

Addressing food justice and environmental justice through culturally grounded and land-based interventions

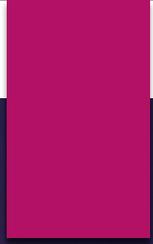
- ▶ Mike Spencer, Professor & Associate Dean Academic Affairs
- ▶ University of Washington
- ▶ School of Social Work
- ▶ Indigenous Wellness Research Institute

"This we know; the earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected." NÆ

—Chief Seattle (c. 1780 - Jun 7, 1866), Duwamish Chief

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Washington stands on the lands and waters of the Lushootseed-speaking Peoples; the Duwamish, Muckleshoot, Suquamish, Snohomish, Tulalip, Puyallup and other Coast Salish people. I also live on these lands and pay Real Rent. I am committed to creating space for all Indigenous/BIPOC communities through my mentorship, teaching, research, and service.



What is
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Hawaii?



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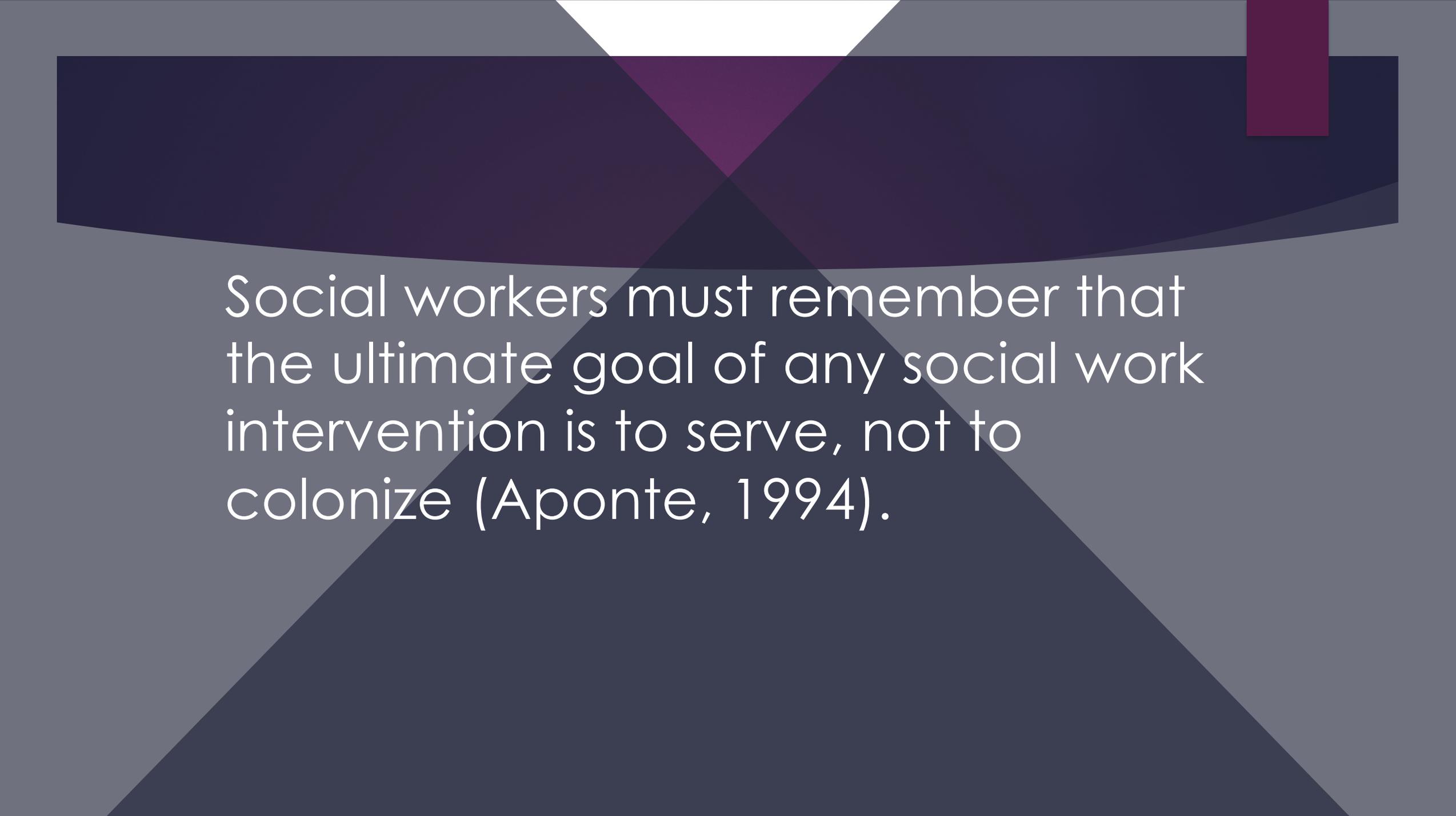


