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A Maoli-Based Art Education: Ku'u Mau Kuamo'o 'Ōlelo

Raquel Malia Andrus

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Mark Graham, Chair  
Daniel Barney  
Maile Andrade

Department of Visual Arts  
Brigham Young University  
March 2014

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## ABSTRACT

### A Maoli-Based Art Education: Ku'u Mau Kuamo'o 'Ōlelo

Raquel Malia Andrus  
Department of Visual Arts, BYU  
Master of Arts

Leaders in K-12 education in Hawai'i are increasingly advocating for and utilizing the culture and knowledge of the *kānaka Maoli*, the native people of these islands, as a context for learning in a variety of curricular disciplines and approaches (Benham & Heck, 1998; Kani 'iaupuni, Ledward & Jensen, 2010; Kana'iaupuni & Malone, 2006; Kahakalau, 2004; Meyer, 2004). To expand upon this trend, this thesis uses a combination of autoethnographic and critical indigenous methodologies to present a personal narrative that looks specifically at approaching art education from a Maoli perspective. Through extensive participant/observer reflections, two place-based and culture-based art education experiences are juxtaposed with an experience working on a culturally-based collaborative mural project. Four significant *kuamo'o*, a concept which holds multiple meanings, including: "backbone, spine; road, trail path; custom, way," (Puku'i & Elbert, 1986), emerge as significant markers of meaningful Maoli-based art education: 1) *mo'oku'auhau*, genealogy and acknowledgement of those who have come before us, 2) *mo'olelo*, stories which belong to our place, 3) an idea that I am labeling *pili ka mo'o*, which literally means, the lizard is intertwined but can be translated through metaphor to mean someone who is intimate and deeply connected, and 4) *aloha*, a profound and honest love.

*Keywords:* Hawai'i, art education, place-based education, culture-based education, autoethnography, critical indigenous inquiry or critical indigenous pedagogy

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Mahalo Dr. Graham. I clearly remember the serendipitous moment that I Googled "place-based art education" as an initial search at the beginning of my Master's journey and found *your articles* as some of the top references. I couldn't believe that in all of the upper-education community, one of the top writers on my personal thesis topic was already my professor. Thank you for taking us into the Utah mountains, (even if I did nearly faint thinking our van would fall off the cliff), thank you for taking us camping with the bears in Colorado and tromping through river gorges in New Mexico. Thank you for coming to my home and meeting my students and my family.

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Mahalo to the BYU Visual Art Department for allowing me to be place-based in this

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## Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Image Sets</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Mo'oku'auhau of this Thesis .....	3
Mo'olelo on Searching for a Pedagogy of Place for Art Education .....	5
Teaching differently .....	7
Pili ka Mo'o: Autoethnographic and Critical Indigenous Methodologies .....	9
Ke Aloha .....	10
<b>Chapter 2: Review of Literature</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Maoli-based Education in Hawai'i .....	12
The Fundamentals of Place-based Education .....	17
Cultural studies .....	17
Nature studies .....	18
Real-world problem solving .....	19
Induction into community processes .....	20
Positive outcomes of place-based education .....	21
Calming feelings of placelessness and identity insecurities .....	21
Perpetuating traditional and local cultural knowledge .....	23
Curbing unsustainable consumption practices .....	24
Making meaning through education .....	25

Contributing citizens .....	26
Place-based education and standards.....	27
Place-based Pedagogies Combined with K-12 Art Education .....	29
Culture, place, and art education.....	31
Summary of Literature Review .....	32
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology .....</b>	<b>34</b>
Descriptions: Autoethnography.....	35
Descriptions: Critical Indigenous Inquiry.....	37
Methodology and Thesis Format .....	40
Personal Research Implementation: Methods.....	41
Methodology and Research Summary.....	44
<b>Chapter 4: Sites of Investigation.....</b>	<b>45</b>
Art Elective at Hakipu'u Learning Center .....	45
The first four classes.....	47
Final project and conclusion of the elective.....	51
Reflections on the Hakipu'u Learning Center art elective.....	53
The Fourth Grade Outdoor Art Workshops at He'eia Fishpond.....	54
At the fishpond .....	57
Reflections on the fishpond workshops.....	64
Ka Moana Nui Mural.....	65
Mural preparation observations.....	65
Mural creation.....	68
Reflections on the mural project.....	74
Sites of Investigation Summary.....	77
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusions .....</b>	<b>78</b>

Mo'oku'auhau, Mo'olelo, Pili Ka Mo'o, and Aloha in Art Education Practice .....	78
Mo'oku'auhau: Placing Artists in a Continuum of Creative Activity .....	78
Mo'olelo: Artists as Story Collectors and Re-tellers .....	79
Pili ka Mo'o: Getting Intimate with the 'Āina .....	80
Aloha: Spirituality and Love.....	82
Conclusion .....	83
<b>References .....</b>	<b>85</b>



## List of Image Sets

Image Set 1. Hakipu'u Learning Center students work on art electives in the carport. ....	50
Image Set 2. First day at He'eia Fishpond: beginning the tour out on to the wall, passing ko'a and pohaku pele during a moment for observation, listening to stories around the makahā, and filling and transporting buckets of coral during a service project. ....	59
Image Set 3. The stream hike, field journal examples, art projects. ....	63
Image Set 4. One of the first activities of the week was an introduction to the mural itself, which at that point, already consisted of three separate but intelocking wooden panels. Alaka'i and haumāna discussed and sketched reactions to the forms while hearing the kumu's current conceptualizations on the oceanic theme. ....	69
Image Set 5. In order to build context, the different kumu led historical, conceptual and technical activities. In the activity shown here, Harinani Orme leads the group in creating collaborative drawings on transparencies that reference the natural elements of the ocean. ....	71
Image Set 6. Haumāna work on panel three, the kumu sit together during a break to discuss progress, and images of the mural at the end of work day three. ....	74

*Ua ka ua, ola ka nohona o ka 'āina kula.*

The rain pours, life comes to the plains.

'Ōlelo No'eau #2802

*Ka ua pō'ai hale o Kahalu'u.*

The rain that moves around the homes of Kahalu'u.

'Ōlelo No'eau #1598

*Ka ua kani ko'o o He'eia.*

The rain of He'eia that sounds like the tapping of walking canes.

'Ōlelo No'eau #1561

*How many of us really understand the rains of our areas, the names of the mountain peaks, the tidal influence on migrating sand or the real understanding of aloha? How many of us really believe there is a wealth of curriculum here in our own lands and that this affects our philosophy and pedagogy? How many of us believe that Hawaiian values are ideals to teach and also embody?*

Manu Meyer, 2004, p. 4

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*A Maoli-Based Art Education: Ku'u Mau Kuamo'o 'Ōlelo.* In the Hawaiian language, the word *kaona* means that words can carry layers of meaning. The words chosen for my thesis title reference layers of meaning that allude to the questions, methodologies, investigations, and conclusions that will be discussed in this thesis. *Maoli* refers to someone or something that is indigenous to a place. I prefer to use the term Maoli-based instead of the more common label of “culture-based” in order to signify that my approach involves a specific culture and place. *Ku'u mau kuamo'o 'ōlelo* can be roughly translated to mean, “my successive stories.” However, there is more to each word’s meaning; *ku'u* is a possessive marker that also carries a deep sense of belovedness. *Kuamo'o 'ōlelo* refers to a, “continuous record, history, story or succession of events” (Pukui, 1986, p. 171). The word *'ōlelo* means language or speech. *Kuamo'o* is “backbone, spine; road, trail, path; custom, way” (Pukui, 1986, p. 170). *Kua* means back, as in the strength of our backs to stand tall, *kua* also references mountain ridges and upright foundational supports. Of the multiple meanings for *mo'o*, I am using it to refer to a “succession or series,” “grandchild,” and “a narrow path” (Pukui, 1986, p. 263). This thesis presents my personal and dearly treasured stories regarding my understandings of a series of foundational supports relative to a Maoli-based art education.

My title also contains the term *art education*. This term signals that this thesis also evolved within the non-indigenous context of art education as it is understood by dominant philosophies of art and education. Consequently, the title of my thesis contains a fundamental tension that I was attempting to navigate throughout my research journey. My narrative includes my growing understanding of how to negotiate a course between

art education and a Maoli understanding of teaching and learning as I have sought to understand, name, and develop a personally appropriate methodology.

### **Mo'oku'auhau of this Thesis**

My name is Raquel Malia Andrus. My parents are Charles Parker Waipa Andrus and Kitura Kanani Duran Andrus. Both of my parents were born and raised in the neighboring areas of Kahalu'u, He'eia and Kane'ohe, on the windward side of O'ahu. I was raised there also. For the first part of my childhood, my family lived up *ma uka* (towards the mountains) in Kahalu'u. When I was about 12 years old, our family moved to a house on Kane'ohe Bay, very close to where my dad grew up. I am therefore from many parts of Kahalu'u: I am from explorations up the hill in the back of our Pakai Place house and sitting in plum trees. I am from short evening boat-runs out to 'Ahua a Laka (a sandbar in the middle of the bay) to eat a packed-up dinner, from camping on the beach at Hakipu'u and from afternoons collecting molted lobster shells from a coral cove on Kapapa Island. I am from low-tide explorations through the sandy/muddy Kahalu'u shoreline, sorting through *limu* (seaweed) and splashing through the water with buckets and nets, digging up the burrowing crabs and chasing schools of small fish. These childhood opportunities founded my current belief in the value of meaningful time in nature.

As a Part-Hawaiian, I have been raised understanding important cultural values which include: *aloha 'āina* (to love and care for this land), *aloha i ke kai* (to love and respect the ocean), and to know our *kupuna* (ancestors) love and watch over us. Looking back, I realize that these specific values were rarely addressed in my K-12 education of the 1980's and 90's. Hawai'i's official school system is the result of the American

colonization which had its origins in the early 1800's when Christian missionaries began running the first formal schools, (Benham & Heck, 1998). Meyer (2004) explains that, "the obvious aim of missionaries, and that of education in general, was to transform Hawaiian villages into the likeness of New England towns" (p.27). Perspectives of the *Kānaka Maoli*, the indigenous people of Hawai'i, have been left out of Hawai'i's schools since that time.

Now that I have become an art teacher in the education system of Hawai'i, I question this absence of Maoli values and perspectives and wonder at the implications of this absence. Clark (2006) states that mainstream school curriculum in Hawai'i continue to enforce an "environment that marginalize(s) and disregard(s) Kanaka Maoli culture and knowledge" (pp. xlvii). Statistics show disproportionately high rates of "poverty, substance abuse, juvenile deviance and criminal activity, teenage pregnancies, poor educational outcomes, domestic abuse, depression, and suicide" among Hawaiians (Kana'iaupuni, Leward & Jensen, 2010, p. 3). These statistics suggest that current education and social systems are not preparing Hawaiians for spiritually, economically, and physically healthy lives. One response to these social problems is the adoption of educational practices that embrace Hawaiian cultural knowledge and ways of knowing.

Contemporary curriculum theorists William Pinar (2008) and Madeleine Grumet (1988) note, "Curriculum is what the older generation chooses to tell the younger generations. The school curriculum communicates what we choose to remember about our past, what we believe about the present, what we hope for the future" (Pinar summarizing Grumet, (2008), p. 20). To re-address what has *not* been remembered in the curriculum for so long, leaders in K-12 education are increasingly utilizing the culture

and knowledge of the Kānaka Maoli as a context for meaningful learning for students of Hawai'i (Benham & Heck, 1998; Kani 'iaupuni, Ledward & Jensen, 2010; Kana'iaupuni & Malone, 2006; Kahakalau, 2004; Meyer, 2004).

The pedagogical shift towards Hawaiian culture-based education was evident in the inception of the Punana Leo Hawaiian language immersion preschools in the 1980's, (Timeline of Revitalization, [www.ahapunaleo.org](http://www.ahapunaleo.org)), which expanded to Hawaiian language medium schooling for K-12. The first community, language and culture-based public charter schools opened in the early 2000's. Today, there are 17 Hawaiian culture-focus charter schools across the Hawaiian Islands (see: [http://www.ksbe.edu/communityeducation/site/programs/grades\\_5-8/charter\\_schools](http://www.ksbe.edu/communityeducation/site/programs/grades_5-8/charter_schools)). Although these trends show a budding revitalization of culture-based education methods and pedagogies, most public schools in Hawai'i ignore the culture and knowledge of the indigenous people of this place.

As individuals and communities adopt relevant place-based and culture-based pedagogies in response to the shortcomings of the legacy of colonial schooling in Hawai'i education, more holistically healthy, spiritually grounded, culturally empowered, and civically minded individuals and communities will be cultivated. To add a small part to this growing practice of Maoli-based educational pedagogies, this thesis will explore the possibilities of Maoli-based education specific to K-12 art education through an auto-ethnographic telling of my artistic and educational journey.

### **Mo'olelo on Searching for a Pedagogy of Place for Art Education**

In 2008-09, I worked at a Hawaiian culture-based charter school, Hakipu'u Learning Center. It was my first in-depth experience with Hawaiian culture-based

education. In this, my first full-time teaching position, I was labeled an “*’ohana* advisor.” In this position, I guided and facilitated student-specific project-based learning activities. During the second semester of that school year, administration invited me to lead an art elective with our students at their weekly visit to the school *lo’i*, a traditional Hawaiian irrigated pond system where we planted, maintained and harvested *kalo*, the staple food crop and a symbol of community health for the Hawaiian people. For this art elective, I gathered supplies and held my art rotation sitting on rocks along the Waipao stream.

