An Evaluation of the Native Hawaiian and Indigenous Health Summer Health Academy

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Abstract

Indigenous ways of knowing center on balance and holism, with an emphasis of learning through ancestral and intergenerational knowledge, which continue to be revitalized as a demonstration of the ongoing resilience of Indigenous Peoples. The Native Hawaiian and Indigenous Health (NHIH) Summer Health Academy (SHA) program was developed and implemented with an objective of increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education, fostering relationships at multiple levels, addressing gaps in education and academia, preparing students to work with and for Native and Indigenous communities, and changing the narrative of health and healing to better align with Native Hawaiian and Indigenous worldviews of health. Program activities included individualized mentoring, critical self-reflections through activities such as Indigenous photovoice, experiential opportunities to learn about social determinants of health, and community-engaged research Overarching themes from the projects. self-reflections included holistic and relational health, the importance of ʻohana (family), intergenerational relationships, and thriving 'Āina (land) as thriving health. Results of the pre and post-test surveys demonstrated the promise and success of the NHIH SHA course, with a statistically significant change in knowledge related to cultural humility, community-based research, Indigenous methodologies, and Indigenous frameworks of health. This program demonstrates the importance of creating a pathway of success for Native Hawaiian and Indigenous students to address gaps and disparities in higher education for Native Hawaiian and Indigenous communities at large, while increasing the pursuit of health-related fields by Native Hawaiian and other Indigenous students.

Abbreviations

CBPR= community-based participatory research IDP=individual development plan KOOKA=Ke Ola O Ka ʿĀina MMNHWG=missing and murdered Native Hawaiian women and girls MPH=Masters of Public Health NHIH=Native Hawaiian and Indigenous Health SHA=Summer Health Academy OPHS=Office of Public Health Studies

Introduction

Indigenous Peoples comprise approximately 476 million people across the globe. 1,2 Despite efforts to advance the health of Indigenous Peoples, their lifespan is on average a decade less than non-Indigenous counterparts, a social injustice that disparately affects these communities.³ Many of these health disparities stem from oppression and sociocultural determinants of health including colonization, historical trauma, and assimilative policies that contribute to erasures of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies.³⁻⁷ In contrast with western epistemology, Indigenous epistemology centers on relationality between living beings, the natural environment, and the spiritual world. Similarly, Western ontology views land as an extractable resource, one of the many strategies used to justify colonization, which contrasts the ontology of Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians), the Indigenous Peoples of Hawai'i, who view land as a revered being essential to the health of the People.

Native Hawaiians share a narrative of experiencing health inequities with other Indigenous communities worldwide. Despite adversities stemming from the long-standing impact of colonization and intergenerational trauma, Native Hawaiian and Indigenous ways of knowing, which centers relationships, holistic ways of learning, and ancestral knowledge, continue to be revitalized, a demonstration of the resilience of Indigenous Peoples.⁸ For instance, the Hawaiian renaissance paved the way for education and academia to re-privilege Hawaiian ways of knowing and being in educational settings.^{9,10}

The Native Hawaiian and Indigenous Health (NHIH) Master of Public Health (MPH) program at the Office of Public Health Studies (OPHS) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) was the first global program of its kind to develop an MPH-accredited program with the goal of eliminating health disparities through collaborative crosscutting research and training with, for, and by Indigenous

communities. 11 The NHIH MPH program aims to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop, analyze, and advocate for health services and policies to improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples by privileging Native Hawaiian and Indigenous frameworks of health, epistemologies, pedagogies, values and concepts. For instance, students learn to embrace kuleana (deep responsibility, privilege, and birth right) to Native Hawaiian and Indigenous communities, while exploring their positionality and biological and intellectual mo'okū'auhau (genealogy). Other important components of the NHIH program include aloha 'Āina (deep love and affection for land and that which nourishes); 'ike kūpuna (honoring ancestral knowledge and wisdom); education and research that promotes mixed methods including mo'olelo (storytelling); and ma ka hana ka 'ike (through doing one learns). Honoring these ways of knowing values the perpetuation of Native Hawaiian and Indigenous knowledge, thereby dismantling structural racism embedded within health and academic institutions, which ultimately promotes wellness.

