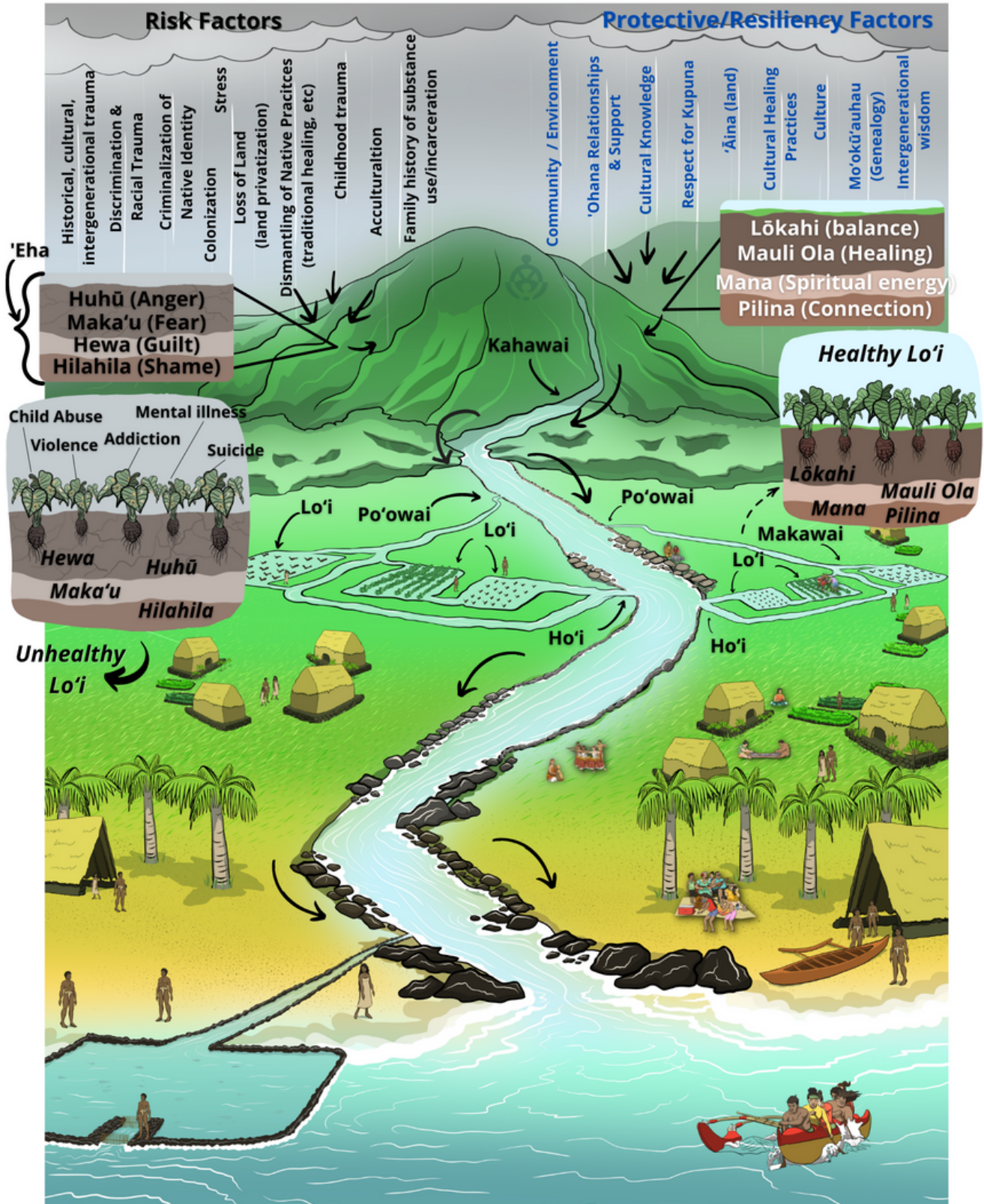




# THE IMPACTS OF COLONIZATION ON 'AHUPUA'A. CONCEPTUALIZATION



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Our Native people thrived in Hawai'i for centuries before Western contact. Native Hawaiians developed a complex resource management system through the 'ahupua'a system, a land division of interconnected systems stretching from the mountain to the sea.