I felt moderately satisfied with the curriculum I created, which included observational water-coloring, a collaborative values activity and constructing paper mache *kalo*. However, I wondered if I had approached the opportunity in a manner that was authentic to the place. I wasn’t sure I had. Hauling all those supplies through the forest to get to the *lo’i* seemed a bit intrusive, if not anachronistic. Additionally, those art lessons and activities could have been conducted just as easily in any standard classroom. I have done similar lessons in other art classes since that time. I asked myself the question: how could I utilize physical place and our *Maoli* understanding of place to more authentically influence the art experiences I provide for my students?

After a year, I left Hakipu’u Learning Center to teach art at a different charter school, Hawai’i Technology Academy. I was sad to leave the culture-based school community of Hakipu’u, but excited to teach art full-time in my new position. Due to my personal beliefs on meaningful learning experiences, I tried to include place-based projects and opportunities in my art educating when possible. I offered a high school class, “Arts and Crafts of Hawai’i” where we learned to weave coconut-frond baskets, created prints inspired by Hawaiian *kapa*, barkcloth, and made natural cordage. I believed

that getting outside and personally experiencing and enjoying our home environment was also important, so as much as possible, I teamed up with other teachers to take students on hikes up the Makapu'u Lighthouse trail to whale-watch, write, and watercolor. I held landscape-painting classes at Kualoa Park, coordinated service learning workshops at cultural sites like He'eia Fishpond and utilized art examples from local artists as often as made sense in the curriculum.

### **Teaching differently.**

In many ways, my approach and presentation in these activities was actually, “teaching *about* cultures rather than grounding teaching and learning within the culturally relevant framework of a particular community,” (Kana'iaupuni, Ledward & Jensen, 2010, p. 3). Without having those precise words at the time, I felt I wanted to *teach differently*. I wanted to teach in a way that was more culturally congruent with how those skills were understood by Hawaiians. I didn't have the perfect answer to what that would be, so I began searching for that “pedagogy of place that shifts the emphasis from teaching about local culture to teaching through culture” (Barnhardt, 2010, p. 113). An important key in helping me to explore and develop my understanding of this question was Maoli artist and educator Meleanna Meyer.

Back in 2007, I happened to be in attendance with a handful of *kupuna*, teachers and start-up artists and writers at a workshop on creativity in Punalu'u, on O'ahu. Meyer was leading the workshop. Her creative energies and methods captivated me. She had brought a small *'umeke*, a carved wooden bowl, and placed it on the center of the worktable. We based our discussions, writing, sketching and coloring on the personal meanings we connected with that artifact. During the workshop, we built upon each



other's shared stories and dug deeply for more specific narratives from our own place in the world. I was excited to experience for the first time, a creative process that seemed to combine two previously separate settings in my mind: art education and *'ike Hawai'i* (Hawaiian knowledge). My upbringing and art education experiences up until this point, although meaningful to me, had not done this.

This specific experience with Meyer transformed me: 1) it allowed me to experience art being taught in a way that I personally connected to, and 2) it began a student/mentor relationship with Meyer that afforded me many personally meaningful art and education opportunities. For example, in 2009, Meyer extended a call to 4 respected artist colleagues in the Hawaiian community, 3 support artists, (of which I was one), and around 30 students in grades 4-12 for a mural project at a Waikiki hotel. We came together for a week of storytelling, researching, brainstorming, drawing and painting. Our focus was the historical stories regarding the area where the hotel is located, Helumoa. Artists and students worked together to complete a 72-foot mural that now hangs around the grand escalators of the hotel. In 2011, a similar call was extended to the same working group of artists and students to create a mural for a campground in a rural area on the northern side of O'ahu. Once again, we heard stories of that place, brainstormed and outlined what messages and symbols were significant to that place and worked for about one week's time to collaboratively paint a mural that now is the backdrop in the camp's chapel.

These mural experiences with Meyer and the artists working with her significantly inspired me to further understand my art education pedagogies and find possible answers to my original question of how to teach differently, and through more

culturally congruent methods. This work also suggested to me ways that I could more thoughtfully utilize our Maoli heritage to influence the art experiences I provide for my students.

This research thesis is my first extensive effort to better understand how I might do this. My literature review will look at three questions that build foundations for understanding teaching from a culturally congruent stance: 1) How is Maoli-based education understood and functioning in Hawai'i? 2) Noting the importance of place in Native Hawaiian, indigenous peoples and contemporary conservationist belief systems, what are the fundamentals of place-based education? 3) How have culture-based and place-based pedagogies been combined with art and art education in and outside of Hawai'i? My personal research will include three in-depth autoethnographic narratives about Maoli and place-based art education: two are personal teaching experiences and the third is a description of a recent mural project led by Meyer.

### **Pili ka Mo'o: Autoethnographic and Critical Indigenous Methodologies**

I approach my research and writing autoethnographically, which is a systematic analyzing (*graphy*) of personal experience (*auto*) regarding cultural practice (*ethno*), (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). I believe I have been led to this research inquiry through all of my personal life experiences, so often concentrated on art, education and Hawaiian culture. These include my childhood growing up in Kahalu'u and my schooldays at He'eia Elementary, my college-preparatory experiences in middle and high school at Kamehameha, and my undergraduate time at Brigham Young University. At BYU, my most poignant learning opportunities came through study abroad programs with Joe Ostraff to Aotearoa, New Zealand to visit the visual art department at the

Wananga o Awanuiarangi, a Maori University. Maori culture was evident in all aspects of curriculum and art project development. The ubiquitous cultural foundations I observed inspired me. Now that I am an art educator myself, I desire the same level of artistic excellence and culture-based confidence for art students and artists of Hawai'i.

For this thesis, my autoethnography focuses on two personal teaching opportunities; an 8-week art workshop with students at the charter school Hakipu'u Learning Center and an art-integrated workshop series at He'eia fishpond with a class of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students from Hawai'i Technology Academy. These two teaching experiences are juxtaposed with a learning opportunity as a participant/observer in a recent mural project led by Meyer.

My propositions for a Maoli-based art education pedagogy is based on the ideas of Critical Indigenous Pedagogy (CIP), (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008), which centers on concerns of indigenous peoples. CIP offers parameters to be mindful of and aspires to the following: “it must be ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonizing, and participatory. It must be committed to dialogue, community, self-determination, and cultural autonomy” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 2). Critical Indigenous Pedagogy informs my place-based and culture-based approach to teaching and learning. This thesis explores how these approaches are shaped through a Hawaiian worldview.

### **Ke Aloha**

My love for this place and the people here is especially concentrated on children. I would like to see children who are confident in who they are, understand stories that can help them navigate through life, are deeply committed to positively contributing to their communities and who love themselves, their families, and this land. The vehicle for my

personal contributions towards this goal is art education, which can be a creative means for developing understanding and expressing beliefs. The conclusions presented here, which focus on Maoli ways of understanding and experiencing the world, are valuable alternatives to the predominantly American lens through which education is commonly experienced in Hawai'i.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

How can K-12 art education be practiced through a Maoli perspective? My literature review will develop a basis for understanding and answering this over-arching research question by looking at three foundational questions: 1) How is Maoli-based education understood and functioning in Hawai'i? 2) Noting the importance of place in Native Hawaiian, indigenous peoples and contemporary conservationist belief systems, what are the fundamentals of place-based education? 3) How have culture-based and place-based pedagogies been combined with art and art education in and outside of Hawai'i?

### **Maoli-based Education in Hawai'i**

Academic research is expanding our understanding of the burgeoning Maoli and Hawaiian culture-based education methodologies being practiced since the 1970's in general, (Benham, 2004; Kadooka, 2010; Kawakami, 2004), and in specific areas like science and environmental studies, (Blaich, 2003; Chinn, 2011; Trinidad, 2011), literature, (Ho'omanawanui 2008, 2010, 2012), and visual arts (Clark, 2006). Yet, "inquiry on teaching and learning, policy and practice, and organizational leadership and change (to name a few areas in education) focused on Native Hawaiian education is still in its infancy" (Benham, 2004, pp. 38). The variety of approaches in our Hawaiian language-based Kula Kaiaupuni and Hawaiian-focus charter schools demonstrates a dedication to and diversity of implementation of how to understand Hawaiian culture-based education. The fact that there are Hawaiian-culture-based charter schools in existence at all is one significant piece of evidence of the growing commitment to this type of education and for recognizing its distinctiveness from mainstream schooling.

The place-based specificity that is one of the key components of Hawaiian culture-based charter schools emphasizes this *makawalu* position (of numerous interpretations and understandings); even as natural landscapes and ecosystems vary from place to specific place, the knowledge belonging to them varies as well, “In each case, an emergent society – that is, a system of knowing – has arisen that is deeply rooted to place” (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008, p .9). As interpretations of the specifics of Maoli-based education vary from place to place across Hawai'i, I want to acknowledge that the literature review in response to this question is by no means exhaustive. For the purposes of this review, Maoli-based education and Hawaiian culture-based education are used interchangeably.

Kana'iaupuni, Leward & Jensen, (2010), offer the following definition of culture-based education as the “grounding of instruction and student learning in the values, norms, knowledge, beliefs, practices, experiences, places, and language that are the foundation of a cultural group, in this case, Native Hawaiians” (p. 4). Customary Hawaiian practice made families, including extended families, responsible for teaching skills and values to the children as noted below:

Traditional Hawaiian teaching practices included three interrelated processes: ...Children must observe their elders or a more experienced person in order to learn... children must listen in order to remember... and third...once children had observed and listened as those more experienced modeled the steps in the activity to be learned, they next imitated and practiced the skill to be learned. Questioning and interrupting was strongly discouraged until these three steps had occurred, and mastery or perfection

was expected as the final outcome. (Schonleber, 2007, pp. 242)

Other key elements of teaching and learning in traditional Hawaiian culture included, “expectations that the older children would teach the younger, and the younger would learn from the older,” (Schonleber, 2007, pp. 243), and the practice of adults watching children carefully to determine skill readiness and interest.

Language is noted as a vital component of a Maoli-based worldview, however, Schonleber (2007) notes that, “it is not enough to simply utilize the Hawaiian language and/or cultural values... Knowledge and use of culturally relevant teaching strategies is also an important factor” (pp. 240). Researching culturally congruent teaching methods, a preliminary survey with teachers across Hawai'i concludes that the kinds of “culturally purposeful projects teachers are using in schools are: 1) *Haku*/Original compositions; 2) *Mālama 'Āina*/Environ-based projects; 3) *Hana Kaiāulu*/Community service; 4) *Hō'ike*/Performances & demonstrations; and 5) *Pilina 'Ohana*/Family involvement,” (Kamehameha Schools Research and Evaluation, 2007, p. 15). A research project led by Schonleber (2007) found ten culturally congruent pedagogical strategies valued by HLCB (Hawaiian Language Immersion and Culture Based) educators. These included the use of demonstration and modeling, hands-on learning, mixed-age classrooms, connecting with nature, a place-based curriculum, and storytelling.

A significant area of focus of these approaches is *'āina*-based (land-based) practices, (Blaich, 2003; Chinn, 2011; Ho'omanawanui, 2008; Kana'iaupuni, Leward & Jensen, 2010; Trinidad, 2011). Ho'omanawanui (2008) explains that “a reclamation of Hawaiian knowledge through “new geography” or renewed understanding of the specificities of *'āina* known by our ancestors has been on the mind of Hawaiian educators

for over a century as a key element of Native Hawaiian education” (p. 207). Regarding Hawaiian culture-based charter schools, many of which incorporate 'āina –based practices, Kana'iaupuni, Ledward and Jensen (2010) write:

Typical of this approach, these innovative schools implement project-based and place-based teaching and learning for children, integrating culture, community and the natural environment. Some of the schools use Hawaiian language as the medium of instruction, but all use the language routinely and offer language classes. Students engage in authentic experiences at wahi pana (sacred places) and other community outdoor learning laboratories. They conduct science experiments to assess the relative successes of various methods to revive endangered endemic species or water resources. Their curriculum includes learning about the lifestyles, knowledge, and values of Native Hawaiians. In this way, connections to the land, culture, and community create a rich educational environment that nourishes spiritual, physical, and educational well-being. These connections generate a sense of kuleana (responsibility) and love for learning in students who come to understand that who they are is the foundation with which they learn to engage with the global community. (Kana'iaupuni, Leward & Jensen, 2010, p. 3-4)

Implicit in labeling Hawaiian culture-based education is the understanding that a Maoli-based education system is different from the current dominant education system and that a re-understanding of the entire educational system is the ultimate goal. School teaches much more than just discipline content: all education is culture-based. Schools



can be recognized as a “primary vehicle for transmitting knowledge and skills as well as the values, practices, and culture of a society... critical questions to consider are whose culture is being transmitted and what cultural values are being instilled in children?”

(Kana'iaupuni, Leward & Jensen, 2010, p. 2-3).

Due to a history of colonization and illegal occupation of Hawai'i, the Kānaka Maoli are what Benham and Heck (1998) refer to as an involuntary minority. There is a long-standing achievement gap between Native Hawaiian students and other students (Kana'iaupuni, Ledward & Jensen, 2010). This achievement gap is one indicator of systemic failings, along with high rates of poverty, substance abuse, juvenile deviance and criminal activity, teenage pregnancies, poor educational outcomes, domestic abuse, depression, and suicide (Kana'iaupuni, Leward & Jensen, 2010, p. 3). A Maoli-based approach is meant to address educational disparities for Hawaiian students (Ledward, Takayama & Elia, 2009).

In addition, other students can benefit when educational context is made meaningful through relationship to the place that they live (Ho'omanawanui, 2008).

“First, culture-based education (CBE) positively impacts student socio-emotional well-being (e.g., identity, self-efficacy, social relationships). Second, enhanced socio-emotional well-being, in turn, positively affects math and reading test scores. Third, CBE is positively related to math and reading test scores for all students, and particularly for those with low socio- emotional development, most notably when supported by overall CBE use within the school. (Kana'iaupuni, Leward & Jensen, 2010, p. 1).

