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**Indigenous Languages:
Preservation and Revitalization: Articles 13, 14 and 16 of the
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Hawaiian Language

“I ka ‘ōlelo nō ke ola; I ka ‘ōlelo nō ka make.”
In the language rests life; In the language rests death.

This *‘ōlelo no ‘eau*, or traditional Hawaiian saying, drives home the magnitude of the Hawaiian language and its *mana*, or force. This power is evidenced on many levels and from many perspectives. Hawaiians have a strong belief that something can be literally *spoken* into existence and likewise into failure such as a person’s health or prosperity. Similarly, the language itself has the figurative power to carry and revive a people and their society as too will the loss of the language just as effectively weaken and destroy a people.

Our people maintained our language for milenia through the spoken word and chants, including genealogical chants. Part of the genealogy of our language includes the 19th century introduction of writing using the Roman alphabet – a genealogy that reaches from Anglo-American introducers back to the peoples of Sumeria to whom we are ultimately indebted for the gift of a writing system for our language. Similarly our language movement is part of a global efforts of indigenous peoples with unique links to our Polynesian Māori family in New Zealand and to political efforts by American Indians for American laws addressing indigenous language use in education.

Coupled with the *mana* of the *‘ōlelo* in its spoken and written form, Hawaiians have also long understood the value of education delivered through our language. *“He aupuni palapala ko ‘u; ‘o ke kanaka pono, ‘o ia ko ‘u kanaka.”* This *‘ōlelo no ‘eau* was uttered by Hawai‘i’s King Kamehameha III, *Kalani Keauikeouli*, and translates to, “Mine is a kingdom of the written word; my subjects are moral and righteous people.” It was *Kauikeouli* who established the Hawaiian language-based (what we call “Hawaiian-medium” today) public school system in 1840. Through these Hawaiian language schools, where both traditional Hawaiian culture and Western education were successfully integrated, Native Hawaiians achieved noted academic success. In fact, in the 19th century, Hawai‘i was one of the most literate nations in the world with over 90% of its population able to read and write. There were over 100 Hawaiian newspapers in print and Hawaiian was the language of the land permeating schools, communities, churches, and businesses. However, in 1896, three years after the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom by a group of American businessmen with the support of the United States military, a law was enacted which stated: “The English language shall be the medium and basis of instruction in all public and private schools.” With that sentence, the Hawaiian language schools were closed and the academic performance of Native Hawaiians began a precipitous decline from which we are still struggling to recover.

For all of us participating in the solutions for reestablishing the vibrancy of our Hawaiian language, we are all too familiar with this history of the demise of our language and culture. We

work therefore to seek out new and innovative strategies and resources to add the new chapter to this story, one that speaks to the repositioning of the *‘ōlelo Hawai‘i*, our Hawaiian language, to a place of respect, authority and influence in Hawai‘i’s society today. In the 1970s, Hawai‘i experienced what today is referred to as the “Hawaiian Renaissance.” This period focused on long-standing political and cultural issues, including the survival of the indigenous language. Hawaiian was then spoken only by elders born before 1920 and by a tiny population of some 200 on the isolated island of Ni‘ihau. In 1978, a state constitutional convention reestablished the status of Hawaiian as an official language of the State of Hawai‘i and required its promotion. Two years earlier, the first baccalaureate degree to academically study the language had been awarded and five years later, there was established the nonprofit ‘Aha Pūnana Leo, which has led the movement to revitalize the language as a living language of children, families and communities through reestablishing Hawaiian-medium education. Built on the Pūnana Leo Family-Based early childhood education centers and gradually expanding education provided through Hawaiian, rather than about it, there now exists a preschool through graduate degree educational system, taught entirely through the medium of the Hawaiian language.

Between the 1990 census and 2000 census, those reporting some use of Hawaiian in the home grew from 14,315 to 27,160, an increase of almost 90%. While progress is being made in revitalizing Hawaiian, it is still not the dominant language of any stable geographically bound community. The vast majority of Hawaiian speakers are second language learners of varying abilities under the age of 30. Most of the speakers have learned and use their language through and around the reestablished Hawaiian-medium educational system.

