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Puhi in the Tree and Other Stories: Unlocking the Metaphor in Native and Indigenous Hawaiian Storytelling

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Abstract

Human beings live and tell stories for many reasons, and it is a way to not only understand one another but to give a time and place to events and experiences. Therefore, a narrational approach within the context of this research offers a frame of reference and a way to reflect during the entire process of gathering data and writing. This study examines the importance of storytelling among Native (Kānaka 'Ōiwi) and Indigenous (Kānaka Maoli) women of Hawai'i and their interconnectedness to land and spirituality through accessing [k]new knowledge. The main focus of this article is to illustrate the resiliency of stories as told by the Kānaka women who are connected to a time and a place of traditional and ecological knowledge. Findings indicate that despite forced cultural and political changes generationally, these women's innate beliefs and interconnectedness to land and spirituality has begun to reshape as enduring patterns over time and space. This is evident by a resurgence in mo'olelo (storytelling), ho' oponopono (Hawaiian peacemaking process), revitalized methods of traditional land irrigation, cultivation, and sustainability programs as testimony. In ancient Hawai'i, both men and women equally participated in the activities of food production and cultivation, however, in contemporary Hawai'i, it is mostly the Native and Indigenous women who have mobilized to revitalize these traditional practices.

Keywords

Indigenous knowledge, relational, narrative, storytelling, kānaka 'ōiwi, kānaka maoli, resiliency, women

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Puhi in the Tree and Other Stories: Unlocking the Metaphor in Native and Indigenous Hawaiian Storytelling

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Human beings live and tell stories for many reasons, and it is a way to not only understand one another but to give a time and place to events and experiences. Therefore, a narrational approach within the context of this research offers a frame of reference and a way to reflect during the entire process of gathering data and writing. This study examines the importance of storytelling among Native (Kānaka ʻŌiwi) and Indigenous (Kānaka Maoli) women of Hawaiʻi and their interconnectedness to land and spirituality through accessing [k]new knowledge. The main focus of this article is to illustrate the resiliency of stories as told by the Kānaka women who are connected to a time and a place of traditional and ecological knowledge. Findings indicate that despite forced cultural and political changes generationally, these women's innate beliefs and interconnectedness to land and spirituality has begun to reshape as enduring patterns over time and space. This is evident by a resurgence in moʻolelo (storytelling), hoʻoponopono (Hawaiian peacemaking process), revitalized methods of traditional land irrigation, cultivation, and sustainability programs as testimony. In ancient Hawaiʻi, both men and women equally participated in the activities of food production and cultivation, however, in contemporary Hawaiʻi, it is mostly the Native and Indigenous women who have mobilized to revitalize these traditional practices.

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Understanding Kānaka Worldviews Through the Moʻolelo

Moʻolelo (story/oral traditions of storytelling) in ancient Hawaiʻi formed the foundation for Kānaka ʻŌiwi (Native Hawaiian) women to pass down Mele ko ʻihonua (cosmogonic genealogies), personal genealogical connections to the ʻāina (land that which feeds) and the birth of the Akua (gods; Oliveira, 2014). These aspects of moʻolelo are crucial to understand the kānaka worldviews, and how these stories directly linked the kānaka to their land and spirituality. Therefore, a moʻolelo carried important information as a way to maintain Native Hawaiian cultural heritage and knowledge systems that connected the past generations to the present. One of the ways cultural and ecological information was embedded in the moʻolelo was through metaphors that made sense in common, everyday life. A moʻolelo often began as a personal experience that highlighted one's connection to geography as a cultural place and context and one's relationship to a specific event. Women in these spaces played an important role in preserving the ancestral knowledge and cultural values as they were the first caretakers of the children traditionally and were thus children's first storytellers. Therefore, in telling a moʻolelo, the storyteller not only embedded rich cultural values, but she also embedded ecological details that deconstructed natural phenomena for people to understand through the power of observation (makawalu),

The power of makawalu enabled people to awaken (hō 'ala) their senses to take action to resolve issues surrounding natural phenomena while honoring nature. A mo'olelo therefore, was crucial in the preservation of ancestral knowledge while serving as a tool for honoring the land and spirituality that were integral for community survival. (Kealaulaokamamo Leota, November 1, 2018).

The mo'olelo of puhi (eels) illustrates this power of *makawalu*. This following story of *Puhi in the Tree* is an example of a personal mo'olelo, told to me by *Abbie Waiwaiole Havre*, a Kānaka Maoli woman, who begins her story by illustrating her special connection to a specific place (geography) and time (event):

When I was a very little girl, my grandma told me a mo'olelo (story), a story she heard from her great grandma, a story about the great tsunami and the floods of Waimea Valley. My 'ohana (family) are from Waimea Valley in the big island of Hawai'i. My great, great, great grandma saved her people, my ancestors in the ahupua'a (a division of land from the top of the hill to the sea) of Waimea from that great big tsunami and the floods in the late 1800s.

During those days, my great, great, great grandma (we got to know her as grandma Jos) was a young girl about seventeen or eighteen, and she would often go to the forest in the hills to fetch berries, get puhi (eels) from the kahawai (stream) and to be among tall sandalwood trees. Those days, there were many, many sandalwoods in the forest you know, and apparently, it always smelled so beautiful when you were among those trees, so she just loved being in the forest. Well, one day she went about doing her usual thing, picking berries, and looking to collect puhi, but she felt that something was not right. The kahawai looked so calm, and not a ripple, almost as if all the creatures from it had disappeared.

So, begins Grandma Jos's adventure, the story of Puhi, which we shall pick up later in this work. It is important to point out here, though, that stories such as *Puhi in the Tree* are full of personal and family history, coupled with metaphors and ecological lessons that represent a layer of varied intergenerational voices including that of the storyteller that energizes deep cultural meanings within a story (mo'olelo). To glean these layered voices, a narrative methodology is employed to help grasp meanings and lessons embedded in these stories as well as to see how messages are connected to a deeper cosmology that was integral for the survival of Native and Indigenous Hawaiians.

Voices as A Quilt

The use of a narrative methodology offers a different form of research presentation as compared to more traditional research methodologies. In the narrative inquiry, the personal story of participants is used as the center of the study to create a more holistic and socially embodied story (Glesne, 2016) which is an important factor to consider in the storytelling culture of Native and Indigenous communities. As defined by Susan Chase (2011), narrative, as a research methodology encompasses one's own and others' experiences to tell a story by making detailed connections to events and actions over a period of time (Chase, 2011). During this process, a researcher uses analytical strategies to construct meaning of these stories and to understand how participants link their experiences to create a whole from parts of these negotiated experiences and connections (Glesne, 2016; Riessman, 2005). Although the researcher hears the consciously told stories by a person, the researcher also has to look for

deeper stories and meanings that a participant might not be aware of during this storytelling (Bell, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This interpretive process provides the researcher access to the varied ways that individuals structure their experiences shared through stories and how these stories fit within larger socio-cultural frameworks.

One of the ways to analyze the stories is by way of the narrative inquiry process that takes a holistic view. A holistic analysis is where the *story* is represented in the narrative and segments of that text are interpreted with respect to other segments of the *story*, tracing connections across the various elements. In highlighting various elements of the story, the beginning of *puhi* in the present instance, the goal has been to understand how parts of the story's text connects to ancestral knowledge by the protagonist, *she felt that something was not right*, this *feeling of knowing* is what Hawaiians call *na'au* (innate knowing). These details inevitably tie present circumstances of the storyteller to the land that connects to the larger cultural and historical context of the community. As Catherine Kohler Riessman mentions in Bell (2003) cultural aspects are made visible through individual's story that merges and meshes with the greater quilt of "community of life stories" (p. 96) constituting reality in many ways and from layered voices for the selected audience.

In Native and Indigenous cultures this enmeshing of private constructions and language are especially necessary because the voices of the generations (epistemological agents), stories and cultural textures are embroidered into the story like stitches in a quilt where pieces of fabrics of varying colors, textures and patterns are held together to tell a story (Bell, 2003). The term, epistemology refers to a body of knowledge or what knowledge entails that is specific to a place and people, in this case, indigenous knowledge and of knowings (Meyer, 2008) whereas, epistemological agents refer to individuals, regardless of their identities, who carry forth beliefs and knowledge claims to maintain cultural norms and patterns (Elgin, 2013).

Conversations as an Important Step in Building Relationships

As a researcher, it was important to me that I maintained a conversational approach with storytellers that was dialogic and congruent to the Hawaiian cultural sense of communication to gather knowledge built upon Native and Indigenous relational traditions and epistemology. This dialogic, conversational method offers a way to gather knowledge of Indigenous linguistic and educative methodologies while honoring embedded Indigenous worldviews, rather than those projected by an outsider. The second author of this research paper, Joshua Hunter, played an important role in the design of the study, review of the data, manuscript review and editing, and providing important qualitative methodological information to enhance this body of work.

The dialogic conversational method allowed me to understand the stories at a deeper level because it allowed me to bond with the participant or the storyteller. This dynamic between the storyteller and me cemented the idea that Native and Indigenous stories are "relational at its core" (Kovach, 2010, p. 40; Meyer, 2008) The stories that I heard for this body of work, have a beginning, middle and an end, but that end is often not a completion of the story, but a connection to another story, with each part forming important lessons embedded within the holistic knowledge systems, making the stories cyclical in nature and relationally bound.

When the conversational approach is used within Hawaiian Native and Indigenous frameworks, I found that it invoked several distinct characteristics important to understanding the significance of the stories told by the storyteller. Margaret Kovach (2010) points out why and how this method fosters distinctive characteristics. For example, (a) a conversational method is linked to a particular knowledge base and situated within an indigenous paradigm, (b) it is relational and purposeful involving a decolonizing aim, (c) it involves a particular place,

(d) it involves an informality and flexibility, and finally, d) it is collaborative, dialogic and reflexive. These points are especially relevant in the Hawaiian context because the “*Hawaiian culture is based on relationship and reciprocity*” (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018). This concept of relationship and reciprocity is exemplified in the Hawaiian word, ‘Ohana (family). The “O” of the word means eternal and “Ha” means breath, a connection to the past, present and future, and “Na” means relationship, thus when the words *Ha* and *Na* are combined, they come together to mean *relationship*; a relationship that is eternal. These innate cultural characteristics form an important part of Hawaiian people’s genealogies because it takes the position that the *relationship* is first and that this relating comes before a *transaction*, be it an interview, dialog or a collaboration. Therefore, knowing these distinctive characteristics and having built relationships before my interviews, grounded me when I engaged in a dialog with my participants. Put another way, after the initial greetings and exchanging of personal stories, I was *allowed to draw closer* to their stories through my inquiring questions because of my established relationship with them.

