

## Cultural Trauma and Resilience in the Pacific

### Problem Landscape

Across the Pacific, indigenous communities suffer disproportionately from poor mental and physical health, homelessness, incarceration and a slew of poverty-related disparities. Eversole (2005) cites “a clear pattern connecting indigenous people with poverty and disadvantage,” including high infant mortality rates, as well as stunting and disease from poor nutrition and poor sanitation. “Indigenous women tend to have lower educational attainment [and] live in more impoverished municipalities” (30).<sup>i</sup>

Nonetheless, as Eversole argues, “these indicators do not paint a complete picture of poverty.” Rather, indigenous people face “racism – reinforced by deeply embedded assumptions about the inferiority of indigenous culture... accompanied by linguistic and cultural marginalization from the centres of commercial, intellectual and political power” (30). Simon takes this argument further: “Rather than being the root illness in itself, poverty in indigenous communities is a symptom of colonial loss” (in Eversole 2005, p.64).

Between 300 and 800 AD, migrations across the Pacific established the “isolated, thriving island societies” of Aotearoa (New Zealand), Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Micronesia, Guam, Saipan and Hawai’i, who have come to be known as Pacific Islanders (Mataira 2014).<sup>ii</sup> Common among these cultures is a familial relationship to the land, which is seen as kin and was stewarded in common (Andrade 2014).<sup>iii</sup>

Following the arrival of British colonial forces in Aotearoa, the indigenous Māori were left with 3 million acres on which to live, while 93 million acres were taken away (Mataira 2016). Through a process of cultural domination that included the required learning of the colonial language, indigenous wisdom was delegitimized and subverted, and people began thinking and speaking differently about the land. In time, this alienation progressed toward institutionalization, as policies reflected new values such as the acquisition of private property for economic gain (Mataira 2016).

Hawai’i’s colonization was driven by corporate actors,<sup>1</sup> but the intention of acquisition resulted in the same pattern of exploitation of the indigenous population. The displacement of indigenous Pacific peoples from their land must therefore be understood not only as a cross-territory problem, but in as subtle a form as an altered relationship between a family and the land that was their ancestral home. Andrade gives an example from Hā’ena on the island of Kaua’i, where due to regulations around a new State park, the descendants of the families that had *kuleana* for this land can no longer grow kalo to feed their families, safely store their canoes between fishing expeditions, or visit their ancestors’ graves. “The regulations of the state have ended those ways and in the process contributed greatly to the fracturing of the lives of the Hawaiian people who lived there” – and this is only one small example. The modern socioeconomic “geography” of lands across the Pacific “has contributed much to the separation of the aboriginal people from the most vital physical, psychological, social and spiritual values of their existence” (Andrade 2014, p. 10-11).

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<sup>1</sup> Supported by the U.S. military. The Hawaiian monarchy was overthrown in 1893, and Queen Lili’uokalani was imprisoned for many years. A provisional U.S. government was set up in 1895.

Inherent in this separation from land is profound economic as well as cultural and psychological loss. Citing Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004), Mataira (2013) describes the five forms of historical trauma—*physical*, in the form of diseases and intergenerational stress; “*cultural* through religious transformation and cultural destruction of native cultures and belief systems;” “*economic* through a violation of native stewardship of land and removal of people from environmental systems;” “*sociopolitical*, through alien governing and social structures; and “*psychological* through the marginalization of native people, an eradication of their social selves, and an undermining of their personal and group autonomy.” (146) The remainder of this project will focus on opportunities for healing the economic and cultural forms of this historical trauma.

### Solution Landscape

As Simon argues in Eversole (2005), “indigenous communities need radically different strategies for the attainment of social justice and economic empowerment” (53).

Dr. Jeffrey Acido (2014)<sup>iv</sup> posits three dimensions of cultural connection—body, language and land—as the foundation for a praxis of healing. While body is beyond the scope of this project, language is being addressed in Hawai‘i through publicly-funded Hawaiian language immersion schools, community college and university courses, and through non-profit community programming. In many island nations across the Pacific, such as Samoa, Fiji, Tonga and the nations of Micronesia, the indigenous language is dominant in schools, business and governance. In Aotearoa, government funded schools teach all students the Māori language. Thus I will now turn to land, with a focus on reconciling economic and cultural trauma through indigenous forms of entrepreneurship.