One of the original intentions of the NHIH MPH program was to foster pathway programs and (re)vision measures of educational success that better align with Native Hawaiian and Indigenous priorities and worldviews. Through strategic initiatives supported by the leadership of the UHM OPHS and in collaboration with university and community partners, the NHIH Summer Health Academy (NHIH SHA) was developed and implemented with an objective of increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education, specifically in public health. Goals of the NHIH SHA include: fostering relationships at multiple levels; addressing critical gaps in academia and health care settings; preparing students to work with and for Native and Indigenous communities; drawing on the commitment to be an Indigenous-serving Institute; and changing the narrative of health and healing.

The NHIH MPH program integrates community-engaged research approaches to ensure graduates are prepared to engage ethically and effectively with communities in finding solutions to health inequities. Thus, an important component of the NHIH SHA includes a community-engaged research project, where students gain hands-on experience. Community-engaged research is grounded in long-term commitments to establish research pathways that redress the distrust and inherent power imbalances of the research enterprise by cultivating equitable community-academic partnerships. 12-14 This approach engages communities to identify research priorities that are beneficial and meaningful. Relationship and trust building are recognized as essential aspects of community-engaged research, which aims to rectify the history of harmful, extractive, and unethical research, particularly in historically marginalized communities including experimentation done without consent to Hansen's disease patients in Kalaupapa, Hawai'i and nuclear bomb testing in the Pacific. 15-17

Purpose

This paper describes the activities and evaluative outcomes of the NHIH SHA course piloted in Summer 2022. The methodological approach of this culturally-grounded evaluation honors the voices of Indigenous students, faculty, and community partners, which highlights the importance of the relational aspects of education. This paper first provides a detailed description of the program followed by the evaluation methods and outcomes followed by a discussion with lessons learned.

NHIH SHA 2022

Program Participants

The NHIH SHA was piloted in Summer 2022 with the intention to continue offering the academy in the future. The course that was paired with the SHA was provided as a 6-week elective summer school course and widely advertised. Undergraduate and graduate students from all disciplines who were interested in NHIH were eligible to apply, with an intentional emphasis on undergraduate students to create an educational pathway. Because tuition for the course was waived through departmental funds, interested students were required to submit a brief application that described their interest in the course and how the course aligned with their professional and personal values and goals. Fourteen students expressed interest in the course and completed the application, including 8 undergraduate, 4 master-level, and 2 doctoral students. Out of the 14 students, 9 enrolled.

The course consisted of: (1) community-based research projects; (2) a 1-week intensive curriculum about cultural humility, Indigenizing research, community-based participatory research (CBPR), NHIH frameworks of health, and social determinants of health; (3) additional curriculum to promote critical reflections and professional skills in presentations and research papers; and (4) a virtual summit. Additional opportunities were provided to enhance networking and mentorship. A copy of the NHIH SHA Road Map and program activities for all student scholars is provided in Figure 1.

Program Activities

The curriculum was designed to provide mentorship and guidance to promote success in higher education, experiential opportunities to learn about social determinants of health, and photovoice activities that promoted critical reflections and (re)visioned health and healing. Program activities of the NHIH SHA included: (1) individualized mentoring, including individualized development plans (IDPs); (2) networking opportunities with scholars passionate about NHIH; (3) critical self-reflections through assignments and photovoice activities; (4) community-engaged research projects. A copy of the IDP is provided as an appendix.

