a community-based infrastructure” to train Native Hawaiian researchers who will remain in community long after the project is completed (Tsark and Braun, 2004, 3).

This article builds on this research and illustrates how the capacity of both the university and the capacity-building intermediary organization may be formed. This article is, in part, an exercise in the coproduction of knowledge at the nexus of *theory and the practice of community building and grassroots-led community development*. Building a culture of learning has been important for deconstructing power dynamics between the university and community and in recognizing the learning that takes place in both directions. As part of our reflections, we acknowledge that research partnerships between universities and indigenous communities require intentional care given an exploitative past. We highlight the importance of valuing indigenous epistemologies, sharing in the decision-making process with a commitment to a community's long-term future, and tending to individual relationships that are central to long-lasting collaborations. This article builds on the ideas drawn from PbLC and CBPAR in indigenous and Native Hawaiian communities while reflecting on our collective experiences in university-community partnerships that are not solely research focused and that include other partners beyond the university and a given community.

### Methodology

In the spirit of the PHD collaboration, the reflection and writing process of this article has attempted to capture the community voice and equalize power dynamics between academia and community. Because of time commitments and the realities of publishing a piece in an academic journal, the written product and analysis presented in this article may still favor an academic style of writing but is grounded in the perspectives of community authors. Over the span of five months, all the co-authors came together in dialogue to tell their stories and retrieve the lessons learned from the PHD partnership. We convened a

series of both informal and formal “talk story” sessions, including two more formal in-person sessions. By “talk story,” we refer to a style of discussion that blends the formal and informal, personal and professional, and the semi-structured and open-ended. It implies a conversational approach to the discussion that maintains each of our histories and history of relationships at the fore. Lessons were formulated collaboratively through dialogues and reviews of notes, drafts, and lists. In one of our main discussions, the co-authors simultaneously wrote reflections in response to prompts and took turns elaborating on what they wrote, which was added to their respective writings. Writing prompts asked authors to think about what made the partnerships successful and sustained, what their individual goals were in partnering, and what lessons could be learned from successes and shortcomings for the future. One of the biggest challenges in writing was to avoid downplaying the role and significance of the work that was done, as highlighting positive practices rubbed against upbringings that valued modesty and humility and that disparaged language that rung of “bragging.” A deliberate effort was made to be critically self-reflective about the partnership by thinking about what could have been done better.

Four of the authors are principal figures in the PHD story. Adrienne Dillard and B. Puni Kekauoha served in longtime leadership roles and in the founding and growth of Kula No Na Po’e Hawai’i (KNNPH) and the Papakōlea Community Development Corporation (PCDC), both of which serve Papakōlea. Dillard was involved with the Papakōlea community beginning in 1994 when her best friend Kekauoha invited her to “do her a favor for a minute.” Almost twenty-five years have passed since then, and Dillard serves as the Executive Director of KNNPH while pursuing her doctoral degree in social welfare at the University of Hawai’i. Kekauoha is a Papakōlea-born resident and longtime Hawaiian community advocate who is also a recognized leader in the state. She, like her parents before her, raised her family in Papakōlea and remains involved, currently as Associate Director of KNNPH. Karen Umemoto was a professor at DURP from 1996 to 2017. Her relationship with Papakōlea organizations (PCDC and KNNPH) spanned her more than twenty-year career at the University of Hawai’i. Her going-away party in November 2017 was hosted in Papakōlea, a reflection of the meaningfulness of her relationships as well as her career experiences there. Robert Agres served as HACBED’s first executive director of HACBED from 1999 to 2012. With a master’s degree in community economic development, he has been a central figure in the community-based economic develop-

ment movement in the state. Currently, Agres is the Deputy Director of Planning, Environmental Compliance & Sustainability at the Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation.

The remaining three authors have connections to the PHD collaboration. Kamuela Enos is the Social Enterprise Director at Mala 'Ai 'Opio Community Food Systems Initiative, known as MA'O Organic Farms. Son of HACBED founder Eric Enos, Kamuela has also become a leader in the local efforts to define what community-based economic development means in Hawai'i. Both Agres and Enos also teach courses on community development at DURP. Brent Kakesako is the current Executive Director at HACBED. With a JD and MBA from the University of Hawai'i, Kakesako integrates his understanding of teams and network building to his commitment to Hawai'i where he was born and raised. Susan Nakaoka was assistant professor at the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work at the University of Hawai'i until January 2018. Nakaoka has also co-taught a DURP community-development class with Agres and was a committee member on Dillard's dissertation. It is noteworthy that although they may articulate it differently, all seven authors have an expressed passion for working toward social justice that is expressed through community-development work. In addition, all authors are people of color who make connections between their place of origin, family experience, and histories of racial and national struggles with the work that they do. We also acknowledge that ethnic, class, and occupational intersectionalities afford unequal privileges, such as with Japanese American professionals like Umemoto, Kakesako, and Nakaoka who may unfairly receive greater standing or societal advantages in Hawai'i's stratified social structure. We see these stratified positionalities as embedded in a larger settler colonial context, which had been critical to keep in mind in both reflection and the collaborative work.