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Professional Social Work is a western invention, but often it is taught as if its methods of interventions are culturally neutral. Because of this oversight, not only do practitioners run the risk of implementing interventions that are ineffective due to a lack of cultural fit between the intervention and the targeted population, but they also miss opportunities to incorporate culturally grounded ways of helping (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2009).

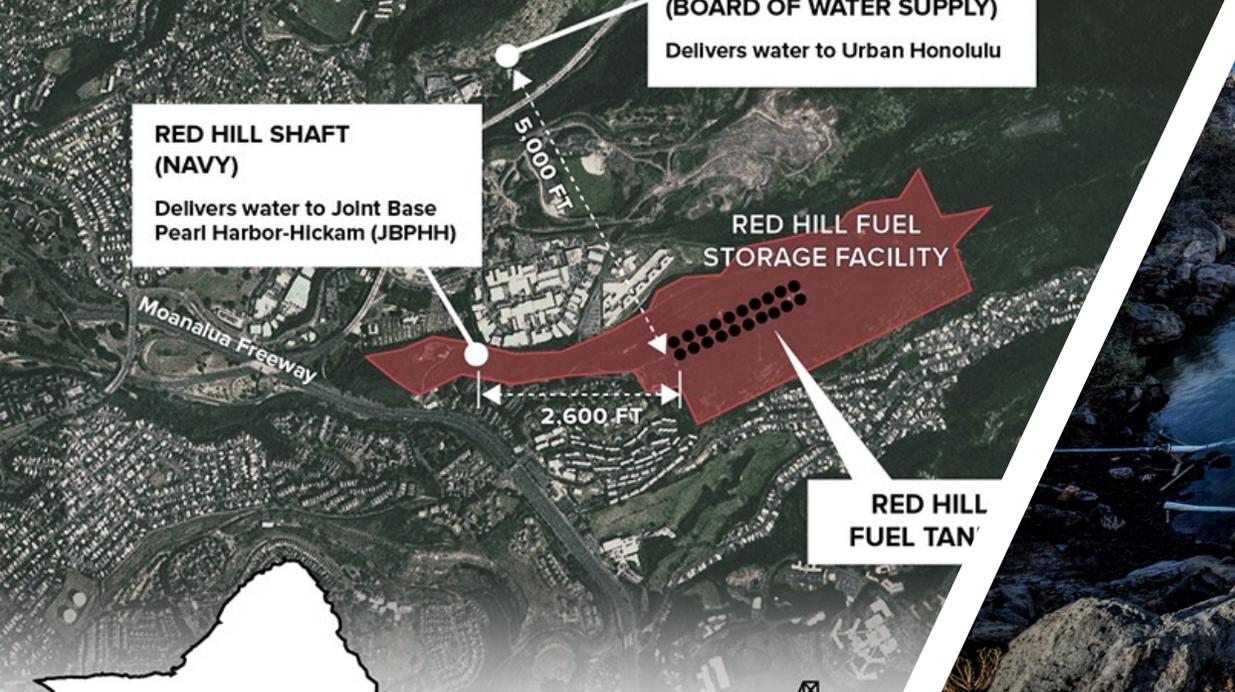


Social workers must remember that the ultimate goal of any social work intervention is to serve, not to colonize (Aponte, 1994).