### **The Fundamentals of Place-based Education**

United States education standards emphasize that the function of schools is to “assure that all students master the skills necessary to perform the high-level tasks required in the twenty-first century workplace,” and “assure that schools—no matter where they are located—produce graduates who can compete in national and even global markets” (Gibbs & Howley, 2001, p. 52). Place-based educators challenge this neoliberal agenda. Proponents of place-based pedagogies suggest that location does matter. Place-based education seeks to include what Sobel (2005) calls, “an enlightened localism” (p. ii). He explains place-based education to be “the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum” (p. 7). Place-based educators advocate that the teaching of academic skills be built upon knowledge relevant to the communities, both human and non-human, that make up a student’s place in the world.

Smith (2002) outlines four relevant themes included under the umbrella of place-based education: 1) cultural studies; 2) nature studies; 3) real-world problem solving; 4) induction into community processes. A brief discussion on these themes and their positive effects will follow.

#### **Cultural studies.**

Cultures have arisen in response to the characteristics of the physical terrain and resources in different places. For this reason, cultures are deeply connected to their place (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008). Culture-based education recognizes that knowledge, including values, norms, beliefs, practices, experiences, and language, is

closely associated with ecology, geography, and place (Kana'iaupuni, Ledward & Jensen, 2010). But cultural studies are difficult and sometimes problematic. As Kana'iaupuni, Ledward and Jensen (2010) point out, "These efforts have led to the practice of teaching *about* cultures rather than grounding teaching and learning within the culturally relevant framework of a particular community" (p. 3).

"Data and practice in indigenous communities demonstrate the importance of culturally relevant education as a means of engaging and empowering students and their families in the learning process" (Kana'iaupuni, Ledward & Jensen, 2010). This engagement and empowerment comes only after we are critical of the culture of colonization, mass consumerism and homogenizing consumptionism. "Critical pedagogies are needed to challenge the assumptions, practices, and outcomes taken for granted in dominant culture and in conventional education" (Gruenwald, 2003, p. 1). Sobel (2005) mentions the contemporary pressure to, "devalue local cultural identity, traditions, and history in preference to a flashily marketed homogeneity" (p. i). For place-based educators, local cultural knowledge of our places is a wealth spring of curricular possibility and foundation.

Facets of culture-based education that are specific to Hawai'i were presented in the previous section within this chapter. It is significant that culture-based education includes place-based facets *and* place-based education includes culture-based facets. It is beneficial to look at both paradigms and how they support each other.

#### **Nature studies.**

Place-based education is a label that has been chosen to include, replace, and add to the previously labeled educational approaches of nature studies, environmental

education, outdoor education, and ecology studies. This approach is just one of five outlined by Smith (2002), though it may be one of the most familiar. Place-based education includes being outside with time to explore, guided visits to witness natural systems at work and a focus on specific local ecosystems. For a number of reasons, including limited access to nature due to development and parental and societal fears of potential threats, the contemporary American child's time in nature is drastically limited (Louv, 2005).

Despite Hawai'i's commercial advertising of lush vegetation and pristine beaches, many of our children are also affected by what Richard Louv (2005) calls *nature-deficit disorder*. Louv (2005) explains, "In the space of a century the American experience of nature has gone from direct utilitarianism to romantic attachment to electronic detachment" (p. 16). Place-based educators focus on getting children outside to experience, explore and connect with the natural world, which many children no longer seem to have the opportunity to do.

### **Real-world problem solving.**

The cultural and natural focus of place-based education cannot help but attend to issues and problems in the school community. Often students participate in projects that have real consequences within their communities. According to Sobel (2005), "The new idea here is that we're not preparing students for tomorrow, we're preparing them to solve the problems of today" (p.12). Schools are so often places where abstract knowledge is delivered to students to absorb. Participating in real-world problem solving projects allow students to be "creators, not just consumers, of knowledge" (Sobel, 2005, p.75).

**Induction into community processes.**

“The fragmentation of the school from the community is mirrored in the fragmentation of the curriculum. Not only is the math curriculum not connected to shopping at the local Piggly Wiggly supermarket, it’s not connected to the history or art curricula in any programmatic way” (Sobel, 2005, p. 19). Place-based projects integrate not only natural and cultural processes, but also the community. Exposure to people, places and systems outside the classroom gives students a peek at actual process at work in their communities, providing introductions to potential employment interests.

In educating with a place-based perspective, the classroom walls are not the limit to a student’s experiences in education. Not only are students more often out and about in the community, community members are also invited to be more a part of schooling. “Community members can take an active role in the classroom, and students can plan an active role in the community” (Smith, 2002, p. 593). The divide so often mentioned by students when they ask, “When will I ever use this?” is broken down as relevancy of learning is readily appreciated.

As the communities and systems surrounding each school are unique, the projects and subjects of place-based educators are diverse and diverge from corporate textbook producers. “Because place-based education is by its nature specific to particular locales, generic curricular models are inappropriate” (Smith, 2002, p. 587). Place-based educators utilize this near-far approach to curriculum development, focusing first on cultural knowledge, natural environment, and the community.

### **Positive outcomes of place-based education.**

Place-based pedagogy is an educational remedy for a number of unfavorable societal conditions including feelings of placelessness, the loss of traditional and local cultural knowledge and practices, unsustainable consumption habits, decontextualized education and the destructive effects of individualism. The goal is to produce democratic citizens who not only care for, but love their community and the earth (Kana'iaupuni & Malone, 2006; Smith, 2002; Meyer, 2004; Gradle, 2007; Sobel, 2005; Gruenewald & Smith, 2010). These far-reaching and holistic ideals of place-based education are part of a complete systemic shift in what education is and should be.

Sobel (2005) sums things up by saying:

Emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experience, this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students' appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens. Community vitality and environmental quality are improved through the active engagement of local citizens, community organizations, and environmental resources in the life of the school. (p. 7)

These various positives outcomes from place-based education are described in more detail in the following sections.

### ***Calming feelings of placelessness and identity insecurities.***

There is a growing homogenization of places and spaces in this globalized world. People in hundreds of different locations can pop in to identical fast-food restaurants for a

quick meal and find all the daily essentials in a chain mega-store. Immense developments clear the landscape of all previous life and story before throwing up row after row of cookie-cutter homes. One has to wonder what affects these mass-produced products have on our lives and minds. Relph (1967), as cited by Kana'iaupuni and Malone (2006), deals specifically with identity creation, saying that, "place has been a critical foundation of human cognition and identity throughout history... contemporary urban and suburban (and most recently, exurban) growth patterns have diminished the unique, historical, and cultural meanings of place to human society today" (p. 1). The kinds of places we create influences who we are.

Kana'iaupuni and Malone (2006) go on to discuss that many Americans today may not relate to the idea of being connected to a place, for they are people who feel no "overwhelming ties to a particular place, who are quite mobile in today's global society, and who, in fact, may be quite accustomed to the increasing standardization of places" (p. 1). Perhaps the standardization of schools and curriculum mentioned earlier is a manifestation of this standardization of place. Smith (2002) has stated that place-based education "helps overcome the alienation and isolation of individuals that have become hallmarks of modernity" (p. 594). Kana'iaupuni and Malone (2006) say that "place – the consciousness of land, sea, and all that place entails – is fundamental to indigenous identity processes" (p. 1). Elder (1998) makes a point that:

Without any stake in the places where we live, we walk though days in which there are trees but no tree in particular, we drive along roads that could be anywhere, never registering the mountains to the east and lake to the west that determined, in fact, exactly where that route would run. Such casual familiarity is

the opposite of intimacy and attentiveness. (p. 8)

Place-based educators believe that this “casual familiarity” is a cause of major alienation and identity confusion. Education grounded in the ecological histories and stories of place teaches not only understanding of place, but also the knowledge of how one belongs.

***Perpetuating traditional and local cultural knowledge.***

As presented earlier, Meyer (2004), a Hawaiian educator, epistemologist and philosopher, asks the questions:

How many of us really understand the rains of our areas, the names of the mountain peaks, the tidal influence on migrating sands of the real understanding of aloha? How many of us really believe there is a wealth of curriculum here in our own lands and that this affects our philosophy and pedagogy? How many of us believe that Hawaiian values are ideals to teach and also embody? ... We live in Hawai'i nei. It is a sacred, special and finite place. We are shaped by the consistency of weather, the pullings of the moon, the running of fish, the sense of community –and all these shape our Hawaiian values. (p.4)

The answers to these questions were had by our *kupuna*, our Hawaiian ancestors. An 'ōlelo noeau, a wise saying of old, mentions the fact that even children knew the names of the 30 moon phases, “Kamali'i 'ike 'ole i nā helu pō” (N. Campbell, personal communication, October 26, 2012). A child who did not know these things was considered ill taught. Knowledge such as this is now being taught again in some schools in Hawai'i. Kana'iaupni and Malone (2006) conclude that, “connections to the land



create the space for native Hawaiians to maintain traditional practices that nourish spiritual, physical, and educational well-being. From a sense of place grows a sense of *kuleana* (responsibility)” (p.302).

Place-based education, in Hawai’i and in any other place, can develop this sense of culture and responsibility as ancient knowledge is applied and utilized in situations of today. “Many of the core values, beliefs, and practices associated with those (indigenous) worldviews have survived and are beginning to be recognized as being just as valid for today’s generations as they were for generations past” (Barnhardt, 2010, p. 113).

### ***Curbing unsustainable consumption practices.***

According to Sobel (2005), society today seems to “encourage unsustainable patterns of consumption and land use by weakening familial and community relationships that are deeply tied to the local environment” (p. i). Going further to include specifics of economy, Gruenewald and Smith (2010) describe how “economic globalization under corporate capitalism is, potentially, economically devastating, culturally homogenizing, and ecologically destructive to local communities” (p. xiii-xiv). Despite the unsustainable consumption practices occurring so frequently in our contemporary societies, students are taught, under the label of environment education, about global ecological issues like deforestation, ozone layer depletion, and saving endangered whales. Sobel (1996) points out that although these efforts have good intentions, children are still disconnected to the world right outside their doors, creating a sense of ecophobia. Place-based educators are more attuned to the issues of natural sustainability occurring in their neighborhoods and communities.

We believe that the solutions of many of our ecological problems lie in an approach that celebrates, empowers, and nurtures the cultural, artistic, historical, and spiritual resources of each local community and region, and champions their ability to bring those resources to bear on the healing of nature and community.

(Sobel, 2005, p. ii)

Then from that point, “learn how events and processes close to home relate to regional, national, and global forces and events, leading to a new understanding of ecological stewardship and community” (Sobel, 2005, p. ii). He further explains:

In practice, place-based education often belies the seriousness of the ecological problems it seeks to remedy because it emphasizes creative exploration and the joyful realization of the ties that connect a person with nature and culture in her place. It does so out of the realization that love –love of nature, love of one’s neighbors and community –is a prime motivating factor in personal transformation, and the transformation of culture. (p. ii)

***Making meaning through education.***

Gruenewald and Smith (2010) actually use the negative impacts of globalization as a metaphor for what is happening to our children in school:

The process of formal education in schools and universities is often totally isolated from the immediate context of community life. Interaction with the wider community and all the learning opportunities these could afford is overlooked in the push for each student to meet prescribed content area standards through decontextualized classroom instruction. (p. xiv)

If we are looking for children to be making meaning from the education learned in school, we must meet them where they are and build. “Valuable knowledge for most children is knowledge that is directly related to their own social reality, knowledge that will allow them to engage in activities that are of service to and valued by those they love and respect” (Smith, 2002, p.586). Where, outside of school, do we learn through worksheets? The lectures and workbooks of schooling are so different from how things are learned in the real world. Outside of school, “people experience the world directly; in school, that experience is mediated, and the job of students – despite all the well-intentioned attempts to engage them as participants in the construction of meaning – is to internalize and master knowledge created by others” (Smith, 2002, p.586). Offering school experiences with a more place-based pedagogy can create opportunities in school that are as real as the experiences of students and people out of school, this is an education, “not about controlling and managing, but engaging” (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008, p.13).

### ***Contributing citizens.***

All of the above factors lead to students who are already contributing citizens in their home communities. Comfortable being activists for community causes that they believe in, students can choose to continue a lifestyle of interconnectivity instead of separation. “Place-based education might be characterized as the pedagogy of community, the reintegration of the individual into her homeground and the restoration of the essential links between a person and her place” (Sobel, 2005, p. ii).

**Place-based education and standards.**

Advocacy for more place-based education comes at a time when the agenda of schooling seems to be thrust in the polar opposite direction. Beginning in the school year of 2013-14, all English, Social Studies, Science and Math courses in Hawai'i will teach curriculum based on the National Common Core Standards (Hawaii Department of Education website: <http://standardstoolkit.k12.hi.us/index.html>). While I agree with the goal of outlining levels of competencies for all students for certain skills, I do not believe in the overall system, which Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2008) explain to be, “a theory of knowledge that is rooted in empiricism and imperialism, and thus organized around an individualistic and commodified conception of knowledge” (p.12). Pinar (2008) describes the situation as being a “business model of education, --the ‘bottom line’ (standardized test scores) is all that matters” (p. xi). However, as systemic changes may be too large of a challenge to override with any quick-fix answer, place-based educators are, for now, looking to meet the demands of both current requirements of accountability based on a single “national” standard and also their personal goals of affording contextualized and meaningful education.

