PRESS RELEASE:

DATE: April 24, 2020

On April 1st, 2020, Dr. Landon Opunui, ND was announced as the new medical director of Nā Puʻuwai, one of five Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems, serving the islands of Molokaʻi and Lānaʻi. Federally funded through the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act, Dr. Opunui becomes the first Naturopathic Physician in history to be promoted to the position of medical director within a Native Hawaiian Health Care System.

Dr. Opunui’s first connection with the island of Molokaʻi was in the waʻa when he landed in Hale O Lono harbor aboard the Hōkūleʻa during an inter-island voyage from Maui enroute to ʻOʻahu. Since then he has been fortunate to cross the Kaiwi channel 8x in both the 6-man outrigger canoe during the Molokaʻi Hoe and in his 1-man surfing canoe.

Dr. Opunui’s Hawaiian grandmother is his inspiration to pursue medicine as a career due to her premature passing from chronic health conditions and limited access to health care. After graduation from Kamehameha Kapalama, he did his pre-med undergraduate studies at Loyola Marymount before then going on to naturopathic medical school at Bastyr University in Seattle. Following residency in Kailua-Kona, Dr. Opunui worked as a PCP in Hawaiʻi’s largest integrative medical practice in Honolulu working alongside MDs, Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, PTs, OTs, psychologists, chiropractors, acupuncturists and massage therapists. He shortly thereafter became the first ND in history to become fully credentialed as a PCP within HMSAs network providing mainstream access to naturopathic medical services for the first time in Hawaiʻi’s history.

Dr. Opunui often views naturopathic medicine as a bridge between western and traditional healing practices because naturopathic doctors are licensed to assess, diagnose and treat disease like medical doctors, but the profession offers several other therapeutic tools besides surgery and medication that are connected closer to nature like traditional practitioners.

Dr. Opunui believes in a multi-modality, team-based, collaborative approach to preventing and managing disease while addressing the root cause of illness. When the right space and support is created for a patient, health can blossom and transform. His vision for Na ʻ Puʻuwai is to create innovative new programs that address the health needs of the community, develop improved team collaborate with shared goals, promote collaboration amongst the healthcare providers, clinics and hospitals within the communities we serve, improve Native Hawaiian health outcomes, and achieve financial success as an organization.

While weaving the traditional views of health and healing with our modern understanding of science and medicine, Dr. Opunui has unique training and perspective to address health disparities within Hawaiian communities. He is humbled and excited by the opportunity to be a pioneer in creating a better future for the people of Molokaʻi and Lānaʻi through improving Native Hawaiian health outcomes.

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