

**Hearing
Committee on Indian Affairs
United States Senate
July 20, 2000
Russell Senate Bldg. Room 485
S. 2688- A Bill to Amend the Native American Languages Act
Testimony of Dr. Kalena Silva
Director, Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language**

I ola nō au i ku‘u kino wailua,
I ‘a‘ea mai e ke ali‘i o Kahiki,
Ke ali‘i n na i ‘a‘e ke kai uli,
Kail ‘Ele‘ele, Kai Melemele,
Kai Popolohuamea A Kane,
I ka w i po‘i ai Ke Kaiakahinali‘i,
Kai m , kai lewa,
Ho‘opua ke ao i Lohi‘au,
‘O Lohi‘au, i lono ‘oukou,
Ola , ola l , ua ola Lohi‘au ,
‘O Lohi‘au ho‘i !

Life has returned to my body,
Its sacredness trampled by the chiefess from a foreign land,
The chiefess who broke the taboos of traveling the deepest ocean,
The Black Ocean, The Yellow Ocean,
The Blueblack-Red-Tinged-Sea of the Deity, K ne
When our land was inundated by The-Flood-Of-Kahinali‘i.
The now silent sea, the sea that floats on the horizon,
The floating cloud brings forth Lohi‘au.
Yes it is I, Lohi‘au,
Body trampled by the foreign chiefess --
I am now alive!

E n l l o ke Kōomike Kuleana ‘Ilikini O ka ‘Aha Kenekoa, aloha k kou:

Aloha members of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, I am Dr. Kalena Silva, Director of Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikolani College of Hawaiian Language of the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. I have come to testify in complete support of S. 2688, while focusing specifically on the role of Ke‘elikolani College’s consortium with the ‘Aha P nana Leo, a community Native Hawaiian language organization.

I began my testimony with a declaration by Lohi‘au, a lover of Hawai‘i’s volcano goddess, Pele, whom the goddess meets in her dreams of the most northerly of our islands, Kaua‘i. Because she lives on Hawai‘i island, hundreds of miles away from Lohi‘au, Pele sends her sister Hi‘iaka to bring Lohi‘au to her. In this ancient epic, Hi‘iaka falls in love with Lohi‘au, moving Pele to kill him in a jealous rage. Many in Hawai‘i know that Lohi‘au was killed by Pele, a foreigner who came to Hawai‘i over distant seas. However, few know that the epic ends with a brother of Pele’s capturing Lohi‘au’s wandering spirit and coaxing it gently back into his body until he is once again fully alive, as if awakened from a deep sleep.

Like Lohi‘au, the Hawaiian language is awakening from near death. Still weak from the disastrous effects of past encounters with those from overseas, recently, our language has increasingly benefitted from the desire and commitment of those same people from overseas to support our efforts to revive it.

My own family is typical in that those born before 1900 were fluent Hawaiian speakers, and those born between 1900 and 1920 replaced Hawaiian with Pidgin English. The loss of Hawaiian was due to relentless anti-Hawaiian language campaigns in the schools initiated as part of Hawai‘i’s annexation to the United States. When I was in high school I developed an interest in learning my ancestral language and pursued it with the help of my grandmother and the budding efforts at the time to teach Hawaiian in Hawai‘i high schools and universities. Today I am fluent in Hawaiian and use it everyday as the internal administrative language of our college.

The University of Hawai‘i at Hilo began teaching Hawaiian in the 1970s and in 1982 developed a BA program in the language. At around the same time, a group of Hawaiian language teachers and speakers formed the ‘Aha P nana Leo organization to reestablish Hawaiian as a language of the family and of schools. There are now 2,000 children enrolled in such schools in Hawai‘i and the first class of graduating seniors graduated in May of 1999. From the very beginning our university and the ‘Aha P nana Leo worked together to provide resources for this educational movement. In 1998, Ke‘elikōlani College was established through state legislative mandate.

The College has two divisions. The academic programs division includes the bachelor’s degree, masters degree, and teaching certificate -- the most developed college program in a Native American language anywhere in the United States. The research and outreach division of the College focuses on language revitalization. It includes a curriculum development component for preschool through college, a new lexicon committee that develops new words for the schools, an in-service teacher training program for teachers already in the schools, a newsletter, a newspaper for the schools, a Worldwide Web Server, an intranet telecommunications system connecting all Hawaiian language schools and offices in the state, and an outreach program to Native America and the rest of the world.

The ‘Aha P nana Leo works very closely with our College. It has powers that our state-funded College lacks and is not impeded by the slowness of government bureaucracy nor by University policies that are not oriented to language revitalization. The ‘Aha P nana Leo runs two curriculum centers, one focusing on print materials -- books, posters, flashcards, maps, etc. and the other focusing on non-print materials -- videos, audio tapes and CDs for television, computer

and radio formats. The 'Aha P nana Leo has a materials distribution office from which, in coordination with Ke'elikōlani College, materials are sent to schools throughout the state (visit our coordinated websites at www.olelo.hawaii.edu). It also has a college scholarship program for those wishing to develop fluency in Hawaiian while pursuing a wide range of majors in college and an administrative office that provides direct support for its current total of 11 schools.

The 'Aha P nana Leo preschools provide children with the language foundation enabling them to continue learning through the medium of Hawaiian in the public school system. The public school program is provided direction by three model laboratory schools that the 'Aha P nana Leo and Ke'elikōlani College operate in consortium. Each with preschool through grade twelve, the laboratory schools are located in different types of communities -- one urban, one very rural and attended by an isolated community that never abandoned Hawaiian, and one semi-rural near our University. A strong feature of these laboratory schools is a focus on hands-on learning using Hawai'i's natural environment which provides the basis for Native Hawaiian traditional life.

The consortium between Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani and the 'Aha P nana Leo has already been assisting other Native American peoples establish schools, curriculum, teacher development, and technological support along our model. We have assisted the Blackfeet Schools, Tlingit School, Dine College of the Navajo Reservation, and also the Washo School with representatives here at the table with me today. The Hawaiian tradition of aloha requires that we extend assistance to others. This bill will provide us the resources to provide increased assistance properly while further strengthening our model which is currently just 17 years old.

Like Lohi'au, we Native Hawaiians are experiencing a rekindling of life through the revitalization of our nearly exterminated language. We want to join with other native peoples in similar circumstances throughout the United States so that, together, we may all move forward. Although Lohi'au was killed by Pele, her own brother, K nemiloha'i, brought him back to life. There have been many Pele bills in the history of Native American languages. S. 2688 is her brother, K nemiloha'i's bill, and through it, our languages, like Lohi'au, can find new life.

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