



# KA HUAKA'I

Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment **2021**

EXECUTIVE  
SUMMARY

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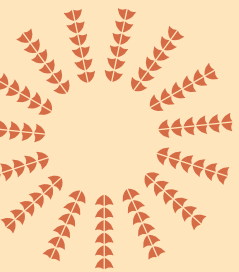
Kamehameha Schools

## Mo'okū'auhau—Origins

Our title, *Ka Huaka'i*, refers to the journey of resistance, resilience, and resurgence among Native Hawaiians toward a brighter future for the lāhui (nation, people). This story of Native Hawaiian well-being is woven from a wellspring of diverse perspectives informed by literature and research, community 'ike (knowledge), and a wide array of national and local data sources.

This volume of *Ka Huaka'i* builds on a mo'okū'auhau, a genealogy of people and mana (spirit) across time and space, from which evolved foundational understandings of Native Hawaiian education and well-being. As with earlier editions produced by Kamehameha Schools in 1983, 1993, 2005, and 2014, *Ka Huaka'i 2021* draws from multidisciplinary approaches and perspectives to understand the interrelated factors that advance a thriving future.

This volume extends the work of previous editions by providing county and region-specific insights to highlight the unique conditions of Native Hawaiians in different communities. Furthermore, *Ka Huaka'i 2021*, which was largely written during the first year of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, provides initial perspectives around potential impacts of this global health and economic crisis on Native Hawaiian well-being.