My findings indicated that explanations of cause and effect of natural phenomena are closely related to people’s response to and relationship with a specific phenomenon. Subsequently, how to respond to a specific phenomenon is taught by ancestral lessons that are embedded in the mo‘olelo in the form of metaphors that are culturally, environmentally and spiritually interconnected. As elders (kūpunas) gather together as storytellers, their primary objective is to make sure that the lessons are passed down in a way that understanding is felt in the *piko* (bellybutton) which then guides the person or people to act with integrity. Therefore, being in the place and experiencing the phenomenon is an important aspect of a successful response gained through the lessons of the kūpunas.

As one can see, a conversational and relational approach can bring together a host of knowledge constructed by communities rather than by a single individual. This is an important factor to take into consideration when listening and being involved in the storytelling process because in Native and Indigenous communities, knowledge is constructed by epistemological agents as a part of such a community akin to Nelson (1993), who states (as cited in Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001) “such communities are epistemologically prior to individuals, who know” (p. 58). In their work, Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001) posit Native and Indigenous epistemology to mean a “cultural group’s ways of thinking and of creating, reformulating, and theorizing about knowledge via traditional discourses and media of communication, anchoring the truth of the discourse in culture” (p. 58). In pre-colonial Hawai‘i, Native and Indigenous women held powerful positions within their culture in many areas. One such position was their responsibility (kuleana) to maintain cultural stories that contained vast knowledge systems they shared via storytelling (Ha‘i Mo‘olelo). These stories (mo‘olelo) provided the people with a strong sense of cultural identity and love for the land while preserving ancestral knowledge.

Accordingly, by developing *piko* to *feel* the culture via women’s storytelling through a conversational approach was an important factor for me and my research. It is from within this cultural lens that I will show how Native and Indigenous stories are crucial to understanding the power behind the voices of the women, whose resiliency has survived millennia against many colonizing and assimilationist forces. This survival was due to the fact that in the ancient times, women represented the physical pilina (connection) between the past and the future, of the ancestors and of pō (night) and ao (day). In Hawaiian culture, according to the creation story of Kumulipo, women were sacred as they were believed to be the descendants of the first human woman, La‘i la‘i from whose womb sprang all chiefs. Therefore, women were equated to the pū‘ao (lit shell of light) which was the word for womb. This prominence established women as powerful allies of the chiefs’ in their courts and because of this position, they often advised and guided the ali‘i‘ai‘āina (ruling chief) (Ho‘omanawanui, 2010, Linnekin, 1990). It is then no wonder that some of these societies managed to preserve their cultural and spiritual

identities in the face of remarkable cultural changes even when they were affected by foreign influences multilaterally.

Dr. Manulani Aluli-Meyer, a world scholar-practitioner of Native Hawaiian and Indigenous epistemology has written widely about the richness of Hawaiian culture, lifestyle, social responsibility and maui ola (wellness) from a Hawaiian worldview. Her use of *Indigenous* as a synonym for *enduring patterns* in the text, *The Context within: My Journey into Research*, (2013) could be an explanation for such preservation of deep-rooted cultural and spiritual identities. Meyer uses Indigenous as a synonym for enduring patterns with regards to “philosophy” (p. 251) because it “helps to bring forth (k)new ideas” (p. 251) that made sense because of the ecology of those times and places. And, perhaps by investigating stories from Native and Indigenous Hawaiian women we can gain access to these enduring patterns. I first came to know of Dr. Manulani Aluli-Meyer and her work while I was a graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in 2010. My Masters thesis work in Indigenous Hawaiian girls’ education gave me an opportunity to connect with her and explore many of her written work and as well as listen to her many lectures and have one-on-one conversations about Indigenous education, especially among girls and women in the Hawaiian Islands. At that time, Dr. Meyer was an Associate Professor at the University of Hilo, Hawai‘i. Manulani, as she prefers me to call her, is now a professor and Konohiki for Kūlana o Kapolei (A Hawaiian Place of Learning at the University of Hawai‘i-West O‘ahu). Her main focus is experiential learning based on wilderness education and a strong figure behind the Hawaiian Charter School Movement and Food Security in the Hawaiian Islands.

For my larger study, I spoke with five women to explore the importance of storytelling among Native (Kānaka Ōiwi) and Indigenous (Kānaka Maoli) women of Hawai‘i. And for this particular study, I focused on one particular story: A story of puhi. It is important to note, that all these stories offered an opportunity to examine how women’s interconnectedness to land and spirituality anchored indigenous knowledge systems which were an important aspect in maintaining the enduring patterns that Aluli-Meyer alludes to in her text *The Context within: My Journey into Research*, (2013). Many of the stories told by women were enriched and made relevant by their use of metaphors that were important in fostering awareness of embedded Indigenous knowledge systems. These metaphors in these stories often combined common day practices, such as planting and fire-making to make the stories relatable to everyday life. By selecting how to share stories, what to tell, and linking bits of their personal experiences, the storyteller is able to disseminate greater information from localized knowledge systems. This growing awareness aids in structuring the flow of experiences for people to understand spirituality and the deep-rooted cultural identities of their lives (Wertz, 2011).

The Role of Kūpunas and Women

In looking at the role of elders (kūpunas) and women in particular in ancient Hawai‘i, it is important to realize that they had a special place and role within their kuleana to the community. Information about this role of the elders was gathered from elders from various communities in the Island of O‘ahu, local museums and their archives, such as the Bishop Museum and a Konohiki (an elder in charge of a large land area). Information was then correlated with the stories of the participants. The primary kuleana of the elders had to do with rearing children of the entire community as well as their own. Women provided the initial contact for children and bestowed upon the children the knowledge of the land, culture and spirituality through ‘oli (chants), mele (songs), hula (dances), and storytelling (mo‘olelo) (Handy & Pukui, 1977). In fact, the relationship between the mother and child was held in high esteem in early Native Hawaiian culture. It is said that the “first expression of what the Hawaiians termed *aloha* (love) was between mother and child” (Handy & Pukui, 1977, p. 165).

Moreover, the relationship between grandparents and the child was also important, as they were the elders (kūpunas) who held the ancestral knowledge that was passed down in the form of storytelling (Ha'i Mo 'olelo). This is because, early Hawai'i maintained an oral tradition as a basis for passing down this knowledge base and other cultural histories. One of my participants, Sophia Carba explained the traditional role of elders and women in the following way,

Traditionally, elders and women had specific kuleana often tied to these ancestral dimensions of spirituality. An important aspect of this kuleana for women was to teach the female children of their own and that of the community's, because raising a child was everyone's kuleana; male children however, from about age seven were the responsibility of men in the educational sphere specific 'oli. (Sophia Carba, June 2017)

An 'oli was also an important aspect in storytelling. These were embedded in mo'olelo by the kūpunas and women for easy transference of information, and for the delivery of important messages. The 'oli, reflected greetings, used as a method to gain permission to enter or to exit a household or to announce events such as, births, deaths, to convey creation stories, to forgive, to tell stories of wars & warriors, and to record genealogies. On formal occasions, an 'oli would render a formal genealogy mo'okūauhau for a person presented to a host or an ali'i if requested (Camvel, 2012). These chants often threaded family associations and distinct attributes of the flora, fauna, and the land, a coupling of cultural and ecological histories. Older siblings were required to know the entire lay of the land that was specific to their own ancestors; "from the mountain ridge to the valley floors, streams, the gulches, the levels of forest and canopies, the rain, the mist, the clouds, the wind" (Camvel, 2012, p. 56) as a way of passing on the lineage and ancestral knowledge. Some of the chants spoke to the birth and the beauty of the island of Hawai'i. In speaking with my participants, I understood the central role Kūpunas and women served as gatekeepers of these important knowledge systems in the Hawaiian Native and Indigenous culture as a way to preserve and to continue their lineage for generations to come.

How I Show Up for This Research: I Have Two Homes

As the principal researcher in this study, I am Renuka Mahari de Silva, a Sinhala-Canadian settler on unceded Anishinabek (ᐱᑦᑭᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ), Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), and Huron-Wendat territory. I recognize the resilience of the First Nations Peoples of the Turtle Island. I am deeply grateful for the opportunities that were presented to me by the great land of kanata and extended my learnings to include the present academic journey that is unfolding for me. I am grateful for my home grounds that I call Barrie, Ontario of Canada, my home.

And, I am a Sinhala-Canadian who is a guest on the Polynesian land of O'ahu, Hawai'i. I recognize the Hawaiian's (kānaka 'ōiwi, kānaka maoli, and Hawai'i maoli) 'āina aloha (love of the land) and I am deeply grateful for resilience of the Kupunas (elders and teachers) in particular to Dr. Manulani Aluli-Meyer, whom I consider to be my kupuna and the guiding light in the Hawaiian ways of knowing and welcoming me to learn from the Peoples of Hawai'i and return the aloha back to the land that I also call my home and continue with aina aloha practices and be a voice for and of the 'āina. It is with this deep gratitude and aloha that I move forward to listen to the stories of 'āina aloha and learn.

My lineage is embedded with both sides of colonization. My ancestors King Vijaya from Bengal with his initial army of five-hundred colonized Sri Lanka (Tambapanni) in 543 B.C. marginalizing vaddas (Indigenous peoples of Sri Lanka). Since then, Sri Lanka has undergone many transformations in social, cultural, political, and economic spheres with each colonizing forces from Indian kings in late 10th and 11th centuries followed by the deadlier

forces beginning in the early 17th century by the Portuguese, Dutch, Spaniards and the British. The British rule ended in 1948, but their lasting legacy of *divide and conquer* concept left the nation's social and cultural fabric ripped and torn. As a result, Sri Lanka has endured several civil wars during mid to late 20th century. Healing from a violent past is always an arduous journey and unsettling at best.