Community Driven, State Public Education Efforts

The Hawaiian-medium educational system is serving learners from 9 months old all the way through to those in the four-year undergraduate and graduate degree granting Hawaiian Language College programs at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. “Hawaiian-medium” is being defined as a learning environment where all the coursework, regardless of content, is taught entirely through the Hawaiian language and all those on the campus, including administrative and support staff, fulfill their roles and duties through the Hawaiian language as well. The foundation of this entire effort is the non-profit ‘Aha Pūnana Leo that was founded in 1893 to establish private total Hawaiian-medium language “nests” for children below the age of five. This family-based early childhood learning environment’s vision continues to be “E Ola Ka ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i” – *The Hawaiian Language Shall live*. There are now 11 of these Pūnana Leo family-based early childhood learning centers throughout the State, serving just under 300 children and their families each year.

Its humble beginnings and crystal clear vision have defined the success of the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo and the greater Hawaiian language movement overall. This movement was built on, and continues to be galvanized by, support from Pūnana Leo parents and the extended Hawaiian

family system – from building playgrounds, cleaning classrooms, and in the early days helping to cut and paste Hawaiian translations over English books to lobbying local, state and national legislators to modify and even reverse laws to allow for the education of their children in their indigenous language. Parents have grown in their learning and development right alongside their *keiki* or children, engaging in adult language learning programming provided at the preschools and even beyond the Pūnana Leo environment. Many family and community members, being encouraged by the sense of purpose they feel in contributing to the language movement, have gone on to pursue their own higher education, and become leaders in the movement as teachers, administrators and advocates.

Two years after the first Pūnana Leo preschoolers were ready for matriculation into kindergarten, the small nucleus of families then lobbied the State to provide for the continued education of their children through the Hawaiian language in the public school system. They built their case for support on the fact that the Hawaiian language, alongside English, is one of Hawai‘i’s two official languages (given the 1978 amendment to the State constitution.) With support from the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo that provided teachers, supplies, curriculum and of course the family and community network, what would grow become a K-12 program in Hawai‘i’s public school system began, referred to by the Hawaiian term “Kaiapuni Hawai‘i” (Hawaiian environment education) and by the English term “Hawaiian Immersion.” As these Pūnana Leo graduates progressed through elementary school, the Kaiāpuni program grew with them, adding a new grade each year. In 1999, the first seniors to be educated entirely through Hawaiian in over 100 years graduated from high school. There are now 19 K-12 sites throughout the State: 6 elementary schools, 5 intermediate-high schools, and 8 full kindergarten through 12th grade schools. All total, these K-12 sites, along with the Pūnana Leo preschools, and the Hawaiian language college, serve approximately 3,000 Hawaiian-speaking students a year; a drastic improvement compared to the number of speakers prior to the establishment of the Pūnana Leo and the start of the current movement.

As this educational system has developed and grown over the past 30 years, the infrastructure necessary to ensure a quality academic experience, grounded in a uniquely Hawaiian approach to education, has also developed. Educational philosophies such as the *Kumu Honua Mauli Ola* have become the foundation of curriculum development, teacher training, strategy, and theory. Developing culturally-relevant assessment instruments and systems for ensuring not only that the program is academically rigorous but is also aligned with the language and perspective that drives learning has been another critical component of growth. Hawai‘i’s public school system started as a Hawaiian-medium program so there was historical evidence that students could be taught and achieve academic success through the native language. So it follows that the flagship preschool-12th grade site, Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u, on the island of Hawai‘i, has held a 100% high school graduation rate and 87% college entrance rate since its first graduating class in 1999; statistics that far exceed those of the non-Hawaiian-medium counterparts of Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u. Graduates have gone on to institutions of higher education throughout the

State of Hawai‘i and beyond, including esteemed ivy league colleges in the United States, and even institutions abroad like Oxford. Early Kaiapuni Hawai‘i students and graduates are now well into their careers showcasing their achievements and academic success whether they be homemakers and farmers or medical doctors and attorneys. Most importantly perhaps, is that these graduates have now become parents themselves, using Hawaiian in the home, enrolling their families in this Hawaiian-medium education system; taking the movement into a new generation.