Mataira (2003)<sup>v</sup> outlines three levels of indigenous entrepreneurship in which “cultural imperatives and kinship” are embedded (170). As observed in New Zealand, *heritage entrepreneurship* “avails itself of opportunities to acquire and/or safeguard... ‘the cultural practices, resources and knowledge systems developed, nurtured and refined by Indigenous people and passed on by them as part of expressing their cultural identity’” (170). *Tribal entrepreneurship* involves “the strategic utilization [and growth] of the indigenous resource base... through tribally (collectively) owned enterprises and/or joint ventures” (173). Finally, *indigenous self-employment and small enterprise* can help overcome the significant “labour market disadvantage of indigenous people” (177).

Supported by a larger indigenous-rights narrative, *heritage entrepreneurship* in New Zealand draws upon Māori people’s “full, exclusive and undisturbed rights to their land, forests and fisheries and other properties” (171) and is visible in such initiatives as the Te Wānanga Whakairo National Carving School. Supported by the New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute, Te Wānanga is part of a network of schools perpetuating indigenous practices, supporting native livelihoods, and inviting visitors to gain a greater appreciation for Māori culture.<sup>vi,vii</sup> Similarly successful initiatives have been established by the Alaska Native Heritage Center<sup>viii</sup> and the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico.<sup>ix</sup>

There is no intellectual property (IP) protection for the representation of Hawai‘i, which is exploited for great commercial gain by non-Hawaiian entities across the world. Managing “the promotion of Hawai‘i’s brand,” the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority (a government agency) has worked since 1998 to support “the ongoing, sustainable growth of Hawaii’s economy” through tourism policy, strategic planning and marketing.<sup>x</sup> Each year, it provides small grants to culturally-based programs that further Hawai‘i’s appeal to visitors. Additional forms of *heritage entrepreneurship* are conducted by entities such as Kualoa

Ranch,<sup>xi</sup> owned by the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of a missionary family<sup>2</sup>, as well as the Waipa and the North Kohala farming communities, which, supported by non-profits, offer community meals, markets and experiential tours of traditional Hawaiian kalo (taro) fields.<sup>xii,xiii</sup>

New Zealand's 1840 Treaty of Waitangi provided a legal basis for indigenous rights which were reiterated in 1975 following strong Māori activism. This foundation for sovereignty and economic control has resulted in the present-day growth of *tribal entrepreneurship*, which has brought significant wealth into Māori communities, for example through large-scale fisheries.<sup>xiv</sup> This growth is not without controversy, however, as an elite class of tribal CEOs and Directors is emerging—exacerbating rather than correcting inequalities within the Māori community (Mataira 2016).

In contrast, the 1893 overthrow of Hawaii's Queen Lili'uokalani lay the ground for present-day anti-colonial resistance based outside of the dominant legal and economic regime. Perhaps as a result, the displacement of kanaka maoli from their native lands and economic base remains largely uncorrected, and native self-determination—highly contested within the Hawaiian community—has not been formalized within U.S. law. The primary locus of *tribal entrepreneurship* within Hawai'i might thus be Kamehameha Schools, which retained significant land ownership and has built an immense endowment to create “educational opportunities in perpetuity to improve the capability and well-being of people of Hawaiian ancestry.”<sup>xv</sup> Additionally, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, a public agency, fosters income and housing stability and culturally-based environmental stewardship through its grant-making program, which awarded \$1.23M to local non-profits in Fiscal Biennium 2016-17.<sup>xvi</sup>

Further examples of *tribal entrepreneurship* include casinos, breweries and construction companies owned and organized by native peoples of North America, which at times instigate difficult decisions regarding environmental and cultural preservation versus monetary gain (Mataira 2016).