The 'ahupua'a model provides a framework to implement cultural interventions at various places within the 'ahupua'a to effectively provide healing that impacts not only the individual, but their 'ohana and community as well. Interventions within the metaphorical framework would aim to effectively decrease the intergenerational transmission of risk factors (intergenerational/historical/cultural trauma, colonization, poverty, oppression, loss of traditional healing practices, criminalization of Native identity, loss of land, family/community history of use/incarceration) and increase the intergenerational transmission of protective/resiliency factors ('ohana relationships, cultural wisdom, traditional healing, community connection, mo'okū'auhau (genealogy), 'āina (land), respect for kupuna, and culture). The model draws from Dr. Kaholokula's model of the social and cultural determinants of health and their relation to Maui Ola (Kaholokula, 2017). Our 'ahupua'a stretched ma uka i kai (mountain to sea), connected through wai (water), which flowed through each system section to bring life. Wai ran through our lo'i (kalo patch), and loko i'a (fishponds), and down into the ocean, where it evaporates and becomes ua (rain) to once again fall from the lani (sky), run through our nāhele (forests), and down throughout the rest of the 'ahupua'a. No one system functioned independently. Kānaka, our people, tended these systems knowing that resources were finite and the land must flourish for us to survive. He alii ka 'āina, he kawa ke kānaka, the land is chief, and us its servant.<sup>69</sup>

Looking at the lo'i system, within our 'ahupua'a system, I ka wa kahiko (ancient times), if these systems were not functioning correctly, or not healthy, and if those who mālama (to take care of) these spaces were not ma'a (accustomed, used to, familiar) to this understanding, no one would be fed. Lo'i is the Native Hawaiian's agricultural system using terraces along the hillsides. They developed complex systems, similar to water paddies, to grow their staple food of kalo (taro) along the valleys. We should understand the external impact on this substantive system.

We can understand kalo as a reflection of ourselves, of hāloa, our ancestor, our root, both metaphorically and physically. Let's conceptualize this new system of care, one where Native persons can thrive and pursue healing pathways that embrace, empower, and value an Indigenous worldview. We achieve this by recognizing interconnections within systems and understanding how feedback from each area along the continuum of care impacts and informs other system areas as a whole, much like the 'ahupua'a.



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As we visualize the system through this culturally informed and holistic lens, we must also acknowledge that current data often aggregates ethnicities, is disparity focused and has a history of portraying Native/Indigenous populations by showing what is wrong. Therefore, the 'ahupua'a model (Kahalewai, n.d.) provides a metaphorical model to understand collective healing through a Native lens and embraces a recovery perspective that recognizes substance use as a symptom of a larger trauma. The 'ahupua'a is a living, breathing example of a thriving, healthy Native system.

Through this model, practitioners can identify the root causes of trauma, and develop effective culturally informed interventions to engage in collective healing from trauma and celebrate resiliency outcomes.

With the help of our Indigenous cousins, we continue to explore the manifestations of deeper trauma within ourselves, 'ohana, and communities through this model of a Healing 'Ahupua'a, inspired by the Healing Forest model created by White Bison (Gryczynski, Johnson, and Coyhis, 2007).

Pre-contact, our 'ahupua'a were healthy and existed in a harmonious relationship, tended by kānaka (Native people) who understood that each interconnected system within the 'ahupua'a must be healthy for all to thrive.

However, the Figure outlines the impacts of colonization, racial/cultural traumas, negative socio-economic impact, the criminalization, and subsequent loss of the Native identity has had on Native Hawaiian individuals, 'ohana, and communities. These impacts are carried through the 'ahupua'a system as risk factors impacting generations.

Let's visualize these risk factors entering our 'ahupua'a through the ua or rain. This 'eha, or pain/trauma, is passed down from generation to generation and compounded by unresolved grief. All of this 'eha creates layers of huhū (anger), hewa (guilt), hila hila (shame), and maka'u (fear), which enter into our 'ahupua'a just as the metaphorical rain feeds into the soil. Suppose we look at these impacted systems and visualize the 'eha (pain/trauma) impacting the soil to understand the pollution and other toxins that have found their way into our environment and continue to impact our systems through the environmental water cycle cyclically. The potentially unhealthy/impacted soil would then run off into the kahawai (river) and be carried downstream, impacting the rest of our interconnected systems. But, just as trauma is passed down generationally, our ancestors pass down the strengths and resilience (as seen in the ua).