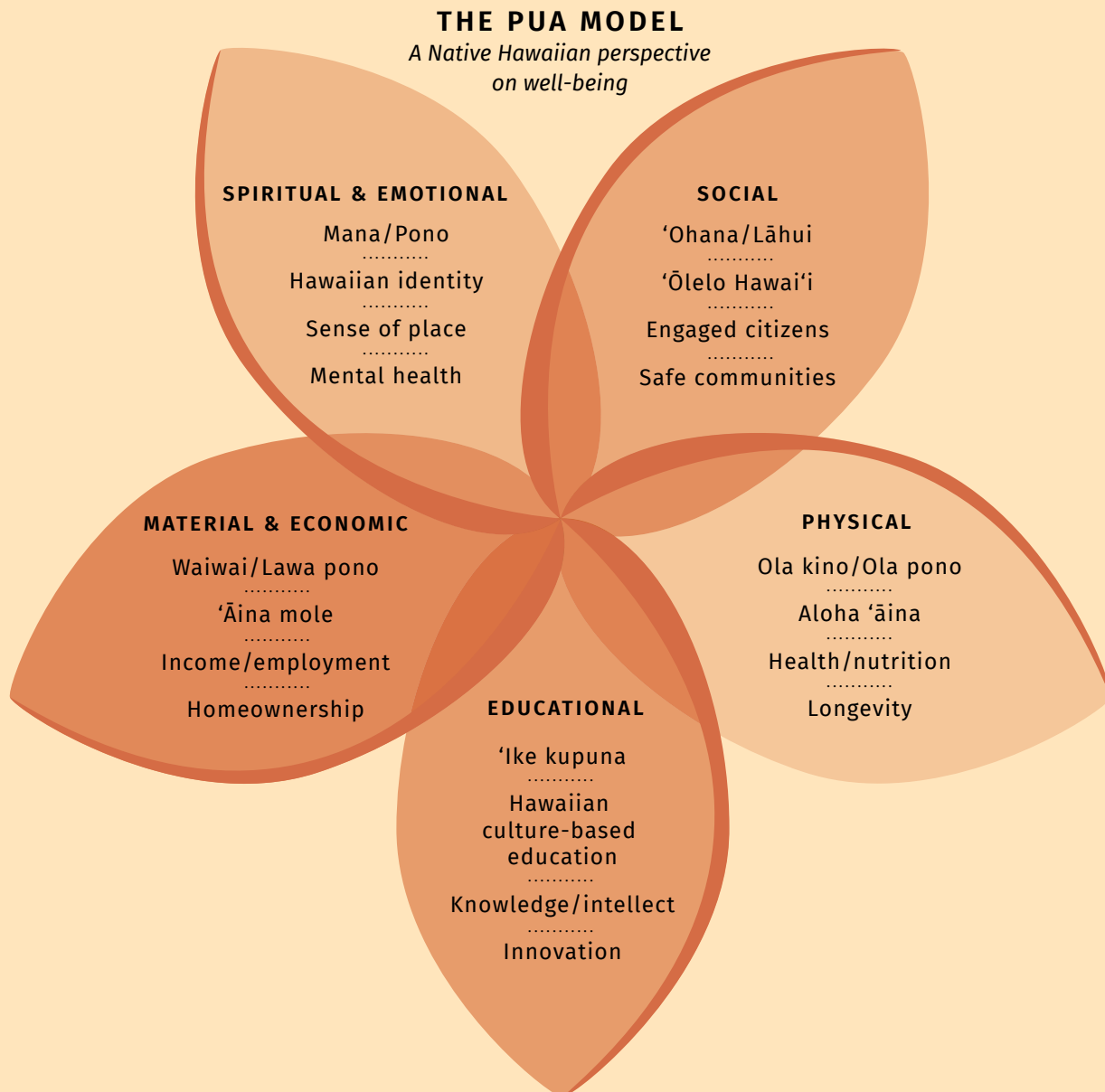
## Kumuhana—Purpose

*“Mōhala i ka wai ka maka o ka pua—Flowers thrive where there is water, as thriving people are found where living conditions are good.”* PUKUI 1983, 237

*Ka Huaka'i 2021* is intended to be a trusted resource for educators, administrators, advocates, policymakers, and scholars to assess strengths, needs, and opportunities to improve the educational experiences and well-being of Native Hawaiians. Educational outcomes are a major focus throughout the volume, with the belief that education is a lifelong journey of wide-ranging experiences and opportunities that feed individual and collective well-being.



As in the 2005 edition, *Ka Huaka'i 2021* presents a conceptual model of well-being from a Native Hawaiian perspective. This “Pua Model” depicts five interconnected dimensions of well-being: Social, Physical, Educational, Material and Economic, and Spiritual and Emotional. These five dimensions provide a holistic framework for assessing the well-being of adults, families, and communities (Chapter 1), young children (Chapter 2), and school-age children (Chapter 3).





# Kilo—Reflections on Native Hawaiian Well-Being

By using the Pua Model to examine well-being holistically, *Ka Huaka'i 2021* illuminates the shifting waters and winds experienced by Native Hawaiians. Looking broadly, our analysis of statistics, trends, and community 'ike reveals areas of momentum that show notable gains and signs of progress. We also observe stubborn and persistent concerns and barriers to well-being that require revisiting, reassessing, and redirecting. The reflections that follow summarize these broad observations.



## Areas of Momentum

In many areas, momentum is *increasing* and reinforcing progress in 'Ōiwi (Native) collective efficacy.

One of the most encouraging trends is the sea change in understanding the **role of culture in education**. This wave of change has been led by courageous immersion and charter school communities over the past four decades, which set the course for today's learners and leaders to create a thriving **Hawaiian culture-based education** system. The kūpuna (elders), 'ohana (families), kumu (teachers), and haumāna (students) of this movement are now harnessing the potential of this learning system to create **intergenerational change**, to reverse historical trauma, and to generate positive and sustained outcomes. This legacy of teaching and learning, based on Native Hawaiian values and practices, is starting to be **normalized** across Hawai'i's educational landscape. Today, Hawaiian culture-based education is **increasingly common** across our educational systems, and mounting research shows its positive effects for Indigenous youth. The **collective energy** around Hawaiian culture-based

education serves to counterbalance system vulnerabilities and disparities facing the lāhui. Increasing momentum is also evident in progress toward **universal prekindergarten** and the rising prominence of **‘āina-based education**, which is steadily changing mindsets, landscapes, and systems, acknowledging that a degraded ‘āina (land) hurts us all.

Beyond education, we are witnessing momentum in the socialization of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language), where the number of speakers has blossomed in recent decades, especially among children. The abundance of our **mo‘omeheu** (cultural resources) is becoming more obvious, linking our past, present, and future in deep and dynamic ways. **‘Ōiwi leadership** perspectives are increasingly evident in initiatives, policies, programs, and critical dialogues about island resiliency and earth justice. Signs of progress are also apparent as conventional health practices begin to shift toward **holistic and comprehensive frameworks** that reinforce the interrelated dimensions of well-being and affirm Indigenous perspectives on health.