Students participated in community-engaged research with 3 primary project-based sites: Ke Ola O Ka 'Āina



Figure 1. Native Hawaiian and Indigenous Health Summer Health Academy (NHIH SHA) Road Map

(KOOKA) (loosely translated as life of the land), Indigenous Photovoice, and Missing and Murdered Native Hawaiian Women and Girls (MMNHWG). A series of workshops were provided to facilitate research-related skills for community-engaged projects. Workshop topics were driven by priorities identified by community project sites and student interests, which ranged to include workshops that focused on online databases, ethical research, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications, qualitative methods, and survey research. Community workdays were integrated in the class to foster Indigenous epistemologies of health including *Mālama 'Āina* (care for the land).

Evaluation Methods and Measures

IDPs

To encourage students to reflect on their professional pathway, students were guided throughout the course to complete an IDP. The purpose of the IDP was to motivate students to identify their personal and professional goals as well as the resources that would be needed to achieve these goals. Because success can be conventionally defined by external benchmarks and societal expectations, discussions on the importance of community support and cultural strengths were integrated into this exercise.

Indigenous Photovoice

Because images are a powerful part of storytelling for Indigenous Peoples, Photovoice was incorporated throughout the NHIH SHA to enhance class lectures, discussions, and reflections. Photovoice is a qualitative methodology developed by Wang and Burris (1997) to provide an opportunity for participants to become active researchers and reclaim their own narratives. 18 Throughout the NHIH SHA, students were trained in Indigenous Photovoice and explored their health and healing in relation to community and 'Āina. 19,20 Students, faculty, and staff collectively reflected on questions such as: "What does Native Hawaiian and Indigenous health mean to you?" and "What does health and healing mean to you?" and took photos to answer these questions throughout the course. At the conclusion of the NHIH SHA, students, faculty, and staff shared their photos as a class and used the following questions to guide them in engaging in a critical dialogue: "What were you feeling when you took your photo?" and "What does this photo mean to you in relation to your kuleana to be an agent of change for Indigenous health and to transform Health and Health Care Systems?"

Pre-Post Surveys

Students were asked to complete an online survey to identify changes in their knowledge and for students to provide feedback on the course. The survey was administered before the course began and during the last week of the SHA course. Eight of the 9 students completed the pre and post survey. Demographic variables were collected in the presurvey. Using a 10-point Likert scale, students were asked to rate their levels of confidence and knowledge in NHIH research. First, students were asked to rate their knowledge in cultural humility, community-based research, Indigenous methodologies, and Indigenous frameworks of health. Next, students were asked to rate their confidence to identify a topic prioritized by Indigenous communities, engage in a community-based project, conduct a literature review, identify relevant statistics and databases for research, conduct qualitative and quantitative research, and apply research findings to health care settings or policies. Levels in confidence and knowledge were re-measured in the postsurvey. The surveys included open-ended questions, which asked students to identify topics they were most interested in, workshop sessions that they attended, and feedback about the NHIH SHA.

Results

Community-Engaged Research Project Outcomes

Outcomes for students at each of the 3 primary project-based sites are described below.

MMNHWG

Pursuant to H.C.R. 11, the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs convened a Task Force to study MMNHWG and generate a report for the Hawai'i State Legislature. Students partnered with the Principal Investigator of the MMNHWG report to conduct historical and systems analyses and formulate recommendations to address the crisis of MMNHWG. Contributions of NHIH SHA student scholars were integrated into the report that urged Hawai'i's legislature to respond with increased attention, resources, and laws to prevent violence against Native Hawaiian women and girls.

KOOKA

KOOKA is a research project that demonstrates the role of 'Aina connectedness in Native Hawaiian health and resilience. Students who participated in the KOOKA research project learned to analyze qualitative data by coding and analyzing interviews previously conducted with cultural practitioners. Students also learned about survey data and conducted data analyses with KOOKA survey data using statistical software.

Indigenous Photovoice

All students participated in the photovoice process. Select student scholars explored the Indigenous Photovoice process more deeply through their Indigenous Photovoice project. Indigenous Photovoice focused on teaching students a methodology that re-prioritizes Indigenous peoples' stories, experiences, and knowledge, and positions participants as active researchers.

