Ka Hana ‘Imi Na’auao – A Science Careers Curriculum Resource Go to: www.cds.hawaii.edu/kahana

Key Science Idea:

Group Resource Management
- a team of experts working together to help nature & society flourish

Word Bank

‘Aha - council; or woven cord
Aho - a single strand of a cord
Ahupua'a - watershed
‘Āina - land
Kūpuna - elders
Moku - district
Mana'o - thought
Nā ali'i - chiefs
Pono - righteous, correct
Practitioner - one who practices or works in a certain field of study

The ‘Aha

Before the arrival of the ali'i, the people of Hawai'i governed themselves with ‘Aha (councils). Each island was divided into moku. For example, on Moloka'i, there were 4 moku: Kaluako'i, Pala'au, Kawela, and Ko'olau. Each moku formed and set up their own ‘Aha to meet the needs of that particular moku.

One practice which linked all of the 'Aha of each island involved choosing practitioners to sit on the councils. These ‘Aha of experts used their knowledge to preserve and manage the natural resources of the land. This helped the people produce more food for the living, and for the generations unborn.

On Moloka'i, it was said:
There is no man familiar with fishing, least he fishes and becomes an expert. There is no man familiar with the soil, least he plants in the earth and becomes an expert. There is no man familiar with hō‘ola (giving life) least he is trained and becomes a kahuna and is an expert at it.

This mana'o was the standard the kūpuna went by in acknowledging which experts were needed to sit on the councils.
Life Under The ‘Aha

The people governed themselves under the ‘Aha for 700 years before the arrival of the ali‘i during the ending of the 9th century. After the first 7 generations under the ‘Aha, war was unheard of amongst all families – peace was established. After 16 generations passed from the time the first ‘Aha were established, there was no manufacture of weapons, no knowledge of war. Under the ‘Aha society was so proficient the needs of all the people were provided for – there were no rich, no poor, everyone had enough food and materials for housing, and everyone lived upon the land in peace.

Because of the ‘Aha, the people were able to progress, expanding their knowledge and abilities in farming and fishing and connecting spiritually with the things of the ‘āina. They traveled and visited each other's ‘Aha for religious, spiritual, and educational exchanges. In this way they gained knowledge and learned from each other in order to help the people of their moku better. Ideas and knowledge were exchanged many times, all of it through speaking, listening, practice and remembering.

The land and people flourished greatly. After the first 300 years or so, the population of all islands grew immensely. This affected the guidance of the ‘Aha in each moku, of course. So, all the ‘Aha gathered together again in Moloka‘i to devise a plan to better provide for the people. They decided that each moku should be divided into ahupua‘a, each having its own ‘Aha of practitioners who lived in that ahupua‘a.

In this way, total control of each ahupua‘a was decided upon by the people living there. The only time moku ‘Aha were called upon was when a decision affected all the ahupua‘a in that moku.
QUESTION

TIME

1. Think of a group of people you know of who are like an ‘Aha.

2. Think of a time when your own expertise helped a group do something better.

3. Think of a time when your expertise was not enough, & working with others like the ‘Aha would’ve helped.

Share your thoughts with a partner.

SHARE WITH THE WHOLE CLASS!

Concept of the ‘Aha

‘Aha is also the word used for a type of woven cord. The ancients chose the woven cord as a symbol of the ‘Aha because it teaches all of us the pono (appropriate) way and the function of the ancient ‘Aha.

When Hawaiians take the bark of the ‘olonā, prepare it, and weave it into a single cord, that single cord is called an aho. When they take the single cord and join it with other aho and begin to weave a stronger cord, that cord that is woven of many aho is called an ‘aha.

This is highly significant in the mana'o of our kūpuna because the aho used in the ‘aha cord represent each expert sitting on the ‘Aha Council. An expert of fishing, with his expertise, is like a single strand of aho. A healer is like a single strand of aho. One who studies the land is a single strand of aho. One who researches water preservation, forest preservation, architecture, astronomy - each of these people, all these experts – are like individual aho.

When each expert is brought into an ‘aha they weave their expertise together. This combining of expertise together has one purpose: to help to preserve the lands and those things which sustain life for the community. This prepares the way spiritually for the land to flourish physically.

In this way, the resources on the land, and the land, become pono (righteous). When both the land and the people flourish – when there is abundant food and many descendants – then the concept of ‘Aha has been understood.

Today, experts are sometimes called together to manage resources, but this is usually done through government and/or private or business groups. Which system is better? Can we improve ours?

Woven Hawaiian ‘Aha (Cord)