Is this possible? Gibbs and Howley (2001) have delved explicitly into this question and they report that, “place-based pedagogy can establish a practical alliance with mandated standards” (p. 54), but this is a difficult balance. According to Gibbs and Howley (2001), the driving force behind standards-based education is the need to prepare students to become workers in a globalized world and “assure that all students master the skills necessary to perform the high-level tasks required in the twenty-first century workplace” (p. 51-52). For place-based educators, “education is all about making

meaning, which necessarily involves intellectual processes of greater sophistication than those typically assessed by state-mandated tests” (p.51). The two goals seem at odds. To focus so intently on locally based knowledge and issues may mean losing some of the standardized rigidity requested by educational policy makers. Place-based teachers, myself included, currently adhere to standards-based curriculum planning while writing projects and lessons from a place-based perspective.

Notably, place-based projects do require time – it is the dedicated time that creates relationships and understanding capable of meaningful education. Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2008) state that this sort of shift in educational understanding and practice is actually a matter of “knowing *differently*, not merely knowing *more*” (p. 8). It seems necessary that some of the breadth that is a goal of the educational standards as they are currently written will need to be given up for depth of knowledge that is capable of occurring in more place-based projects.

Lastly, as so much of our current educational goals are based upon the requirement for students to be prepared to survive in a globalized world, this global awareness need not be lost in a place-based pedagogy. Smith (2002) states:

Although this approach could lead to parochialism, that need not happen during an era when electronic communication allows for the easy exchange of ideas, images and even artifacts. While demonstrating loyalty and commitment to their own communities and culture, individuals and groups of individual can still learn from the experiences of others in both similar and dissimilar places. (p. 594)

Global awareness may actually be enhanced when students understand that each place has unique communities and systems in place – an understanding that comes from

recognizing the specifics of their own place.

### **Place-based Pedagogies Combined with K-12 Art Education**

While it seems that the majority of the literature on place-based education suggests curriculum for science and social studies topics, there is a handful of research and writing being done which describes and advocates for place-based art education, (Ball & Lai, 2006; Cajete, 1994; Clark, 2006; Gradle, 2007; Graham, 2007; and Inwood, 2008). Each of these authors supports the community-based, critical social involvement and ecological awareness promoted by place-based education and suggests that these same concepts can be further developed through integration with art education.

“Art education offers a dynamic way to increase the power and relevancy of learning about the environment by providing an alternative means of furthering learners’ ecological literacy” (Inwood, 2004, p. 30). As place-based art projects will often inherently include science and social studies related topics, the interdisciplinary nature of the method enhances students’ understanding and personal power to relate their understanding of these concepts through art making. “Art education has proven to be fertile soil in which to grow creative approaches to problem-solving, critical thinking, and self-reflexive learning, all necessary for making our communities healthier and happier places” (Inwood, 2004, p.30). Places, however, have a multiplicity of definitions, as Gradle (2007) explains in her discussion on, “the designation of place” (p. 393-396). Including ideas such as, “boundaries, physical or phenomenological,” “a part of the relational nature of people an culture,” “a player in the game,” “intertwined with conceptions of belonging, home, identity, and what it means—on man levels—to be displaced.” These are issues that may be dealt with through creative exploration. “The

exploration of place, as an enduring idea, one that enriches discussion in art curriculum is an essential component of art education scholarship” (Gradel, 2007, p. 395). A warning, however, has been issued by Ball and Lai (2006) as they realize students may resist engaging with issues of local ecology because of the actual fact that their contemporary lives may be segregated from these issues. Then, the promise of meaningful connectivity runs counter to what is actually “local” for the students. It is with this caveat that they implore art educators to continue to make use of contemporary artists and folk practices and productions, which may be more familiar or meaningful to students’ ideas of localism (Ball & Lai, 2006, p. 275).

Many contemporary artists use their art-making as a way of enhancing social awareness of ecological issues (Inwood, 2004; Graham, 2007), including: “Joseph Beuys, Hans Haacke, Alan Sonfist, Agnes Denes, Mel Chin, Ana Mendieta, Newton Harrison and Helen Mayer Harrison, Lynne Hull, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Dominique Mazeaud, and Andy Goldsworthy” (Inwood, 2004, p. 32). Regarding the use of contemporary place-based artists in the art curriculum, Graham (2007), states:

Locating art education within a critical place-based pedagogy disturbs standardized curriculum models and re-envision educational purposes by valuing the peculiarities of the local and questioning taken for granted assumptions about progress and our relationships with nature. Teaching becomes responsive to ecology and local culture and artmaking becomes socially aware, reflective, and transformational. (p. 376)

Place-based art education includes introducing students to how these people are creating art that deals with place, an inclusion that often is neglected though our standard

art history curriculum development (Inwood, 2004, p. 33). Of course, choosing artists and artifacts would inescapably depend on the educational local and the connected issues of that place.

Inwood (2004) discusses her own explorations in a place-based art project that introduces the work of Andy Goldsworthy and has her students creating site-specific artworks using found materials to share with community members the student's own interpretations about what is important about their river valley. Gradle (2007) has her pre-service teachers experiment with performance-based art that deals with ideas of place, for example. She concludes about the resulting performance art:

The fact that the arts can bring in daily life—the everyday experiences, the autobiographic richness—of students' concerns about their place-worlds establishes meanings that are multiple and significant, yet each performer brings only the participation that they can embody at the time, and takes away only what they recognizes as valuable at that moment. (p. 407)

#### **Culture, place, and art education.**

Although I know that there are many artists and educators working on combining art education in explicitly culturally-based ways, only one art educator to my knowledge has written regarding the issue. In his doctoral dissertation, "Kūkulu Kauhale o Limaloa: A Kanaka Maoli Based Approach to Education Through Visual Studies," Herman Pi'ikea Clark (2006) dissects an experience teaching a "Kanaka Maoli process of learning by way of image making" (p. liii). He voices the concern:

The broad practice of Art Education in Hawai'i particularly in the public school system of the State of Hawai'i where the majority of Kanaka Maoli children in



Hawai'i receive their education. Just as I had been conditioned to only see and value the Eurocentric cultural position in Art as a University Art student, I worried about Kanaka Maoli children in schools and the extent to which their education in Art was serving to override the cultural viewpoint as Kanaka Maoli through the assimilative process of its curriculum. (p. lv)

Clark notes that “traditionally, Kanaka Maoli visual and material culture has always served a functional role in providing for the sacred, secular or utilitarian needs of Kanaka Maoli through time” (p. 48), therefore, “within a contemporary educational context, Kanaka Maoli visual and material culture will enable students the opportunity to engage a process by which to think about, compose and produce objects and images that reflect and manifest Kanaka Maoli knowledge(s)” (p. 48).

As significant aspects of his course, he lists: image development, (personal reflective image making), workbook and journal notations, (“even the most rudimentary or inconsequential of sketches were considered important to the overall learning process and were to be included in the workbook” (p. 73), rituals of *pīkai* and *pule*, (a cleansing ocean ritual and prayers to open and close class sessions,) slow observational drawing, talk story sessions, (conversations and discussions on a specific issue), and food and communal eating. His dissertation title points to an *’ōlelo noe’au*, a traditional wise saying, which he comes to understand as meaning, “it was the process of coming to ideas through the construction and arrangement of the kauhale rather than the creation of kauhale itself that was important” (p. 14).

### **Summary of Literature Review**

This literature review has considered how Hawaiian culture-based education is

understood and is functioning in Hawai'i, the fundamentals of place-based education and how culture-based and place-based pedagogies have been combined with art and art education in and outside of Hawai'i. These ideas provide the theoretical background to my explorations of Maoli-based art education. They also provide an important context for my research methodology, which emerges in large part from my cultural background and personal experiences.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

#### **Blending Autoethnography and Critical Indigenous Inquiry**

Before entering this master's program, I would never have called myself a researcher. I was unaware that there was a difference between research methods and research methodologies. I have since found a community of researchers and writers that have fascinated and inspired me as an investigator, writer, teacher and artist-- categories whose lines of distinction are now blurred/blended/and woven into an exciting world of research. While reading in *Decolonizing Methodologies* by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), a Maori researcher from Aotearoa, New Zealand, I became initially uneasy about perpetuating colonial processes within the "dominant systems" of research (Wilson, 2008, p. 6). Referring to scientific ethnographic research where "Western researchers and intellectuals assume(d) to know all that is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us" (Smith, 2012, p.1) and the use of gathered observations without any "accountability to relationships" (Wilson, 2008, p. 7), Smith stated that "research" is one of the dirtiest words for native peoples (Smith, 2012, p. 1). As I develop my understanding of the ethics I want to embody as a researcher, I am supported by critical indigenous pedagogies and methodologies, recognizing not only that native people can do their own research, but also do work through methods that are, "ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonizing, and participatory... committed to dialogue, community, self-determination, and cultural autonomy" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 2).

I will be writing about a specific culture of which I am a part, one within the broader label of indigenous Hawaiian culture: the culture of the Maoli art educator.

Because I am a part of this specific culture, my writing will be autoethnographic. I will be analyzing and sharing what I know best: narratives of my own experience.

Autoethnography, as a framework and guiding philosophy, allows me to share my stories as personal research and in a way that might be useful to others. I am hoping to add my indigenous voice to the conversation of what it means to be an art educator, both in regards to teaching in Hawai'i specifically and also to teaching in general.

I will also be looking to others in my Maoli art and education community and want to represent them authentically. In trying to maintain consistency between my propositions for Maoli-based art education pedagogy and this research project, I also rely on the ideas of Critical Indigenous Pedagogy, (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008; and Wilson, 2008), which center on increasingly self-outlined concerns and methodologies of indigenous peoples.

### **Descriptions: Autoethnography**

Autoethnography is “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experiences in order to understand cultural experience” (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2001, p. 1). Autoethnography is a blending of autobiography and ethnography, (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2001; O'Reilly, 2009).

Autobiography is a narrative in which an author explains in detail chosen personal life experiences. “Usually, the author does not live through these experiences solely to make them part of a published document; rather, these experiences are assembled using hindsight,” (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011, p. 3). In contrast, autoethnography also utilizes a narrative lens on personal experience yet goes a step further in analyzing meaning from the narratives and has the goal of attempting to explain cultural practices

underlying the described personal experiences. Research findings may be shared with those outside the culture, but a primary goal would be to contribute to the community's understanding of themselves.

Ethnographic studies involve describing and interpreting observations made of a culture's social practices, (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Ethnography is the common anthropological method of visiting another culture and then reporting your observations within your own culture. A founding example of ethnography would be the 1920's work of Bronislaw Malinowski with the native peoples of the Trobriand Islands. He lived amongst them for a time, mastered their language, kept written observations, and then published his research findings for European and American audiences, (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Beginning in the 1970's, researchers in the social sciences began to follow post-modernist/post-positivist agendas and recognize that producing an all-encompassing objective representation was impossible. Instead of pretending that it was possible for research to be accomplished without bias, academics began to recognize that personal biases and values could be honestly presented and critically examined and that narrative was a viable site of investigation, (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011; and Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Autoethnography differs from ethnography in that the researcher is writing about and analyzing their own culture or community, recognizes biases are inherent in research experiences and assumes long-term responsibility with the people they write about.

I concede, "like all stories, my account is partial, fragmented, and situated in the texts and contexts of my own learning, interpretations and practices" (Holman Jones,

2008, p. 224). However, autoethnographers believe that “looking at the world from a specific, perspectival, and limited vantage point can tell, teach, and put people in motion... a personal text can move writers and readers, subjects and objects, tellers and listeners into this space of dialogue, debate, and change” (Holman Jones, 2008, p. 206). These incidents that change us, whether they be overcoming a challenge or experiencing a powerful work of art are transformative experiences and true moments of learning.

“Autoethnography is both a process and a product,” (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011, p. 1), both a way to research/act/think/be and also a way to represent or write about those actions. This methodology combines the scientific practices of ethnography with the artistic and literary practices of autobiography.

### **Descriptions: Critical Indigenous Inquiry**

Searching for writings of indigenous researchers who have questioned what it means to research and write from an indigenous perspective has led me to four key texts: *Indigenous Heuristic Action Research: Bridging Western and Indigenous Research Methodologies*, by Ku Kahakalau (2004), Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (2012), *Decolonizing Methodologies*, the anthology, *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, edited by Norman Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2008), and *Research as Ceremony* by Shawn Wilson (2008). In this section, I will describe the chronology of how I adopted this methodology. I am encouraged and inspired by their words and have found many of my personal beliefs articulated in the philosophy, goals, and postulates of critical and indigenous methodologies.

As I was first searching for a way to research from a Hawaiian perspective, (and if there were publications on it), I came across the article, *Indigenous Heuristic Action*

*Research: Bridging Western and Indigenous Research Methodologies*, by Ku Kahakalau (2004). In the article she explains her process of working on her doctoral dissertation on indigenous education and how she searched earnestly for a research methodology that seemed a right fit for her. Kahakalau explained her eventual decision to design her own research methodology which authentically helped her to reach her goal “to make a positive difference for Hawai’i’s native people, to help myself, my family, my community, ma *lāhui* (nation) achieve *pono* (excellence) and contribute to the perpetuation of my native language, culture, and traditions” (Kahakalau, 2008, p. 23). I was comfortable with what I was discovering about autoethnography and did not believe I would utilize her full outline of what she termed, “indigenous heuristic action research,” however, I hope to incorporate a number of her methodology points, including; “the research question(s) center on an indigenous plight and attempts to bring about positive change for an indigenous people” (p. 31), and “the research is conducted by an indigenous person, in an indigenous community, for the immediate benefit of this community and with help from this community” (p. 31).

I read more broadly about indigenous pedagogies, next taking a look at Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (2012), *Decolonizing Methodologies*, to learn about the critical breaking-down of indigenous researchers attitudes to Western research methodologies within their communities. The anthology, *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, edited by Norman Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2008), proposes that Critical Indigenous Pedagogy (CIP) and inquiry “uses its methods critically, for explicit social justice purposes. It values the transformative power of indigenous, subjugated knowledge... and seeks forms of inquiry that are emancipatory

and empowering” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 2). A list of criteria for research is proposed by Denzin & Lincoln (2008): “It must be ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonizing, and participatory. It must be committed to dialogue, community, self-determination, and cultural autonomy” (p. 2). Living by its own suppositions, this dialog is on-going, being ever added to and re-visioning interpretations. I can only hope that my attempts here can be a beginning in helping me to grow in my understanding and embodiment of these valuable characteristics.