Additional projects

During the academy, students had the opportunity to partner with multiple community-engaged research projects. For instance, one of the scholars integrated Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices with federally funded nutrition programs like Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Two additional scholars visioned their future work by proposing community-engaged approaches. One of the projects focused on betel quid consumption and the sociocultural perspective of Indigenous undergraduate students in Papua, Indonesia. The second project focused on obesity in American Samoa.

IDPs

All students completed an IDP for career and professional goals that helped to re-define their own measures of success. Students formulated immediate, short-term, and long-term indicators for themselves (Table 1). During the NHIH SHA, a staff member met with students to solidify immediate goals. The program incorporated optional opportunities to promote personal and professional goals based on priorities identified by the student scholars. Given the focus of the supportive pathway over time, the same staff member met with students 6-months and 1-year after the program to assess "successful" achievement of immediate and short-term goals.

Indigenous Photovoice and Critical Reflections

Through critical reflections, students actively reflected on health and healing from Native Hawaiian and Indigenous worldviews as well as their roles as agents of change in health care systems. Sample Photovoice images are provided in **Figures 2 and 3**. Major themes from the Photovoice activity included holistic and relational health, the importance of 'ohana (family) and intergenerational relationships, and 'Āina as thriving health. Aligned with Native Hawaiian concepts of health, the students defined health as holistic and being mentally, physically, spiritually, and culturally well. Scholars emphasized the interconnectedness nature of our wellbeing and the importance of relationships to our friends, family, communities, and 'Āina.

Evaluative Survey Data

The results of the pre- and post-surveys demonstrated the promise and success of the NHIH SHA course. A Paired samples t-test was conducted to determine the effect of confidence to engage in research-related tasks and knowledge of pertinent concepts related to CBPR and Indigenous research (Table 2). The results indicated a favorable change for each indicator and a statistically significant increase in confidence to conduct a literature review (M=1.13, SD=.99); [t(7)=3.21, P=.01]; identify relevant databases for a research project (M=1.38, SD=1.92); [t(7)=2.02, P= 04] and a statistically significant increase in knowledge of cultural humility (M=2.88, SD=2.53); [t(7)=3.21, P= 01]; CBPR (M=2.13, SD=3.09); [t(7)=1.95, P=.05]; Indigenous methodologies (M=2.88, SD=3.27); [t(7)=3.35, P= 01], and Native Hawaiian and Indigenous frameworks of health (M=3.50, SD=2.73); [t(7)=3.63, P<.01].

Qualitative feedback from the post-survey further validated the importance of the NHIH SHA workshops and their synergy with community-based research projects. For instance, one scholar described the workshops as "super insightful and highly important topics for students in every academic step of their journey." Others described the NHIH SHA as "excellent, inspiring, empowering, interesting, compelling, mind blowing." One student stated, "I loved loved loved having other Pacific Island scholars sharing their work and passions...we need so much more of this!" Another student scholar indicated that "this (program) really creates and

Table 1. Individualized Development Plan Indicators Identified by NHIH SHA Scholars

	Immediate: 6-month indicators	Short-term: 1-4 year indicators	Long-term: 5-10 year indicators
Professional	Participate in other fellowships Identify scholarships for schooling Apply for professional or graduate school programs Gain additional experience in research Conduct public presentations Gain leadership skills	Graduate from college (undergraduate), masters program, and/or doctoral program Be admitted to professional or graduate school program Gain additional experience in research, public presentations, and leadership Start professional career	Graduate from professional/ graduate school Complete research publications Have a sustainable job with a livable wage Employ other Native Hawaiian and Indigenous scholars
Personal	Good health for self and 'ohana Take care of 'ohana (parents and children) Start planning for financial wellness	Good health for self and 'ohana Community involvement Settle down with significant other Stable housing Begin savings and developing financial wellness	Own a house and set roots in Hawai'i Good health for self and 'ohana Enjoy time with 'ohana (Married, children, parents) Volunteer and other community involvement Financial wellness: Savings, investment portfolio Vacationing and traveling



Figure 2. Indigenous Photovoice Example 01: Kalo Planting.

