



Papa Ola Lokahi
Nana I Ka Pono Na Ma

Papa Ola Lokahi

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FOR RELEASE: August 25, 2009, 3:30 PM

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Noa Emmett Aluli & Billy Akutagawa recognized with Hawaiian Health Award

(Kaka'ako, Hawai'i) Two dedicated men from Moloka'i are being recognized with the 2009 Hawaiian Health Award presented by Papa Ola Lōkahi to individuals who have made significant contributions to improving the health status of Native Hawaiians. The award is being presented at the annual Native Hawaiian Conference today at 3:00 PM at the Hawai'i Convention Center.

William Akutagawa, Jr. is a social worker and community organizer, *keiki o ka 'āina* to the East End, Moloka'i. His community leadership has been meaningful and varied: planning for the needs of Moloka'i college students, defining and seeking solutions for mental health issues on the island, revitalizing Hawaiian fishpond production, developing and teaching a hunter education program, and promoting a drug-free environment on Moloka'i

In 1995 he got involved with a group of folks looking at improving the health conditions of Moloka'i. Built around two major projects, the Molokai Heart Study in 1985, and the Molokai Diet Study in 1987, he co-founded Nā Pu'uwai. When the Native Hawaiian Health Care Act passed in 1988, Nā Pu'uwai was established as the Native Hawaiian Health Care System for the islands of Moloka'i and Lāna'i.

Billy is the only executive director Nā Pu'uwai has ever known. He has developed programs in diabetes education, cancer screening and education, established a fitness center, provided outreach to those unable to leave home for health care, and assured healing traditionalists were supported, that traditional healing practices were available to patients who want them. He made sure the health needs of the residents of Kalaupapa were addressed, and quickly expanded to serve Lāna'i.

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Papa Ola Lokahi

is a non-profit Native Hawaiian organization founded in 1988 for the purpose of improving the health and well-being of Native Hawaiians and other native peoples of the Pacific and continental United States.

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Billy's strength lies in the ability to bring together all the agencies, programs and necessary resources together to address an issue, which he has most recently done to address long term care on island, ensuring patients needn't leave Moloka'i.

Noa Emmett Aluli is a physician and community activist. A member of the first graduating class of the medical school at the University of Hawai'i in 1975, he was one of only four Hawaiians at a time when Hawaiian physicians could be counted on two hands. Today, he serves as a model and mentor to Hawaiians who have pursued medicine, and to those who have embraced service to rural communities. Later he would co-found 'Ahahui o na Kauka, the Association of Native Hawaiian Physicians; today there are nearly 300 physicians around the world with Hawaiian ancestry.

As one of a few Hawaiians in health and medicine in 1983, Dr. Aluli participated in the original *E Ola Mau Health Study*, the groundbreaking report that established the baseline health status of Native Hawaiians. He helped to draft the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act, which he then played a significant role in moving through the U.S. Congress until it was passed in 1988. Already conducting the Moloka'i Heart Study, he co-founded Nā Pu'uwai, which became the Native Hawaiian Health Care System for Moloka'i and Lāna'i.

Dr. Aluli has dedicated himself to numerous efforts to address and improve Native Hawaiian wellness, and to the role that traditional values and traditional practices play. He was one of the first physicians to refer patients to kahuna lā'au lapa'au Papa Henry Auwae, with whom he consulted over many patients desiring Hawaiian healing as part of their treatment.

He found his passion on the island of Moloka'i where he has served since 1975. It was also on Moloka'i that he became aware and involved in access rights and land issues with Hui Alaloa, leading to the establishment of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, and Pele Defense Fund, and his ongoing involvement.

By taking health professionals and healing traditionalists to Kaho'olawe together to talk about Hawaiian healing, he has been able to connect for all: the healing of individuals to the healing of our land, to healing as a community, to the healing of a Hawaiian nation.

These two men, **Billy Akutagawa** and **Dr. Noa Emmett Aluli**, honor Moloka'i and us all with their contributions to improving Hawaiian health.

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