### Overview of Partnership-Building in Papakōlea

Those who have played a leadership role in the Papakōlea home-stead community have maintained a grounding in the local and ancestral wisdom of their elders while exploring the world of ideas beyond its geographic boundaries. The PCDC and KNNPH, with which the community co-authors have worked, have built a reputation as effective, collaborative partners on a wide variety of projects over the years and its leaders have come to serve on boards and committees outside of Papakōlea. In the course of these partnerships, they have built valuable relationships and networks and have brought a steady stream of



resources into the community to provide programs and opportunities to residents ranging from health screenings, elder care services, after school and summer youth programs, creation of a community kitchen, training programs, and classes in Native Hawaiian language and cultural practices, among others. Their long-standing partnerships with the University of Hawai'i have spanned numerous departments of applied disciplines that focus on training practitioners who will eventually work in community settings. The academic units that have had long-standing partnerships are DURP, School of Social Work, School of Nursing, Department of Psychiatry, and the John A. Burns School of Medicine's Department of Native Hawaiian Health, though they have also worked on shorter-term projects with other university departments such as Public Health, Public Administration, and the Hawaiiuiakea School of Hawaiian Knowledge. They also extend to other universities such as Hawai'i Pacific University's Schools of Social Work and Nursing, Chaminade University School of Business and Communication, Chaminade University School of Nursing, Honolulu Community College, Kapi'olani Community College, and Osaka Prefecture University of Japan.

The Papakōlea university-community partnership is distinct not only in its sustained duration but also in the nature of its inception. It initially formed out of a neighborhood visioning project rather than a traditional or community-based participatory action research project or student-centered program. Because of its proximity to the flagship state university (the University of Hawai'i), the Papakōlea community has had frequent requests from researchers seeking access to the Native Hawaiian population. Similar to other indigenous communities' experiences, residents felt they were objects being studied, rather than research partners. They also felt that researchers were deficit focused, rather than studying the strengths and beauty of the community. Thus, community members became wary of university-led initiatives. Dillard explains:

Researchers would show up in the community of Papakōlea and begin to knock on doors to gather the data. Community residents wanted to know if anyone in community were aware of what they were doing and how they would be informed of the results of their surveys. More often than not, there was not a plan to return to the community. One example is a researcher who conducted research and did an article without the com-

munities' knowledge that was recently found in a publication. When asked what happened the researcher indicated she forgot to send it to community (2017).

As a result of these experiences, the community became "closed" to research projects, as the kūpuna (elders) declared they did not want to allow further access for any research projects. As a new organizer in the community, Dillard respected this point of view. As an African American woman from the Midwest, she also understood the perspective as a common racial frame.

This resistance was overcome in the mid-1990s with an initiative of the Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center (QLCC, but now referred to as the Lili'uokalani Trust), an organization dedicated to the benefit of Hawaiian orphan and destitute children by the beloved and last reigning monarch of Hawai'i prior to the illegal overthrow. The then-QLCC leadership contracted the University of Hawai'i at Manoa School of Social Work and Department of Urban and Regional Planning to assist social workers in their various units as they made an organizational shift toward community building. Co-author Umemoto was paired with co-authors Puni Kekauoha and Adrienne Dillard to work with the Honolulu unit in the Papakōlea community. From that time, she maintained an ongoing working relationship with Papakōlea. As a faculty member of DURP and the College of Social Sciences, merit reviews allowed for contributions to community-engaged research, teaching, and service activities in addition to peer-reviewed publications and other traditional forms of scholarly productivity.<sup>2</sup>

Starting with the aspirations expressed by members of the Papakōlea Community Association, it was clear that regaining control and use of the community center, which had come under the management of the City and County of Honolulu, Department of Parks and Recreation, was a major priority. The Papakōlea Community Center is a 5,712-square-foot multipurpose center that now houses two meeting rooms, office space, a library and technology center, a certified commercial kitchen, basketball courts, and a playground. They had many ideas for what they would like to do at the park programmatically, recalling earlier times when the community did control the community center. It is located in the middle of the community, home to more than 1,800 individuals in 402 residences. Dillard and Kekauoha requested a planning project to come up with a collective community vision of their desired future. This ground-up process was needed to align their work with what the community thought

was most needed. A plan was created, which helped them regain administrative control of the community center with support from the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands. Papakōlea community leaders established a new nonprofit organization, the PCDC.

Recognized as Papakōlea's first federally recognized nonprofit, KNNPH, was established in 1992 to address the educational needs of the children of Papakōlea. During the visioning project, KNNPH provided technical and administrative support to establish the community development corporation. Both organizations worked together to realize the programmatic goals set forth in the visioning plan.