The image above is in response to the Indigenous Photovoice activity, where students reflected on health, healing, and wellbeing for Native Hawaiians and Indigenous Peoples. After captioning this photo as "Kalo Planting," the scholar also provided the following reflection: "For me personally, health means the balance of physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. I think that to be able to live healthy, we have to be able to balance these 3 factors in our lives. This feeling can be expressed through this picture. I took this picture after we finished with our kalo planting today. At that time, I felt so much joy, happiness, satisfaction, and tiredness in myself. It was the moment I realized that our hard work today will serve other people in the future. I remember before our activity started, we were asked to put our energy (physical, mental and spiritual) into the activity because what we planted today can be transferred to the kalo and even the people who will consume it later. I think this is very important message because sometimes we do not realize that our energy can affect people directly and indirectly...Serving community with the right and pure intention is necessary, so that what we do can impact our community in a positive way."

maintains the essential qualities of Indigenous and research scholarship."

Discussion

The NHIH SHA is a strategic effort that takes a strengthsbased and holistic approach to health and education by enhancing Indigenous ways of knowing and representation.



Figure 3. Indigenous Photovoice Example 02: Thriving Health.

The image above is in response to the Indigenous Photovoice activity, where students reflected on health, healing, and wellbeing for Native Hawaiians and Indigenous Peoples. After captioning this photo as "Thriving Health," the scholar also provided the following reflection: "When I think of what health means to me, I think of the multiple aspects of mauli ola and how its balance translates to total alignment with your na'au (guts), kūpuna (ancestors), and 'Āina (land). This concept of thriving health is what I envision for my lāhui (Hawaiian nation). In reference to the photo I chose, I feel that the picture itself is a manifestation of mauli ola."

Table 2. Paired-Samples T-Test of Pre/Post Survey Measures of Summer Health Academy Participants (n=8)

	Mean	SD	Т	P-value
Student scholar confidence to identify a topic related to their interests		1.39	1.53	.09
Student scholar confidence to identify a topic that is prioritized by Indigenous communities		1.60	.88	.20
Student scholar confidence to engage in a community-based project		2.56	.55	.30
Student scholar confidence to conduct a literature review		.99	3.21	.01
Student scholar confidence to identify relevant statistics for a research project	.625	1.69	1.05	.16
Student scholar confidence to identify relevant databases for a research project	1.38	1.92	2.02	.04
Student scholar confidence to conduct qualitative research	.25	3.10	.23	.41
Student scholar confidence to conduct quantitative research	.13	3.31	.11	.46
Student scholar confidence to apply research findings to healthcare settings or policies		2.77	.38	.36
Student scholar knowledge of cultural humility		2.53	3.21	.01
Student scholar knowledge of community-based research		3.09	1.95	.05
Student scholar knowledge of Indigenous methodologies		3.27	3.35	.01
Student scholar knowledge of Indigenous frameworks of health		2.73	3.63	<.01

Major outcomes of this initiative include increased confidence and knowledge among students from all levels who are interested in careers in NHIH. There is a variety of evidence that demonstrates the growth in the students' learning and engagement with NHIH research. For example, the photos and reflections from the Photovoice project demonstrates a deeper understanding of health that is grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing. The survey results indi-

cated favorable changes in their knowledge and confidence to engage in research using Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous framework of health. Following up with these students in the future would provide additional insights on the impacts of the NHIH SHA.