Health and the Environment

- ▶ Science has found ample evidence that social environments and physical environments both impact health and wellbeing
- ▶ Evidence is also conclusive that the distribution of factors that impact health is not equally distributed
 - ▶ Environmental Justice, e.g., unequal distribution of toxins and air and water quality in poor and BIPOC communities
 - ▶ Neighborhoods and Communities, e.g., urban blight,, unequal schools, amenities, access to nature
 - ▶ Relocation, e.g., indigenous communities due to climate change
 - ▶ Contamination and pollution,
 - ▶ Exploitation, extraction, and destruction of resources, e.g., detonation of 23 nuclear weapons by the United States between 1946 and 1958 on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands





Link between the environment and health

- ▶ Growing evidence that understanding the link between the environment and health can promote wellbeing
- ▶ Land ('āina) based models of practice can promote wellbeing
 - ▶ Links to values of responsibility (mālama), justice (pono), and the interconnectedness between people and the environment
- ▶ Contact with the environment can promote health
 - ▶ Promote physical activity and happiness
- ▶ Thus, changing or enhancing people's perspectives on the interconnectedness between the environment and health may lead to increased action to promote environmental wellbeing, including environmental justice and climate change

Food Justice as an Environmental Justice Issue: Native Hawaiians

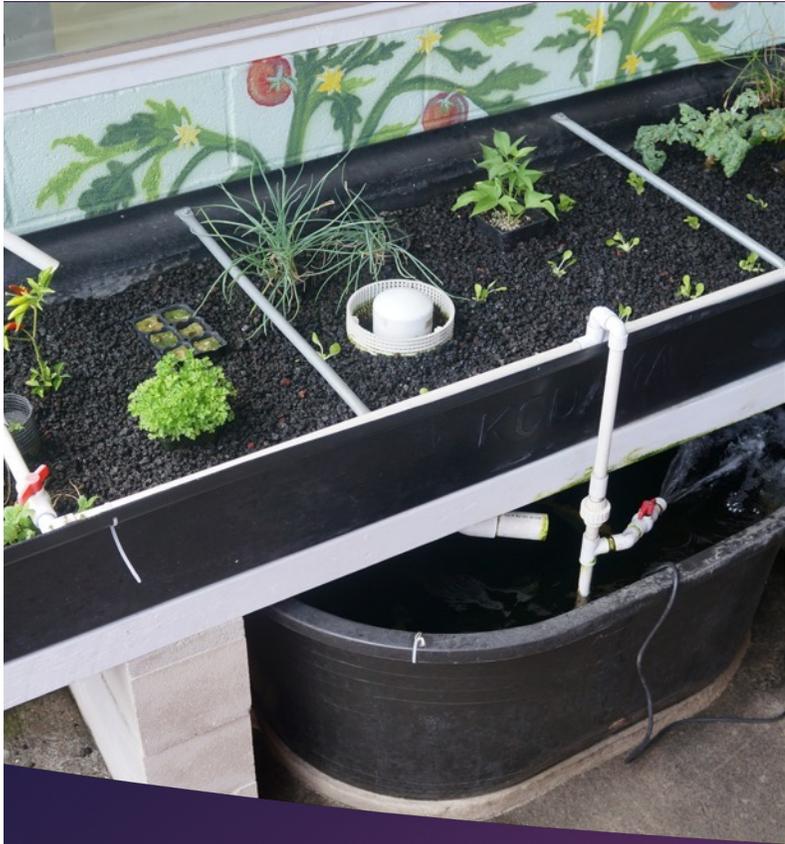
- ▶ Food Justice ensures the universal access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally-appropriate food for all, while advocating for the well-being and safety of those involved in the food production process
- ▶ Food Justice is closely intertwined with environmental justice and sustainability movements
- ▶ Native Hawaiians sustained the islands for 100 generations through their interconnectedness with their environment

Food Justice as an Environmental Justice Issue: Native Hawaiians

- ▶ Provided food for estimated 500,000 to 1 million inhabitants
- ▶ Colonization led to de-population and dispossession of land
- ▶ Water diversion from ancestral farms and commercialization of land
- ▶ Traditional foods less available, new diets introduced
- ▶ Concentrated poverty leads to instability in food and essentials
- ▶ Located predominantly in food deserts
- ▶ 80-90% of food in Hawaii is shipped today