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New momentum demonstrates greater community capacity to mobilize and protect sacred places like **Mauna Kea**, and to link hands around the world in caring for our oceans, as championed by the **Mālama Honua** Worldwide Voyage. Heightened **community activism** is being fueled by ‘ike kupuna (ancestral knowledge and wisdom), strong values, greater access to historical and cultural information, and dissatisfaction with the status quo, especially among our young people. A more **prominent Indigenous voice**, especially from younger generations, is influencing multiple segments of society,

particularly regarding the use of ‘āina. Locally, **social entrepreneurship** and **innovation** have grown significantly as new Indigenous players and ideas design more equitable, triple-bottom-line futures. And within higher education, **Native Hawaiian faculty representation** and **scholarship** are on the rise across the University of Hawai‘i system.



# 2

## Areas of Concern

Even as cultural vibrancy and collective efficacy uplift our people, troubled waters are evident as Native Hawaiian families experience disparate economic and other challenges.

For example, about half of Native Hawaiian families with young keiki (children) do not earn a **livable wage**. Compared with the major ethnicities in Hawai'i, Native Hawaiians continue to have the highest rates of **poverty** and **unemployment**. Although the proportion of Native Hawaiian children with a working parent has increased, Native Hawaiian parents, as a whole, tend to have comparatively **lower levels of education and employment**. Native Hawaiians are disproportionately employed in **lower-wage jobs**, even among those with higher levels of education. Native Hawaiian **homeownership** rates in Hawai'i have stagnated since 2006, whereas home prices and rents have increased substantially, contributing to increased **homelessness**. In the face of these and other economic constraints, Native Hawaiians are the only ethnic group in Hawai'i with consistently **more people leaving** than entering the islands over the past fifteen years.

Native Hawaiians also face challenging health and social conditions that intersect with economic disparities. For example, although **cancer incidence** among Native Hawaiians is similar to that of other ethnicities, Native Hawaiians contract cancer at younger ages and have higher fatality rates. Moreover, about one in five Native Hawaiians suffers from **poor mental health**—a condition that is more pronounced among those with lower levels of education and income, mirroring trends for Indigenous peoples across the United States. Within the **foster care system**, Native Hawaiian keiki are overrepresented, though recent years have brought slightly lower rates and higher likelihood of keiki being placed with relatives. Among adults, increased arrests and **incarceration** rates for Native Hawaiians create major obstacles in the path toward a thriving lāhui.

Stubborn health, social, and economic barriers have profound impacts on Native Hawaiian education progress and learning. Educational data show large **achievement gaps** between Native Hawaiian learners and their peers—a trend that has persisted for decades. Additionally, a “**school-to-prison pipeline**” in Hawai‘i disproportionately affects Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander children, which can impact in- and out-of-school **suspensions**. In fact, Hawai‘i has the longest school suspension periods in the nation, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students are more likely than their peers to be suspended, losing 75 days of instruction per 100 students. All these obstacles, in turn, influence educational outcomes such as **high school completion**—an accomplishment that one in five Native Hawaiians does not achieve.

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These areas of momentum and concern for Native Hawaiian well-being suggest that our current social and educational systems are in need of repair and reimagining. Solving systemic challenges calls for a reactivation of our superpower as a Native people: our strong roots in ‘**ohana, community, ‘āina, and spiritual connections**. This inherent strength among Kānaka Maoli (Native, Indigenous people) leads us to revive our Native practices and reignite ancestral knowledge to solve contemporary challenges. Within this broad context of strengths and values that guide our work of repairing and reimagining at the systems level, we now turn to specific findings and recommendations for Native Hawaiian well-being.










## ‘Ike waiwai—Key findings and recommendations

Consistent with the Pua model, we summarize a wealth of key findings and recommendations by each dimension of well-being presented in *Ka Huaka’i 2021*. The findings are further categorized in terms of strengths and gains, mixed results, and challenges and opportunities. The data that inform our key findings draw primarily from internal analysis and research, augmented by findings from secondary data sources and studies. We further acknowledge that the data behind our key findings are largely based on Western models and are therefore limited in providing a comprehensive picture of Native Hawaiian well-being. These limitations serve as a reminder to more aggressively develop other types of data that are holistic, strengths based, and culturally appropriate.



# Educational Well-Being

## STRENGTHS AND GAINS

**Preschool enrollment** More than half (52 percent) of eligible Native Hawaiian keiki are enrolled in preschool, a rate that is higher than the statewide average.