The incentive of enrolling in a tuition-free course, networking with Indigenous scholars and public health faculty, and receiving mentorship address barriers that may occur

in higher education, particularly for students from historically marginalized groups. 21,22 The NHIH SHA aligns with other Indigenous-centered programs and Hawai'i-based programs such as 'Imi Ho'ola, the Native Hawaiian Interdisciplinary Health Program, and Eia Mānoa Summer Institute, which demonstrates the importance of pathway programs that aims to address gaps and disparities in higher education for Native Hawaiian and Indigenous communities at large.²³⁻²⁷ Short- and long-term outcomes of this initiative include the promotion of future health academies and the integration of Indigenous-centered learning to promote health and social equity. Throughout the academy, students continuously reflected on their truths, experiences, and realities, while connecting their reflections to positions of relationality and goals of serving community. These pedagogical approaches aim to decolonize historically western academic spaces and privilege Indigenous ways of knowing by centering relationships and Indigenous values, which has been found to be a support in Indigenous students' academic success.²⁸ Thus, the NHIH SHA has the potential to be one of many ways to address and transform educational and health equities.

In addition to the strengths of the NHIH SHA, many lessons were learned through this process. The curriculum itself was implemented as a 6-week intensive course during the summer. Although students were exposed to community-engaged research projects and Indigenous frameworks of health, including the opportunity to foster their own sense of mauli ola (optimal health and wellbeing), the quick timeframe often presented challenges, such as limited time to experience all phases of community-engaged research. Student tuition and other costs of the NHIH SHA were supported through departmental strategic initiatives funds, which speaks to the importance of academic leadership who support advancing the health of Native Hawaiian and Indigenous communities. However, departmental funds and additional extramural funding are often subject to changes, which may limit program sustainability.

Future pathway courses and programs, such as the NHIH SHA, may consider expanding to ensure a true, authentic relationship is formed between students and community

partners. Potential ways to sustain the efforts of the NHIH SHA includes partnering with other health sciences programs at the university as well as engaging with high school students, especially Native Hawaiian-serving schools, to expose them to public health as a potential education and career pathway. Concurrent with the NHIH SHA, other OPHS faculty members launched a similar high school pathway program called Community Health Scholars Program, which aims to recruit high school juniors, seniors, and incoming first-year students at any University of Hawai'i campus.²⁹ Collaborating with Native Hawaiianserving community-based organizations with established trust and rapport is another approach that may help to sustain these efforts. These collaborative approaches are aligned with Indigenous practices that decolonize and Indigenize the individualistic nature of academia. Ultimately, this initiative serves an example of reframing education as an achievable goal for Native Hawaiian and Indigenous students and communities at large.

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Appendix

The purpose of an Individual Development Plan (IDP) is to support individuals and provide an opportunity to set goals, identify strategies, and identify resources that will be helpful to achieve these goals. The IDP is intended to be a self-tracking tool that may facilitate communication and discussions around expectations, personal goals, and professional goals.

Part 1: Use the following questions to guide your development of the IDP.

- 1. What are your ultimate goals
 - 1a. What are your ultimate goals of your community-based project?
 - 1b. What are your ultimate goals of the summer health academy?
 - 1c. What are your ultimate goals in the next 6 months (immediate)?
 - 1d. What are your ultimate goals in the next 1-4 years (short-term)
 - 1e. What are your ultimate goals in the next 5-10 years (long-term)?
- 2. What skills, competencies, activities, or resources will you need to be successful?
 - 2a. What skills, competencies, or activities will you

- need? For instance, will you need additional coursework, research skills, professional skills, leadership skills?
- 2b. What kinds of resources and support will you need? For instance, family support, mentors, professors, financial support?

Part 2: Sometimes it is helpful to chart your immediate, short-term, and long-term goals and match these goals with required competencies/skills, activities/experiences, and resources/support. Complete the following chart to help you better understand what is needed for you to achieve your goals.

Goals	Competencies, Skills, and Activities	Assessment of Progress	Resources and Support
Immediate (6mo-1y)			
Short- term (2-4y)			
Long-term (5-10y)			

Part 3: Additional resources are provided for scholars to explore professional development skills in relation to their work values, skills, interests, and long-term visions.