Food Insecurity

- ▶ Food insecurity — a household-level condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food due to lack of money or other resources — affects millions of households in the United States (US).
- ▶ Food insecurity is a widely studied social determinant of health that has been associated with myriad health conditions, poorer management of chronic diseases, and numerous adverse health behaviors.
- ▶ Food insecurity among Native Hawaiians in Hawaii is 27% and up to 44% for Filipinos and other Pacific Islanders*
- ▶ 48% of Hawaii's families with children report food insecurity (2021)
- ▶ “People who are dependent upon or have strong links to land and water are often at high risk of food insecurity.” (Pinkle, 2022)



Promoting food justice and environmental justice through culturally grounded and land-based interventions

Culturally Grounded Research

- ▶ **Cultural sensitivity** is being aware that **cultural** differences and similarities between people exist without assigning them a value – positive or negative, better or worse, right or wrong.
- ▶ Pasick et al (1996) define **cultural tailoring** as “the development of interventions, training practices and materials to conform to specific characteristics” (p.145). Also, Eyberg (2005) defines cultural tailoring as “changes made in focus or delivery style of essential elements in an established treatment, based on the unique features of the individual case” (p. 199).

Culturally Grounded Research

- Centered on cultural practices, values, and norms
- Deconstructs and challenges stereotypical messages from the majority culture
- Connects individuals with their cultural roots and explores what the members have in common in terms of the past, the present, and their dreams for the future
- Help members to become aware of their identity in the context of their cultural background and its connection to their experience of oppression
- Resources from the culture can be used creatively and respectfully to support this effort

Land-based Research

- ▶ For indigenous communities, culturally-grounded research is centered on values, practices, and norms, e.g., relationship between people and the land, respect for the land, responsibility (mālama) for taking care of the land (‘āina)
- ▶ This can include reconnecting with our land, restoring our land and our practices and ceremonies
- ▶ Growing disconnection with land among indigenous people due to colonization
- ▶ Growing evidence that contact with nature has many benefits for health and wellbeing, including reduced stress, reduced diabetes, obesity, blood pressure, and mortality, improved life satisfaction, better sleep, and improved mental health

An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational, is shared with all creation, and therefore can not be owned or discovered. Indigenous research methods should reflect these beliefs and the obligations they imply. Shawn Wilson

Decolonizing practice

- ▶ Removal of the domination of non-indigenous forces, e.g., return of land, institutions, language, culture, values, bodies, minds, spirit
- ▶ Undoing of colonialism
- ▶ Removal of colonizers' ideas that made the colonized feel inferior
- ▶ Political process and vital internalization of the rejection of colonialist mindsets and "norms"