I bring my past to bear with this research because personal affiliations and journeys influence how we relate and connect with our environments and the work we do. In my case, a vast number of world travels and seeing and experiencing dichotomous lifestyles have naturally made me deeply reflect, adjust, adapt and at times reject beliefs and assumptions that did not fit my inner ever-adjusting compass. I have learned the importance of agency and personal efficacy to determine next steps in my life through these very experiences and observations. *Agency* is the ability to act on behalf of what one values and have reason to value (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007). On an on-going basis, I am also exposed to several varying styles of learning and knowledge acquisitions. These experiences are enriching my point of references to reflect upon my actions and how they impact my learning outcomes and how I relate to my fellow human beings. These learning outcomes are paving the way to build new experiences that can ultimately create a causeway to higher grounds of learning that I hope will continually make sense to me.

To this research, I bring the sensitivity as much as one could, however, my lenses may never be devoid of certain biases and limitations. A possible bias or a limitation may be that I feel that I am a part of the Hawaiian social and cultural (to some extent) fabric, and I empathize with Native and Indigenous women and their plight. However, being prepared to listen and engage in conversation to feel and understand from the point of intersubjectivity, I feel is a first step in making a connection with the participant at a deeper level. Intersubjectivity is a way to understand the colonial power structure of discriminations that were codified as, “‘racial,’ ‘ethnic,’ ‘anthropological,’ or ‘national,’ according to the times, agents and populations involved” (Quijano, 2007, p. 168). Intersubjectivity relies on the researcher to pull away the lenses and the veils of marginalization to indigenize the stories and knowledge systems. This requires the researcher to approach her design from the place from where the research is based—in my case, O`ahu.

Narrative Research and Storytelling

There are many stories told in the narrative tradition about disruptions of cultures, colonization, and its social, political and economic effects upon populations. Furthermore, there has been a “contemporary fascination with stories” (Polletta, Chen, Gardner, & Motes, 2011, p. 110) where social scientists seem eager to “capture the local and textured character of experience against the simplifying abstractions of behaviorist theorizing” (Polletta et al., 2011, p. 110). Bamberg, however, does not see storytelling as a means to an end, searching for the *who* rather than the *what* of the story (Bamberg, 2007). Bamberg argues that there are many layers to a story and that researchers must explore all layers before assigning specific meanings. He suggests that it is important to invoke, inflect and rework the identities within the story and the storytelling to create a synergy to build boundaries that are less sharp (Bamberg, 2007). When we use narrative inquiry in qualitative research, we are able to adopt experiences and views as a phenomenon under study. These adoptions play an important aspect in qualitative research (Clandinin, 2006; Pinnegar & Daynes 2007). This study is situated in the interrelatedness of stories of the participants and their relationship to the researcher allowing for self-reflection. The inquiry offers the researcher to encapsulate participants' social imaginations, feelings, and time (Michell & Egudo, 2003) that allows for the development and expansion of different viewpoints and interpretations of gathered data. An example of this

would be an ‘oli embedded story where the information flows not only through the chant and the story, but also through the emotions of the storyteller that renews and reinvigorates the information from her perspective inviting the audience into a dialog.

In narrative research, the interaction between the participant and the researcher is important as it allows the researcher to see a story as a version of life at a particular moment of experience for the storyteller. However, a unique aspect to my research dwells in the fact that I am interested in not only listening to all women’s stories but further, participate in a dialog when appropriate. It is especially important to note that having the support of Konohiki - Kūlana o Kapolei (*Elder in charge of Kapolei*), Dr. Manulani Aluli-Meyer and community elder, Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan, opened pathways for me to meet and enter into conversation with many Kānaka (*Native Hawaiian*) wahine (*women*) participants. This support allowed me a pathway to bridge our unique backgrounds together to come to a space of reciprocity. In other words, I was both the giver and receiver of information as well as the participants being the giver and receiver of information because we each took turns being a listener and a learner. It is also important to mention that I never interviewed anyone without first getting an opportunity to speak and spend time with them. This is because Hawaiian worldviews are built on relationships and reciprocity. Therefore, no interview was immediate. This process offered a unique position from which I interviewed. It allowed me to access participants’ life experiences from a standpoint of [k]new knowledge, a term coined by Manulani Aluli-Meyer to engage in a process of storying and restorying. It is this unique composite portrait of collaborative access to participants’ life experiences of storytelling and the process of restorying that will set my work apart from other works in similar fields. This process is done through a reflexive, participatory and aesthetic process that enables the researcher to glean and extract emerging themes from the presented data to restory so that it can appeal to the readership’s (authors, researchers, educators or social scientists) understanding and imagination (Kim, 2006; Leavy, 2015). The concept of *restory* refers to individual experiences of the storyteller as well as that individual’s interaction with others in creating the flow of the *story* in a way it makes sense to the storyteller and her audience when delivering the story (Foote, 2015; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). And, importantly for my research goals of developing relationships with these women, all of this resonates with Native and Indigenous Hawaiian ways of knowing and relating.

Storytelling (Ha’i Mo ‘olelo) in the Hawaiian Culture

Ha’i Mo ‘olelo played an important role in Hawaiian culture. It provided a strong sense of cultural identity that linked people to their land. Mo ‘olelo embodied various values of the Hawaiian culture that had developed and evolved over generations of experiences of their ancestors. The term *mo ‘olelo* is composed of two words. According to Puki and Elbert (1986), as quoted by Lipe (2016) the first “mo’o is translated as “succession, series, especially a genealogical line, lineage”” (Puki & Elbert, 1986, p. 253; Lipe, 2016, p. 53). And the second word, “ōlelo translates into English as “language, speech, word, statement, utterance; to speak, say, converse”” (Puki & Elbert, 1986, p. 253; Lipe, 2016, p. 53). Hence, the meaning of *mo ‘olelo* extended to mean that in “speech there is life and in speech there is death” (Lipe, 2016, p. 53). In other words, speech carries tremendous power to ignite truth or to destroy it. This is because until the mid 1800s Hawaiian language was solely an oral language, therefore, there was much emphasis behind “ōlelo. According to Lipe (2016) ōlelo emphasized power because of the following:

Ōlelo was the livelihood of the Hawaiian people-our entire knowledge system- depended on the continuity of mo ‘olelo as spoken and taught to the next

generation. Therefore, I grew up learning that not only that mo‘olelo in its many forms is important but also that it is essential we share those mo‘olelo out loud. I learned that it is critical to listen to mo‘olelo as they are told, to share mo‘olelo with others, and to use those mo‘olelo to learn, teach, connect and make sense of the world. (p. 54)

Storytelling reinforced love for the land, relationships and the family ties to a place and time (Kikiloi & Graves, 2010, p. 75). Additionally, the storyteller’s kuleana to Kanaka ‘Ōiwi was to preserve the knowledge by passing on the information through stories helping to transform geographical spaces into cultural places. In these spaces, women were held in high regard for their place in storytelling and their deep connection to the land. In fact, women in ancient Hawai‘i, were compared to the ‘ā‘ali‘i, a blooming plant that can withstand strong winds. According to Pukui (1983), the strength of women is recorded this way; “He ‘a‘ali‘i kūmakani mai au, ‘a‘ohe makani nāna e kūla‘i” (I am the wind withstanding a‘ali‘i. No wind can topple me over; p. 60). In the Hawaiian tradition, a‘ali‘i has been used as a metaphor in storytelling to model “strength, resiliency, and flexibility because it can survive challenging environments and elemental forces and bloom to become a beautiful and useful resource” (Lipe, Kanī‘aupi‘o-Crozier, & Hind, 2016, pp. 57-58; Nakoa & Wright, 2015).

Methods

A General Overview

The current research broadly entails people and lived experiences from a kānaka (Native Hawaiian) perspective, and how their lives are intertwined with their environments through stories and storytelling. Indigenous knowledge has come to be known as a valuable knowledge system that is “transcultural (or intercultural) and interdisciplinary source of knowledge” (Battiste, 2002, p. 7) because traditional knowledge is universal knowledge that is expressed in the local (Meyer, 2001). These knowledge systems play an important role in understanding people’s relationship with the land and how that is crucial to the success of many of the revitalization projects that are happening in the Hawaiian Islands.

According to Sharan Merriam’s (1998) description, qualitative research is the most appropriate way of “understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world” (p. 6). Qualitative methods allow for complexity and richness that questionnaire surveys are incapable of providing to the researcher. Human beings live and tell stories for many reasons, and it is a way to understand one another and to give a time and place to stories. Use of a narrative allows people to shape their daily lives and of others as to who they are and create frames of references to make meaning of their lives through constructions and interpretations. Therefore, a narrative is a way of knowing and thinking about personal experiences as a *story* (Clandinin, 2006). Hence, to use a “narrative inquiry in qualitative research is to adopt a particular view of experience as a phenomenon under study” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 46). Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) note that there are four converging phenomena or turns: a way of thinking from one way to another within the narrative inquiry. These turns vary in speed depending upon the experience of the researcher and their experience with doing research. These four broad themes include the following: The relationship of the researched and the researcher, the move from number to words as data, a shift from the general to the particular, and the emergence of new epistemologies or ways of knowing. Hence, for narrative inquirers, both the humans and the stories are “continuously visible” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 7) during the study. The inquiry offers “the ability to capture the social representation processes such as feelings, images, and time” (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003, p. 5) that allows for

the development and expansion of different viewpoints and interpretations of gathered data (Mitchell & Egudo 2003).

My field methods are not unlike those of most anthropological ethnographies in which the researcher aims to gain an insider's view of the culture all the while referencing participants' experiences to her own to understand differing points of view. Since I had an opportunity to build relationships prior to the actual interview, the process of gathering information became quite fluid. This interaction between participants and the researcher is important as it allows the researcher to see a story as a version of life at a particular moment of the storyteller. However, a unique aspect to my research was the fact that I listened to all women's stories to "collaboratively access participants' life experiences and engage in a process of storying and restorying" to reveal "multidimensional meanings and present an authentic and compelling rendering of data" (Leavy, 2015, p. 27). This process was done through a reflexive, participatory and aesthetic process that enabled me to glean and extract emerging themes from the presented data to restory so that the findings can be relevant and may be meaningful to the readership's (authors, researchers, educators, or social scientists) understanding and imagination as indicated by Leavy (2015) and Kim (2006). Most of all, the work's relevance to indigenous communities. An important point to remember is that narrative inquiry can be used in various ways because it deals with human experiences. Moreover, these experiences can also be conceptualized in many ways. Most importantly, a narrative approach can reach out to:

Under-represented stories as well as viewing all stories as social practices amidst others (in relationship or tension with them, not inherently better or worse) that are equally observable, analyzable and researcher-researched accountable. Small stories in this respect can enable the shift from the precious lived to the messier business of living and telling. (Bamberg, 2007, p. 152)

Hence, listening to my participants' stories was central to this intensified understanding of constructive dialog between narrative inquiry and narrative analysis; especially around issues of identity. These issues of identity of the storyteller and their stories are an important part in this body of work as it contextualizes time and space in which the stories are told.