*Indigenous self-employment* in Hawai'i is supported by entities such as the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, which promotes “the cultural, economic, political and community development of Native Hawaiians” through microloans and savings programs;<sup>xvii</sup> the Hawaii Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development, which facilitates network-building; the Consuelo Foundation,<sup>xviii</sup> which is partnering with the Islander Institute<sup>xix</sup> think tank to support a cohort of land-based entrepreneurs; and the Hawai'i Investment Ready program,<sup>xx</sup> established in 2014 to build capacity among social enterprises that integrate culture into their business model.

In contrast, Kaplan (2013) describes an “immature and somewhat stalled” social enterprise ecosystem in Aotearoa, where government acts as the largest philanthropist but has yet to invest significant resources into social enterprise.<sup>xxi</sup> Dr. Peter Mataira (2016) describes the challenges Māori women face in accessing resources for entrepreneurial endeavors. Further, while the social enterprise network in Hawai'i is growing, significant gaps remain in bridging the non-profit and private sectors and in establishing a model for entrepreneurship that does not undermine indigenous values.

Nonetheless, entrepreneurialism is posited by many thinkers as inherent among native peoples. Kaplan (2013) states that “Māori historical values, traditions and structures link enterprise and social good,” while Mataira (2016) describes entrepreneurship as a “culturally normative practice” among indigenous

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<sup>2</sup> Although the ranch is not owned by indigenous Hawaiians, I have included it under the category of heritage entrepreneurship because it perpetuates the awareness and practice of some elements of Hawaiian culture through tourism as well as educational field trips.

communities, which he sees as “risk-taking” and “always open to innovation and new ways of seeing things.” He further identifies stories of innovation within Hawaiian as well as Māori mythologies.

### Lessons & Levers

Though I had wondered for many years about the possibility of entrepreneurial approaches to addressing disparities among indigenous populations, I had not previously named historical trauma as the core problem to be addressed. I have therefore gained deeper insight into the parameters through which economic opportunity might be built so as to allow autonomy without undercutting cultural values. Dr. Peter Mataira called for a shared standard to define indigenous entrepreneurship—a concept far more complex than I had previously realised.

I restricted my inquiry to the developed Pacific Islands to more deeply understand and articulate the sources of inequity and resilience among Hawai’i’s people and those with whom they share the greatest parallels. In the process, however, I came across stories of many indigenous people who were similarly displaced their familial lands and practices, who worked through the power of narrative to reassert their rights. To learn from the struggles and triumphs of communities as the Aborigines of Australia, the Ainu people in Japan, the Karen of Burma, the original inhabitants of the Philippines, or the *yuanzhumin* of Taiwan would be incredibly valuable. Narrative is key in heritage entrepreneurship as well, where intellectual property can be leveraged powerfully—as the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania have done.

Lastly, significant opportunity exists in the Pacific diaspora: an estimated 12,000 Micronesian migrants now live in Hawai’i,<sup>xxii</sup> and the community of Kalihi has emerged as a “hub of Chuukese culture.”<sup>xxiii</sup> Living and working legally in the U.S. through the Compacts of Free Association, these migrants often expatriate their savings back to their extended families in Micronesia. Recently-immigrated Filipino and Samoan families residing in Kalihi and similar communities on O’ahu also send back remittances, potentially bolstering economic opportunity in their homelands. Successful culturally-based entrepreneurship in Hawai’i or Australia, where many Pacific Islanders migrate, might thus have an amplified effect.

Broadened research into indigenous narratives and economic models, and the articulation of cultural standards for entrepreneurship, might therefore foster an ecosystem conducive to the revitalisation of indigenous communities across multiple geographies. Finally, as alternative market structures emerge that are more akin to indigenous modes of relationship-based exchange, this work may hold insights for mainstream business that wish to adapt and to thrive, as indigenous communities have done out of necessity for generations.

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<sup>i</sup> Eversole R. McNeish J & Cimadamore A, 2005. *Indigenous Peoples & Poverty, An International Perspective*. Zed Books: London. CROP International Studies in Poverty Research.