The successes of schools taught through Hawaiian have been the driving force in revitalizing the Hawaiian language. They have also played a major role in encouraging enrollments in Hawaiian language courses in English-medium public high schools – approximately 10,000 in 2010. Providing another avenue for expanded Hawaiian language and culture knowledge are Hawaiian focused charter schools taught through English. These environments often teach Hawaiian as a formal second language and use much Hawaiian terminology in other activities. Enrollments in English-medium Hawaiian culture-based charter schools in 2011-2012 were 1,235 and, like Kaiapuni Hawai‘i, are growing.

Approximately 11% of the school population in Hawai‘i attends private schools. Large private schools enrolling the elite have sought to strengthen their Hawaiian identity through Hawaiian language courses and through recruiting students from Kaiapuni Hawai‘i sites. This is especially true of the private Kamehameha Schools for Native Hawaiians. Kamehameha Schools is a private charitable educational trust endowed by the will of Hawaiian Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop (1831-1884), the great-granddaughter and last direct descendant of King Kamehameha I. As of June 30, 2014, the overall fair market value of the Kamehameha Schools endowment was \$11.0 billion. While Kamehameha is well-endowed and has educated thousands of Native Hawaiians for over 125 years, they have long struggled with their history of Hawaiian language and culture suppression. Many of the founders, initial teachers and families of the Pūnana Leo and Kaiapuni Hawai‘i schools were graduates of Kamehameha, having been drawn to something that allowed them to contribute and give back to strengthening their culture and language. Furthermore, as the Pūnana Leo and Kaiapuni Hawai‘i grew and began driving the modern movement, a resurgence of teaching and learning Hawaiian began at Kamehameha. In the early 1980’s, there was just one Hawaiian language teacher on campus. Now, Hawaiian language is a requirement for graduation and language is taught from elementary through high school, where hundreds of Native Hawaiian students are learning Hawaiian as a second language there now.

One of the most valuable results of this education-based language revitalization movement is not only the increase in the number of speakers, whether in the Hawaiian-mediums schools themselves or the educational programs beyond that have been impacted by these Hawaiian-medium schools, but also the return of a Hawaiian world-view that is grounded and codified in the language. These students, graduates and families involved in the core of the language movement are now equipped with their native language and can use it in school, at

home, and in the community. They also have a natural tendency to see the world and their relationships – to each other and to place – and their role in the greater community from a Hawaiian lens, one that comes into clear focus and view because of their grounding in the language. These homemakers, teachers, farmers, policemen, firefighters, building contractors, medical doctors, legislators, attorneys, business owners and managers have become “change agents” for our Hawaiian language, culture, and worldview in our indigenous community here in Hawai‘i. This may be a “by-product” of reestablishing a infant-toddler through doctoral degree formal education program, but the ability to permeate and impact the broader community via these “change agents” raised in and through this system is what will lead towards a greater “normalization” of our language and culture here in our homeland once again.

Using the power of media for further “Normalization”

The tireless efforts of the Pūnana Leo leadership and families who initiated the language revitalization efforts have earned the organization a reputation as the forerunner of the overall Hawaiian language movement. As a result, the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo (‘APL) was presented with an amazing opportunity in March 2008 to do a week-long broadcast of news segments in Hawaiian on the national, mainstream non-government commercial CBS television’s affiliate in Hawai‘i, whose call letters are KGMB. The initiative was met with a tremendous response. The ‘APL team and KGMB were inundated with emails and phone calls and even press coverage on the program itself, *‘Āha‘i ‘Ōlelo Ola*, or Messenger of a Living Language. Thanks in no small part to this outpouring of support and desire for such programming, on the third day of air, KGMB announced that ‘Āha‘i ‘Ōlelo Ola would be a permanent segment. Broadcast media has become a very powerful tool for increasing the conscious awareness of the community regarding the capacity of the Hawaiian language and reshaping attitudes about the status of the Hawaiian language as a functioning, living language.