**Student-to-teacher ratios** K-12 public schools with high concentrations of Native Hawaiian students have lower student-to-teacher ratios, compared with schools with fewer Native Hawaiians.

**College enrollment** Native Hawaiian students demonstrate the largest gains in college enrollment since 2005, relative to rates among Hawai'i's other major ethnicities.

## MIXED RESULTS

**Advanced placement (AP) enrollment** Cohorts of Native Hawaiian students in public schools saw an upward trend in AP enrollment, increasing from 12 to 17 percent between 2013 and 2017; however, rates among Native Hawaiians were the lowest of Hawai'i's major ethnicities. Regions with the highest proportion of Native Hawaiians taking AP courses are Leeward (22 percent), West Hawai'i (21 percent) and Windward (20 percent).

**Dual credit enrollment** The percentage of Native Hawaiian high schoolers enrolled in dual credit courses increased from 7 to 15 percent between 2013 and 2017; however, compared with their peers from other major ethnicities, Native Hawaiians were the least likely to earn six or more dual credits. Among regions, Leeward has the highest proportion of Native Hawaiians taking dual credit courses (21 percent).

**Degree attainment** The proportion of Native Hawaiians with a bachelor's degree or higher increased over a ten-year period, rising from 15 to 17 percent between 2008 and 2017. However, Native Hawaiians continue to be far less likely than other major ethnicities to attain a bachelor's degree.

Native Hawaiian students demonstrate the largest gains in college enrollment, relative to rates among Hawai'i's other major ethnicities.



## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**Childcare availability** Based on findings from DeBaryshe (2017d), childcare is relatively inaccessible in rural areas such as Kauaʻi, Molokaʻi, and Lānaʻi.

**Chronic absenteeism** Compared with other major ethnicities in Hawaiʻi’s public schools, Native Hawaiian students continue to exhibit the highest rates of chronic absenteeism. At the regional level, Leeward schools have the highest rates of chronic absenteeism among Native Hawaiian students.

**Special education** Native Hawaiian students are more than twice as likely as their Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese peers to be enrolled in special education. The Windward region has the highest proportion of Native Hawaiians enrolled in special education, followed by East Hawaiʻi, Honolulu, and North Shore.

**Achievement** Compared with their peers from other major ethnicities, Native Hawaiian students have the lowest rates of proficiency on standardized tests for language arts, mathematics, and science, with no increases in language arts and mathematics from 2015 to 2017 and only slight increases in science. The Leeward region is seeing the lowest proficiency rates within these subject areas.

**High school completion** One in every five Native Hawaiian high schoolers does not graduate on time.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Normalize **Hawaiian culture-based education** and make it available to all learners in Hawaiʻi (see “[Kāhea](#)”).

Establish a **universal early learning system** that integrates public prekindergarten, family-child interaction learning, and community-based preschools.

Tackle equity in **broadband access and technology**. More specifically:

- ▶ Ensure Native Hawaiian learners have reliable devices for distance learning.

- ▶ Advocate for high-quality distance learning programs and systems.

Replicate the successes of Hawaiian-focused charter and private schools in terms of **high school completion rates**.

Develop change-ready ʻŌiwi leaders by supporting **next-gen skills and certifications** through community-based, school-to-business partnerships focused on future economies.

# Physical Well-Being

## STRENGTHS AND GAINS

**Prenatal care and birthweight** More than eight in ten Native Hawaiian women receive prenatal care as early as they want. Further, the percentage of low-birthweight Native Hawaiian infants (8 percent) is lower than that of most other major ethnicities in Hawai'i.

**Health insurance** The insured rate among Native Hawaiian individuals increased to 97 percent in 2017, a rate on par with the Hawai'i total. Across regions, North Shore, Central, Honolulu, Windward, and Maui have the highest rates of health insurance coverage among Native Hawaiians.

**Cholesterol** Native Hawaiians have the second-lowest rate of high cholesterol among the major ethnicities in Hawai'i.

**Physical activity** The percentage of Native Hawaiian adults who meet the federal guideline for physical activity (28 percent) is among the highest across major ethnic groups. Native Hawaiian youth, compared with other major ethnicities, are more likely to be physically active.

**Secondhand smoke** The percentage of Native Hawaiian middle and high school students who breathed secondhand smoke in a public place (42 percent) is lower than the Hawai'i total (47 percent).

