

**Project Title:** Kūhi Nō Ka Lima: (Re)connecting Indigenous Dance Practitioners with Cultural Heritage Materials to Strengthen Community Belonging and Identity

**Introduction:** The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa's (UHM) Library and Information Science (LIS) graduate program requests \$147,551 from the IMLS National Leadership Grant Program for Libraries (IMLS NLG-L) to support this proposal for a 1-year Planning Grant. *Kūhi Nō Ka Lima* directly addresses IMLS NLG-L **Program Goal 2** (build the capacity of libraries and archives to lead and contribute to efforts that improve community well-being and strengthen civic engagement) and associated **Objective 2.2** (develop or enhance collaborations between libraries and stakeholders, and leverage opportunities to address community needs). Indigenous communities often feel excluded and unwelcomed in libraries and archives, especially when they don't see themselves (re)presented in those spaces in appropriate and uplifting ways. And, yet, library and archival collections can be critical to improving and enhancing ideas of Indigenous traditions, languages, origins, and futures. *Kūhi Nō Ka Lima* will endeavor to better understand how to improve the relationships and collaborations between 1) Indigenous communities and 2) libraries and archives with Indigenous collections, with a particular focus on Indigenous dance practitioners and Indigenous dance collections. Ultimately, we will leverage the findings of these investigations towards the co-creation of a strategic plan - inclusive of an Applied Research project plan - to increase and improve library, archive, and information services for Indigenous dance practitioners.

**Project Justification:** *Kūhi Nō Ka Lima* targets underrepresented and undersupported communities, like Native Hawaiian communities, who are in need of significant supports to realize their goals of equity, health, and wellbeing. Native Hawaiians are overrepresented in categories like poverty, homelessness, obesity, and mental health disorders. According to Dr. Kamana‘opono Crabbe, a Native Hawaiian psychologist and respected leader in Native Hawaiian communities, the historical trauma, psychological distress, and associated issues resulting from loss, oppression, and cultural disruption for Native Hawaiians has led to a collective community sadness, moral outrage, and broken spirit. What's more, these experiences are exacerbated for Native Hawaiian communities in the diaspora, who shoulder the additional struggle of the severance of direct, physical, intimate connection to their ancestral homeland. This disconnection undermines ideas of community belonging and identity. Ideas of cultural authenticity, identity, and belonging for Native peoples, especially those in the diaspora, are complicated by histories of exploitation. For many around the world, imageries of Hawai‘i include white, sandy beaches, glistening blue water, palm trees swaying in the breeze, and - of course - the "little brown gal," the hula girl. These imageries have been promoted by the entertainment industry for decades with films like *Blue Hawaii* (1961) and *Lilo & Stitch* (2002). And, yet, the value of hula - in its authentic form - is priceless. Hula remembers and (re)presents all facets of customary Native Hawaiian life: genealogies, place names, events, values, and language. Like many Indigenous peoples, Native Hawaiians have a holistic worldview, inclusive of physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual domains. Underlying this worldview is an emphasis on relationality, with each individual a unique embodiment of all their relations. **The key, then, to improving equity, health, and wellbeing for Indigenous peoples is strengthening connections to community and ancestral knowledge.**

Artifacts of ancestral knowledge created by, and belonging to, Indigenous communities are found around the world. For Native Hawaiian communities, specifically, their clothing, musical instruments, regalia, legal agreements, etc. can be found in cultural heritage institutions like the Library of Congress (U.S.), the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Aotearoa New Zealand), and the British Museum (United Kingdom). Hula materials are housed in institutions like the Ohio State University Archives (Ohio, U.S.), the Museum of Performance + Design (California, U.S.), and the Chicago Film Archives (Illinois, U.S.). Even with the prevalence of hula materials across the U.S., these materials remain largely inaccessible to hula practitioners, though. As there is yet no professionally-accepted thesaurus available for hula terms, especially those terms in the Native Hawaiian language, intellectual access to these materials is prohibited by the lack of accurate, relevant descriptions for these items. Additionally, it is currently unclear to what extent collection managers in, say, Ohio and Illinois are familiar with hula materials and their cultural significance. This lack of understanding adds to the overall ambiguity surrounding the relationship between hula practitioners and hula collections. Thus, *Kūhi Nō Ka Lima* will endeavor to better understand how to improve the relationships and collaborations between

1) Indigenous communities and 2) libraries and archives with Indigenous collections, with a particular focus on Indigenous dance practitioners and Indigenous dance collections.