Most recently, I have been deeply influenced by the writings of Shawn Wilson (2006), in, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. In this book, Wilson describes one view of an Indigenous research paradigm and includes many of the points mentioned above. In this book however, Wilson not only writes *about* this methodology, he writes *through* this methodology. Sorting the ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological indigenous positions, Wilson (2006) claims:

1. The shared aspect of an Indigenous ontology and epistemology is relationality (relationships do not merely shape reality, the *are* reality). The shared aspect of an Indigenous axiology and methodology is accountability to relationships.
2. The shared aspects of relationality and relational accountability can be put into practice through choice of research topic, method of data collection, form of analysis and presentation of information. (p. 7)

To write *through* the methodology he is proposing, which pays close attention to this relational accountability, Wilson switches between a scholarly writing voice that speaks to us as readers, and a writing voice that speaks to his sons. This allows for us to be able view him as an intimate individual and also allowing himself to write in a way



where he is visualizing his audience in a very real way. He explains, “I felt the dominant style of writing to an anonymous reader did not live up to the standards of relational accountability I was proposing” (p. 8). These thoughts have influenced my embracing both critical indigenous and autoethnographic methodologies.

A final significant research feature of he outlines is the aspect of ceremony:

The purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves. The research that we do as Indigenous people is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world. Let us go forward together with open minds and good hearts as we further take part in this ceremony. (p. 11)

When reading Wilson (2006), I sometimes identified his research methodology proposals also as viable proponents of Maoli-based art education. The fact that these separate topics nearly became one in my mind gives me great confidence in applying his ideas in my approach to researching and writing this thesis and my approach to being a Maoli art educator.

### **Methodology and Thesis Format**

Autoethnography embraces personal narrative, allows for multiple forms of representation, and is not rigidly limited to any one format. I have to admit that I did not write this paper in a linear fashion, I was writing all sections, researching and drawing conclusions all at the same time, here, there and back again. However, in this process, some of my conclusions naturally paralleled what and how I was writing, and you may notice that I reference my conclusion ideas of mo'olelo, mo'oku'auhau, pili ka mo'o, and aloha in the formatting of my sections in both the introduction and conclusion. This was

not planned, however, the creative, personal nature of autoethnography is probably the reason I have been able to write in ways consistent with what I am writing about.

### **Personal Research Implementation: Methods**

As autoethnography is a research methodology and also informs research-writing style, I have and will continue to offer narratives from my personal art-teaching experience that are intended to give readers a context for understanding who I am. In attempting relational accountability with all readers, Wilson (2008) proposes that, “relationality requires that you know a lot more about me before you can begin to understand my work” (p. 12). As that is being established, readers may then be able to more fully understand my illustrations of the community of which I am a part and which I am analyzing in this paper: that of the Maoli art educator.

Writing these narratives from a reflexive and critical stance means that I am offering you more than an autobiography, I will also discuss what these narratives mean for me within the context of the question, “What are essential components of a Maoli-based art education?” The shorter narratives I have chosen and include throughout all chapters of this thesis are the ones that have emerged as personally meaningful to this topic as I look back on the last 6 years as an art educator.

In chapter four, Sites of Investigation, I more thoroughly examine and explain two personal attempts at Maoli-based art education which occurred during the 2012-2013 school year, the first being an 8-week art elective with a group of students at the place-based/culture-based charter school Hakipu'u Learning Center, and the second being a series of art-integrated workshops with a group of 4<sup>th</sup> graders at He'eia Fishpond. In both cases, I autoethnographically explicate and reflect on my own pedagogical choices,

noting significant Maoli-based elements, my interpretations of the effectiveness in delivery, the contributions of other Maoli-based educators within the cases, and how the students and participants responded.

In contrast to my own teaching practice, I will also describe a third significant site of investigation through participant/observation reflections of a collaborative group mural project led by Hawaiian artist and educator Meleanna Meyer in May of 2013. I was able to take part in the planning and execution of the project, paying specific attention to the pedagogical decisions naturally and purposefully taking place. In order to gather information about what was being taught and what was being learned, I did not actively participate in mentoring and production as I had in a number of past mural projects with the understanding that my primary responsibility was written documentation. I have worked with most of the students and adults who were a part of the mural project, so my discussions and interviews with them were in the comfortable manner of what Hawaiians often call talk story, (Kahakalau, 2004), conversations that naturally occur between friends who are working together. Kahakalau lists talk story as one “method of indigenous data collection” (p. 31). I kept a journal and took notes as each step of the project unfolded, spoke to different participants and pulled significant thoughts from video-recordings and gathered written participant reflections.

At the beginning of each of these investigation sites, I officially explained that I was not only teaching/participating with them, but also writing about the experience in a thesis. This means I was labeled an “overt” (O’Reilly, 2009) researcher. In my own teaching cases, the fact that I was writing about Maoli-based education certainly did play a part in my curriculum development. I was honest in my attempts and you will see that

my understanding at the time was not fully developed. In the process of autoethnographical research on these cases, I have begun to refine my analysis of these experiences.

I had access to the mural-project research because I had participated with Meyer and this team of collaborators in mural projects twice before. When I first requested a chance to observe and write about Meyer as a Maoli art educator, she was willing and suggested that we take a critical look at the mural process as a site of art and cultural education. She was encouraged that my critique might open dialog surrounding Maoli art education and also help to improve our practice. I was more of an observer than driving leader, so I do not feel that I swayed the process I was researching. Perhaps Meyer was aware of my intention to write about the process, which may have altered some of her choices, however, as I have participated in other mural projects with her in the past, I did not see significantly different pedagogical choices being made. I was able to be both participant and observer, able to step to the side throughout the entire process and write on-the-spot reflections (O'Reilly, 2009).

I recognize that with autoethnography, I am not an objective researcher. I highly respect the people I will be shareing about: the kumu, alaka'i and haumāna, (mentors, leaders, and students). These accounts are my own honest representations, triangulated for robustness through multiple lenses. I concede that this is only my humble observation of an experience and that the personality and stories behind each of these individuals, both adults and students, are much more complex and deep than I mention here. Through careful observation and documentation, and more especially during the write-up of these

experiences, I was able to describe and analyze the significant Maoli-based factors at play.

### **Methodology and Research Summary**

Relying on the foundations of both Autoethnography and Critical Indigenous pedagogies, I will provide an in-depth description and analysis of three significant art education experiences that offer insight on my personal teaching practice as well as Maoli-based art education. It is significant that what was initially a collection of research methodology positions became a reflection of my art and art education goals. As I began to name and describe a methodology within the literature, a personal methodology emerged that I can now claim as my own. The entire research experience has been “healing and transformative... committed to dialogue, community, self-determination, and cultural autonomy” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 2). My methodology is woven into my art and teaching practice and reflects my very personal connections to culture and place.

#### Chapter 4: Sites of Investigation

This section presents my autoethnographic research, three *kuamo'o 'ōlelo*: formative narratives of two notable experiences along my personal journey in providing Maoli-based art education in juxtaposition with participant/observer data gathered in a collaborative mural project led by Meleanna Meyer. This section explores these significant art-educator-cultural-experiences in my search for *kuamo'o*, meaningful facets of Maoli-based education that provide opportunities for meaningful engagement in learning.

##### **Art Elective at Hakipu'u Learning Center**

During the 2012-2013 school year, I was working part-time as an art teacher at Hawai'i Technology Academy and full-time on my masters study. This schedule allowed me time to volunteer to teach an art class back at Hakipu'u Learning Center (HLC), once a week for 8 weeks. The class was an appropriate place to conduct autoethnographic research on preparing and carrying out a Maoli-based pedagogy due to my previous time with that school community, my continued relationship with the school, and the school's place-based/culture-based and project-based mission.

The HLC physical school sits at the windward base of the Ko'olau mountains and consists of a car port and four cottage buildings converted into offices and classrooms. Our art class would meet under the car port. Based on my knowledge of the school's place-based/culture-based mission and my own questions about combining these ideas with an art education curriculum, I titled the class, "Ku'u One Hānau: Where I'm From (Art)." In accordance with HLC procedures for project-based learning, I patterned my class as a group project, defined through the following essential and driving questions:

EQ: What personal significance do you hold about the place you are from? How can you visually represent this through art-making?

DQ: What traditional stories belong to the place you are from?

DQ: What contemporary stories belong to the place you are from?

DQ: How have other artists represented their understandings of place?

The project focus was described as follows: Students will develop personal processes of creative thought and visual representation through class discussions and art activities centered on the theme, “Ku'u One Hānau: Where I'm From.” Students will participate in a variety of art activities including: drawing, painting, and mixed-media collage. The elective offered an opportunity for students to earn credit towards the HLC content standard: AR:VIS.01.01.01 Create original works of art using a variety of visual arts materials, techniques, and processes. The class ran from 9:45 am – 11:15 am on Tuesdays and I was available to monitor open studio work from 12:30 pm – 2:15 pm on those afternoons. Nine students from 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade participated in the class.

Gathering resources that would build both art skill and conceptual development surrounding the topic of Ku'u One Hānau, I planned a general curriculum sketch for the eight weeks, aware that the personalities, interests, and skills in each of the students would be a large determining factor in how the curriculum actually progressed. I will briefly discuss the main learning activities, outline significant personal moments and student responses, and give select commentary on which aspects stood out as meaningful place-based and Maoli-based pedagogies during the experience of teaching this class. I would like to note that I am not going to compare my curriculum with another curriculum, or track student improvement from the start of the course to the end. That

research may be addressed at some future point. I will autoethnographically analyze these experiences in order to note significant Maoli-based pedagogical aspects of my art education practice.

### **The first four classes.**

On the first day of the course, we gathered around two large round tables under the carport. I began by introducing myself to the students, giving some background on myself as a person, artist, and educator. I had worked previously with four of the nine students who signed up, but of course I wanted to present myself anew to everyone and make clear my teaching and learning style and expectations for our time together. I identified myself as being from Kahalu'u, an area very near to Hakipu'u. I then asked each of the students to introduce themselves and share where they came from, why they were interested in taking the class, and if they thought they already had developed a personal art style (and what that was). Most students were from areas near the school, including Kahalu'u, so that common ground was established. We discussed the title of the course, Ku'u One Hānau, and I asked the students to think about what their relationship with their home meant to them. We read aloud a poem by Kaimalino Andrade entitled, "Where I'm From" (Andrade, 2002) and talked about the imagery he created in our minds with his words. I could see by their attention, nodding heads and occasional smiles that they related to many of his descriptions, despite being hesitant to vocalize any thoughts. As a course warm-up activity and to pre-asses their drawing ability, I brought a collection of images from books and calendars of older and contemporary Hawai'i, asked the students to choose an image that caught their eye, and begin a large drawing with chalk pastel, encouraging expressive (not necessarily realistic) color. By the time class



was almost finished, only one student got to a place where he considered his drawing finished. To finish the day, we gathered together for a quick critique on what had been produced that morning. The one student who had finished his piece brought a comfortable seriousness to the critique that permeated through everyone when he asked another student, “What was your intention there?” Students were ready to share and receive honest feedback from me and from each other. Lastly, we folded 18” x 22” sheets of paper in to “sketchbooks” and their homework was to fill each page with images of significant aspect of their home.

On the second day of the course, I asked the students to share a page from their sketchbooks. Only about half of the students completed sketches. (That was a major challenge I found with this experience: in-class engagement was high, out-of-class engagement on homework and project development was low. This situation would make for interesting action-research projects, but is not the focus I will write about here.) After sketchbook sharing, I showed a TEDTalk by Rick Barboza, (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzyRa6G0Fig>, 2012) entitled, “Restoring Hawaii's Natural History...Before It Is History.” Barboza is a Hawaiian biologist/environmentalist, who gives his presentation speaking *pidgin-English*, the localized dialect of many long-time Hawai'i residents and familiar to all of these students. His pidgin, humor and message of protecting Hawai'i's natural history held the student's attention for the full twenty minutes. Some vocally agreed and expressed their agreement, “das right,” and “I like dis guy.” After watching the video and asking students to share about the meaningful ideas they heard, I asked, “What can art do about these issues?” Then I passed out my collection of MAMo catalogs, asked them to look through them and find a piece that was

meaningful to them or that they felt has a message about Hawai'i's environment. (MAMo stands for Maoli Arts Month, and consists of a series of art events that take place each May. The catalogs showcase a number of producing contemporary Hawaiian artists and examples of their work.) The students actually were engaged in the catalogs for a longer time than I had planned for, so I let them search. After a while I had them pair with a partner and discuss the pieces they most liked and then each partnership explained their choices to the group. The choices that they made were often similar to their personal interests and art styles, which suggested that they had taken the opportunity sincerely.

Earlier that week I was at Kahana, a beach near where I was living. While there, I found a small burnt log, which easily broke into small cubes of charcoal. I brought that log in and intended for them to do charcoal drawings with this natural medium. However, by the time we completed our discussions on MAMo art pieces, there was little time left for drawing. Only two days into the elective, I found I was already feeling limited by time – there were so many resources and activities that could help them build and grow in their understanding of home and place, yet two days had already been filled and we were only able to spend a small portion of that time actually creating. We were building common foundations for future creation, so I accepted the pace and revisited my own expectations.