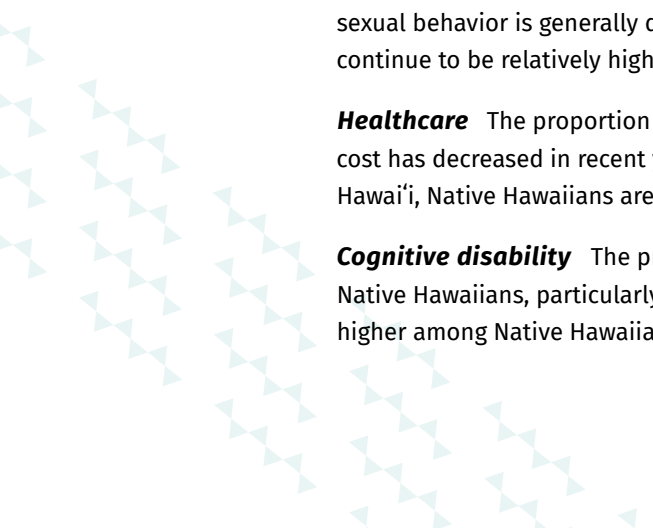
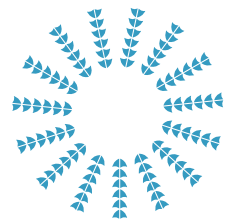
## MIXED RESULTS

**Infant mortality** Infant deaths are declining among Native Hawaiians; however, rates remain higher than those of Hawai'i's other major ethnicities. At the county level, Hawai'i county has seen the greatest decline in the proportion of Native Hawaiian infant deaths, while Kaua'i county has seen an uptick.

**Risky behaviors** Engagement in risky behaviors such as marijuana use, smoking, and sexual behavior is generally declining among Native Hawaiian students, although rates continue to be relatively high.

**Healthcare** The proportion of Native Hawaiians who missed a doctor's visit because of cost has decreased in recent years; however, compared with other major ethnicities in Hawai'i, Native Hawaiians are among the most likely to miss a doctor's visit due to cost.

**Cognitive disability** The prevalence of cognitive disability is trending downward among Native Hawaiians, particularly in Hawai'i county; however, rates of cognitive disability remain higher among Native Hawaiians than among other major ethnic groups.





## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**Maternal health** Hawai'i PRAMS data from 2019 show that maternal health measures such as obesity and substance use are relatively high among Native Hawaiian women, with binge drinking and smoking prior to pregnancy of particular concern. Certain counties experience heightened maternal health challenges including alcohol use (Kaua'i), illicit drugs (Maui), and smoking and unintended pregnancies (Hawai'i).

**Unintended pregnancies** Based on Hawai'i PRAMS findings from 2019, the rate of unintended pregnancies among all Native Hawaiian mothers (60 percent) is significantly higher than the Hawai'i average and is the third-highest relative to other major ethnicities.

**Health conditions** Compared with other major ethnicities, Native Hawaiians have higher rates of smoking, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, heart attack, disability, and cancer mortality. Native Hawaiian youth face comparatively higher rates of asthma and obesity.

**Poor physical health** Native Hawaiians are more likely than other major ethnicities in Hawai'i to be in poor overall physical health, despite a slight decline between 2013 and 2015.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Implement recommendations from the [Native Hawaiian Health Task Force](#), particularly:

- ▶ Establish an online database across state agencies to improve data sharing and quality.
- ▶ Include prekindergarten in public schools.
- ▶ Develop a state plan to incorporate the United Nations' [Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).
- ▶ Develop an undergraduate health sciences academy.

Eliminate **food deserts** in Hawai'i and increase access to **healthy, local food** by incentivizing the purchase of locally grown produce.

Adopt policies for state, city, and institutional **purchasing of local food** to support our local farmers and agriculture industry.

Increase **Native Hawaiian employment in healthcare**—especially the number of doctors, surgeons, and administrators.

Provide **insurance coverage** for traditional **Native Hawaiian health practices** such as lā'au lapa'au (herbal healing) and lomilomi (massage).



# Social Well-Being

## STRENGTHS AND GAINS

**Ties to ‘ohana and ‘āina** In a recent survey about decisions related to migration, Native Hawaiians were much more likely than other respondents to cite social connections to family, friends, community, and ‘āina as reasons to stay in the islands and to return to Hawai‘i after moving away.

**Community connectedness and safety** A 2018 statewide survey of Hawai‘i residents found that Native Hawaiians are more likely than their non-Native Hawaiian peers to feel connected to their community and to have positive perceptions of community safety.