Kūkulu Kumuhana Wellness Framework

Ea—Self determination, having control over your life

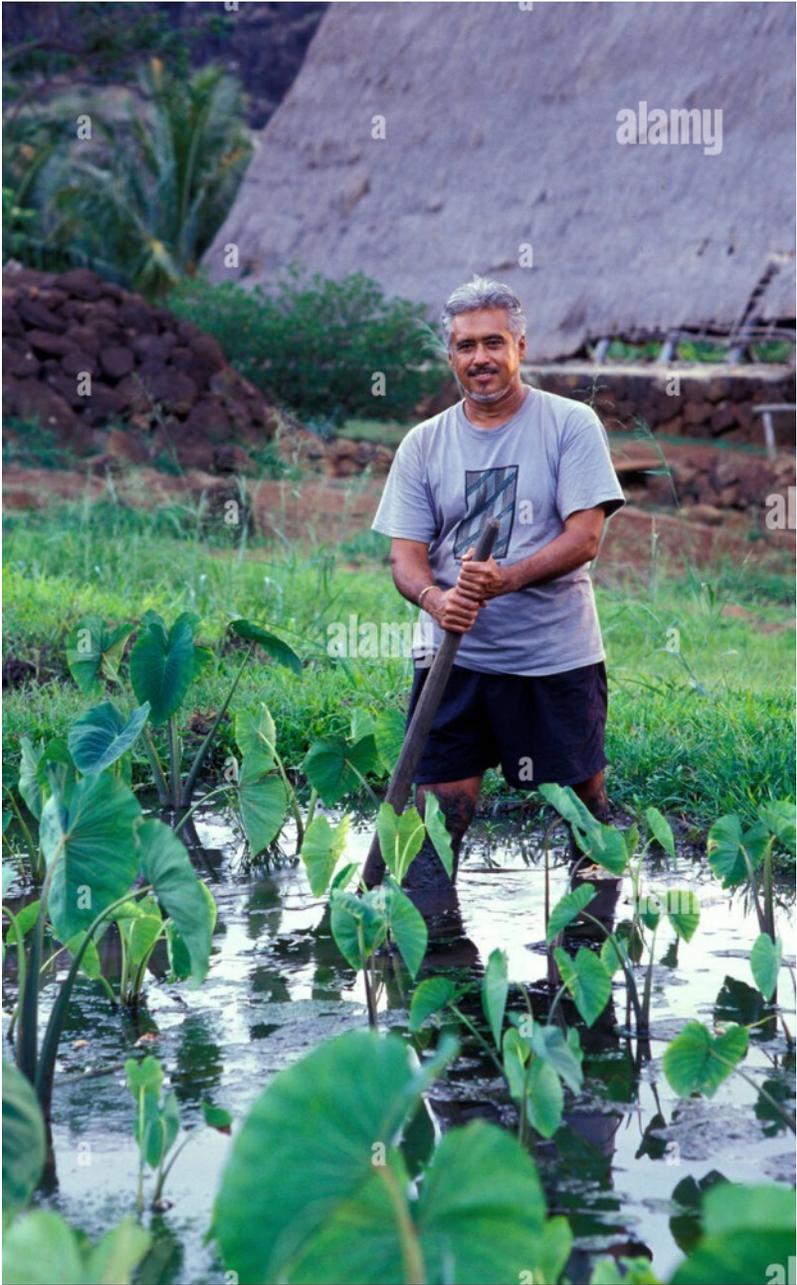
‘Āina Momona—Healthy lands, healthy people, life in balance with nature

Pilina—Quality relationships; giving support to one another

Waiwai—Shared wealth; seeing value in everyday things

‘Ōiwi—Cultural identity; knowing who you are and where you come from

Ke Akua Mana—Spirituality; belief in a higher power(s)



PĀHONU RESTORATION
QUARTERLY



LIMU PLANTING
MONTHLY



WAIMĀNALO
LIMU HUI



Promoting a healthy lifestyle through culture and land-based interventions

- ▶ Projects are tied to the concept of *mālama* or responsibility for taking care of the land, which in turns takes care of us.
- ▶ Promotes the value of *pono* or justice through restoration of land
- ▶ Reinforces connects between land and people, which can promote values of conservation and health
- ▶ Promotes physical activity and health in culturally-relevant ways
- ▶ Enhances civic engagement and community empowerment
- ▶ Promotes community attachment and social support which can improve emotional and mental health



M ini
A hupua'a for
L ifestyle
A nd
M ea'ai with
A quaponics



The MALAMA Crew



Jane Chung-Do, DrPH
Principal Investigator,
Public Health



Ilima Ho-Lastimososa, MSW, MOA
Community Investigator, Social
Work & Alternative Medicine



