



**Papa Ola Lokahi**  
Nana I Ka Pono Na Ma

**Papa Ola Lokahi**

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### **Papa Ola Lokahi**

is a non-profit Native Hawaiian organization founded in 1988 for the purpose of improving the health and well-being of Native Hawaiians and other native peoples of the Pacific and continental United States.

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## **TOBACCO USE IN PACIFIC IS ASTOUNDING**

(Kaka'ako, Hawai'i) More than 150 public health delegates from throughout the U.S.-associated Pacific Islands are in Honolulu to attend a conference, *Building & Strengthening our Relationships for a Tobacco-Free Pacific*. Today is the last day of the conference being held at the Queen's Conference Center, Mabel Smythe Auditorium.

Yesterday's keynote speaker was Lynn Tenorio, Deputy Secretary for Public Health in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), a flag territory of the United States, the main island of which is Saipan.

The data presented by Ms. Tenorio, who was raised both in Saipan and in Hawai'i, was jaw dropping. Some of the points made about tobacco use in the U.S.-associated Pacific Islands:

- In a 2004 report by the Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), Alaska was identified as the state with the highest tobacco use (29%), although the incidence in the territory of Guam even higher (32%).
- In the same report, the greatest number of male smokers is reported to be in Kentucky (34%), a tobacco state; although Guam's male tobacco use rate is considerably higher (41%).
- Nauru, an independent republic and the world's smallest island nation, leads the world with the highest overall smoking rate (54%)
- CNMI ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the world in number of boys 13-15 years of age who smoke; the Republic of Palau (Belau) is close behind
- CNMI & Palau are in the top five worldwide for girls 13-15 years who smoke
- In a World Health Organization report, Saipan reported that a whopping 31% of all smokers started before the age of 10.

Throughout the day, faith-based leaders, traditional leaders, women's groups and youth discussed the issues of tobacco use in their home jurisdictions and how best to reduce the health burden caused by tobacco.

This afternoon, April 30<sup>th</sup>, there will be remarks by:

- Governor Linda Lingle, former board member, American Legacy Foundation (2:00 PM)
- Amber Hardy Thornton, executive director of American Legacy Foundation (1:30 PM)
- Dr. Annette David, author of the 2004 WHO report that introduced the most recent Pacific tobacco use data (3:00 PM)
- JoAnn Umilani Tsark, research director of Papa Ola Lōkahi (1:30 PM)

The Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems will present the Native Hawaiian Tobacco Program being implemented throughout the Hawaiian islands (2:30 PM). Other Pacific initiatives in chronic disease will be introduced, as well (3:30 PM).

This is the first conference put on by the Pacific Partnership for Tobacco-Free Islands, a coalition of diverse participants from faith-based, traditional, governmental, public health and non-governmental organizations working toward a Pacific-wide tobacco control initiative.

Major conference sponsors are American Legacy Foundation and two programs of Papa Ola Lōkahi: ‘Imi Hale—Native Hawaiian Cancer Network & Pacific Diabetes Education Program. Other sponsors are Queen’s Medical Center and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, with support from American Cancer Society.

*American Legacy Foundation, established in 1999, is committed to building a world where young people reject tobacco and anyone can quit.*

*Papa Ola Lōkahi, established in 1988, is recognized by the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act to improve the health and well-being of Native Hawaiians and their families.*

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