<sup>ii</sup> Mataira, P. 2014, “Social entrepreneurship: a culturally rooted approach to promoting social and economic justice.” In *Cross-Cultural Social Work: Local and Global*, Kee, L.H. et al, Eds. Palgrave Macmillan: South Yarra.

<sup>iii</sup> Andrade, C. 2014, “A Hawaiian Geography or a Geography of Hawai’i?” In *I Ulu I Ka ‘Aina Land*, Osorio, J, ed. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu.

<sup>iv</sup> Acido, J., 2014. PhD Dissertation, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Department of Education.

<sup>v</sup> Mataira, P, 2003 *Indigenous Entrepreneurship*, in *Entrepreneurship: New Perspectives in a Global Age*, edited by Anne De Bruin and Ann Dupuis, Ashgate Publishing Company: Burlington VT. pp. 169-185.

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- <sup>vi</sup> NZAMCI 2016, "Nga Wananga, The National Schools of Carving, Weaving and Canoe." Available from <<http://www.nzmaci.com/schools>>. [27 April 2016.]
- <sup>vii</sup> Jackson, P. (Ho'oulu 'Āina Program Coordinator) Personal Conversations, 2014-2016.
- <sup>viii</sup> Personal meeting with staff from the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, July 2011.
- <sup>ix</sup> Personal meeting with the founders of the Taos County Economic Development Corporation, July 2014.
- <sup>x</sup> The Hawaii Tourism Authority, 2016, "About HTA." Available from: <<http://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/about-hta/>> [26 April 2016.]
- <sup>xi</sup> Kualoa Ranch, 2016, "Kualoa Private Nature Reserve History." Available from: <<http://www.kualoa.com/about/history/>> [27 April 2016.]
- <sup>xii</sup> Waipa Foundation, 2016, "About." Available from: <<http://waipafoundation.org/about/>> [27 April 2016.]
- <sup>xiii</sup> Farm Tours North Kohala, 2016, "'Iole Ag Journey." Available from: <<http://www.farmtoursnorthkohala.com/calendar/iole/>>. [26 April 2016.]
- <sup>xiv</sup> Adams, C, 2016, "Captain and the Crayfish: Former All Black Taine Randell Chases Big Money in China," *Business Herald*. Available from: <[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=3&objectid=11618598](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=11618598)>. [18 April 2016.]
- <sup>xv</sup> Kamehameha Schools, 2016. "Endowment." Available from: <<http://www.ksbe.edu/endowment/>>. [26 April 2016.]
- <sup>xvi</sup> Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2016. "Land and Water Grantees," & "Economic Self-Sufficiency Grantees." <http://www.oha.org/aina/land-and-water-grants/> & <http://www.oha.org/economic-self-sufficiency/edh-grants/>. [26 April 2016.]
- <sup>xvii</sup> Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, 2016, "Loans and Grants." Available from: <<http://www.hawaiiancouncil.org/our-programs/native-cdfi-loan-fund/>> [27 April 2016.]
- <sup>xviii</sup> Weston, P. (Consuelo Foundation Program Officer), Personal Conversations November 2012, & Mahi, D. (Consuelo Foundation Program Officer), Personal Conversations, April 12 & 14, 2016.
- <sup>xix</sup> Aoki, A. (Islander Institute Founder), Personal Conversation, April 21, 2016.
- <sup>xx</sup> Kleisner, L. (HIR Founder), Personal Conversation, April 2015.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Kaplan, M, 2013, "Growing the Next Generation of Social Entrepreneurs and Start-Ups in New Zealand." Supported by the Axford Fellowship in Public Policy. Available from: <[http://www.fulbright.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/axford2013\\_kaplan.pdf](http://www.fulbright.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/axford2013_kaplan.pdf)> [18 April 2016.]
- <sup>xxii</sup> Lincoln, L, 2015, "State Officials: Majority of Homeless in Kaka'ako are COFA Migrants." Hawaii News Now. Available from: <<http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/29049224/state-officials-majority-of-kakaako-homeless-are-cofa-migrants>>. [27 April 2016.]
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Epp, M. (Former Director of the Pacific Island Health Officers Association), Personal Conversation, April 17, 2016.