The visioning process occurred within the broader context of community development in Hawai'i. As an intermediary founded to support indigenous community economic development in the state, HACBED became an important player in the PHD collaboration. HACBED was formed in 1992 by community and cultural practitioners as a response to development pressures of the 1970s and 1980s. HACBED was a space for these practitioners to define the kind of development they wanted: development that would respect culture and values, distribute wealth equitably, and empower residents rather than leave them disenfranchised—development guided by the needs and priorities of the communities. HACBED incorporated as a nonprofit to specifically encourage increased investment in community-based approaches to economic development. In the process, HACBED provided vital support in terms of convening, facilitating, and building networks across the state, hence taking on an intermediary role. This role was critical to creating a space for community and institutional partners alike to feel safe and be willing to be vulnerable and build that sense of trust, which set up that co-learning experience and process of translating between community and institutional partners.

The PHD partnership involved community-based economic development feasibility studies, capacity building, community-building training, conferences, ad hoc consultations, and various forms of student involvement supervised by faculty colleagues, including Professor Dolores Foley. Continued involvement on the part of DURP was mainly through service-learning courses. Meanwhile, a HACBED-sponsored capacity-building training and networking program called Community Connections had become a crucial vehicle for Papakōlea leaders to grow and meet others doing similar work. It was held for twelve successive years between 1994 and 2006 with a nine-month training program and related workshops and conferences that convened grassroots organiza-

tions across the state. This served as a network of support and sharing with heavy participation among Native Hawaiian organizations. Through their participation, co-authors Puni Kekauoha and Adrienne Dillard came to serve on the HACBED board, and many younger leaders grew from the hard work and wide range of activities and opportunities that were created. Subsequently, HACBED's Bob Agres became a regular lecturer in DURP, teaching courses on community planning and community economic development. This strengthened the institutional ties between the three entities.

### Lessons Learned

Many useful lessons emerged from the self-reflective discussions about the PHD partnership and were synthesized into five main areas:

1. Building partnerships based upon community values with potential for long-term commitments;
2. Privileging indigenous ways of knowing;
3. Creating a culture of learning together as a co-learning community in forging strategies for change;
4. Fostering reciprocity and compassion in nurturing relationships; and
5. Utilizing empowering methodologies and capacity-building strategies.

We describe each of these with examples from the work in the following section.

#### **1. Building partnerships based upon community values with potential for long-term commitments**

The values that drive most institutions of higher education and their temporal rhythm inherently clash with those of indigenous communities. Particularly at research universities, faculty are evaluated first and foremost on the quality and volume of published research and the impact of their scholarly work on their fields of expertise as indicated by scholarly awards and reviews and measured in increments of academic terms. In most communities, these matter very little. Grassroots organizations committed to community well-being and greater control of their futures, such as those in Papakōlea, determine the value of higher education partnerships by the impacts on their communities and the capacities they may have gained as a result of working together. They have their temporal rhythm that does not abide by the cycle of semes-

ters or quarters but, rather, on life events that they experience and that impact their communities, from births, deaths, and community celebrations to grant deadlines and policy decisions that have defined their past and shape their futures.

One characteristic of the PHD partnership that was identified as necessary was the establishment of shared values based on those of the community rather than the university. The launch that began with a visioning project serendipitously set this groundwork for the university partners to understand the values articulated in the various stages of the visioning project because visioning began with the identification of shared values among community participants. A shared sense of community values was articulated, for example, in a vision statement that emerged from the participatory planning process, which read:

Our home is Papakōlea, a community where the spirit of lōkahi and aloha inspires self-reliance and participation to share knowledge of our culture and respect of aloha. Residents assume responsibility to create a community with strong identity, spirit, and pride. Our participation nurtures our growth in education, economic well-being and improved health conditions for generations to come. (Vision statement, Papakōlea, *A Vision for the Future*, 1998)

Separate values-based vision statements were created for each area of work, including health, economic development, ohana, culture, and education. While students and faculty helped synthesize the input gathered from different subgroups (elders, youth, young adults), community leaders crafted the language of those statements. University participants strove to work in ways that valued and uplifted community voices and an emergent consensus. Referring to the initial community visioning process, Kekauoha stressed the idea of the collective: “We all sat there and worked together to create a vision for Papakōlea. It was a collective, kākou thing.” Kākou, the idea of togetherness, and kuleana, the idea of responsibility and duty, were shared values that animated this community. Honoring history, culture, and indigenous ways of being were other shared values that reinforced the idea of interconnectedness.

