



*Uplifting the Nation*

## Hui Mālama Ola Na 'Oiwi

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### TESTIMONY - REAUTHORIZATION HEARING

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Nothing affects one's quality of life more than one's health. Large numbers of native Hawaiians in poor health are confronted daily with this dilemma whatever ohana or island they come from. They have helplessly endured this compelling impact upon their very survival, beginning with Captain Cook's 1778 arrival and the subsequent introduction of western culture and its devastating social and medical diseases, which continue to the present time.

Nearly 400,000 Hawaiians the islands who were of "fine stature and presence" according to reports of the Cook and Vancouver voyages. However, by 1920 only 62,000 pureblooded Hawaiians remained, 6000 in 1998. For the purpose of reconciliation Hui Malama's statement will be presented from the perspective of Hawaiian health. According to Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell, noted Hawaiian physician-activist, "Hawaiian health is worse now than it was ten years ago despite establishment of the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act, and further, that the Hawaiian race is in danger of disappearing."

My name is Everett "Sonny" Kahiliokalani Kinney, Executive Director of Hui Malama Ola Na Oiwi, the Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems for the island of Hawai'i. Translated as the "organization caring for the native Hawaiian", Hui Malama has a current enrollment of 8400 Hawaiians. We try our best, with limited resources, about \$13.00 per person, to access our clients to better health through outreach and referral and other enabling services in our effort to improve their quality of life. Hui Malama, for many, is the last stop because it's clients are generally poor, elderly, have no insurance, are unemployed or disabled, several receive SSI checks and many cannot even afford medications.

Briefly our clients are also experiencing wide-spread disparities, both male and female, in all the cancers, cardiovascular-related disease, diabetes, bronchitis, asthma, overweight and obeseness, HIV/AIDS, and a significant growth in mental health diseases. In a large measure, as an indigenous group, the Hawaiians have survived the infectious ravages of the past, only to be similarly engulfed by today's chronic diseases.

In addition, the despair of a political group unable to truly gain a meaningful share of Hawaii's economy now have the highest rates of alcoholic and drug abuse, unemployment, low-income, family violence, suicide, homelessness, welfare dependency and elderly abuse among others. Any discussion of the poor state of Hawaiian health cannot be addressed without bringing together holistic approaches that will help to heal the wounds of the past.

The thrust towards improvement of native Hawaiians health care as we move towards reconciliation between our people and the Federal Government is especially timely. In the past ten years sincere efforts by the Bureau of Primary Health Care and Senator Daniel Inouye, on our behalf, have quietly helped our systems to promote greater awareness of health problems. Reconciliation efforts and the rebuilding self-esteem and pride will become valuable contributions towards resolving issues such as housing, education, jobs, and land settlements. Adopting a positive statement of purpose would greatly improve native Hawaiian attitudes in gaining greater improvements in health. To a large extent, however, we Hawaiians must also seek reconciliation among ourselves as we seek the ways and means to work together. Through diversity and respect for each other, we can resolve those social, economic, and political problems which reduce our quality of health. Without good health how can we truly enjoy the blessings that can come with reconciliation?