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We can understand the interconnected 'ahupua'a systems as our care systems, our 'ohana, and our communities. In understanding care systems and approaches to healing within the larger continuum, let's focus on the lo'i as an 'āina-based model to visualize the internal and external impacts of trauma and the manifesting symptom of substance use on our lāhui ecosystem. Lo'i is the Native Hawaiian's agricultural system using terraces along the hillsides. They developed complex systems, similar to water paddies, to grow their staple food of kalo (taro) along the valleys. We should understand the external impact on this substantive system. We can understand kalo as a reflection of ourselves, of hāloa, our ancestor, our root, both metaphorically and physically. As the unhealthy soil enters into our lo'i, it becomes that which feeds the next generation of kalo or hāloa that emerges from it.

Today, we may have generations of people born with all of this internal 'eha buried deep within them. If the 'eha begins to bubble up to the surface, it can manifest in many different ways in our kalo; anger, violence, substance use, etc., giving way to an unhealthy 'ahupua'a. However, suppose we remember that our strengths and cultural resilience are also contained in the ua and soil. In that case, we see a path forward in cleaning our water of the risk factors to improve and increase our protective/resilience factors for generations to come.

Let's imagine, while working in the lo'i one day, we find one kalo that is sick (manifesting trauma as addiction). First, we must look around to the other kalo to find the source of the sickness. Are the other kalo sick? Is the whole lo'i sick? How could this sickness be getting in? We must look up the interconnected 'auwai (canal) and the kahawai for the source of this sickness, this pollution, this 'eha. If we cannot find the source of this ma'i, this sickness, and we instead decide we will just take that one kalo out, heal it, and then put it back into that potentially unhealthy environment, it will only get sick again.

This metaphor illustrates we will face the same result we began with if we decide to solve the problem on the surface that we see. We need to put in the work to address the root of the problem, look far enough up the system, and dig deep enough to find the source that creates the unhealthy environment.



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Recognizing how Native Hawaiians experience the self through ecocentric, cosmocentric, and sociocentric definitions provides a lens for understanding and developing more impactful and effective interactions for Native people are implemented through the 'ahupua'a framework. Thereby The 'ahupua'a model provides a framework to implement cultural interventions at various places within the 'ahupua'a to effectively provide healing that impacts not only the individual, but their 'ohana and community as well. Interventions within the metaphorical framework would aim to effectively decrease the intergenerational transmission of risk factors (intergenerational/historical/cultural trauma, colonization, poverty, oppression, loss of traditional healing practices, criminalization of Native identity, loss of land, family/community history of use/incarceration) and increase the intergenerational transmission of protective/resiliency factors ('ohana relationships, cultural wisdom, traditional healing, community connection, mo'okū'auhau (genealogy), 'āina (land), respect for kupuna, and culture), cleaning our wai as it traverses throughout our interconnected systems and is reborn through the water cycle to fall as ua once again. This increase in protective factors will contribute to the healthy lo'i and 'ahupua'a through the soil waiwai (rich) with lōkahi (balance), mauli ola (health), mana (spiritual energy), and pilina (connection/bonds), foundational values for a thriving lāhui kānaka (Native Hawaiian people), as seen on the right side of the image. The 'ahupua'a conceptual framework is intended to develop and grow as the framework is embraced and actualized across systems and care spaces.

Embracing a more culturally grounded approach would effectively provide a paradigm shift in how society and individuals see themselves. Imagine the empowerment of nurturing and uplifting these unique gifts contained within Native Hawaiian protective/resiliency factors and the impact or effect they would have on someone's life, how they grew up, and how they perceive themselves. By understanding the multiple threads impacting their lives, a more robust, comprehensive (holistic) approach that incorporates (blends) the interventions used will have more value for this Native person.



Papa Ola Lōkahi  
Nana I Ka Pono Na Ma

PAPA OLA LŌKAHI

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Apaka K. 'Ahupua'a image (Edited by the authors). 2021.