The second characteristic of PHD was the commitment to community development beyond the typical cycles that mark the ends and beginnings of academic time. The DURP department at the University of Hawai‘i, through the faculty co-author as well as other faculty and students, did not treat this collaboration as a one-time effort and remained open to future collaborations. A short time after the visioning project, the faculty co-author began to cross paths with members of HACBED who

also worked with Papakōlea leaders. Co-author and then-HACBED Director Agres was invited to teach community economic development and community-planning courses at DURP. Between Umemoto, Agres, and other faculty, members of DURP contributed to maintaining a somewhat steady stream of client-centered student projects that also solidified the partnership over time. Meanwhile, Papakōlea organizations connected with other universities and departments that had other needed expertise and resources, such as in social work and nursing. Papakōlea's need for expertise, coupled with the university's growing support for service learning and internship opportunities created fertile ground for reciprocally supportive relationships between community and university partners. In particular, DURP scholars favored a social justice approach to their engagement, which governed their interactions. This combined with the University of Hawai'i College of Social Sciences' turn toward engaged scholarship and Papakōlea's increasing capacity to partner with university entities led to more equitable relationships than in the past.

This first experience with the visioning project that was facilitated by QLCC, however, set the tone and stage for subsequent collaborations. In particular, it provided the environment for trust and community building. Kekauoha describes how this first experience provided the foundation for the long-term partnership:

For me, it was that first relationship that enabled us to continue down this road. In that period right before, we had certain funders and other academics come around which were not helpful experiences. For this project, it was all about relationship building with the students and with Karen. For me, relationship building takes time. During the visioning process, it was not necessarily building relationships with the "University" but building a relationship with and trusting Dolores, Kem, Karen, and the students that were here to conduct that visioning project twenty years ago. All of my mana'o (thoughts, feelings, and opinions) [about building partnerships] comes from that place and time—it started with that first experience.

Community co-authors Kekauoha and Dillard were careful to protect the community from disrespectful or exploitative relationships with outside institutions, informed by past experiences. In fact, they actively schooled potential partners about their protocols for collaboration. Agres commented on their ability to do this, explaining that "how you enter community is so important. KNNPH has always done a good job of that—instructing us *how* to enter community in respectful, mean-

ingful ways.” It is tantamount for university partners to understand a community’s history with educational institutions, learn any past wrongdoings of universities and researchers, and find out how best to demonstrate respect based on the values and cultural protocols of indigenous communities.

## 2. Privileging indigenous ways of knowing

It is widely acknowledged that different cultural groups share different epistemic lenses—ways of knowing—that shape how the world is seen and interpreted. Acknowledgment of this is critical in university-community partnerships in indigenous communities where there are often stark differences in values and knowledge systems between Western and indigenous epistemologies, however “Westernized” a particular group may appear. In an earlier paper, Umemoto (2001) describes the challenges inherent in interactions between groups or individuals holding different worldviews, with insights from this visioning process. The five challenges she identifies are (1) traversing interpretive frames embedded in culture, history, and collective memory; (2) confronting otherness in the articulation of cultural values and social identities; (3) understanding the multiple meanings of language; (4) respecting and navigating cultural protocols and social relationships; and (5) understanding the role of power in cultural translation (Umemoto, 2001). She stressed the critical role of those who can aid in cultural translation and the ability of “code switching” between knowledge systems.

We add to this by emphasizing that it is not only important to “code switch” between knowledge systems and their accompanying values, assumptions, beliefs, and cultural practices but that it is also critical to privilege that of the community in university-community partnerships, especially those in indigenous communities where land-based or, as in this case, ‘aina-based traditions and values are meaningfully present. Trinidad (2012) suggests a framework to promote a sense of agency and a critical understanding of the social context by privileging indigenous epistemologies and values. She calls this a Critical Indigenous Pedagogy of Place (CIPP), stressing that “centering community epistemology views knowledge as *practice-based evidence*—that is as knowledge that is acknowledged as having a local and contingent process and being accountable to the community (Fox, 2003).” Valuing indigenous ways of knowing and being describes the context in which DURP and HACBED were co-learners in the partnership. By appreciating the lived meaningfulness of ancestral wisdom and place-based cultural knowledge,

university partners can better work toward a dual fluency or multiple fluencies. This appreciation requires an open-minded approach to seeing the limits of “schooled” knowledge, much of which emanates from academia, and the possibilities of other ways of knowing that inhabit indigenous community settings.

One area in which this has become very clear is in the work of Papakōlea in the area of health, conceived of holistically regarding physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, and social well-being. The Papakōlea community vision statement for health reads: “Our spirit of lōkahi will be achieved by improving the overall well-being of the people through sharing the knowledge of good health that we may enjoy long life together” (Papakōlea, *A Vision for the Future*, 1998, 24). This vision has been the foundation of the many community-based programs and initiatives addressing health for residents at the Papakōlea community center. The language of the document reflects the felt connection between a *sense of community togetherness* and *wholeness of being to good health and longevity*, a set of connections that has also been explained in scholarly works on Native Hawaiian health (Chun 2011; McGregor, Minerbi, and Matsuoka 1998). Culturally rooted approaches to health aligned with a growing trend among health programs that were based on Native Hawaiian epistemologies. KNNPH was quite successful in creating programs founded on Native Hawaiian cultural knowledge on health and well-being, such as the PILI (Partnership in Lifestyle Intervention) Ohana Project (POP), a successful CBPR project that originated with researchers from KNNPH, four other community organizations, a team of academic researchers from the Department of Native Hawaiian Health at the University of Hawai‘i, John A. Burns School of Medicine, and five additional community organizations that served in an advisory role. The goal of the project was to establish a community-academic partnership aimed at obesity-related disparities in Hawai‘i and to implement a pilot intervention to address weight loss maintenance in Native Hawaiians and Pacific peoples; the positive outcomes were clearly measurable. In these and other ways, university-community partnerships can play a valuable role in reaffirming indigenous ways of knowing—in this case supporting Papakōlea leaders and community members in all forms of expression of “being Hawaiian.”