Specific Methodologies Within Study

This research design is based on the qualitative method that includes narrative, and 'ōiwi methodologies with an epistemological approach. The term epistemology is defined as the knowledge contained within the social relations of knowledge production. It has been a term used by indigenous researchers to express indigenous worldviews or philosophy (Ermine et al., 1995; Meyer, 2001; Wilson, 2008). Cobern (1996) quotes Kearney in saying that a worldview is "culturally organized macrothought: those dynamically inter-related basic assumptions [i.e., presuppositions] of a people that determine much of their behavior and decision making, as well as organizing much of their body of symbolic creations...and ethnophilosophy" (p. 584). In other words, worldviews refer to what a majority of the people within a certain culture believe and behave according to an agreed-upon set of assumptions. Therefore, it is quite possible that within a certain worldview, other micro worldviews to exist, but it is usually the macro worldviews that seem to be used as identity markers of a particular culture.

Within this research, there are two other specific terms that embody this work, and they are paradigm and ontology. Native and Indigenous research is emergent within the western qualitative research, so it is important to state what is meant by the claim that it is important to

look from an indigenize perspective to approach methodologies to understand paradigmatic approach. Within a paradigmatic approach to research, the paradigm influences the choice of methods (i.e., why a particular method is chosen), how those methods are employed (i.e., how data is gathered), and how the data will be analyzed and interpreted (Kovach, 2005). As Neuman (2006) reminds, a paradigm is a basic orientation to theory and thus impacts method. Within this approach, significant attention is paid to assumptions about knowledge. Within this approach to research, it is expected that the philosophical orientation of the research is informed by the methodological framework to show internal consistency. In other words, my research must make sense from a k̄anaka knowledge perspective. Moreover, the second specific term of ontology refers to the organizational language that gives form and structure to help define knowledge assumptions (Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2006). Current research direction is based on the place of the origin of stories and of knowledge systems which is O‘ahu, Hawaii. This research also incorporates intersubjectivity and feminist theory as additional theoretical lenses for gathering and interpreting data and making meaning of participant stories to indigenize and analyze a k̄anaka culture with relation to colonization and its aftermath.

Geographical location of research. The physical location of the research was the Island of O‘ahu. However, within O‘ahu, I traveled to several locations to interview my participants which added an interesting dimension to my work. This is because different locations experienced historical events differently and their stories reflected those differences. The eight main locations where I conducted the interviews were Kahana Bay (northeast), Waiāhole Valley (east), Waimānalo (southeast), Kāne‘ohe (southeast), Nu‘uanu Valley (southeast), Wai‘anae Valley (west), Kapolei (southwest), and Honolulu (south). These are also locations where my participants have lived for generations; therefore, they were very familiar with the area, and the local culture that contained rich histories in their mo‘olelo (*narratives*). Therefore, when I interviewed, the k̄upuna (*ancestral knowings*) that were brought forward by my participants were very specific to that area of the space contained within the general location of the place. I mention this specifically because, in ancient Hawai‘i, the Islands were systematically divided by the ruling chiefs into ahupua‘a (*land divisions from the hills to the sea*) for governing purposes. These ahupua‘a were often very close to each other, but they were separated by a specific ruling ali‘i (*chief*) as well as the physical land markers of the ahupua‘a. Therefore, the stories within each ahupua‘a reflected a K̄anaka worldview that related to experiences from that place of existence. Hence, there were many stories I listened to that had the same or similar message, but the story’s trajectory and its relationship to the k̄anaka changed according to the storyteller, her k̄upuna, physical landscape, and her audience. However, when it came to specific creation stories such as the birth of the Islands (Papa and Wākea), the main storyline remains unchanged; for example, the creation chant of the Kumulipo, mele ko‘ihonua (*Hawaiian creation chant*). This story is well explained in one of the following chapters.

Participants and selection. The selection of the participants was based on my ongoing research interest focus which has always been women and their positionality in various spaces around the world. Therefore, for this research, I specifically interviewed women. Their ages ranged between twenty-five and seventy. For my study, a wide range in age groups of women was intentional and was established purposefully, because the k̄upuna (*in this case, elders*) who are generally sixty years and above are held in high esteem and are honored with passing down the knowledge to their younger generations through mo‘olelo (*stories*), hula (*dance*), mele (*song*), and ‘oli (*chant*). The k̄upuna access their knowledge from their family and community k̄upuna, so I am privileged with getting insights from about one hundred and fifty years or more of knowledge systems that have been passed-down from these elders (the story of puhi and limu in subsequent chapters are cases in point). On the other hand, the mid-range to early thirties age group showed how perhaps these same knowledge systems and stories have

changed or reinterpreted because, as Meyer (2003) states culture is multidimensional, and that it expresses both present and future designs. For example, a system such as knowledge, is developed over a specific time in a location, and this knowledge always changes according to knowledge holders who are shaped by space and time because they are open to historic influences to become current and resilient.

Data collection & ethics and standards. This study gained IRB approval from the IRB Committee of the University of North Dakota on June 5, 2017. All willing participants were accommodated with a set of semi-structured interview questions and an *Informed Consent Form* to sign. The interview questions strictly pertained to storytelling and the health and well-being of the Hawaiian people, and the interviewees trajectory within that scope under current circumstances. For instance, it is quite possible that a participant may have changed their viewpoints over the course of time, but this was not the focus of my interviews. The *Informed Consent Form* was given twenty-four hours to forty-eight hours prior to the interview, recording, and videotaping of the interview as this provided participants an opportunity to consider the interview and its format. For example, when I spoke with one of the participants, Luana Albinio, she said that she appreciated the time as it allowed her an opportunity to feel it in her na'au (gut) if she could trust me with the stories. I must also mention that keeping with protocols of both IRB and Hawaiian, permissions were secured for photographing historical documents, cultural sites, and present-day revitalization of agricultural project sites of lo`i kalo (*irrigated terrace for growing taro*) and loko i`a (*fishponds*) within the ahupua`a around O`ahu.

Before the start of each in-person interview, I presented each participant with fruits or a lei (*floral garland*) an honored tradition of welcoming and being grateful and asked their permission to be interviewed, even though, agreements were in place. Two of the participants were women I knew over the years from my studies at the University of Hawai`i, and others were invited to be interviewed either due to a chance meeting (*Abbie Waiwaiole Havre*) or on the recommendation of friends, community elders and through *Hawai`inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge* at the University of Hawaii. An important point to mention is that I never interviewed anyone without first getting an opportunity to speak and spend time with them. This is because Hawaiian worldviews are built on relationships and reciprocity. Therefore, no interview was immediate, even in the case of a chance meeting of Abbie at the Queen's Hospital in Honolulu.

Hence, this relationship factor between the researcher and the participant is significant because the implication is that there are trustworthiness and credibility for the participants to participate in the research. As I have shown in my research within each article, this trust factor helped deepen conversations and consequently offered richer insights into my research questions. Moreover, this combination of relationship and trust factor also allowed me to reach out to my participants multiple times, if I needed in order for any clarifications of data. This also meant that sometimes, the narration veered off somewhat, but because of the underlying trust between the two parties; the researcher and the participant, the narratives, ultimately, unified the two. In other words, having this underlying trust, allowed me to be present and be a part of the dialog or *being in the moment of the story*, and usually, this entailed doing an activity before and sometimes during the interview, so the activity becomes a part of the story. An example of such an activity was when I visited the Nanakuli Children's Center in Wai`anae, with Lynette Kahekili Kaopuiki Paglinawan, whom I got to know as Auntie Lynette, (there were no children present at the gathering, only the social workers and staff who were mostly women). When we first arrived at the Center, we greeted each other, shared food, then sat around the table and participated in making a lei as we were being formally introduced. During this introduction, we participated in making a single lei while sharing an important personal story (Figure 1). This event of sharing personal stories is commonly known as *talk story*, around

the Islands. However, Talk Story, also refers to when kūpuna are engaged in sharing ancestral wisdom and creation stories, especially when children are involved in the audience.



Figure 1

Shared lei making and talk story. Nanakuli Children's Center, Queen Lili 'uokalani Trust, Wai'ane, October 22, 2018.

The idea behind this activity is not just to be introduced to the community, but also to reiterate the importance of trust, support and aloha (*in this case, to mean love*) in building relationships to perform kuleana (*obligation*) to 'āina (*that which feeds*).

Data analysis. For the purpose of data analysis and develop holistic, embedded awareness, I began by acquiring written, visual texts, audio, video, and historical texts, all in addition to my ethnographic field notes. I think data analysis is perhaps the most trying of all activities—no matter how many times I have engaged in this activity, I always seem to miss some details. This meant, revisiting the taped or the video interviews and conversations while constantly checking the notes, and of course, reaching out multiple time to my participants to make sure that my own interpretations of the data correctly represented their own experiences. For example, I strove to weave these written and visual texts (museum archives, private collections), videos and photos and the particular and contextualized stories of the past to the present as cohesive elements of the Islands' cultural foundation. Stories carried forward cultural and ecological knowledge that were integral for survival. Even though the women shared their own stories in contemporary spaces from their own perspectives, the information and messages contained in the stories had keen connections to past knowings and a continuity

of a legacy of knowledge and experience. This connection is what Dr. Aluli-Meyer calls [k]new knowledge. Knowledge that is carried forward in stories but were told many generations ago. Although the messages contained in these contemporary stories may be presented as new and in different ways, they are nonetheless, wisdom from the past that these women highlight for the future survival of people and the environment. The more I looked at the different types of texts (stories, videos, written, images, etc.) and the stories contained within those texts to my field notes, the more I saw how the messages and information correlated with each other, even though my referenced texts were produced many generations ago.

