

**MALAE KA LAMAKŪ –
A Hawaiian Sense of Place/Connection/Belonging
(Sacred Places of Knowing & Wisdom)**

A Presentation to
Haskell Indian Nations University
Faculty Retreat – August 6, 2008

Aloha mai kākou. Greetings, all my relatives.

Thank you to Valerie for helping us to exercise our minds and tongues in learning a little about her language. I would like to ask your help in a little exercise that represents who I am as a Hawaiian. If you could all stand and help me out by giving a great big Hawaiian hug to your neighbor standing next to you. I am not able to give each one of you a big hug from me, but Hawaiian protocol would require that I do so. So, you can help me out by hugging the person standing next to you. Thank you so much for doing that for me. It means a lot to me.

It's not about me, it's about we. We are more alike than we are different, and I feel so much at home, because of my relatives Judy, Valerie, Smokey and all of the other Haskell students that visited our beautiful islands just a few weeks ago. You are now a part of me and I am a part of you. We are now family in the Hawaiian sense.

It's not about Hawaii, it's about Haskell. While these slides showing on the screen behind me, show the various places that your students were able to visit, what makes these pictures truly unique are the fact that your Haskell students are standing in sacred Hawaiian places that not many Hawaiians have been too, including myself. Because of their visit to our island of Oahu, I struggled to find places of great cultural significance to our Hawaiian culture and people to share with your students to give them an idea of who we are as a people and culture. And we found them hidden, and deep in the backside of valleys away from tourists and modern civilization. Indeed, these are special places where our people are quietly trying to live our traditional practices of fishing and farming. So, what lessons does that present to Haskell and the things that you teach your students. What are the sacred places here and around campus? What are the traditional names, stories and songs of your sacred places? Are these teachings being passed on to your students? What was here before the settlers came?

It's not about money, it's about mana. Mana means spiritual essence or power, and is the power that Creator used to create everything around us. As your students visited our sacred places, they came to feel and were deeply touched by the mana and spiritual essence of these places. Indeed, they heard personal stories from our kupuna or elders struggling to restore and renew our ancient sites, to revitalize our language and to maintain our histories and genealogies so as to ground our youth in their Hawaiian, and not a hip-hop, identity.

It's not about a handshake, it's about honi. When Captain Cook first arrived in our islands, he greeted our people with a handshake, which prompted our ancestors to exclaim, "Ha `ole or haole." Haole means Ha or the breath of life, and ole means no or none. Thus, Haole refers to someone who gives no breath of life. When Hawaiians greet each other, we honi or hug and

exchange our breath of life with each other by touching noses and inhaling each other's breath of life. Captain Cook and his men, just shook hands, and thus, these first foreigners to our shores became known as haole.

It's not about defining, it's about describing. Defining puts us neatly in boxes from which we very often are unable to escape. Describing allows us freedom to expand and change and adapt often under extreme pressure and circumstances. By describing who we are as Hawaiians, will hopefully help you to learn more about yourself. I believe that is what your students learned on their trip to Hawaii. By learning more about Hawaiians, I believe they came away learning more about themselves as individuals and as cultural or tribal people.

The lessons learned about Place as Community is that Place is Community; Place is Sacred; Place is Identity; Place is Leadership and Place is Education. Place is all of those things, because place is us, you and me and all of our ancestors collectively with all of mankind or humankind. Thus, for me, Place is Community means:

Protocols or those rituals, ceremonies, and prayers that infuse life in our living environment, and connects us to Creator and Mother Earth.

Legacy or that imprint which we have left upon the hearts and lives of those who live on after us, and those yet unborn, the generations to come, and the collective memory of our sojourn on earth that makes us all better because we knew and loved each other.

Ancestors or that genetic imprint which we have been endowed with that lives on in us, and in whose ancestral footsteps we follow and seem drawn to as familiar and true.

Collective and cherished relatives that make up who we are as community, without whom we stand alone, but with whom we find significance, meaning and fulfillment.

Empowerment, embracing and emotional is the power place has in our personal lives as we literally walk upon the bones of our ancestors to find our rightful place in the universe.

Place keeps me centered and connected at all times to the Creator. Place is the abode and the evidence of Creator in our and our ancestors' lives.

Lastly, if I were to give a Hawaiian name to Haskell Indian Nations University, it would be – Malae ka Lamakū. Malae are found throughout Polynesia, especially in Tahiti and New Zealand, and refers to a sacred gathering place or plaza for ceremonial and community purposes. Lamakū refers to Lama, which means light or enlightenment, and kū, which means upright or standing. Thus, when combined, Lamakū refers to a torch of light or enlightenment. So for me, Haskell Indian Nations University is Malae ka Lamakū or in other words, represents a sacred place of light and enlightenment for Native and Indigenous people around the world.