Efforts were made to ensure that indigenous ways of knowing were also respected in planning processes. For example, it was imperative in the various projects and for Dillard and Kekauoha’s interactions within the community to honor the kūpuna or elders. So, when



any major decision was made about the process or the substance of the plans and activities, they consulted many of their elders who had once been very active leaders in the community. Over the course of the twenty years, many of the beloved kūpuna passed on. Kekauoha and her peer group were slowly stepping into positions of decision making and slowly taking on the responsibilities of their elders, who they came to care for in many instances. These generational changes, along with other changes in the community, continue to shape the ways in which culture is passed down and practiced, but nevertheless remains important.

### **3. Creating a culture of learning together as a co-learning community in forging strategies for change**

A quality that sustained the long-term partnership was a culture of learning together as a learning community that was mutually nurturing. Members of DURP and HACBED gained valuable knowledge from those in the community, and the learning process was multidirectional. For example, because Umemoto was paired with the Papakōlea Community Association after only being in Hawai'i for less than two years, she had little knowledge of Native Hawaiian history, culture, or community organizations. The partnership was as much or even more fulfilling as a learning experience for her as a faculty member as it was for Dillard, Kekauoha, and others involved in the community. Mutual learning was also a defining feature in the relationship between DURP and HACBED. Umemoto and Agres, for example, decided to co-teach several community economic development courses at DURP, learning a great deal from one another about the subject matter as well as new pedagogical approaches. Agres continued to teach solo and later co-taught with co-author Enos, who brought in a wealth of knowledge and wisdom from his work in Wai'anae and at MA'O Organic Farms. Dillard and Kekauoha of Papakōlea often spoke in DURP classes to share their experiences and insights. Co-author Kakesako, the current Executive Director of HACBED, is also a frequent guest speaker in DURP classes. Likewise, community partners were encouraged to join in on classes involving the PHD partnership.

Thus, it was the opportunity and the ability of all partners to learn from one another in both deliberate and serendipitous ways that resulted in a fluency that bridged sensibilities and understandings across the institutional divides inherent in the languages of the university, non-profit intermediary, and the Papakōlea community. Based on a commu-

nity-centered approach taken by the faculty and students at DURP as well as HACBED in which all involved walked alongside those in the community with a listening ear, community members felt heard, built confidence, helped create the materials produced, and determined how they would utilize them. It is truly a tribute to community leaders and members that the majority of the projects detailed in the original vision and plan were successfully carried out over the twenty years that followed.

One important characteristic of the PHD partnerships was the nonhierarchical nature of the learning process that transpired. No one person's knowledge was deemed any more important or truthful than another's. Each person worked toward having dual or even multiple fluencies, meaning that members of the partnership became more familiar with the multiple vernaculars of research and higher education, public institutions and policy, and the daily language of community life. Agres uses the analogy of the Filipino Christmas food, bibingka. Bibingka is made in a special traditional oven that slowly and evenly bakes the holiday treat from the top and bottom. Agres uses the metaphor to describe the HACBED philosophy of working simultaneously at the "top and bottom" to connect partners into networks to enact social change. As an intermediary, HACBED's kuleana and responsibility is to bridge the middle to create a just playing field for communities to choose their path and act on their own. One challenge was and remains, however, the specialized and often alienating language of the research academy or government bureaucracy. While the academics involved did relatively well avoiding scholarly jargon in day-to-day interactions, they struggled with contributing to articles (such as this) that are accessible (and interesting) to the lay reader.

Another critical factor was the opportunity to expand that culture of learning through HACBED's Community Connections (CommConn), a capacity-building program that had a strong peer-learning dimension. Capacity building here includes cultivating leaders who can access power structures and resources for the community. For universities, this extends to efforts to infuse public agencies, including the university, with indigenous knowledge and cultural capital drawn from Hawaiian communities such as Papakōlea and many others. For Papakōlea partners, the initial visioning process enhanced community capacity through supporting leadership development, strengthening community bonds, making connections to decision makers and funders, and providing a product to be used to access further resources and create even broader networks.

Community members drove the process, and through that experience their leadership capacity was enhanced. HACBED's CommConn provided ways to strengthen these various forms of community capacity by bringing communities and influential figures together. This experience facilitated the development of statewide networks that became increasingly valuable over time for Papakōlea organizations and many others who participated.