There are many examples of ancient wisdom carried forward that show up in contemporary stories, dances, and chants through cultural metaphors. Two examples in regard to harvests: *Pala ka hala, momona ka wana*, which means, the hala fruit are ripening, the sea urchins are fat, which highlights the corresponding harvest of field and sea. Or a warning to those who live by the sea; *pua ka wiliwili, nanahu ka manō*, which means, the wiliwili blooms, the shark bites. These chants provide key pieces of ecological knowledge recorded in various texts, written and oral, and continue to be used as expressions of continuity and community resilience. So, coming back to the story of *puhi*, when Grandma Jos saw *puhi* in the trees and not in the stream, this immediately told her to alert the elders because often the *puhi* seek higher ground when they sense danger, a fact confirmed by scientific research (Linton, Jónsson, & Noakes, 2007). In all of these examples, there is an active intermingling of cultural, ecologic and metaphoric awareness. My attention to multiple texts; ancient, new, written, visual and oral gave me access to this legacy of knowledge and awareness and the holistic nature of these insights.

The analysis part indeed is an important activity in piecing together, to pull apart, and sew together deep meanings and knowings to construct a bigger story, and to see how pieces in the story *speaks* and connect to other parts of the story and pull together threads to weave tapestries that connects to ancient wisdoms and their application in present situations. I find this type of data analysis enhances a participant's voice, or her meanings attached to the story as a part of being mutually respectful of the process of storytelling and analysis, which Lincoln, and Guba quote Reinharz (1978) as the "Lover Model" (Lincoln, & Guba, 1989, p. 230). Another important part of the analysis is how I coded emerging themes. To borrow an understanding from Johnny Saldaña (2015), a code can be a "word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language base or visual data" (p. 4), this can pertain to many areas of the qualitative research process. Therefore, in my work, I used the word *coding* broadly. What I mean by this statement is that my coding was based on three main qualitative methodological frameworks of narrative, portraiture and 'ōiwi. These frameworks allowed various ways to code while allowing space to honor Indigenous traditions. So, for example, in using portraiture, I was able to use context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole which are also the key features of this methodology to capture the multiple dimensions of the visual, auditory and the tactile. This capturing allowed for the illumination of metaphors, allusions, images, and repetitive refrains that encompasses bodies of work. In this work, the use of a narrative framework allowed me to explore and to bring to surface treasured Indigenous concepts of relationships and connections. Findings will indicate how these relationships and connections offer meaning to everyday life, and at times, how these relationships and connections are integral to people's strength and resiliency. This may indeed help safeguard lives, as the story of *puhi* elegantly illustrates.

The following narrative accounts focus on particular stories, some of which were told to me by my participants. Throughout the retelling I provide interpretive explorations concerning emergent themes related to survival (people, environment, responsibility, and community), spirituality (birth and lineage), and love (familial, and earth is the mother).

Findings

The story of *puhi* (eel), introduced earlier and shared more fully below, beautifully illustrates this strength and resiliency of a woman in times of challenging environments and elemental forces. It speaks to responsibility, lineage and love as broader themes as mentioned earlier. The story of *puhi* has now been passed down for generations, and it was relayed to me quite remarkably at the most unlikely place of a hospital room while visiting my mother. The storyteller, Abbie, was also a patient sharing the same hospital room with my mother, therefore, I suppose we were destined to meet and share stories, even if in passing. Now, as we return to *Puhi in the Tree*, we also return to Abbie's generosity in sharing this account from her family genealogy, generations ago, from the big island of Hawai'i.

Puhi In the Tree

"*Hi sis,*" was how she used to greet me whenever she saw me. With a bright smile and a genuine desire to connect, she always seemed alert and attentive to everything that was happening around her. So, it was natural to get my attention when I walked past her bed to visit my mother. I first met Abbie Waiwaiole Havre at Honolulu's Queen's Hospital on October 19th, 2017. She and my mother shared a large semi-private hospital room on the 6th floor. My mother's bed was opposite to Abbie's, beside the large picture windows that extended to the end of the room and around to the left side. The view was breath-taking because the scenery extended from the immediate foreground to the distant sea miles away. The closer view from the window overlooked tall plumeria trees laden with blossoms of varying hues of pink right below the room. And just beyond the Plumerias were several majestic Banyan trees and other exotic species of trees that I could not possibly name. From that same window, you could also see the square building of the State Capitol and beyond that the Honolulu Harbor into the distance where we would often spot ships and changing cloud formations and playful shadows cast by sun's rays upon the clouds. The scenery was a dreamy landscape from a picture postcard breathing life it seemed.

This was the space from which Abbie's story began. Insisting on my pulling a chair so I could be close to her, she relished in detailing me her *mo'olelo*. Every now and then, Abbie would pause, and slightly bend over towards me from her hospital bed and say;

Now, did you get that? "Honey, I don't want you to miss any of these details, because it's a very important story for me and for our people." "And when you come back from North Dakota, you come visit me in Laie, so you can meet my kupuna (elder/teacher); oh, you will love her. We have so many important stories about my people and our land that I want to tell you.

Originally, from Kauai, Abbie's ancestors came from the big island of Hawai'i in Waimea Valley which is where the story of *Grandma Jos and Puhi* took place. To put this story's timeline into perspective, I would say that this story took place about fifty years after Captain Cook's landing in Oahu –he actually never did get to the big island. So, it is quite possible that there was very little or no contact with the *new world* at the point of this story. And, this is a significant point, because the story speaks to the ways in which people were connected to the land, and how they communicated certain environmental phenomena to their community. Gleefully, here is how Abbie told her story to my willing ears amidst my copious notetakings.

As previously noted, Abbie begins her story by identifying the time and place and describing the circumstances of her grandma Jos. In her day, as a young woman, one of

Grandma Jos's kuleana was to gather food for her 'ohana (family). This gathering of food and the *knowing* of ecological particulars were passed down through stories as a way to honor family lineage, Hawaiian cultural traditions, maintain deep connections to the 'āina and to be self-aware of one's surroundings. So, when Grandma Jos went to the kahawai to harvest puhi and seeing their absence, this created a panic within her. Abbie explained that Grandma Jos was puzzled and,

walked along the bank for some distance peering into the water every now and then, but no fish and no puhi to be seen at all. She didn't know what to think. Well, she had some berries with her, so she thought that she could at least take those back to the village. But, not finding puhi really worried Grandma Jos, and the kahawai, it looked so different too. For no reason, Grandma Jos started to panic, and she started to run down the hill towards the village. While she ran down the hill with a worried mind, she fell. But, this is when something very strange happened...she heard a voice, very strange she thought because she knew she was alone. As she was gathering herself together, she again heard a voice, only this time, it called her name. The voice said, "Jos, look up." When she looked up, Grandma Jos couldn't believe her eyes. It was a puhi in the tree! He was hanging off a branch, and he began to talk to Grandma Jos. Bewildered, Grandma Jos said, "but why are you up there? You should be in the kahawai. "No," said the puhi. We are all up here because big waves are coming up to the land and all your homes will be under water—you must warn your 'ohana right away. Frightened, my Grandma Jos ran down to the beach to warn everyone of the big waves that are coming, and that the waves would swallow up all the land and homes by the sea.

"Very soon afterward, as we know from history," said Abbie, "the big waves of the tsunami hit the shores of Waimea Valley, and severe rainfall caused flooding in the ahupua'a. But, because my Grandma Jos was able to warn her 'ohana in time, they were able to move way up to the hills of the ahupua'a to safety until it was safe to move back down." (Abbie Waiwaiole Havre, October 2017)

This story is one of the many that exposes the audience, both readers and listeners to the multidimensional nature of Hawaiian traditional knowledge and environmental truths. For example, it is a fact of natural history that eels spawn offshore and once hatched, young eels drift inland with ocean currents into streams, rivers, and lakes. Eels stay in fresh or brackish waters until they mature which is when they would migrate back to the sea. In fact, young eels (elvers) are known to climb trees when they sense an oncoming drought, or a change of water temperatures in oceans or floods (Linton, Jónsson, & Noakes, 2007). Therefore, it is not unusual that an idiom such as a *Puhi in a tree* was used as a metaphor for the changing nature of ocean currents, its temperatures and rising waters among the Hawaiians. Stories such as this sustained and prospered Kanaka 'Ōiwi for millennia through their interconnectedness to sacred land that bound ideas of food production, environmental truths, and cultural beliefs enabling them to encode these practices in storytelling.

In Hawaiian Native and Indigenous storytelling, use of metaphors was an essential aspect of the practice. Hawaiian scholar and storyteller, Pualani Kanahēle says "metaphors are like fragrant orchids in your garden or spice in your food, they add dimension to the story and gives special meaning" (Living the Myth and Unlocking the Metaphor, TEDX, Maui, 2012). Metaphors were woven through the stories combined with common everyday practices, such as planting and fire-making, so people understood these stories through their relatability to

personal lives, lived experience, and the practical phenomena of daily living (TEDX, Maui, 2012).

According to Kanahale, storytellers were wise, and they knew about the elemental forms that were involved in creating the earth's weather patterns and eruptions. By cleverly taking advantage of that available information of magnificent and catastrophic events, storytellers wove these events into 'oli, mele and hula to pass on the information to preserve the knowledge. Because these stories were retold using diverse methods, people readily embodied the emotions contained within stories making it easier for them to retain and retell stories to their own families to keep stories, such as *Puhi*, alive.