**Family structure** In Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiian adults are the second-most likely to live in a family unit—a stable trend over the past decade. Among regions, Leeward has the highest percentage of Native Hawaiian households with children where grandparents are present.

## MIXED RESULTS

**Families with children** From 2008 to 2017, Native Hawaiians had the largest decrease in the percentage of family households with children, compared with Hawai‘i’s other major ethnicities.

**Single-parent families** In Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiian keiki are among the most likely to live in single-mother or single-father families. Looking at regional data, East Hawai‘i and Leeward have the highest percentage of Native Hawaiian family households led by a single mother.

**Living with a biological parent** Compared with children of other major ethnicities in Hawai‘i, young Native Hawaiian keiki are the least likely to live with a biological parent.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**Household structure** Among Native Hawaiian households, 86 percent have one or more occupants per room. Looking at housing units of Native Hawaiian-headed households across regions, the most crowding occurs in Leeward (27 percent) and Maui (20 percent).

**Child abuse and neglect** Native Hawaiians are disproportionately represented among those who experience child abuse and neglect.

**Partner abuse** The Hawai‘i Health Data Warehouse (2015a) indicates that Native Hawaiians and Caucasians experience the highest rates of physical abuse by an intimate partner (13 percent)—twice the rate of other major ethnicities.

**Arrests and incarceration** The Hawai'i Concurrent Resolution 85 Task Force on Prison Reform (2019) shows that across Hawai'i, Native Hawaiian adults and juveniles constitute the largest proportion of arrests for violent crime, aggravated assault, robbery, and drug manufacturing and sales. Native Hawaiians also constitute the largest share of Hawai'i's adult incarcerated population.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase access to and quality of **keiki and kupuna care** for a healthier social infrastructure.

- ▶ Streamline need-based financial assistance for childcare via the Department of Human Services' [Child Care Connection Hawai'i](#) and [Preschool Open Doors](#).
- ▶ Prioritize universal basic income and public funding for childcare and elder care services, which Jabola-Carolus (2020) has shown to be more effective in reducing public deficits and debt than austerity policies, boosting employment, earnings, economic growth, and gender equality.
- ▶ Support trauma-informed care assessments and services to strengthen schools and institutions that serve children and families, for example through initiatives based on [findings](#) of the Act 271 Trauma-informed Task Force.

Improve **broadband access and digital equity** to ensure families stay connected and have ample opportunities for learning, employment, and healthcare.

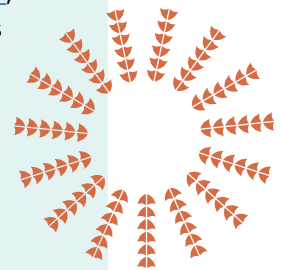
- ▶ Support recommendations of the [Hawai'i Broadband Initiative](#).

Implement recommendations from the [Hawai'i Concurrent Resolution 85 Task Force on Prison Reform](#).

- ▶ Develop a comprehensive strategy to address the overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in the criminal justice and correctional systems.
- ▶ Set goals and a timetable for reducing Hawai'i's prison population, particularly the number and percentage of Native Hawaiians in the correctional system.

Train government agencies on the principles of [Evaluation with Aloha](#), and adopt **Indigenous approaches** to research, evaluation, and well-being indicators.

Strengthen **public-private partnerships** for collaborative, community-driven, and system-building efforts in early learning, culture- and 'āina-based education, social entrepreneurship, and food system transformation.





# Material and Economic Well-Being

## STRENGTHS AND GAINS

**Employment** Comparing Native Hawaiians across regions, Honolulu has the highest employment rates, followed by North Shore, Central, and Windward. On Hawai'i Island, employment has increased steadily among Native Hawaiians in East Hawai'i.

**Livable income** Livable income increased between 2008 and 2017 among Native Hawaiian families, including those with young keiki and school-age children.

**Homeownership** All regions, except Honolulu, have Native Hawaiian owner-occupancy rates that exceed 50 percent. Kaua'i has the highest owner-occupancy rate (66 percent) among Native Hawaiians.

## MIXED RESULTS

**Employment** Looking specifically at Native Hawaiian school-age keiki, 89 percent have at least one working parent—a rate that approaches that of the Hawai'i total (91 percent); however, this percentage is lower than that of other major ethnicities. From a regional perspective, West Hawai'i has the highest proportion (97 percent) of Native Hawaiian children with at least one parent in the labor force.

