

Hawaiian Healing Arts in the TCF Curriculum

From its early days, our school has included Hawaiian healing arts in its practice. Our founder, Patrick Watson, lived in San Francisco in the 1960s and 1970s, a center of Asian martial arts and Hawaiian culture. Patrick had the great fortune to learn traditional ways to heal the body and mind from eminent Hawaiian kahunas (spiritual healers, doctors, and teachers).

First, he learned Hawaiian swimming from his kahuna coach Eddie Ukini. While teaching swimming himself, Patrick mentored the young Vicki Shackford, who later became a tai chi teacher in our school. Vicki has preserved the Hawaiian swimming art over the years, teaching it at most of our summer residential tai chi trainings as well as training other teachers in the art.

Second, Patrick learned the bodywork art of lomi from Eddie Ukini and from Mornah Simeona, a kahuna honored as a healer and a Living Treasure of Hawaii. Lomi is a method of restoring our skeletal structure to its optimum alignment, to strengthen and correct body and movement, relieve pain, and improve energy.

When Rhoda Joy Jacobs, a teacher in our school, suffered a physical trauma to her back after being attacked, Patrick took her under his wing and worked with her for several years, overseeing and fine-tuning her daily lomi practice. At first, Rhoda was in so much pain that she was unable to stand or sit without assistance. With lomi practice, she experienced the gradual restoration of her alignment, her strength, and her ability to move, and she was able to return to teaching tai chi classes.

Third, Patrick learned the practice of ho'oponopono from Mornah Simeona. Ho'oponopono is an ancient Hawaiian practice of reconciliation and forgiveness (the word means "to make right"). When Patrick taught the practice to Rhoda, she was able to forgive her attacker and cleanse her connections to all people, things, and events in her current and past experiences. A few weeks before Patrick died, he entrusted Rhoda with the responsibility of keeping lomi and ho'oponopono alive within our school.

Because Patrick recognized how the Hawaiian healing arts and tai chi arts could enhance each other's practice and embodiment, he included swimming, lomi, and ho'oponopono in our school's curriculum, available to tai chi students, healing professionals, and other people who want to learn these self-healing arts. The combined Hawaiian arts align and heal, freeing our body's structure and energy, as well as our mind and spirit, enhancing our tai chi practice. These arts and tai chi practice work together to accumulate qi, improve our skills and sensitivity, and awaken our consciousness.