



2017 Project Directors Meeting In Pursuit of Higher Education for All

Nāmaka Rawlins

Director Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations

'Aha Pūnana Leo

Nāmaka Rawlins is from the Native Hawaiian communities of Keaukaha and Pana'ewa in Hilo, Hawai'i. Ms. Rawlins served nearly 20 years as the executive director of the 'Aha Pūnana Leo. The 'Aha Pūnana Leo is a nonprofit family-based educational organization dedicated to the revitalization of the Hawaiian language. Today, Ms. Rawlins serves as a senior advisor and director of Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations.



The Pūnana Leo is a full-day language- and culture-based early education program. The Hawaiian language is used exclusively with the children and between teachers and staff. Hawaiian is the "language environment" in early learning and development interactions of children, staff, and families. The 'Aha Pūnana Leo is a member of an internationally recognized association of schools, organizations, and university programs in Hawai'i dedicated to reestablishing the indigenous Hawaiian language as the first and primary language of the home.

Ms. Rawlins served on the National Indian Education Association Board of Directors. She is the vice-president of the National Coalition of Native American Language Schools and Programs. She also serves on the Native Hawaiian Education Council and was appointed by the Governor to the state's Early Learning Board to the Executive Office on Early Learning.