The next week, I scheduled a visiting artist to join us. I have mentioned Meleanna Meyer quite often in this paper already, and as she is a personal friend in art education, we planned to have her visit. I found that I had to consciously navigate my place in that moment she arrived – I was usually apprentice/student when working with Meyer, yet with these students, I was the *kumu*, the teacher. I settled in to more of the student role,

participating in Meyer's discussions and activities and only facilitating with the students when helpful. She also began with introductions, placing herself as from Kailua, another community near to HLC. She focused on the idea of becoming more acquainted with trees, had us describe the trees around us, and sent the students out for some up-close observational drawing time of a tree of their choice. She closed the day with a reflective activity where students traced the outline of their arms and hands, recognized the parallels of that structure and growing trees, and had them color and write different thoughts in the spaces created. That opportunity for reflection and writing on layers of imagery seems to be a hallmark of Meyer's sketching and brainstorming and is very different from my own artistic style. I believe it is beneficial to expose students to a variety of styles of approaching art making. This is one of the main reasons I value visiting artists in my classroom and appreciated Meyer's time with the HLC students.



*Image Set 1.* Hakipu'u Learning Center students work on art electives in the carport.

From Meyer's observational tree drawing activity, I could see that all of the students wanted support in their drawing skills and in particular, they wanted guidance in realistic drawing activities. Despite our discussions on intentions of artistic practice, (and my explanation of the elective focus on the sign-up sheet,) it seemed that most students

who signed up for my art class just wanted to draw. Perhaps due to a lack of opportunity for artistic collaboration and discussion of art in school, these students' expectations for an art class were limited to their understanding of what art is: realistic drawing. The challenge to appropriately build on the existing knowledge and skill of each student is an overarching educational challenge and not necessarily a Maoli-based art education battle, still, this realization proved to be a significant juncture in my lesson planning and I felt the need to reexamine my proposed learning activities and adjust to better meet the students where they were.

The next week I brought in a book of photographs by Kapulani Landgraf (1994) titled, *Nā Wahi Pana O Ko'olau Poko*. This book presents black and white photographs, along with English and Hawaiian informative texts of significant and sacred places in the district of Ko'olau Poko, places like Hakipu'u, Kahalu'u, and Kailua. Many of the photographs were of locations, mountain peaks, landscapes and seascapes that the students were intimately familiar with. As an activity to practice realistic drawing skills, our goal was to sketch the images, capture accurate proportions and utilize a range of values, light to dark. On this day, we had another guest visitor, my own professor, Dr. Mark Graham. He was there as my research committee chair, experiencing and learning more about my research projects. He also added to the class through his questions to the students and his sketching examples, which were again, in a style very different from my own.

### **Final project and conclusion of the elective.**

During the fifth class, I shared images and stories about a recent mural project that I had been a part of, to introduce their third and final summative personal art project.

The mural was a 400-foot barricade wall in Kaka'ako and dealt with imagery and ecology of that place. Our team had to research the place, dialog with community members, and facilitate a community paint day. With this mural as a large-scale example of a representation of place, I set out the goals of a final personal-choice project: share with viewers a peek into their world; show their representation of meanings of the theme, Ku'u One Hānau. They were asked to do a little research, or at least think about significant aspects of their home and decide upon a meaningful way to visually showcase that idea. For the remaining class days, the time was open for students to work on the three projects that would be collected for review: 1) the initial pastel drawing, which was intended to be a pre-assess/introduction assignment but which ended up being something the students wanted to spend a lot of time working on, 2) the pencil drawing based on photographs by Landgraf and placed in shadow boxes, to be surrounded by small objects that they brought in as reminders of “home,” and 3) their Ku'u One Hānau personal art piece.

The Kaka'ako wall touched on a style of art many of the students were interested in, street art. On one of the concluding workdays, I had a final visitor come in to talk with the group. This young man was a member of the recent mural team I worked with who was very involved in the growing street art scene and a young artist himself. He was also from Kahalu'u. He came and shared with the students some of the inspiration for his work and answered questions about the Kaka'ako street-art scene.

During work time, I met individually with the students in the class to dig through their personal art interests and commit to a final project idea. The concepts and project ideas were ambitious: one student was interested in photo journalism and wanted to take a number of photos of his family. We discussed possible creative presentations of these

photos, along with his interest in “tribal designs.” I challenged him to research and be more respectful to the designs he was utilizing, know their cultural origins, specify Hawaiian, Maori, Samoan etc., choose meaningful patterns, instead of using the word “tribal” without contextual respect. He planned to arrange the photo images according to a design he would research and create. Another student spoke of his *lane*. His *lane* was his whole life, and the view of the land was something he wanted to put into his art. He wanted to draw this view. I asked that he sketch on-site and take photographs as reference. Another wanted to alter personal photos of his favorite place to be: in the ocean; another wanted to create an image of an ideal world instead of this real one. During our last meeting together, each student presented one of his or her completed products for a final group critique. I also requested that the students give responses on an end-of-course reflection sheet. The reflection sheet was laid-out in the form of a hand/tree, circling back to the exercise we had done with Meyer.

### **Reflections on the Hakipu'u Learning Center art elective.**

Despite a lack of out-of-class student commitment to the projects, I felt that most student in-class work and efforts were meaningful and that the class overall was successful. In taking myself through the experience once again by reviewing my journals, end-of-course student reflections and then writing this section of my paper, two main pedagogical *kuamo'o* stand out:

1) Build a conceptual foundation through relationships. I felt that giving the students exposure to people that they could connect with became a significant learning opportunity: listen to this poem this boy wrote, he is like you, and he writes beautiful poetry about things you know; watch this presentation, this scientist is like you, he is very

educated about this place and is working hard to maintain our culture; look at these works of art, they are so varied, yet Hawaiian artists made them, what do they say to you? Meet this woman who is an experienced artist, meet this young up-and-coming Hawaiian artist, and meet an artist who loves nature, but is from a very different part of the world. And perhaps, understand also that you can know me and that we have common groundings, but know that all our means of expression will be different, and that is good.

2) Begin where you are. Knowing the students of Hakipu'u have daily access to Hawaiian cultural practices like *'oli/pule/hula* (opening and closing chant/prayer/dance protocols), mauka and makai 'āina-based learning activities, and a strong sense of place, the theme was something that was already meaningful to the students. Being attentive to how students respond to learning activities, recognizing if they are understanding and contributing to discussions, and assessing their work is an important facet of knowing them in order to guide growth opportunities.

### **The Fourth Grade Outdoor Art Workshops at He'eia Fishpond**

In the charter school I currently work, Hawai'i Technology Academy (HTA), the majority of basic core lessons are worked on at-home through online curriculum. To supplement this online learning, teachers schedule and invite students to participate in various community field trips and learning experiences. For a number of years, the fourth grade has taken a one-day visit to He'eia Fishpond for a first-hand learning experience that addresses fourth grade social studies standards, which focus on Hawai'i and Hawaiian history. Hawaiian fishponds usually consist of a man-made wall, which encloses a body of water (a pond) around the site where a freshwater stream opens to the ocean. Through systems involving tidal flow, brackish water algae growth and systems of

gates in the wall, a working Hawaiian fishpond can be a veritable refrigerator of food supply for a community. The wall at He'eia was built over 800 years ago, surrounds 88 acres of pond and is currently in a state of restoration.

On our previous day-long visits at the fishpond, our students would participate in an introductory tour, walk along parts of the wall learning about its construction, visit a *makahā*, one of the gates in the wall, help in a service project of trudging through ankle-deep mud to collect invasive mangrove seeds and finally, compete in a scavenger hunt that reviewed many aspects of the information learned throughout the day. I have chaperoned with the fourth grade teacher on a number of these visits and we both agree that the experiences are beneficial, contextualizing and fun.

As I looked for Maoli-based art education opportunities for this research project, I approached both our fourth grade teacher and staff at the fishpond with the request that we experiment with a more extended fishpond curriculum, integrated with art. My proposal included four visits to the pond within a close proximity of time, including on-site art activities. Both parties were graciously willing to allow and help coordinate the project.

Prior to our student visits, I met with the educational coordinator at the pond to create a four-visit curriculum built on the central theme: *waiwai*. *Waiwai* is the Hawaiian word for wealth. Breaking it down further, *wai* means water, so *waiwai* is the doubling of water, meaning plentiful water, and plentiful water was the source of abundance in ancient Hawai'i. We planned activities that dealt with the wealth of resources surrounding the water system in the ahupua'a of He'eia. We titled the opportunity, "Outdoor Art Workshops: He'eia Fishpond." When our fourth grade teacher and I offered the project to



her students, explaining then also that I would be writing about the experience, we received an overwhelming response, 40 students requested to participate.

We began with a preparatory meeting at our school's learning center.

Participating students and parents were introduced to the project details. Students watched a video clip about He'eia fishpond, discussed the protocols and expectations while being on-site and decorated the title page of their personal field journals. Parents sat-in for the introduction, video clip and expectations, then left to submit permission forms.

During this introductory meeting, there was one especially illuminating moment for me: I asked the students to share where they were from. This, I now realize, is not always a simple question for everyone. A significant percentage of the families who attend our school and who were meeting with us that morning were families in the military and often recited lists of the many places they had lived. In addition to that, I found I was completely unfamiliar with many of the place-names some of the students were saying that they currently lived. The names were not the Hawaiian names, nor related to the way I knew how to explain locations or places, but military-named communities. It was a powerful moment in which I realized that though everyone currently lives here, we have vastly different understandings of what this place is, including how we name places. Through this project at He'eia fishpond, I was excited to share with them a part of my understanding; yet, I wanted it to be more meaningful than a tourist-like superficial experience of place. I hoped that the repeated visits would incite a connection and an understanding of Maoli-based understanding of place. I did wonder if my project centered on Maoli pedagogies could be authentic if the children I was working

with were not Maoli. I struggled with this question, but have come to the conclusion that it is valuable for everyone to learn of the specific ecological workings of a location and the historical and cultural knowledge of places. Ho'omanawanui (2008) states, "It is also beneficial to educate non-Hawaiian learners about the rich depth of Native Hawaiian culture to help them appreciate and respect the indigenous people of Hawai'i" (p. 208).

**At the fishpond.**

I have been deliberating on how to actually write about our time at the fishpond. There have been many insightful moments and many questions on propriety, best-practice, and cultural responsibility. Thankfully, I feel liberated by autoethnographic methods and can honestly explore, first through the process of the experience, and second through the writing of the experience. I cannot offer this example as an illustration of perfect place-based/Maoli-based art education, however, it is a site of investigation on the topic and I have approached my writing openly and have learned through the writing.

There were both personal successes and challenges during this specific project, each of which illuminated for me the nature of learning outside of a physical standard classroom. Knowing all of the variety and unexpected joys and frustrations that happen within a limited classroom space, a relatively controlled environment, I was excited about the variety of opportunities that could happen in the outdoors. I had been working on the specifically place-based section of my literature review and reading Richard Louv (2005), David Sobel (2005), and Gregory Smith (2002). My enthusiasm and agreement with the passion to get outside and learn through community clouded my acknowledgement of what I was actually excited to teach about: the systems of our place, specifically weather systems. Things did not always go the way I hoped that they would. I was stressed during

the project due to the fact that I needed to take notes and experience everything for later recording. Safety concerns were amplified due to heavy rains. One day even had to be canceled and rescheduled. These complexities were a reality of both of my inner weather and external conditions. Nevertheless, I will offer a detailed yet brief-as-possible explanation on the place-based and art-integrated activities of the four days.

On the first day, we had 40 students and 22 parents in attendance. Like on our other initial fishpond visits, we opened with a welcoming circle. I was comforted to hear our guide address the same thought I had noticed on the introduction day: she said, “I hear many of you saying names for places on this island that are newer names, I challenge you to find out the ancient names for the places you are from.” It was a simple recognition and request. Our group was introduced to the place and the pond, explained some of the construction history and shown images of what it used to look like before the current restoration efforts. A meaningful learning moment, (a personal judgment based on the quiet attentiveness from the entire group) was when our guide arranged the group to stand in two facing lines. She asked that we take some time to be absolutely quiet and observe our surroundings, sights, sounds, smells and feelings. She was going to pass a few items down the line, and when each person received an item, they would turn their observation attentions to those objects. She passed a *pohaku Pele* (black rock) and a piece of *ko'a* (white coral), the two main components of the wall. All morning I was uneasily observing the grey clouds building and during this moment of observation, I noticed them anxiously and noted the wind had also picked up. We continued. Next we



*Image Set 2.* First day at He'eia Fishpond: beginning the tour out on to the wall, passing ko'a and pohaku pele during a moment for observation, listening to stories around the makahā, and filling and transporting buckets of coral during a service project.

moved to the *makahā*, where there is a small break in the wall with a bridge going over it and two gates on either side to regulate entering and exiting fish. Next to this makahā is a

guard's house, so the students were told a stories about the guardians of the pond, both man and mythical.

It was at about this time that the grey clouds, which had been stacking themselves up against the nearby Ko'olau Mountains, began to let down a little rain. The fishpond workers had just assembled out on the wall with us to start our service project, so despite the rain, some of our group loaded buckets with coral while the second half of the group pushed rafts of these filled buckets along the wall of the pond to a section of wall that was being rebuilt. The students were being incredible workers. Unfortunately, the rain did not stop. Instead, it became so heavy I could barely see across the wall to where some of our parents and children were working. I was frightened for each student's safety, although I knew that there were parents and fishpond workers with each group of students. What would have otherwise been an enjoyable outdoor service project on any other day turned into a fight against pelting rain. Soon, we were all safely back to the tent where our shoes and bags were stored. We decided not to complete our end-of-day field journal entry. Students who came with parent chaperones went home early. We made phone calls to the students whose parents weren't due back for another hour so that they could be picked up also. One of the fishpond workers joked to me, "Today is waiwai for sure!"