After ‘APL was given the opportunity to move into broadcast television as another venue to promote language normalization, it partnered to help develop the only all-Hawaiian language and culture content broadcast media initiative, ‘Ōiwi Television Network (‘ŌiwiTV). ‘Ōiwi TV’s Hawaiian language programming is a direct product of the language movement that had been building momentum for decades. Fueled by passion and determination and equipped with 21st century technology, ‘ŌiwiTV overcame the obstacles to entering the media industry with support from key partners, including Oceanic Time Warner Cable, the Kamehameha Schools, and the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo. ‘ŌiwiTV’s mission is to leverage the power of media to engage, entertain and educate as a means to strengthen the Hawaiian language, culture and overall identity. In pursuit of this mission, ‘ŌiwiTV has these as their three priorities:

1. **Being a Catalyst for Change:** Being familiar with the historical struggles of the Hawaiian people and acknowledging the current status given the circumstances of the past, ‘Ōiwi TV is scripting a new narrative; one that will challenge current paradigms and

ensure the influence and capacity of things Hawaiian for future generations.

2. **Being an Instrument for Normalization:** ‘ŌiwiTV is at the forefront of a movement using broadcast media to once again make *‘ōlelo Hawai‘i* (Hawaiian language), *mo‘omeheu* (culture), and *kuana‘ike* (perspective) normal here in Hawai‘i. ‘ŌiwiTV is working to raise the status, understanding, and application of things Hawaiian as this adds value to contemporary society as a whole here in Hawai‘i.
3. **Being Educators:** ‘ŌiwiTV is an educational venue providing news and entertainment that reinforces a Hawaiian identity, with a particular emphasis on providing much-needed resources to the Hawaiian medium and immersion programs.

This was a general overview of what have become the major avenues we have used to revitalize and normalize our ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i within an American context where government plays a much smaller role in providing services for linguistic minority groups. These features are: an informal and formal community- and family-based Hawaiian-medium educational program (preschool – graduate degrees) that is now engrained in the State public school system and a budding broadcast media initiative. There has definitely been a wealth of other by-products and supplemental programs and accomplishments, including the growth of modern Hawaiian arts and artisans, the development of a bilingual, informal science center, and budding Native Hawaiian businesses owned and operated by speakers who use Hawaiian daily in their work to name a few. While we have much more to do, we are listing below some of the core tenets of what we think are fundamental to our success thus far and hope they prove relevant to our global indigenous ‘ohana (family), working to revitalize and normalize their ‘ōlelo.

Recommendations and Take-Away’s from the Hawaiian language movement

1. Longevity and long-term success must be driven by the community and the families therein.

While language policy, financial resource, along with buy-in and support from government agencies are critical to language revitalization and normalization, a language will not live without speakers to speak it. It is ultimately family and community members, no matter how few in number, who will start and keep a language movement going. When the movement started in Hawai‘i, there was no public or private money for programming, there were very few native speakers left, and any formal language teaching was nominal and not producing fluent speakers. However the passion and drive of individuals who had an aloha or love for their indigenous language and the way of life defined by that language made a conscious decision to **just do something** about it. They were committed and found like-minded individuals to join them. That aloha for our ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i has truly been the driving force behind our accomplishments to date. Resources have grown over time and so too has policy and some government support, but those

are not what sparked the revolution and neither will they drive it forward towards that vision of “E Ola ka ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i.”

2. Government recognition and official standing/capacity of the indigenous language provides a fundamental foundation to build programming and policy from.