The Theme of Creation as a Central Tenet in Ancient Hawaiian Mo'olelo

Stories of ancient Hawaii had many themes. The most dominant theme that seems to reverberate is that of creation. The tradition of these creation stories centers on the geologies of these islands and the procreation of two important ancestors of the Hawaiian people – Papahānaumoku (goddess personified as earth) and Wākea (God personified as expansive sky) and various partners with whom they mated, and the consequences of those actions documented as spiritual truths of Hawaiian peoples' lineage (Kikiloi & Graves, 2010). One of the most prominent stories to develop from this creation event was the birth of the Taro plant (Kalo). Taro is also the staple food source of the Hawaiian people. To Native and Indigenous Hawaiians, the Kalo is also of great importance because it signifies the birth of the Hawaiian people according to the Creation Chant of the Kumulipo. This story of the Kalo was relayed to me by Hawaiian scholar and writer Manulani Aluli-Meyer in the following way:

When Papahānaumoku and Wākea got together, the beautiful islands of Hawaii were born. In addition to the islands, they also gave birth to a beautiful daughter whom they named Ho'ohōkūkālani. As she matured into a young woman, Wākea desired to sleep with his daughter. With the help of Wākea's religious advisor (kahuna), sacred eating ('aikapu) which was the basis for Hawaiian spirituality was established. This sacred eating ritual separated Papahānaumoku from Wākea for a brief time. This brief separation gave Wākea time to entice his daughter into lovemaking. Soon, Ho'ohōkūkālani became pregnant. Papahānaumoku became horrified and angry at Wākea. Her anger was felt throughout the islands through great rumblings that came from the islands core frightening all who were on the islands. Unfortunately, Ho'ohōkūkālani gave birth to an unformed fetus that looked like a taro corm with a long tail. Deeply grieving parents, Wākea and Ho'ohōkūkālani named him Hāloanakalaukapalil and buried him in the ground. Apparently, it was from this place that the first Kalo had sprouted. So, the land (āina) and Kalo were considered to be the elder siblings of the Hawaiian people, therefore much-honored. (Manulani Aluli-Meyer, June 2017)

What is fascinating about this creation story is the Hawaiian perspective and ritualized practice of giving birth, including what happens with the afterbirth, and how that relates to understanding the value of taking care of the land. *Papahānaumoku and Wākea* are personified as people as with *Ho'ohōkūkālani* because this created relatability to the ordinary Kanaka 'Ōiwi. During the storytelling, the listener is invited to take part in understanding the ancient Hawaiian cultural value system and the consequences of not honoring those values; even the gods are not spared for dishonor, yet *Papahānaumoku's* resiliency is clearly articulated in the story; *Papahānaumoku* is the *a'ali'i* that will not break in the wind. Aluli-Meyer explained to

me how the creation story makes sense to the Hawaiian people. Her witnessing of her sister's third child led her to tell me the following story:

Did you know that after a baby is born, its afterbirth is just as big as the baby? Early on in this century, when women gave birth, they were never given the afterbirth, but now we ask for it. Because this afterbirth is the metaphor behind the dead baby of Ho 'ohōkūkalani from which sprang the Kalo or the newborn. When women get the afterbirth, they wipe down the blood, and you can still see the umbilical cord quiver like the stalk and the leaf of Kalo in the wind. Women eat a bit of the cord for nourishment just as Wākea did during his sacred eating, then we bury the afterbirth in the ground to give thanks to Hāloa, the second human offspring of Ho 'ohōkūkalani and Wākea, and plant a taro, ulu (breadfruit) tree, or a coconut tree that would take nourishment from the afterbirth and bear food for us in abundance. (Manulani Aluli-Meyer, June 2017).

Aluli-Meyer explains that,

Wākea is infinite time and space' that bears on its skies the sun, the moon, and the stars. The sun provides ample light for plants to grow on earth (Papahānaumoku) and the darkness of the night when the sun is resting provides a time and space for seeds to germinate in the earth's womb, and gather nourishment for it to grow, just like how a baby is conceived and grows in the dark womb of the mother taking nourishment from her mother to grow, until it is ready to come out. So, you see, it is essential that we take care of the land and give back love as gratitude so that we can continue to prosper and care for one another. Without this magnificent land, we die. (Manulani Aluli-Meyer, June 2017)

Meyer often says in conversation that there are “no binaries in the Hawaiian culture; binaries are a part of the western culture” (Meyer, June 2017). Hawaiians exist because of nature and with nature and to think otherwise is disastrous. When one respects and listens to nature, it tells you its secrets and ways to coexist with it, and this is the only way people can prosper, ‘*āina aloha* means exactly this point. In this way, human society and the natural world are interdependent and sustained reciprocally. In Basso and Feld's edited volume, *Senses of Place* (1996), American philosopher, Edward Casey states that a “place is generative and regenerative on its own schedule. From it, experiences are born and to it, human beings (and other organisms) return for empowerment” (Casey, p. 26; Feld & Basso, 1996). After millennia, the story of *Papahānaumoku and Wākea* displays this quality of *generative and regenerative on its own schedule* and highlights this sense of empowerment of the people derived from the story and the intrinsic connection to the land through the burial of the afterbirth under a taro corm or another plant. These contemporary, regenerative experiences play a vital role in a *place* and become a “generatrix for the collection as well as the recollection of all that occurs in the lives of sentient beings, and even for the trajectories of inanimate things” (Casey, 1996, p. 26).

Mo'olelo as a Generative and a Regenerative Process

The following creation story involving volcanic eruption is very much tied to this concept of *generative and regenerative on its own schedule and collection and recollection* through ‘*āina aloha* (love of the land). According to Casey (1996), the power of these

experiences gathered by sentient and other organisms has “its own space and time” and are moved into “one arena of common engagement” (p. 26) in the sharing and telling of stories. In this *one arena*, the storyteller invites the audience to participate in the story by visualizing another’s life or experiences to gain varied and intimate perspectives. In the creation story of a volcanic eruption, storyteller Pualani Kanahale relays the science behind volcanic eruptions that were passed down through many generations. Spoken through a series of metaphors, Pualani Kanahale imparts important scientific concepts to her listener in very simple terms. In her TEDx appearance, Pualani Kanahale illustrated how people were made to understand science through storytelling and chants. She says in her presentation, a chant is “timeless, and it has to do with space, and that is timeless” (Living the Myth and Unlocking the Metaphor, TEDx, Maui, 2012). According to Kanahale, chants provide us lessons that help with our personal growth process. Kanahale's story begins with Lonomakua (god of fire, rain, and agriculture and uncle to (Pelehonuamea) and Pelehonuamea (goddess and the creator of sacred land, and that of fire and the niece of Lonomakua).

When Pele (Pelehonuamea) reached womanhood at about 11 years, Lono (Lonomakua) took her into an underground cave with a small hole (puka) on its roof, and the light from the sun streamed into the cave from this puka, so the inside of the cave was not dark. Here seated, Lono wanted to teach Pele how the earth was formed with many layers, and how each layer contributed to supporting life that was important in sustaining all life forms. Sitting inside the cave, Lono showed Pele both vertical and horizontal layers of the earth. For example, where they sat was below ground, and he informed her that there were many more layers beneath her. Next, Lono asked her to look above through the small hole to the sky as far as she could see, and that she was told was the vertical sphere. Then she was told to pay attention to what was happening in the sky with the sunlight. For example, when the clouds moved in and out of sun’s path, it brought darkness and created shadows, and at night, there were only the moon and the stars, and still created shadows. These were fascinating lessons for young Pele. Many nights passed, still being in the cave, Pele was taught about the importance of soil, rocks, animals, fish, mountain tops, earth’s atmosphere and how it interacts with warm and cold air to create the water cycle. However, the most important lesson was yet to be taught, and that was how to make fire.

In order to teach Pele how to make fire, Lono secured a block of wood (Aulima) and asked her to hold it down on to the ground tightly and not to let go no matter what happens. She very obediently says, “Yes uncle,” I will hold it down no matter what. Lono seeing how well Pele was following instructions, broke into a chant. While chanting he took the long stick (Aunaki) and began to rub in back and forth on the Aulima. In the olden days, Hawaiians used this Aulima and an Aunaki to start a fire for cooking and to perform other fire rituals.

Lono continued to rub the Aulima. He sometimes rubbed it hard, and other times, softly, until smoke came from the wood. As time passed, Lono kept rubbing this Aulima with his Aunaki. As some time passed, Pele could feel the stones and the ground around her warming up, and suddenly, sparks began to fly, and now the smoke was thicker, and heavier, and “whoosh” came the fire! Lono quickly asked Pele to look towards the small puka on the roof, and she could see that the smoke and the fire with some of the dust and small rocks

spewing out of the roof into the open air. And as soon as the fire escaped from the roof's small puka, the outside air helped it to become bigger, and the wind carried the fire and the smoke higher and higher. Pele was in awe. "This is who you are Pelehonuamea," said Lono. "You are the fire starter." "This is your responsibility (kuleana) to keep the fire burning." "These things I told you about are important for the land to survive." Of course, what Lono meant was that islands of Hawaii were created by volcanic eruptions, and with each eruption, the land mass become bigger, and after the lava flow dries, new growth takes place, thus renewing the earth, and once again creating an abundance of vegetation for the people.

In this story, Lono is personified by cold air, and scientifically speaking, in the winter months, when cold air descends from the mountains to the earth, their interaction with warm air sets the stage for the biggest volcanic eruptions of Kilauea, Mauna Loa, and Pu'u'Ō'ō. Furthermore, by illustrating fire making, people were made to understand how the action of cold air (Aunaki) interacting with Aulima (warm air) creates friction, thus creating fire, in this case, a volcanic eruption, akin to starting a fire for daily cooking activities. These types of stories were important so that people not only appreciated the land, but also revered it, and understood the traditional ecological awareness and the knowledge behind the eruptions because their very sustenance depended upon their shared love of the land ('āina aloha) and their ability to create fire as Pele did. Moreover, these stories made Native and Indigenous Hawaiians aware of nature's signals so that the communities could be kept safe from what we call natural disasters.