The second scheduled visit was two weeks later, on a Monday. On the Sunday before, it stormed. We decided to cancel and reschedule our visit; we did not want to have a repeat drenching. That is one large factor to take in to consideration in outdoor learning, there is no guarantee the weather will agree to your lesson plans.

On our actual second day back, I noticed a different excitement in the children. As they arrived, they knew where they were going and there was a new confidence and familiarity, together with an excitement for new opportunities. That day we went on a “stream hike,” walking out along the pond wall, past the makahā and guardian house that we stopped at before, past the coral piles where we had filled buckets, across an uneven section of rocks, over some log bridges, past fishpond workers who were burning piles of removed invasive plant matter (an exceptionally cool sight for many of our fourth graders) through thigh-high water along the wall and eventually to see where the He'eia stream let out in to the ocean. The students were now near an area of wall that hadn't been restored or cleared, so our service project consisted of picking up trash in the thick forest of mangrove trees that broke down the wall and collected the mud and garbage that came down from the stream and in from the ocean. Without any rain falling on us, we got back to the tent, washed up, and set up in the garage for art time. We discussed the idea of waiwai and what it might have meant to people who depended on the fishpond. What did it mean for us today? What from their experience at the pond was important in this system of living? Students got to pick one aspect of that system we talked about, some picked clouds and some rivers, some *limu* (seaweed) and many fish. I had reference images for them to look at, or they could create images from their own memory and interpretation. After our discussions, we didn't have much time left for sketching. We cleaned up, leaving 20 minutes for field journal reflections. We came out, sat on a small grassy hill overlooking the pond and wrote.

The plan for the third and fourth days was similar to the first two days; we had groups rotating between working on the art project in the garage, learning about tides and

moon phases, and how those systems have a huge affect on what happens in the pond. Our students learned a hand-game that Hawaiian children used to play in order to memorize the phases of the moon. In the garage, students developed their images of an aspect of waiwai. To reiterate the interdependency of every small part of the large system, students were to fill their drawn images with small pieces of tissue paper. We discussed simple color mixing and layering ideas. After sections of color were filled in, it was intended that students would write reflections, based on their experiences at the pond or on the significance of their chosen aspect, so that we would have yet another layer added to the image. No one reached this stage. In fact, I had to schedule an extra work-on-art day at our learning center for many students to come and finish their project. We finished the fourth visit to the pond with a scavenger hunt. Students were now able to more intimately know the rocks and muddy areas of the pond and scampered about, collecting their specimens of invasive mangrove pods, small examples of the materials that make up the wall, a sample of brackish water, and other items on their list like fish and a crab.

To completely wrap up our “Outdoor Art Workshop” experience, we held a family showcase one evening at the pond. I set up all the art projects in one section of the tent area, there were refreshments and a slideshow of images taken by myself and families on loop in the garage. Since not all parents were able to join in one of our work days, students led their own tours out to the makahā to share with their families the stories of what they learned and experienced while at the pond. Towards the end of the evening, the students came together to play the moon phases hand-game that they

learned. Students and parents were also asked to take some time to submit answers to a questionnaire. The evening was a success and families were grateful for the opportunity.



Image Set 3. The stream hike, field journal examples, art projects.



**Reflections on the fishpond workshops.**

What did the students learn from this experience? What did I learn about providing place-based and Maoli-based art education? Are different lessons being learned outside than when we stay in the classroom? What kinds of different kinds of memories are being created? If all students are able to be safe, do the opportunities build authentic intimacy with place and community, for example, “Remember the time we ran along that wall in that downpour? “Ka ua kani ko'oko'o... right?”

Some of the most successful outcomes I heard was that two families went back to He'eia fishpond on later open community work days. That showed me that people had connected and developed enough dedication to the place to return on their own time. Was art integral in instigating that dedication? Maybe not. However, the art project was the instigating factor for the extended visits. I have personal dissatisfaction with the actual art project. I feel that, once again, I brought a standard classroom project out of the classroom and didn't fully incorporate creative experience authentically with the place. Perhaps if we utilized all those mangrove seeds we collected in some environmental art project, that could have reiterated the fact that although certain plants may be helpful in native ecosystems, they can be harmful in others.

I did get a lot of positive feedback from conversations with students, parents, and the questionnaire so I know that the overall project, despite the abundance of rain, was “rich” -- waiwai. For this project, intimacy with place was a guiding purpose. Students were able to have a variety of recurring experiences with a place and use those experiences as a jumping-off point for image making. The art-making was not the primary learning activity, but it did provide opportunities for students to process the

experience. The individual worktime gave the students a chance to mentally revisit their time at the pond and create a tangible reminder of that time.

### **Ka Moana Nui Mural**

In discussing my personal inclinations towards research on place-based and culture-based art education practices with a mentor artist and art educator, Meleanna Meyer, I asked if I could observe her in a teaching situation and interview her about her pedagogical understandings. At about the same time, Meyer was beginning to plan for another collaborative mural project. As in previous mural projects, a significant aspect of the mural creation process came through the inclusion of *haumāna* (student artists who had been selected through previous art-related work with Meyer) and *alaka'i* (young-adult artists) who would take part in foundational concept-building and creation stages. She invited me to observe and write about the art education pedagogies at play in creating that upcoming mural.

#### **Mural preparation observations.**

To begin my observations, I joined one of the mural planning meetings with the five *kumu* (leaders): Meyer, Al Lagunero, Harinani Orme, Solomon Enos, and Kahi Ching. At this meeting, the *kumu* discussed both mural plans and educational goals and activities of the *haumāna*. My writing here will focus on the art education aspects of the project, noting Maoli-based pedagogical underpinnings, however, the entire experience will be discussed to give these experiences context.

It was intended that this mural would represent the connecting powers of the ocean to Hawaiians and those who live and have lived in the Pacific throughout the centuries. Through creative preparation discussions, (possible cultural metaphors, related

mo'olelo etc.) and physical mural considerations, including the idea of not being boxed in by a traditional rectangular canvas and wanting to do something with a more organic and free-form edge, something happened that I believe exemplified a dedication to open exploration in art. Orme tiptoed off and returned with a stack of colored paper and a pair of scissors for each of us. "Let's cut!" She smiled. We metaphorically tipped our hats to Matisse and Arp and went to work/play. We all cut out organic shapes with oceanic intention, threw them on the floor, spent a good amount of time arranging them, and discussing the aesthetics of it all. No one had anticipated that at the end of the meeting, the mural plan would be to cut out three separate plywood shapes, fashion them together and create an over-lapping three-dimensional mural, but that was what happened. This was a key example to me of the commitment these artists have to artistic collaboration, allowing for an artistic outcome that is not pre-determined, but emergent through creative cooperation. This significant pedagogical attitude would permeate the following mural experience.

Throughout the planning meeting, I did notice that questions and dialogue constantly returned to the haumāna: what kind of experience would this be for them? How could this mural expand on concepts and techniques they had experienced in past mural projects? These objectives would be developed by what Meyer calls, "front-loading" activities, which build foundations from which to pull and then place within future art pieces. Each of the kumu decided on process and technique activities that would focus on new skills. The intention to complete a mural was not the only purpose of the project. The more long-lasting intention was to provide yet another learning opportunity for the haumāna, an art education experience that would build their technical

and conceptual skill base and help them to actively participate in creative cultural ways of being in the world. I recall a quote by Enos in a recent article in Mana Magazine. When speaking about his involvement with the Hawai'i Convention Center mural project, an 80-foot mural project completed in 2011 by these same artists and haumāna, Enos stated, "The mural itself is not necessarily as important as the process... I feel like we generated 30 more of those murals in each one of those students. Soon it will be their turn to lead their own murals," (Mana, June/August 2012, p. 31). At this planning meeting I could explicitly see that this aim wasn't just what *happened* to come out of a mural project. What the haumāna would take-away from a mural project was discussed, examined and continually considered.

The next preparation meeting involved briefing the *alaka'i*, the group of young leaders/artists, on the project intentions and goals. The purpose of the *alaka'i* role is multi-faceted: firstly, with *alaka'i* on the project, the kumu are able focus completely on the art-making and teaching while the *alaka'i* pay special attention to the small details of taking care of haumāna, making sure that everything and everyone knows how to contribute and were being kept clean and safe. Secondly, the *alaka'i*, like the haumāna, help with concept development and painting the initial layers, providing a significant accumulation of work hours in limited actual time. Thirdly, the *alaka'i* were being trained as artists and teachers by being apart of the process. A few weeks before the actual mural work weekend, some of the kumu met with the *alaka'i* group for introductions and explanations on the project plans. To conclude, the *alaka'i* group was given 18" x 24" sheets of paper and taught how to fold them into sketchbooks. We were charged to fill the books with sketches of researched visual representations of people, art and stories of the

Pacific islands. We were reminded of the necessity to personally research and begin our own process of tuning into the intentions of the piece.

### **Mural creation.**

The morning we would begin work on mural was dry and cool, the kind of morning that anticipates a perfect sunny day. Kumu, alaka'i, haumāna (students ranging from 7<sup>th</sup> grade to recently graduated, and most of Hawaiian or Pacific heritage) and a handful of support staff began by standing in a large circle in an area open to breeze and singing birds for an invocation of *mahalo*, thanks to *Akua*, *Aumakua*, and *Makua*, (God, guiding spirits, parents and ancestors.) The *kua* here in these entities means “backbone” and references the different supports we rely on as Hawaiians, artists, and people. For me, the synergy of coming together was instantly apparent and inviting. Many of the group had worked together before on previous mural projects and were happy to be together again. There were also many first-time participants including three young Micronesian students that Meyer had recently worked with in one of her art workshops.

After introductions we went out to “meet” the mural. The weeks of previous conceptualizing and planning by Meyer and the other kumu had led to an interesting starting-place for the weekend of work: three-layers of interlocking wooden panels cut in deliberate organic forms. The kumu brought out all the paper cuttings and process sketches they had done so far and spread them out on the ground, explaining what Enos called, “the birth of the idea” to the haumāna. Simple sketchbooks were provided to the haumāna and as the kumu continued to explain their current and developing anticipations for the imagery and *mana'o* (thoughts) to be expressed, haumāna and alaka'i sat on

benches in front of the mural, sketching the forms before them, beginning to sketch their own vision of what might be included.



*Image Set 4.* One of the first activities of the week was an introduction to the mural itself, which at that point, already consisted of three separate but interlocking wooden panels. Alaka'i and haumāna discussed and sketched reactions to the forms while hearing the kumu's current conceptualizations on the oceanic theme.

During the talk-story/introduction session, (and throughout the entire project), the kumu frequently referenced relevant cultural metaphors, symbols, and *mo'olelo*, stories of our kūpuna, which lend appropriate morals and inspiration to the process. Also, the work of other influential artists, such as Matisse and Arp, was referenced as it related to the

meaningfulness and the randomness of organic form and over-lapping parts, and possible painting techniques to be used. Perhaps not all of the technical or historical references were absorbed by the haumāna right away, yet, a sense of accountability to this information was evident in the attention and focus of the haumāna. They recognized that you need to pay attention to what is being said because it would be what we were going to be doing together very soon; you needed to know how you would be contributing.

Supportive enrichment activities had been planned to build everyone's understanding of the space in which the mural would remain and of the meanings of the mural: the connections and lifeways of the people of the Pacific Ocean. We spent time in the physical space where the mural would hang, making observations of the mood, energy, and intentions felt in the space. We visited the museum archives, being shown a number of special artifacts and discussing what we might learn from them. We visited other sections of the museum, hearing stories about different displays and thinking about how visitors view and interpret museum displays. Each of these opportunities reiterated stories of people who had come before us, people whose decisions affected our reality, people we were remembering in the mural. These experiences were authentic learning opportunities for the haumāna and all of us. Viewing significant historical artifacts, some of which I had only seen before in books, changed the level of learning from theoretical to actual.

In the afternoon of this first day, besides time for lunch, the kumu each took turns leading workshops on technical and conceptual understandings they wanted to build in the students. Lagunero led a workshop that developed haumāna understanding of shading to create form; Meyer offered a lesson on organic and inorganic objects, including time

for observational drawing in sketchbooks. Orme conducted a lesson about “retaking control of the elements,” which proved to be a special departure point for everyone.



*Image Set 5.* In order to build context, the different kumu led historical, conceptual and technical activities. In the activity shown here, Harinani Orme leads the group in creating collaborative drawings on transparencies that reference the natural elements of the ocean.

As many of the discussions surrounding the mural dealt with our understanding of the connections we have with the ocean, this activity reminded us of the potential we



have as creative beings to use the natural elements in our visual and daily-life creations. The navigators, fishermen, farmers, and gatherers utilized the intimate knowledge of place and ecosystems as they relied on these elements for physical and spiritual survival. The students were asked to recount their own personal knowledge of and relationship with the ocean, and were guided through a process that included drawing representations of these ideas within a circle, taking a transparency around the room and tracing bits and pieces of everyone's drawings to create new collaborative iterations of the depictions, and finally piling them up together on a center table to discuss the layering and built-up, perhaps vortex-like hole that had been created through the process. The collaborative and active nature of this activity became a substantial source of mural development, including the designs and input from every member.

After taping these up to the wall, it was time to get out to the mural. The first preparation step was to gesso all parts of the panels. As my focus was on the written documentation of process, I was often sat back along the edge of the workspace and wrote as everyone worked. As large movable pieces of the mural were spread across the workspace, small working groups gathered around each piece. Kumu, alaka'i and haumāna broke off in mixed-generational pairs and groups to work and talk. This was a pivotal moment in my autoethnographic research; I wrote in my notes:

Mentorships are happening all over the place... Tiana and Lilia are painting and talking together on one side, Robin directs her niece, Malia, Sol makes his rounds with the different haumāna, Aunty Hari spends her time talking to me about going up to the archives, Aunty Mele is being attentive to everyone, different mentoring moments are happening on their own everywhere!