**Project Work Plan:** *Kuhi Nō Ka Lima* will: **(Objective 1)** Identify priority research support needs for Indigenous traditional dance practitioners; **(Objective 2)** Document the current state of collection management, description, and community engagement practices for Indigenous traditional dance collections; and **(Objective 3)** Leverage project findings in the co-creation of a strategic plan - inclusive of an Applied Research project plan - to increase and improve library, archive, and information services for Indigenous traditional dance practitioners.

*Kuhi Nō Ka Lima*, comprises 4 phases over 1 year. **Phase 1** [August 2024-September 2024] activities include staffing the project with a Graduate Research Assistant, Advisory Board ((6) members total who are hula practitioners and/or managers of Indigenous dance collections), and focus group participants ((2) focus groups, each comprised of (8) members; 1 focus group will be located in Hawai‘i, the other will be located in the continental U.S.). **Phase 2** [October 2024-December 2024] activities include co-creating (2) exploratory surveys (one to investigate the information practices of hula practitioners, and one to study the collection management, description, and community engagement practices for managers of hula collections). **Phase 3** [January 2025-April 2025] activities include distributing the (2) online exploratory surveys, analyzing their responses (we are targeting (120) responses from both hula practitioners and managers of hula collections), and hosting meetings and collection visits for the (2) focus groups. Both the surveys and collection visits will elucidate trends (quantitatively and qualitatively, respectively) in the engagements between hula practitioners, hula collections, and library and archive staff. In the final phase, **Phase 4** [May 2025-July 2025], we will draw on the findings from the previous phases towards the co-creation of a strategic plan - inclusive of an Applied Research project plan - to improve the relationships and collaborations between 1) Indigenous communities and 2) libraries and archives with Indigenous collections. Like in other phases, co-creation is embedded in this phase, as the project's Advisory Board members and focus group participants will be directly involved in drafting and evaluating the strategic plan.

**Diversity Plan:** The processes and outcomes of *Kuhi Nō Ka Lima* are aligned with IMLS' stated interest "to maximize its public value" with a focus on "underserved populations." This project's design prioritizes direct and sustained collaboration and co-creation with underrepresented and undersupported communities, with a focus on Indigenous communities and Indigenous dance practitioners. The project also includes a focus on geographic and, therefore, cultural diversity, as Advisory Board members and participants will be based in Hawai‘i and across the continental U.S.

**Project Results:** As a planning grant, we endeavor to expand and solidify relationships with target communities and pilot strategies for increasing collaborations between hula practitioners and hula collections. Ultimately, we hope to scale these relationships and strategies in an Applied Research project, which would engage a much larger number of stakeholders.

Even as a 1-year planning grant, we anticipate that this project will have national impact for the target communities and beyond. First, findings from the investigations of the information practices of hula practitioners will point to priority support areas for their research practices. Second, findings from the investigations of the collection management, description, and outreach/engagement practices of collection managers of hula collections will point to priority professional development needs for our profession, as a whole. Combined, these findings will illuminate opportunities for hula practitioners and managers of hula collections to work together to address the needs of both groups. To our knowledge, these research strategies have not previously been undertaken with these communities in a systematic and publicly documented way.

**Budget Summary:** UHM requests an estimated total of \$147,551 from this grant program for a period of 1 year for the following expenses: \$21,316 for salaries and wages; \$403 for fringe benefits; \$3,748 for travel; \$4,930 for supplies, materials, and equipment; \$5,000 for subawards and contracts; \$40,499 for student support; \$32,200 for other costs (i.e. participant honoraria, venue rental fees, printing); \$39,455 for indirect costs.