Exploring [K]new Knowledge; A Tapestry of Voices

There were many ways in which women were honored in ancient Hawai'i. Traditionally, women established the first aloha between a mother and child and as well as rearing children and teaching them their genealogies. More importantly, they legitimized the births of ali 'i (chiefs) who were akin to gods on the earth plane. Therefore, women were seen as the pilina (connection) through their piko (umbilical cord) between the people and the akua (gods) in the heavens (Kame'eleihiwa, 2001). Keeping with this belief system, women were not only protected but also revered within the early *Ihi Kapu* system which was based on Hawaiian spirituality. This spiritually based system enabled all Hawaiians to live in harmony with family, nature and the spiritual realm. One of my participants, Sophia Carba, explained a part of this kapu spiritual system in the following way:

The order of kapu forbade women with consuming certain types of foods and its gathering or preparation. Food was considered sacred, and there were certain types of food that women were not allowed to consume. For example, food like, pork, bananas, certain types of fish, and coconuts, because these foods represented anatomical parts of gods such as, Lono, Kanaloa, and Kū, therefore, eating these types of food by women was considered a spiritual disrespect to those gods as well as towards their family ancestors ('aumākua). And also eating these foods meant the loss of women's mana. And losing their mana meant a woman's inability to connect with the gods when giving birth to an ali 'i, affecting her pilina (connection) between earth and the heavens. This fear of loss of mana is one of several reasons why women were disallowed from cooking. Thus, it became the duty of the men to cook and offer food to women in their separate eating houses as a way to safeguard women's mana. (Interview, Sophia Carba, June 2017) (Sophia Carba, June 2017)

Although coloniality changed and shifted Hawaiian culture and women's positionality within the traditional family system, women remain as the *kua* (backbone) of the family. Today, women are at the forefront reclaiming their Hawaiian language (‘ōleo Hawai‘i) rights and ancestral mo‘olelo that connects them to their treasured genealogies, thus reestablishing their *mana wahine*. Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, an artist, educator, and activist is one of the many women who is regrouping with kānaka from all the islands to add her powerful voice to an emerging tapestry of vibrant voices in reclaiming their mana. Meyer feels that her genealogy has provided her with the tools necessary to reestablish their culture and restore balance to the beloved ‘āina. This action toward reclamation is evident in her following statement:

I have been given the tools, so, I must put that into good use...to do healing work especially with our young women who need a voice and support in the work that they must do.” “We are taking back our voice. I have a lot of work to do, but I am a part of that continuum of reclamation.” (Meleanna Aluli-Meyer, September 3, 2018)

Hawaiian Women, the Divine Feminine: A Discussion of Findings

As told by the stories, the women of ancient Hawai‘i played important roles in their immediate families and in their communities. Women were held in high regard because they were believed to have been the *Creator* of all beings. In the ancient Hawaiian world, it was believed that Pō the mysterious female night gave birth to a son (Kumulipo) and daughter (Pō‘ele) without “any male impregnating element” who then “by their incestuous mating (in the Hawaiian tradition, incest created divinity) created the world (Kame‘eleihiwa, 2001, p. 3). This Hawaiian cosmogonic genealogy spans over sixteen wā (time periods) of eight days and nights where forty thousand Akua (gods) were born (2001). Out of these forty-thousand Akua, twenty-thousand were female Akua. The female Akua embodies every aspect of life, of divinity (spiritual power also known as *mana*), sexuality and capability in all women and empower them. The female Akua is the “source of life, of divinity, and of ancestral wisdom” (p. 3). Moreover, it is said that the Akua communicates with humans by dreams in the night to “connote wisdom and customs that come from antiquity” (p. 3). Therefore, when stories are told, a very prominent part of this feminine voice is carried through these metaphors by way of the ancestors who are passing down generational knowledge systems from time immemorial. This passing down of divine ancestral knowledge is what Aluli-Meyer (2013) refers to as [k]new *knowledge* which is an important aspect of the mo‘olelo (storytelling).

In telling stories, women bring their divine femininity into the story with their acute sense of belonging to a place or time. This divine femininity is evident in all of the stories that I had the pleasure in which to listen and to be engaged in conversation. For example, in the first story of *Puhi*, young Jos’s *knowing* (in Hawaiian, na‘au) that something was wrong when not seeing any eels in the stream and immediately getting a sense that she needed to warn the community shows her god-like behavior in showing community responsibility (kuleana). Furthermore, when the village kupunas were informed of the eels’ strange behavior by Jos, they immediately acted without a question, and this is a good example of the female authority that was honored in women, no matter what their age.

In the second story of the *afterbirth*, it is the woman who has an undeniable agency in what to do with the afterbirth. Nowadays, (realigning with the ancient cultural practice) the women are deciding in some cases to eat part of the afterbirth and bury the rest so that it would provide nourishment for important life-giving and sustaining plants like kalo, ulu and coconut. This practice emphasizes the important kuleana of giving birth and its sustenance

through the planting of important crops for the benefit of the family and greater community, just as the mysterious Pō did in creating the universe.

The third story of *Pele* is also associated with life-giving (volcanic eruption), through the offer of abundance by means of regeneration of the land, climate, and earth. In all of these stories, women are central figures of rebirth and the link to the sustenance of life. Women are the ultimate power-structure of the family and the culture, because, genealogically, the first ancestor is the most powerful, and that ancestor was a woman - Pō. The woman created the universe. Therefore, women have always been seen as the strength and the protector of families and the knowledge-holders.

With my specific use of narrative methodology with a conversational approach, and by listening to women's stories I have come to understand how female presence is deeply embedded within the Hawaiian culture. For a brief moment in history, through colonialism, western worldviews altered Hawaiian worldviews and women's positionality within their culture. Europeans introduced gendered social systems that commodified women, often relegating them to be their husband's chattel reflecting the western ideology of the 18th century (Lugones, 2010). However, with the current resurgence of cultural pride and the idea of what it is to become pono (being in balance and harmony with land and spirituality) Indigenous and Native Hawaiian women have rearranged how they will once again identify themselves with their Hawaiian culture. Realigning themselves with their cultural past, in contemporary Hawai'i, women are reasserting themselves to be the women in how they were believed to have been created by the female Akua and the mysterious Pō. Being a woman means, being *pono* (balanced)-there is no separation in identity between culture and spirituality in womanhood (Kame'eleihiwa, 2001). Speaking with women and understanding these important aspects of their connection to the land helped me to see how each piece of the story, how each voice, could be woven together in an intricate manner to present a composite of a woman that is complex, divine and, and one who is trusted to sustain and nurture the Hawaiian culture and reclaim the mo'olelo and the 'āina.

Cosmos and The Knowledge of Land

Indigenous peoples refer to those who were born of the land and who share an understanding of the relationship they have with the land, language, forms of cultural knowledge, an interaction to their natural resources and living within the environment (Smith, 2013). These indigenous peoples are the Maoli (descendants of the Polynesians; Cook et al., 2003). In the text, *The Context within: My Journey into Research*, Meyer uses the word indigenous as a synonym for "enduring patterns" with regards to philosophy that brings forth [k]new ideas that have made sense "because of the ecology of these times" (Meyer, 2013, p. 251). An example of this [k]new knowledge is relayed intimately in the story of *puhi*, because without the understanding of this peculiar animal behavior, the village may not have been saved by the tsunami. Meyer further iterates that "indigenous is really about culture: best practices of a group of people specific to a place, over time" (Meyer, 2013, p. 251). The quick action by the kupunas in the story of *puhi*, speaks volumes to these best practices of culture and their finely tuned awareness of the environment.

When it comes to Native and Indigenous Hawaiian people and their reverence for the land and its use, one can see that the regenerative culture is embedded in storytelling and vice versa. Because stories helped keep alive the knowledge of the land and the cosmologies which were integral to their survival, we see a blending of culture and nature, a relational awareness. As illustrated by the story of *puhi in the tree*, culture is shaped by the environment and specific needs of the people, developing a dynamic "interdependence" (Meyer, 2014, p. 97). For example, when Grandma Jos did not see eels in the kahawai, she panicked, because she knew

there was something wrong. It was only when she saw a puhi in the tree that she became overly concerned. It suffices to say that although young Jos was confused by puhi in the tree, the village kūpunas (elders) must have known that such events took place only when a disaster was about to strike the Islanders – a disaster involving water. That knowledge helped the lowland dwellers to make appropriate decisions to keep themselves safe by moving to higher ground out of harm's way.

Although words such as nature, biodiversity, and sustainability are made famous by western sciences (Posey, 2001, p. 4), indigenous Hawaiians already knew the concepts behind these words. As *beings* of the land ('āina), Hawaiians felt directly tied to a generational spiritual base that governed them and their relationships to the land. In this way, “dimensions of traditional knowledge are not *local* knowledge, but knowledge of the *universal* as expressed in the local” (Meyer, 2001, p. 4; Posey, 2001). Hawaiians see themselves as people of the 'āina who gave thanks and received bounty from it, as evidenced by “'āina aloha,” the act of care for others and for the earth (Meyer, 2013, p. 99). And certainly, listening to Abbie passionately tell the story of Grandma Jos, and her running down the hill to deliver puhi's message to her 'ohana illustrated the meaning of 'āina aloha well. This *collective consciousness* for the community's well-being is central to Hawaiian Native and Indigenous culture.

Knowledge of The *Universal* as Expressed in The Local

This *collective consciousness* of the community was evident with every question that I posed to my participants during interviews. I say this because all answers garnered from the questions ended up being connected to a tapestry of stories; built upon other stories that layered multiple voices, those of the storytellers, both current and past, that echoed as I listened. Lynne Davis posits that “stories cement together generations of collective memory, embodying the historical, spiritual, social, and spatial... linking past and future in the present. Stories are containers of Indigenous knowledge and thought, just as Indigenous languages are their fiber” (Davis, 2004, p. 3). When we listen to stories, in the end, we look for significant statements contained within the stories and comments to look for emergent themes that form patterns. This offers the researcher and the readers an opportunity to understand the underlying meanings of the context that gives its power to resonate and strengthen belief systems that carry *truths* for a generation's specific cultural settings. This is because Indigenous worldviews honor orality as “a means of transmitting knowledge and upholds the *relational* which is necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition” (Kovach, 2010, p. 42). Therefore, a story is a relational process that guides Indigenous research consistent with a particular Indigenous worldview. This is important as stories within the Indigenous worldview highlight beliefs and values that are paramount within that paradigm (Kovach, 2010). Moreover, this relational symmetry between the researcher, the story and its teller contribute to maintaining the authenticity of Indigenous worldviews, which is an important aspect of my research and resounds with the goals of narrative work.

This brings me to reiterate the importance of women and storytelling in kōnaka tradition. A tradition where women were held in high regard for their role in storytelling and their deep connection to land and spirituality. Since they were also the first connection and nurturers to their own children and that of others in the community, they were central to passing down epistemological knowledge of ancestors or the *[k]new knowledge* and cultural awareness to future generations (Handy & Pukui, 1977). The stories discussed in this paper bear evidence to the centrality of women in this context where women are fundamentally both storytellers and protagonists within the kōnaka tradition.