This culture of learning became a way of life for many and inspired some to pursue higher education. Dillard earned a master of social work degree and recently received her doctorate in social work. Kekauoha reflected that leadership building was not confined to members of KNNPH—other community members gained job skills once they participated in grant-funded programs. The University of Hawai'i hired one community member, and another took a management position at the Boys and Girls Club. Other residents recalled having advanced in their education or careers due, at least in part, to their involvement in Papakōlea projects and activities.

A critical approach to learning requires self-awareness—being aware of your story, passion, and gifts, as well as weaknesses and the baggage you bring to the table. This critical self-awareness has meant questioning ourselves as a matter of habit, with an ongoing dialogue with oneself, such as: Why am I here? What are my motivations? What gifts do I bring? What are areas that I need to help with? Do I have team members who can compensate for my weaknesses? Was that action or interaction successful? Who was left out of that discussion? What are my privileges that limit my perceptions? How do others perceive those privileges or what do they think they are? How can I use my position to open access for others? Did I take advantage of that situation for my gain or others' benefit? It also has meant being reflexive in our practice by being willing to reflect on our mistakes and make changes to our approach when needed.

This type of critical reflexivity has meant that we try our best to be aware of the limits of one's understanding in working with others from different cultural backgrounds who may have unique traditions, practices, protocols, sensibilities, historic memories, and ways of being in the world. It also means putting our egos aside and keeping the welfare of the community in the forefront of our concerns. As Dillard put it, "It ain't about you. You should learn and focus on community, and you will benefit from that learning. Don't make it personal, about you (because) it's not about you, it's about the community."

#### 4. Fostering reciprocity and compassion in nurturing relationships

Poets have spoken about the power of love and compassion as liberating and empowering. While emotion-laden words may sound foreign to discussions of university-community partnerships, the word *aloha* may rightly describe the spirit of heart that enlivened the PHD partnership. *Aloha*, which has been literally translated as “I am of your breath,” is an important value, among other Hawaiian values, that influential members of Papakōlea embraced and extended to others. For university faculty and students, their warmth and generosity were not only welcoming but also set a tone of compassion and encouraged aloha in return. This led to a sense of reciprocity that could be seen in a deeper dedication to the work they committed to as well as long-term working relationships and a feeling of ‘ohana or family.

In urban planning literature, some models focus on participatory methods that lend to reciprocity and mutual transformation. Kennedy (2016) defines a *transformational planning approach* as one that moves beyond mere advocacy to work toward an emphasis on the transformation of people as well as places, of ways of thinking as well as social relationships. A transformative planner practices active listening, respects the knowledge of others, and can leverage community-based expertise to influence those in power. Transformative planners consider “not basing our work on the superficial pasting together of short-lived, issue-specific coalitions, but rather focusing our work on transforming relations between groups” (Kennedy, 2016, 6). Transformational planning also aims to put real control over decisions in the hands of people most affected by them. Collaborative work that is empowering often centers on community-driven processes over an extended period.

The PHD partnership projects reflected these qualities of transformation. Projects and activities were approached with the idea of eliciting community voices and instilling a feeling of confidence that communities can take greater control of their futures. The design of trainings and the various activities promoted interaction that could uplift the knowledge, dreams, and stories of residents. Dillard and Kekauoha talk about Umemoto’s approach—they felt she listened, recognized their knowledge, and valued the community perspective. In turn, the community members valued Umemoto’s time, treated the students with respect, and were reciprocal in terms of time spent and work tasks. Activities were designed to grow empathy and awareness of oneself and others and to take in other’s points of view. For PHD partners and par-

ticipants, this required meeting people “where they were at” and being open to understanding that not everyone wants to move beyond their space of comfort. Dillard explains that this process does not equate to taking pity or excusing inaction. Instead, it means saying, “I’ll meet you where you are at, and we can work together, but you can’t stay there. You have to put in the work to move or you will get left behind.” One thing that was demanded of those working in Papakōlea was a willingness to engage in the hard work of community building and community development, hand in hand with others.

Reciprocity was an essential requirement for university-community partnerships. While discussing motivation to partner, Dillard explains, “No one wants to feel as if they are being used by the other.” Partners need to feel equally valued in terms of having their needs met. There should be a balanced learning approach that embraces the various cultures of the partnership to ensure all are vested in understanding the need for shared kuleana to have a successful collaboration. She added, “For example, if a community requires student interns, program evaluation or other product, they should feel comfortable asking for support. In turn, academic and community development practitioners could rely on community for providing access to data and individuals to advance their work when all parties deemed it appropriate.” The PHD partnership was mindful of allowing the community to make the decisions as to the types of projects while university partners ensured that any products generated from a research project or program was left with the community.

In fact, the ethos of “service to the community” was something that all partners embraced in a heartfelt way and modeled for students. As entities worked to create opportunities for shared learning and capacity building, this led to a more explicit understanding of the shared set of values. In turn, a shared ethos and language among the partners set the stage for long-term working relationships. Compassion also meant respecting the realities that members of each sector faced. Funding constraints, pressures to publish, staff shortages, and other demands were stressors faced by partners. Developing partnership plans based on an awareness of the requirements, time commitments, restrictions, and possible interruptions as well as space, confidentiality, and privacy considerations were taken to avoid “burnout and shut out.”