**Income** Despite gains in livable income, Native Hawaiian families remain the least likely among the major ethnic groups to have a livable income.

**Public assistance** Across all regions, the proportion of Native Hawaiian households receiving public assistance income decreased between 2000 and 2015; however, Native Hawaiian households are more likely than households of other major ethnicities to receive public assistance.

**Homeownership** The owner-occupancy rate among Native Hawaiian households is 57 percent—the same as the Hawai'i total; however, this percentage has not changed significantly since 2006.



## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

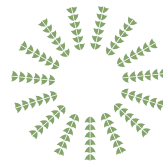
**Economic disadvantage** Of the five major ethnicities in Hawai'i, Native Hawaiians constitute the largest share of public school students with economic disadvantage, ranging from 36 to 34 percent between 2013 and 2017. The East Hawai'i region has the highest percentage of Native Hawaiian students with economic disadvantage (74 percent), followed by West Hawai'i (72 percent).

**Employment** The employment rate of Native Hawaiians (93 percent) is lower than the Hawai'i total (95 percent), and the 2008 recession had a disproportionately adverse effect on Native Hawaiian employment. Across regions, West Hawai'i, Maui, North Shore, and Kaua'i saw decreases in Native Hawaiian employment rates between 2000 and 2015. The lowest employment rate among Native Hawaiians is in Leeward (84 percent).

**Income** Relative to other major ethnicities in Hawai'i, Native Hawaiians have the lowest average family income (Kamehameha Schools 2019), the greatest proportion of households making \$49,999 or less per year, and are the least likely to have a livable income. In East Hawai'i and Leeward regions, the majority of Native Hawaiian family households do not have a livable income.

**Poverty** In Hawai'i, 14 percent of Native Hawaiian individuals live in poverty—the highest rate among all major ethnicities. The highest percentages of individuals living in poverty are in East Hawai'i (30 percent), Leeward (23 percent), and West Hawai'i (18 percent). Poverty among Native Hawaiian individuals is increasing in all regions except for Honolulu.

Native Hawaiian owner-occupancy rates exceed 50 percent in all regions, except Honolulu.





## RECOMMENDATIONS

Build an economy that focuses on meeting the **basic needs** of residents.

- ▶ Hawai'i residents note that key components of a strong, sustainable, future economy include livable wages and income, local food production and agriculture, and housing and healthcare that are affordable and accessible.

**Diversify the economy** by creating growth in agriculture and food systems and regenerative tourism and rebalancing growth in commercial use land development, government, and military development.

- ▶ Focus on increasing livable-wage jobs and circular economy solutions.
- ▶ Leverage goals from Hawai'i Green Growth and the [Aloha + Challenge](#).
- ▶ Take action through ['Āina Aloha Economic Futures](#).

Invest in **workforce transformations** to better align education, business, and community with future economic and employment opportunities.

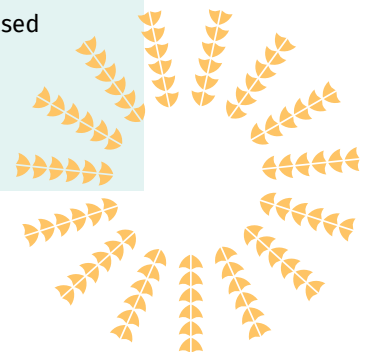
- ▶ Pay early childhood educators what they are worth by strengthening career pathways and providing opportunities for higher education and quality training.