None of these groupings or relationship-building was structured, but the time we had together lent itself to supporting each other through authentic listening and discussions. These moments of relation building occurred throughout the entire mural process.

Work on the mural progressed with task, (gessoing,) *hui pu* (gather together) and facilitated discussion, task (let's paint the backs red to honor the creative forces that raise up from the ocean), discussion, task, discussion/critique, task, discussion. During each discussion, the kumu would talk in art language and metaphor, about areas being opaque and transparent, where washes of warm colors might be added, about glazes and washes and layers and layers. At each step, insights from the haumāna were requested. Meyer reminded us that deliberation in decision-making is purposeful: "We want to taste every single part of this process until every single part feels good. That is how we collectively create artwork."

Through the next day, talks on *wa'a*, (seafaring) navigation and symbols of significant aspects of these ideas were discussed in preparation to begin painting *ka mua*, the first panel, the one which would hang closest to the wall. Including references to kumu, alaka'i and haumāna sketchbooks, and taking advantage of the many hands available for work, the group decided that this first layer would be made up of small patterns, symbols, and techniques that would offer an oceanic feel and reference elements of seafaring in a cool color pallet of blues, greens, and purples. The first panel was filled with these motifs.

Including time for snack breaks and meals, the pattern continued through that second day of haumāna work on the mural, alternating between an artistic task and a hui

pu for discussion and critique until all three layers of the organic mural were covered with foundational designs. After the haumāna returned home with their families, alaka'i spent a day building up the painted layers on each of the panels and then the kumu spent the last few days building up each panel to a completed work. At the end of the week, everyone returned to the work site to see the completed mural, eat together, and celebrate contributions and learning opportunities.



*Image Set 6.* Haumāna work on panel three, the kumu sit together during a break to discuss progress, and images of the mural at the end of work day three.

### **Reflections on the mural project.**

By being a part of this mural project, I was personally rewarded both spiritually and creatively. Witnessing and working through the collaborative development of this visual art piece renewed my standard for artistic quality and my understanding of some of

the gifts of my heritage. As an art educator, I recognize many special and Maoli-based practices emerging through the learning opportunities of the mural project:

1) Heritage as a foundation of reference. Concept development was firmly grounded in Hawaiian culture. Mo'olelo and metaphor specific to Hawaiian culture and surrounding oceanic peoples were the platforms from which visual elements were developed.

2) Reliance on spirit. Every work period opened and often closed with *pule*, (prayers or invocations of spirit and ancestors). On the day that just the kumu and alaka'i were working on the piece, Lagunero requested that we open our circle, the usual formation for group *pule*, and include the mural. The circle was opened, we all held hands, and the two people standing on the edges of the mural touched its sides so that the mural was a contributing part of that conversation. Art therefore, also is a respected entity, a manifestation of spiritual promptings and respected as a birthed member of the 'ohana.

3) Authentic skill-building learning experiences. Skill-building activities utilized each of the kumu's passions and expertise so that students were learning from practicing artists. Responsibility for the conversations during our visits to the museum displays and archives were deeper than a casual visit to a museum. The haumāna were not only given authentic examples, but were expected to accomplish authentic performance of the knowledge discussed through timely visual representation in collaborative work.

4) Acceptance of ambiguity in the process. The end result was not pre-determined. I believe it is helpful for students to witness emergent results, especially with art and creative activity. Answers are not already figured out. In fact, a number of

possible answers could result, but what level of dedication does it take to reach one of the best possible final outcomes? Although this is allowing the opportunity to experience the process of creativity, it is often stressful for the kumu, who in this project, ultimately were responsible for being sure that the final product was of excellent quality.

5) Process is valued: Although the final mural hanging in the museum today looks quite different from what it looked like on the day the haumāna completed their contributions, there is a recognition and constantly stated assurance that every paint stroke and layer that went into the piece is important in achieving the final piece.

Everyone who participated contributed *mana*; personal energy and value.

6) Mentorships. I've already spoken about the mentoring relationships that occur during the process. This happened as haumāna, alaka'i and kumu had the time to work together, and talk one-on-one about the project goals and also about personal issues. This relationship-building is a meaningful part of a project like this.

I consider participation in a mural project, such as the one described here, as an exemplary art-education opportunity, however, it is very different from an ordinary school-based art class. Firstly, as this was a collaborative art piece, haumāna were not absolutely free to interpret the dialogs and create their own art work on the theme, which is often an important goal of art education. However, to me it seems that the knowledge learned through both conceptual and technical aspects of this project will influence all future personal projects. Secondly, in the classroom, there are many other facets at play that were not a part of the mural experience, including variety in students' art skill, limits on time, limits on human and cultural resources, etc. It would be impossible to replicate all aspects of the mural opportunity in a school classroom.

**Sites of Investigation Summary**

I do not want to limit “art education” to classroom education. Education can happen everywhere, especially in community and group activity, which is also a significant principle guiding place-based art educators. These three sites of investigation reinforced my belief in an experiential education that focuses on culture and place. The out-of-classroom aspect of these experiences was a key facet of the overall Maoli-basedness of these learning experiments.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions

**Mo'oku'auhau, Mo'olelo, Pili Ka Mo'o, and Aloha in Art Education Practice**

Though taking the time to autoethnographically analyze my own art-teaching practice within two significant place-based and Maoli-based art education opportunities and a mural project led by Hawaiian artist and educator Meleanna Meyer, I have been able to identify four *kuamo'o* (significant aspects) of a Maoli-based art education. They are: Mo'oku'auhau, Mo'olelo, Pili Ka Mo'o, and Aloha. In conclusion, please allow me to offer these final narratives summarizing thoughts on these four emergent Maoli pedagogical concepts in relation to art education.

**Mo'oku'auhau: Placing Artists in a Continuum of Creative Activity**

I have often heard Hawaiian and Maori carvers offer their artistic genealogy. “I learned from this man, who studied under this man,” etc. In a Maoli-based pedagogy, ancestry is important because it secures an artist in his or her creative place. The artist then has the *kuleana* or responsibility to produce quality work with that creative heritage. The mentorships and relationships developed in Meyer’s mural projects seem to be the beginning of similar creative genealogies. In spite of the limited amount of time in the Hakipu'u workshops, my goal in working with the *haumāna* was to offer as many possible relationship-building opportunities as I could in an effort to begin this process of placing the student-artists in a continuum of creative activity.

Studying art history and finding stylistic examples can be a way of adopting ourselves into a creative heritage. When given the opportunity to look through the MAMo art catalogs, one of the Hakipu'u students chose a painting by Herb Kane, another student chose weaponry created by Umi Kai. Besides references to unknown artists in the

museum's collections, the kumu in the mural project often mentioned Western artists since we were painting with acrylics and influenced by previous relationships with their forms. This is a significant Maoli-based attitude: *e nānā i ke kumu*, look to the source and to the past, not to replicate, but as a supporting knowledge base from which to develop new forms of representation. Studying and respecting both past and present artists as influential creative ancestors gives contemporary students a firm grounding in personal art creation. However, these relationships take time and effort. In the current educational system, how often can we give students this opportunity? What can we do to teach art and art history in ways that allow students to connect, have relationships with, and be truly influenced by the ideas and passions of past artists?

### **Mo'olelo: Artists as Story Collectors and Re-tellers**

I haven't yet shared a seemingly insignificant story that occurred during the mural project planning. I feel it is a highly illustrative story about *story*: At a mural planning meeting with the kumu, the last member to arrive showed up carrying a box full of treasures. Before we really had a chance to greet him, he excitedly pulled out a small piece of white coral with a deep natural cavity. He encouragingly passed it on to us to examine. Then he pulled out a smooth piece of water-worn driftwood, the cross-section of a tree branch, a heavy scrap of rusting metal with slight traces of flaking red paint still visible, a fish's jawbone, a little peanut that looked like an *'ipu*, a Hawaiian gourd, and a number of other items which, after inspecting, we placed on the table between our sketchbooks and notebooks. All of these items became visual and tactile fodder in our planning.

For me, the tangible presence of the collection of small and perhaps taken-for-



granted items mentioned above, each tenderly offered as a source of wonder and beauty, became a metaphor for the potential offerings of mo'olelo. Mo'olelo are the stories we collect for ourselves and possibly share with students as sites of investigation, to use a term I've become fond of in this research paper. Our shared cultural stories and the items that hold stories are an important aspect of Maoli-based art education. Providing opportunities for art students to build a collection of meaningful personal stories, or guiding them to recognize they have their own stories to share, whether culturally significant, holding contemporary meaning or a combination of both, gives students meaningful "jumping-off points" in artistic creation. They are able to contribute new representations and tell their own stories. The poetry and stories of home shared in the Hakipu'u workshops, the stories created through rainstorms and stream hikes, Meyer's "frontloading" activities and discussions: all these things build the pool of mo'olelo from which art students are able to dip into and then develop.

### **Pili ka Mo'ō: Getting Intimate with the 'Āina**

The phrase, "pili ka mo'ō" can literally be translated as the *mo'ō*, lizard, is *pili*, intertwined. Metaphorically, however, we each can be entities who are pili, determinedly connected and interwoven to many things: places, other people, stories, and processes. This idea references developed relationships. Another translation of pili is intimate. Having intimate knowledge of a place or process can allow for experiencing the world in unique ways. The word intimate may have romantic and physical connotations, but my understanding of the word used in this context means depth of connection and understanding. Intimacy with a place, for example, is evidenced by the myriad of 'ōlelo *noe'au*, proverbs or poetic sayings, which have been handed down from our Hawaiian

ancestors who knew our islands well. Every type of rain in differing locations had its own name. Two 'ōlelo noe'au (wise sayings) recorded by Pukui (1983), speak of the rain in areas where I grew up:

*Ka ua pō'ai hale o Kahalu'u.*

The rain that moves around the homes of Kahalu'u.

*Ka ua kani ko'o o He'eia.*

The rain of He'eia that sounds like the tapping of walking canes.

I can attest to the first type of rain. Growing up in Kahalu'u, my sisters and I would always run around the house whenever it would start to rain, closing all the windows, because we knew the rain was not coming from just one direction. My fourth grade students can attest to the second type of rain. While participating in the outdoor art workshops at He'eia Fishpond, the rains of He'eia came to bless us, or, drench us. Indeed, those raindrops were so determined; in my memory they did create a melodious tapping sound as we all ran for cover.

These intertwining relationships include the land. Kana'iaupni and Malone (2006) conclude that, "connections to the land create the space for Native Hawaiians to maintain traditional practices that nourish spiritual, physical, and educational well-being. From a sense of place grows a sense of *kuleana* (responsibility)" (p.302). The organized information of textbooks and the routine available in classrooms have value, but we cannot neglect the value also to be found in the order of natural systems abundant around us, especially in Hawai'i, where useful knowledge of surrounding systems were once much more deeply understood and utilized. Intimacy with the *'āina*, the land, or more broadly that which provides sustenance, builds a knowledge grounding that can influence

a Maoli-based art education by providing site-specific art making materials, themes, and metaphors. Explorations in art making surrounding these ideas can, in turn, develop an even deeper sense of pili ka mo'o through the creative process.

### **Aloha: Spirituality and Love**

To return for a moment to that first creativity workshop with Meyer in Punalu'u that I have mentioned previously, remember, she brought out a small *'umeke*, a carved wooden bowl, and asked us to free-write and sketch whatever thoughts came to mind when we looked at it. My mind wondered about the life of the bowl: Where did the tree it came from grow? Who cut down the tree? Who carved the bowl? Where now, are the other bowls that came from that same tree? What has since been held in it? As the workshop progressed, we built upon each other's shared stories and dug deeper into more specific attachments to our own places in the world. In that sketching and roughing-it-out process, Meyer noted the variety in our lines, the emphasis those lines created, how we might add shadows to particular areas to replicate the form of the *'umeke*, etc. We were thinking about the elements and principles of art and design as we worked, but they were only used as tools to enhance our representations of the ideas that sprung from the *'umeke* on the table in front of us. The meanings built up an intimacy and that intimacy of sharing stories and recognizing the past developed our understanding of *aloha*. Aloha is our love for each other, love for stories, and love for the containers and holders of special keepsakes. As Maoli-art educators, aloha is where we work from, what we work through, and why we work.

## Conclusion

K-12 educators in Hawai'i are increasingly using indigenous Maoli culture and knowledge as a context for meaningful learning. This approach is intended to remedy the marginalization of Hawaiian culture in education and to connect student to their cultural and ecological heritage. A Maoli educational stance is also designed to improve educational outcomes and to develop holistically healthy, spiritually grounded, culturally empowered, and civically minded individuals and communities.

In this thesis I have explored this educational approach in relation to art education through an examination of my own heritage, experiences, and educational practices. I have framed my search and its stories within the theoretical constructs of critical place-based and culturally responsive pedagogy. This autoethnographic reflection and narrative has been a journey. As I began to name and describe an autoethnographic methodology, a personal methodology emerged that I can now claim as my own. The characteristics of a Maoli artist and art educator are now more clearly defined in my mind. This journey has deepened my understanding of how I belong to this place and its culture and how place and culture have shaped my identity, artistry, and pedagogy.

The challenge now lies ahead: How can I further develop my understanding of these ideas and their implementation in future art education practice? How can I develop and enhance the important transformative qualities of Maoli-based art education within and beyond my own students? How can I be an advocate for educational methods to teach through a culture and not just about a culture? And how can I fight the battles for my own culture and place within oppressive or exploitive educational or economic or social systems? These are questions for my future curriculum plans and future teaching

experiences. These will also be questions for our communities to tackle in long-term advocacy for Maoli-based pedagogies in art and art education that addresses the need for meaningful learning opportunities for Hawaiian and all students of Hawai'i.

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