Phoebe Hwang, DrPH
Co-Investigator, Public Health



Ted Radovich, PhD
Co-Investigator, Sustainable
& Organic Agriculture



Kenneth Ho, MOSM
Kōkua, Hawaiian Education



Ikaika Rogerson, BA
Kōkua, Hawaiian Studies



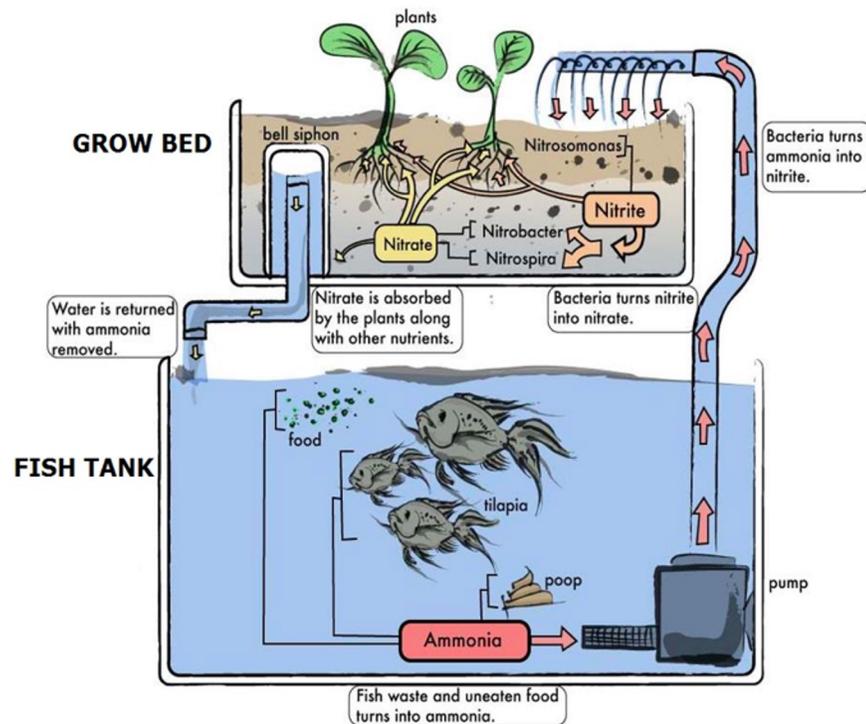
Keawe Kaholokula, PhD
Mentor, Native Hawaiian
Health