## **5. Utilize empowering methodologies and capacity-building strategies**

The work of DURP and HACBED partners was guided by a belief in the right of Native Hawaiians to self-determination and in the ability of communities to organize themselves to collectively shape their futures. This stance manifested in the daily interactions and conversations that transpired. The planning, training, and service projects were all conducted with hopeful anticipation that positive change would result from all that was done. The assumption that change would be seen was never questioned. This certainty of hope, unbeknownst at the time to the partnering co-authors, had a significant impact on leaders in Papakōlea. In reflecting on what “made a difference,” Kekauoha shared that “Karen believed we could do it, make change for our community. That made me believe we could do it, too.... We had the vision and a collective thinking process. We created a nucleus of people that were on board and stayed the course.” Dillard added, “She listened. The students were good. The community felt in control. Additionally, the product was helpful in guiding the work for years to come.” Both Dillard and Kekauoha felt that, in their work with DURP and HACBED, power and agency were always placed in their hands.

The modes of engagement that DURP and HACBED created were designed for maximum participation by the broadest range of people. For example, in trainings and plan making, activities were tailored for different groups. Activities with kūpuna tapped their reserve of memory, engaging them in piecing together a timeline documenting the history of community development and using that as a springboard to talk about what they would like to see in the future. When engaging children, gamelike activities were created to get them to think about what they wished for the future and for their families. Young adults were asked to sketch out their ideal future community. All these elements strengthened bonds within the community and sparked hope and imagination. Also, public events like the SpeakOut, a community planning fair, allowed for anyone in the community to have input, which generated ideas used for years to come. Dillard summed it by stating, “The only way your voice wasn’t represented is if you refused to participate. Everyone had an opportunity to be heard.” The goal of planning and capacity-building trainings was to leave the community with products and capabilities to advance their work in coming years.

The training and technical assistance that HACBED provided over the years was equally empowering in the most unassuming of ways. Agres is known for talking about “the Jedi approach” to building capacity. He explained, “The Jedi approach refers to thinking something and having it influence the other person. It’s doing things where people don’t feel like their capacity is being built by someone else, but rather that they are directing their own growth.” This is not meant deceptively but reflects an approach based on the coupling of mutual learning and collective growth. He adds, “There has to be co-learning happening. You’re not helping someone if you’re not getting something out of it.” In other words, learning in a way that is reciprocal is at the same time empowering and life giving. This was a central strategy to HACBED’s community-building activities. A hallmark of HACBED-led CommConn trainings, conferences, and capacity-building workshops was storytelling and group sharing that clarified and reaffirmed the value of everyone’s lived experiences.

Impediments to applying empowering approaches that build individual and organizational capacity often came from structural sources. For the university, there are entrenched hierarchies of roles, real or perceived, that can contribute to existing power imbalances. If the university provides funding for a project, for instance, the needs and process of the community may be passed over in favor of strict timelines and requirements of funding sources. Power related to having more money, education, and social position can be critically and openly reexamined so that community members and academics come to the table knowing all have equal standing and worth. In academia, there is a need for champions who can sing the praises and reaffirm the value of community-based work. In the academy and community, there is a need for translators who can connect the work of academics to the community in ways that are relevant to the lived realities in communities. With all entities reinforcing the value of the other in the partnership, power imbalances can be lessened and contributions better leveraged.

In many ways, empowerment and capacity are reinforced in the smallest of everyday interactions. As any entity coming into a community, it makes a difference to humble oneself and listen; be open to critical feedback; strive for transparency in all activities; avoid defensiveness that can create distance; and build trusting relationships that can overcome some of the structurally embed-

ded power dynamics. Even when facilitating a project or process, it is empowering to allow the community to lead the process as much as possible, while being mindful of time constraints among volunteers. Finally, we found it helpful to be transparent from the beginning about the preceding issues and challenges to help equalize power dynamics and avoid miscommunication and false expectations.

### A Community-Centered Approach to Partnership Building

The contrast between the mistrust that characterized the community's relationship with the university decades earlier and the critical role that partnerships with universities and other organizations came to play in Papakōlea is quite dramatic. This change reflects the capacity of its organizations, leaders, and partners to continually improve ways to maintain healthy partnerships. No partnership is problem-free, and the PHD partnership confronted limitations, shortcomings, and mistakes made at different points. One challenge was the management of time demands. For example, the initial visioning project was much more taxing for community members than initially anticipated. Umemoto stated, "I really felt bad at times, knowing how stretched people in the community had become and how time-consuming the visioning project turned out to be." Though the ambitious planning goals were met, it also left many exhausted in the end. Umemoto reflects, "It taught me to spend more time talking through how much of a time commitment may be needed and to be more realistic in scoping out the parameters of a project." The subsequent community economic development projects were much more deliberately designed around the time constraints of the community partners as well as to the changing needs of the community.