Building upon a strong community effort, policy and government support of the native language must be established. Hawaiians have a history of engaging in government, up to, during, and after the illegal overthrow of the kingdom; that was no different once the language movement started. It was Hawaiians who inserted themselves into the 1978 State constitutional convention who provided for the amendment making ‘ōlelo Hawaii an official language of the State. It was Pūnana Leo parents who fought to remove the 100-year-old law banning the use of Hawaiian as a medium for education. Parents, teachers, and administrators have since continued to fight for parity as it relates to resources and status afforded to the Hawaiian language by the State and Federal government, from education to media. It is an ongoing and necessary battle, but each accomplishment becomes a building block added to the foundation and structure upon which further, better policy is built.

3. Education innovation, grounded in traditional knowledge, is key.

As noted in Hawai‘i’s 19th century monarch, Kamehameha III’s quote regarding his kingdom being one of education, Hawai‘i has a long history of placing great importance on education. It was fitting and somewhat intentional that formal education end up being the chosen pathway to reclaim our language, since it was from within the educational system that our language was attacked via the 1896 ban on its use in schooling. Teaching our youth through the language serves many fundamental purposes; from proving the capacity of the language itself as one of academic potential, but also being a context to for empowering future generations to be the change agents we need. Equipping our children with education in any language is fundamental to the livelihood of a people, but even greater is the impact when this is accomplished through our indigenous language. Indigenous-medium education unlocks knowledge and opens doors, but does so through that unique indigenous lens that also unlocks the unique contribution that we as indigenous people have to offer each other and the world around us. This education must seek to be both cutting edge and at the same time be grounded in a traditional set of values, norms, and guiding principles; ones that acknowledge and perpetuate the indigenous world view. The expectation for academic performance must be as high, if not higher than those of our non-indigenous counterparts because we owe that to the legacy of our ancestors.

4. Use of media and technology is a critical “make it or break it” point.

Our work to revitalize our ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i in our homeland would have continued to progress regardless of breaking into using broadcast and social media as another venue and strategy.

However, the power of media to exponentially increase the reach of our language programming, change the “face” of things indigenous, and legitimize our ‘ōlelo as something viable in this day and age, has catapulted us to another level. Coupled with the use of the “mechanism” of media is the development of a “marketing” mindset in order to reach out and educate a broad audience on the reason “why” holding on to our indigenous languages is so important, not only to us as indigenous peoples, but to non-indigenous people as well. Making things indigenous appealing and relative is key to a thriving indigenous presence. Media has become a true mechanism for “normalizing” things indigenous, namely our language. We hear and “see” it being used in places and by people and entities that we would have never impacted through our education and “school” settings.

5. Collaboration with other indigenous language movements leads to greater efficiency and innovation.

Initially, our efforts in Hawai‘i started alongside the growing movement amongst our Māori cousins in Aotearoa with their “Kōhanga Reo” and “Kura Kaupapa”, the parallels of the Pūnana Leo and Kula Kaiapuni Hawai‘i. Our relationships with other language efforts internationally and in the United States of America with other Native American efforts have kept us motivated and informed. We have become a recognized leader in a global movement of indigenous peoples, we are constantly humbled and enriched by all of the unique contributions that each movement has to bring to the collective. We work collaboratively on everything from education strategy, assessment and evaluation to policy and fundraising. Because almost all of us as indigenous peoples are minorities in our own homelands and represent a small percentage of the world’s population, there is no way we will succeed if we do not collaborate. Along these lines, the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo is working together with the Hawaiian Language College at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo – via a public, private partnership with initial seed money from a private foundation – to develop a Global Center for Indigenous Language Excellence. This is the next step in bringing structure to what has been happening organically for years in terms of these critical global collaborations.

We understand that the experiences of each indigenous group are unique and that some of the experiences and successes of Native Hawaiian language revitalization may not apply to other indigenous language revitalization and normalization efforts or may not apply in the same way to other indigenous efforts. We do however hope this paper and our interaction at the expert group meeting will prove to be beneficial to our ‘ohana ‘ōiwi (indigenous family) around the world. For more insight and resources on the efforts here in Hawai‘i, these are the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo and ‘ŌiwiTV websites: ahapunanaleo.org, oiwi.tv.

Mahalo nui for this opportunity to participate in this global effort to ensure our indigenous languages will continue to thrive for future generations.