

This trip had multiple objectives: to conduct intertidal monitoring weaving Huli ‘ia, a kilo methodology (‘Ōiwi inquiry) as a scientific process and tools of western science and to support our land crew collecting videos of Nihoa and Mokumanamana led by Dr. Kekuewa Kikilo, CWG co-chair and expert of the islands, mo‘okū‘auhau, ka‘ao, and mo‘olelo of Papahānaumokuākea. The journey strengthened pilina (relationships) to Papahānaumokuākea through sharing experiences and knowledge in collaborative multi-disciplinary research and storytelling from the decades of work that some participants have done to support Papahānaumokuākea. We learned a lot from Kekuewa sharing his experiences, intimate knowledge, and memories of Papahānaumokuākea as an ‘āina akua, a place of regeneration and mana. Building pilina with these islands with respect and in reciprocity of kuleana to protect and care for these islands has been life changing for all of us.

Following past annual intertidal research expeditions in Papahānaumokuākea through the Intertidal Monitoring Partnership from 2011-2017, Na Maka Onaona led the intertidal team continuing kilo through Huli ‘ia, an ‘Ōiwi scientific process of inquiry, using the tools of western institutional science, to understand cycles of productivity, health, and momona of ‘opihi and intertidal ecosystems as a whole. Together, with Huli ‘ia, the intertidal team conducted Productivity and Carrying Capacity surveys of ‘opihi population size and habitat, a limu assessment, and conducted drone and GoPro intertidal mapping. There are drivers of these cycles that require an understanding of the interconnectedness of the lani, honua, wai, and kai, and the habitats and seasonal environment that are important to incorporate in the management of ‘opihi and coastal fisheries. Each place has its story and understanding its function and the drivers of health and productivity will help us adjust our behaviors and create adaptive management to support ‘Āina Momona, healthy and productive communities of people and place.

This journey has reinforced the kahua (foundation) of our pilina to ‘āina, “he ali‘i ka ‘āina, he kauwā ke kanaka.” Land is chief and we are servants. As we swam amongst baitfish, manō, and ulua, we were in awe of the feeling of the many stories and connections that reverberate through us and across generations. All special memories engraved in us, learning from each other in that one week amongst our kūpuna embodied in those islands and the surrounding ocean, that we will spend the rest of our lives remembering and re-remembering with our ‘ohana and friends.

We couldn’t be more proud of this crew for their hard work and aloha going on this journey, learning from Papahānaumokuākea and each other, forever grateful and humbled to travel there and return home safely.