Moreover, these women's stories indicate that despite forced cultural and political changes over time, innate beliefs and interconnectedness to land and spirituality has begun to

reshape in multidimensional ways both culturally and ecologically. They not only feel directly tied to a generational spiritual base that governed them, but they also feel that “dimensions of traditional knowledge are not *local* knowledge, but knowledge of the *universal* as expressed in the local” (Meyer, 2001, p. 4). They see themselves as people who give thanks to their land and receive bounty from it as evidenced by “‘āina aloha,” the act of care for others and for the earth. This fact is made evident in contemporary Hawai‘i with the resurgence of traditional practices in cultivation, the revival of traditional food preparations, revitalized methods of land irrigation, language, and sustainable farming, such as fishponds in local communities.

To illustrate this idea, I will give an example from an interview I conducted with Kealaulaokamamo Leota, whom I got to know as Mamo while visiting Paepae o He ‘eia Fishpond on the northeast side of O‘ahu. Mamo is a teacher and practitioner of cultural education and outreach who teaches school-aged children at the fishpond. Paepae o He ‘eia is one of the largest and oldest (eight hundred years) revitalized fully functioning fishponds on the island. It is owned by the Kamehameha Schools, and the project’s purpose is three-fold. One is to reintroduce and feed ancient healthy foods to local kānaka population as it was done in the days of the ahupua‘a. The second is to teach ancient farming techniques in the current context using innovative methods that do not create an imbalance in the environment. The third is to introduce young children to ancestral knowledge of farming and food production using *kilo* (observation) within a system called *Makawalu*, introduced earlier in the paper. The word, *Makawalu* means *eight eyes*. Therefore, this system of *Makawalu* entails learning to *read nature* using *eight eyes*. In other words, to observe *events* or *happenings in nature* deeply, so that you can see, smell, feel, taste and hear what you are observing, so you know how a phenomena function. According to Mamo, it was with the use of these skilled observations that the kūpuna knew when or when not to act with regards to natural events. She states the following,

using makawalu, we teach kids to step back and really look at things to understand their function. We use three categories that our kūpuna used, and they are Papahulilani, Papahulihōnue, and Papahānaumoku. The first category of Papahulilani means observation of the heavens; this means the skies, the clouds, winds, and the moon cycles. The second category of Papahulihōnue means observation of nature in natural settings like water in streams and ocean, mountains, vegetation and animal behavior. And the third category of Papahānaumoku means the observation of birthing; in other words, how things grow. Everything we do is very tide-based because our kūpuna knew how to use the moon cycles because the moon affected the tides and tides affected how we farmed. They say you can’t predict the weather, but our kūpuna knew how to predict the weather, and they did that very well. (Interview, Kealaulaokamamo Leota, November 1, 2018)

A knowledge system such as *Makawalu* is developed over a specific time in a specific location, and in Hawai‘i, this knowledge is shaped through space and time by knowledge holders through metaphors embedded in stories and storytelling as in the case of *Puhi* and other stories. According to Hawaiian educators Eddie Kaanana and Ilei Beniamina, storytelling is directly tied to the kuleana and well-being of the ‘ohana or learning community. Therefore, kuleana is about “feeding one’s family, caring for one’s children, and all other kuleana depends on one’s ability to mālama (island of Hawai‘i) that primary kuleana, to care for the piece of land and to make it productive” (Lipe, 2016, p. 15). In ancient Hawai‘i, rights and privileges were earned only by fulfilling increasing levels of responsibilities by both women and men. Therefore, these rights and privileges were “inextricably rooted in the land itself and in how well we care for it”

(Lipe, 2016, p. 15). As quoted by Lipe (2016), Hawaiian educator Mehana Blaich (p.15) says the following:

Learning and knowledge are forms of privilege that comes with attendant responsibilities to a larger collective and to the ‘āina on which we depend for life. As a learner masters new skills, he or she takes on more complex responsibilities. In turn, it is through the fulfillment of more challenging duties in caring for the land and the community that one learns. (p. 15)

According to Lipe (2016), ancestral knowledge is embodied within each individual and with that comes power, privilege and the kuleana to listen to the stories to learn from and share with future generations. Although knowledge systems are vulnerable to change, these women’s stories have proven that it is the nature of culture to survive evident in women’s resiliency embedded in metaphor that has made them to be the ‘*a ‘ali ‘i* (a strong blooming plant) that will not break in the wind.

When we look at the three stories from these storytellers, these traits of strength, resiliency, and flexibility, of *a ‘ali ‘i*, are evident from the roles women play in telling the stories and in their continued preservation through spirituality, connection, love and care for the land (mālama ‘āina). Whether it is Pele’s empowerment for the regeneration of land through fire-making, a contemporary women’s giving thanks in honor of her spirituality and connection to the earth by offering her baby’s afterbirth or a young woman keeping a community safe from a tsunami several centuries ago, women have taken a central responsibility of maintaining the mālama ‘āina both as a protagonist and as storyteller.

As Indigenous leaders, women have shown the importance of relationality and interconnectedness to land and spirituality with important stories that have been passed down for generations (Aluli-Meyer, 2013). Demonstrably, women have shown how their resiliency and flexibility have strengthened their relationality to extend beyond families and communities, to include the land, time/place, and Creator. Native and Indigenous women of contemporary Hawai‘i are now taking back the ownership of their power to reposition themselves for a renewed mālama ‘āina through a resurgence in revitalized methods of traditional land irrigation, cultivation, and sustainability programs that was central to the cultural identity of Hawai‘i and its women. Most of all, women have now begun to *call back* their treasured mo‘olelo that was forbidden during colonialism to bridge the past with the present and heal years of cultural trauma that was inflicted upon all people of Hawai‘i. In taking back this ownership and the kuleana that comes with it, Native and Indigenous women are reconstituting essential narratives and embedded metaphors in the mo‘olelo that resonate with cultural and ecological truths.

Reconnecting with ‘Āina (that which feeds)

As Kānaka leaders, women have shown the importance of relationality and interconnectedness to land and spirituality with important stories that have been passed down for generations (Aluli-Meyer, 2013). Demonstrably, women have shown how their resiliency and flexibility have strengthened their relationality to extend beyond families and communities, to include the land and time/place. Kānaka women of contemporary Hawai‘i are now taking back the ownership of their mana (*power*) to reposition themselves for a renewed mālama ‘āina (*care for the land* -- so it can give back) through a resurgence in revitalized methods of traditional land irrigation, cultivation, and sustainability programs that were central to the cultural identity of Hawai‘i. Most of all, women have now begun to *call back* their treasured mo‘olelo that were forbidden during colonialism to bridge the past with the present and heal

years of cultural trauma (Aloha 'Āina mural) that was inflicted upon all people of Hawai'i. In taking back this ownership and the kuleana that comes with it, Kānaka women are reconstituting essential narratives and embedded metaphors in mo'olelo discussed in the articles, (Puhi, burying of afterbirth, Kalo Pa 'a o Waiāhole) that resonate with cultural and ecological truths.

Examining Limitations and Intersections

In reflection, as I mentioned in one of my articles, I still see myself as a guest on Hawai'i's land. Although my personal genealogical trajectory ran somewhat parallel, yet at times intersected with many of my participants' experiences, I realized that my worldviews were built from my own experiences and values brought into my *cognitive* and *living* (experiential) domains. Having said this, I do understand, that there are many cultural and social values and aspects that intersect with the values of many Kānaka women I spoke with, but because, I was not tied to the land generationally, and learned the knowings of the kūpuna as they were passed down, my interpretations will always be from my experiences. In spite of the fact, that I grew up in Hawai'i, attended Nohona Hawai'i (*Hawaiian way of living*) classes and learned over several months about health and well-being of Hawaiian people and listened to many hours about place specific stories from Auntie Lynette and many other women, not being born of the land to experience it, makes a significant difference in how I relate to the land and ultimately to its people. This personal *knowing* brought me to reflect what Edward Casey (1996) says about the role of body in a place and space:

Lived bodies belong to places and help to constitute them. Even if such bodies may be displaced in certain respects, they are never placeless; they are never *only* at discrete positions in world, time or space, though they may be *also* be at such position. By the same token, however, *places belong to lived bodies*. (p. 24)

So, when it comes to my position, I was not a constituent of the places and spaces of my participants and their experiences that they and their kūpuna have constituted. Neither was I a part of the gathering and keeping those places and spaces, so my experiences will always be from an outsider looking in to connect and make meaning within worldviews that I bring to this place of Hawai'i and the research.

Implication to Practice and Moving Beyond

In my role of doing this research, I feel that my task is to offer a way to see and appreciate kānaka experience from their point of view, not necessarily through an objective analysis of an empirical lens but rather from the subjective lens of the kānaka as it applies to their thoughts and values that make sense to their place and space and histories and experiences. This is because as Meyer (2013) says, in Kānaka worldview, there are no separations between people, environment, and spirit. In my research journey, I have discovered that there are two main research directions. They are kānaka and empirical, and they are not mutually exclusive or in competition with each other, but they both have much to offer in advancing the understanding of Kānaka worldviews to *decolonize* indigeneity. This requires opening one's self to new paradigms to inform new thought processes and praxis to continue with future work. As I mentioned in one of my articles, for me, engaging in this type of research is a way to invite other scholars to deepen the conversations and analysis surrounding indigeneity. When we interview people and engage in conversations, with a view to writing about them and their

stories, we enter into their lives. In that process, it is essential that we build relationships and trust so when we unfold *our stories about them*, these stories resonate *true* to the *voices* of the interviewees. When we gather voices and their emotions from these stories and articulate them in a body of work such as this, we in a way create opportunities to intervene in academic, social and political settings to further social transformations through dialogs however uncomfortable they may be at times. However, to be engaged in these dialogs are an important part of engaging in ethical and moral research because they create understandings and appreciation for worldviews that are different than our own. Perhaps, in the long run, these engaged discussions will bring us to new understandings that may play a salient role in guiding non-indigenous researchers such as myself and audiences into honoring the health and well-being of the Kānaka as well as that of all indigenous peoples around the world for their need for cultural sovereignty.

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