Mike Spencer, PhD
Mentor, Social Work

MALAMA Project: Aquaponics

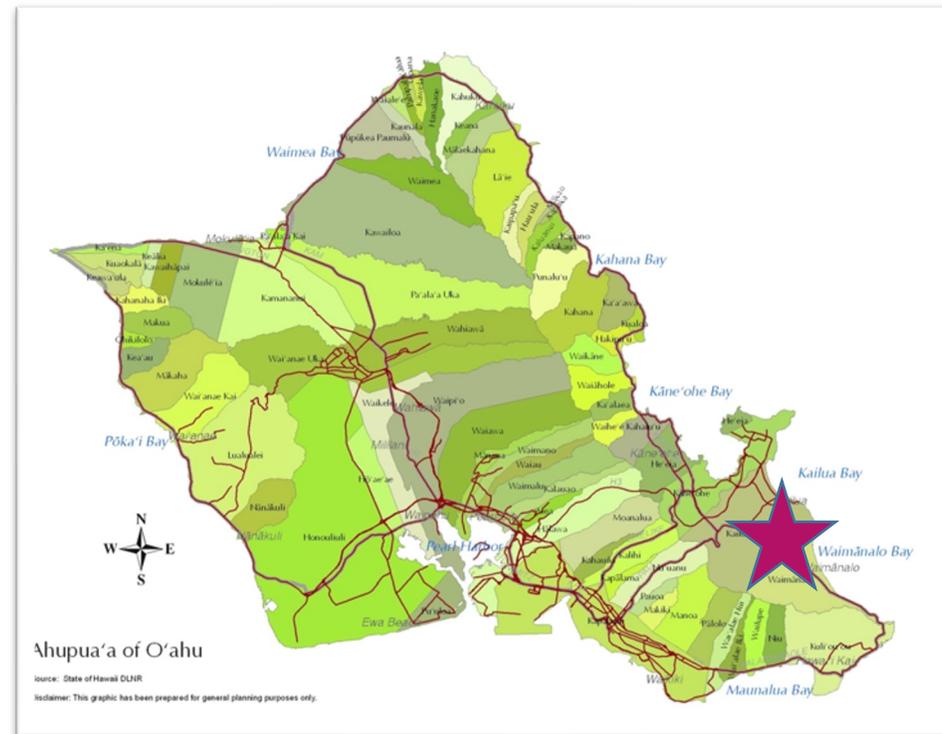
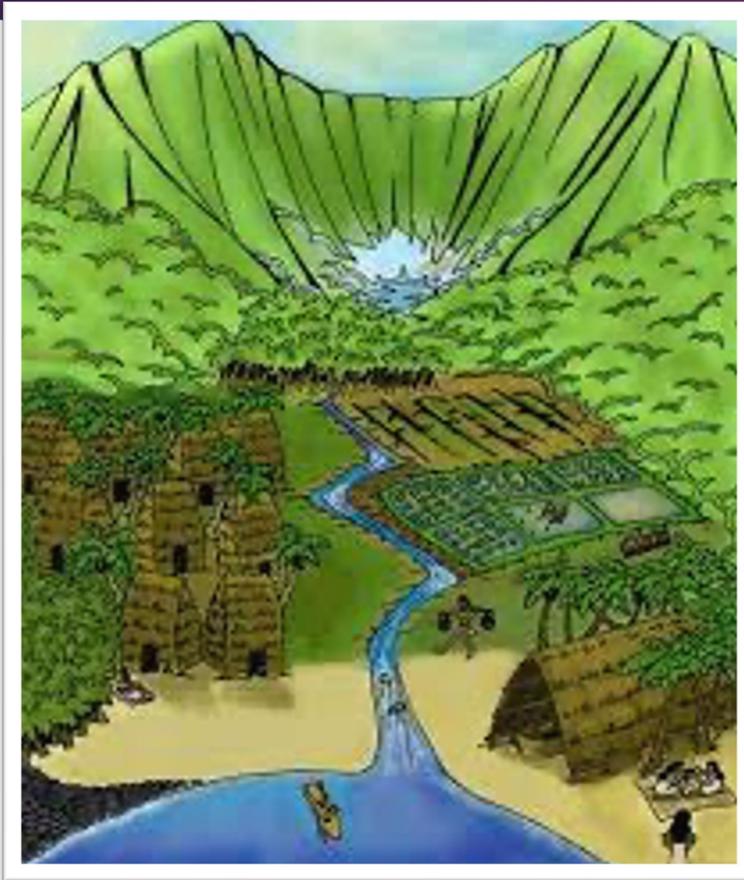
AQUAPONICS BASIC DIAGRAM



A combination of fish and plant production using aquaculture and hydroponics in one integrated system.

- Self-sustainability
 - Food sourcing
 - Food security
- Resource conservation
 - Water efficiency
- Organic food
 - Faster growth
- Proper sourcing
 - Vegetables & Fruit
 - Fish

The AHUPUA'a



Community Aquaponics Workshops

1. Baseline measure, Aquaponics Demo
2. Build out weekend
3. Aquaponics Technology & Maintenance
4. Lā'au Lapa'au and 'Ai pono
5. Checking in: cooking demo & talk story
6. Ho'ike
7. Reunion, post measures & focus group



















Promoting a healthy lifestyle through culture and land-based interventions

- ▶ Aquaponics promotes healthy eating (fruits and vegetables) as well as traditional foods, and fish
- ▶ Reduces food insecurity in food deserts by increasing access to fresh food
- ▶ Promotes familial support and attachment ('ohana)
- ▶ Promotes community empowerment and social support
- ▶ Promotes sustainability through ongoing food access as well as support for their aquaponic systems
- ▶ Promotes interconnection between land and people and promotes Native Hawaiian values of pono mea'ai (food justice) and la'au lapa'au (plant-based medicines, spirituality)

He ali'i ka 'āina; He kauā ke
kanaka.

The land is chief; People are its
servant. – Mary Kawena Pukui,
'Ōlelo No'eau No. 531

Ka na'auao o nā kūpuna ka lama
e ho'omālamalama i ke ala no
nā keiki.

The wisdom of the elders is the
torch that enlightens the path of
the children. – Gary
Kahaho'omalua Kanada (1998)



Mahalo!

‘A‘ohe hua o ka mai‘a i ka lā ho‘okahi.

No task is too big when done together by all.