

Hawaiians spur STD app's name change

May 7 2014, by Jennifer Sinco Kelleher

A sexual health information app called "Hula" will be changing its name after complaints that it is culturally insensitive to Native Hawaiians, the app's owner said Tuesday.

Ramin Bastani, founder and CEO of Los Angeles-based Qpid.me Inc., said that after weeks of learning to understand concerns of the Native Hawaiian community, he's moving forward with the name change.

"We immediately engaged the community and listened with an open mind," he said. "By doing so, we gained a great respect for hula, the Hawaiian culture and its history."

An online petition asking him to change the name argued that it exploits a sacred cultural dance. Bastani previously said the name would remain, even after the petition gained some attention in March, but he immediately removed any references to "getting lei'd" in marketing the [app](#).

"As we continued to listen and learn, we realized this is the right thing for us to do," he said. Recently, the controversy seemed to die down, he said, but that "quiet period" allowed the company to "truly reflect."

Bastani apologized to anyone who was offended by the name.

"That was absolutely never our intent," he said.

On Friday, the state Senate Hawaiian Affairs Caucus and the Office of

Hawaiian Affairs issued a statement calling the name "highly insensitive, tactless and inappropriate."

Office of Hawaiian Affairs CEO Kamanaoiono Crabbe said in a statement Tuesday, "We appreciate this change, in acknowledgement that no culture should be demeaned for profit or convenience."

Bastani said a new name hasn't been determined, but he assured it won't have anything to do with Hawaii.

"We promise to change the name in the very near future," he said, estimating it will happen in the next month or so, after ironing out legal details and other issues.

"We need to redo our entire website, all of our marketing, our application," he said. "There's a lot we need to do."

Bastani said he'll continue to educate others not to associate "getting lei'd" with his health tool.

The free app's website says its functions include helping users find an STD test center, get the results online, and share their verified STD status with people they choose.

Bastani said the app is about "helping people retrieve and share [health information](#)."

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