

19th Annual Native Hawaiian Education Association Convention
March 26th & 27th 2018
University of Hawai'i West O'ahu

This year the Native Hawaiian Education Association (NHEA) Convention hosted a range of students, professionals, and community members from across the state for two days filled with 'ike (knowledge) and best practices. There were workshops and guest speakers, along with a facilitated "talk story" session spotlighting this year's Educator of The Year Honoree Puanani Burgess. The convention's theme was I Ka Pono Kaulike O Ka Lāhui, For the Equal Rights of the Lāhui (Nation). Workshops were available both days and the title and narrative of each made it difficult to narrow down my selections. They would all serve to enhance my professional skills and allow me to return to our campus with a new wealth of 'ike to apply when working with students and share with my peers.

Our first day began with ho'okipa (welcome) and an introduction to the honored Educator of the Year, Puanani Burgess. She shared stories of life experiences and very valuable professional mile stones. It was a truly humbling experience to receive the stories and experiences Auntie Pua so willingly shared with all who were in attendance. Workshops started in the afternoon and I attended Lā'au Lapa'au which covered session times and materials for both the first and second workshops. They were conducted by master practitioner 'Ilima Ho-Lastimosa. This combined workshop was a lesson in returning to the importance of connecting with the foundation of healing and wellness. It reminded me to be cognizant of the wellbeing of the people I serve, as well as those I work with, and myself as well. As 'Ilima shared the importance of health from a holistic perspective, she reminded us that as we continue to do the work we do, with the people of our community (students and peers) it is imperative to remain centered and healthy so we may continue to be of service to our lāhui.

On the second day I attended Kūpe'e by Umi Kai for a combined first and second workshop session. Umi Kai is a cultural treasure as well as a former NHEA Educator of the Year honoree. He continues to work with the people of our community in the art of weaving many types of native and commercial materials. A quiet man by nature, Umi Kai conducts his workshops in a style that stems from traditional cultural values of observing and listening, with very minimal dialog. It challenges the student to engage in cultural practices and values in an educational setting, remaining quiet and observant in order to complete your tasks. As the kumu, he discerns when intervention is required in order to help the haumāna progress, and he will approach to assist by demonstrating the corrections and steps needed to complete the lesson or project. This kūpe'e workshop was enjoyable and very valuable not only because of the content, but mainly because of the way the lessons were delivered.

The materials covered throughout this NHEA convention were invaluable, not just in material content, but the style of delivery by cultural educators. I returned to our campus with 'ike to implement and share with students as well as peers in counseling and beyond. I was fortunate to attend NHEA this year and look forward to next year's 20th annual convention here on our University of Hawai'i Maui College campus. Mahalo.