This example speaks to two valuable lessons. First is the necessity of an honest and open rapport between partners so that any problems or issues that arise can be dealt with in a timely way. Hurdles will always arise. Accepting that fact makes it easier to address them as a matter of course. Informal time together to discuss problems or issues that may arise outside of formal meetings and in smaller groups can prompt collaborative problem solving. Second, what a community may need from a partnership continually evolves as their work evolves. Organizations move through different stages of development, take on different initiatives, and



involve new people and partners. For the university partner and intermediary organizations, it is helpful to be flexible in adapting to changing needs, personalities, and conditions.

For university partners, it became clear that as community partnership needs change or shift over time, no one academic department can offer the full suite of expertise, knowledge, and resources that may be required. Assisting communities to access other people and resources from the university is critical. Papakōlea leaders were known to be very resourceful, so much so that they developed an extensive web of partnerships, including different University of Hawai'i programs and schools, such as the John A. Burns School of Medicine, as well as different schools and universities in the local area, such as Kamehameha Schools and Hawai'i Pacific University. They also reached out to state and local government agencies, elected officials, and nonprofit organizations to bring services and programs into the community.

Thus, the university and intermediary organizations that co-authors represented became a part of a larger constellation of partners orchestrated with community leaders and members in the conductor's seat. KNNPH is currently working with another set of partners on a Kūpuna Community Care Network funded by the Administration for Native Americans of the Department of Health and Human Services to be a one-stop shop to assist community residents fifty-five and older and their caregivers in assuring they are able to "age safely in place" when possible and access health and social services. They continue to be successful in building upon and expanding their partnerships. However, not all communities may be as adept or have access to as wide a range of resources. Here is where university and intermediary partners can play a more active role in helping to identify what that constellation of resources can include, based on their networks and contacts. Acting collaboratively as a "community of supporters" can lead to a more sustainable structure of support in the long term.

Lastly, there remain institutional and other barriers that make it difficult to scale up these types of partnerships. The members of DPH were people of color who shared a deep commitment to community development and issues of social justice—work that is not always rewarded by universities or mainstream funders. Community transformation takes time, as Kekauoha explained: "A handful of us took the time [to keep working for the community], and that

was extremely important.” Without greater institutional support for such partnerships, they become overly dependent on a small group of committed individuals. After a twenty-year partnership, the key partners in PHD are moving to other positions and institutions. Two of the faculty member co-authors left the University of Hawai’i for various reasons. While other faculty at the university remain involved as of this writing, there was no institutional entity to readily replace the faculty doing this engaged work. If universities are committed to sustained community partnerships, a change in the hiring, reward, and personnel evaluation system is needed to encourage many more faculty to engage in community-based and applied research and pedagogy. Support for extension agents patterned after agricultural programs at universities is one example of the ways in which this work could expand.

In sum, we have presented five lessons drawn from our insights based a community-university-intermediary partnership in the Hawaiian homestead community of Papakōlea that spanned two decades. There are many more lessons to be learned and shared. As many universities turn greater attention to civic engagement, we hope that more opportunities arise for these types of partnerships to flourish. For partnerships in indigenous communities, this requires an acute awareness of the possible harms that can be done without one even knowing it. Understanding the legacies, trauma, and ongoing challenges that a people or community endure in a settler colonial context brings forth an appreciation that tends to manifest in respect and humility. Support for the principle of self-determination often appears in the natural inclination to defer to the wisdom of those in the community and to their processes of working through conflicts and differences. Knowing when to take a step back is as important as knowing when to offer support. We share these modest lessons knowing that there is no blueprint for success, but with the hope that the sharing of some of our experiences is helpful in forging partnerships that are life giving and fruitful, for all involved.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921, was enacted by the U.S. Congress to protect and improve the lives of native Hawaiians. An agency of the State of Hawaii, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) is governed by the trust and are responsible to serve its beneficiaries and manage its extensive land trust. The land trust consists of more than 200,000 acres on the islands of Hawai`i, Maui, Moloka`i, Lana`i, O`ahu, and Kaua`i. Native Hawaiian homestead beneficiaries are defined as individuals having at least 50 percent Hawaiian blood. Beneficiaries may receive ninety-nine-year homestead leases at \$1 per year for residential, agricultural, or pastoral purposes.
- <sup>2</sup> The University of Hawai`i Department of Urban and Regional Planning guidelines for faculty tenure and promotion is, just as most research universities, based on teaching, research, and service. However, credit toward research also includes evidence of the application of research in the form of professional planning and research reports and other outputs. With the expectation of at least one peer-reviewed publication or book chapter per year, the guidelines give faculty latitude for other forms of professional practice, including community-engaged research and professional service.
- <sup>3</sup> Please note the authors of this resource paper are listed in alphabetical order.

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