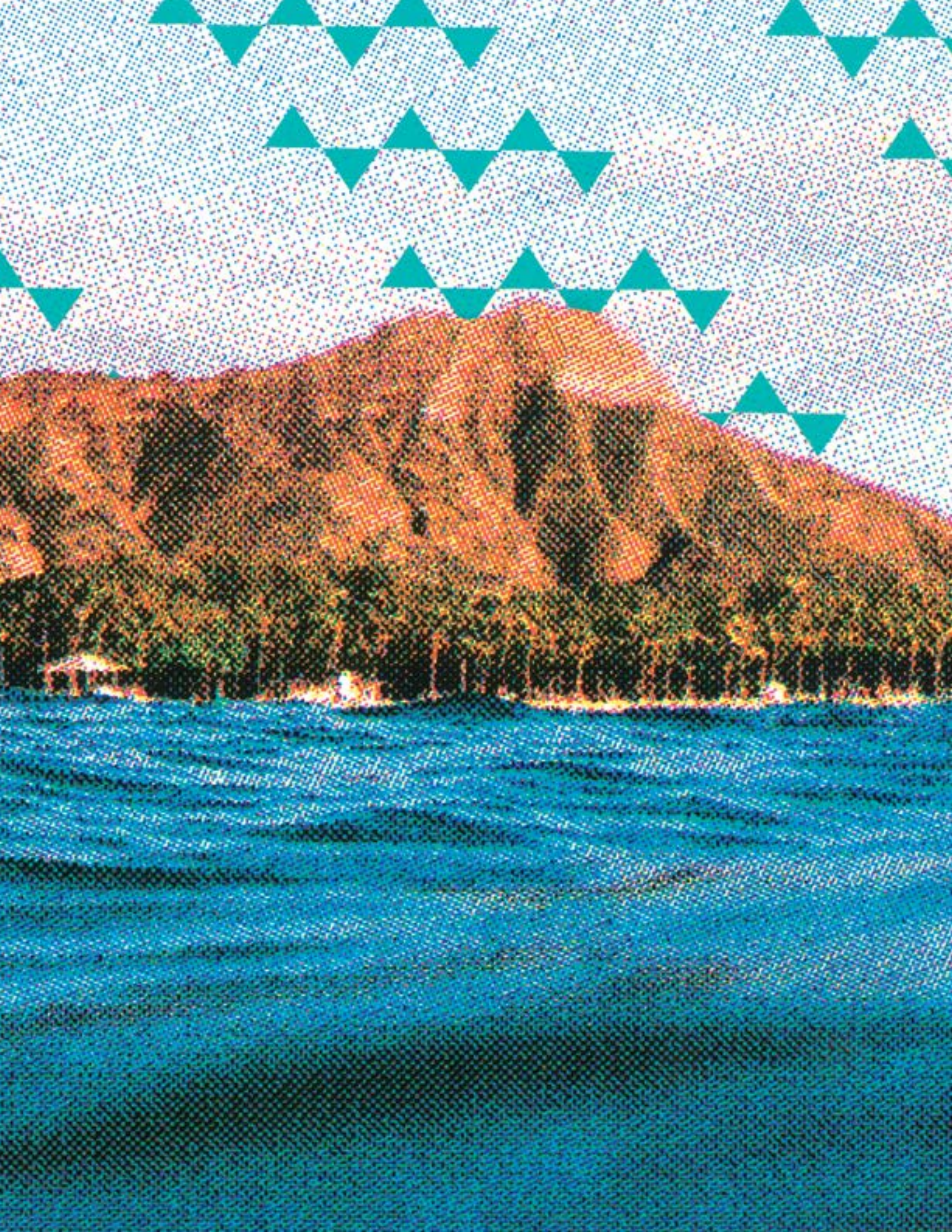
- ▶ Strengthen personalized learning and adult reskilling through student-centered approaches that extend dual credit, training/apprenticeships, and corporate certification opportunities to traditional and adult learners.
- ▶ Make career-connected learning a core component of public and private education so that k-12 schools and postsecondary institutions form strong, reciprocal relationships with businesses that ignite learners' passions and equip them with skills desired by employers.

Expand **innovation and entrepreneurship** networks to make Hawai'i more attractive and competitive for business.

- ▶ Leverage innovative ideas and networks to strengthen and reimagine Hawai'i's core sectors that impact well-being.
- ▶ Build competency and skills in data science to prepare learners and companies to compete effectively in a rapidly evolving knowledge economy.

Explore **social impact investing and social ventures** as a way of generating capital for community-based organizations.





# Spiritual and Emotional Well-Being

## STRENGTHS AND GAINS

**‘Āina** A 2018 statewide survey shows that the majority of Native Hawaiians (66 percent) report that ‘āina has important cultural, spiritual, and subsistence purposes. Furthermore, 38 percent of Native Hawaiians report interacting with the land for spiritual or religious reasons, compared with 21 percent among non-Native Hawaiians.

**Spirituality** Native Hawaiians are more likely than non-Native Hawaiians to draw inspiration from the lives of ancestors when faced with a challenging decision or task.

**Depression** The prevalence of depression decreased among Native Hawaiian adults in Hawai‘i county and among Native Hawaiian middle schoolers across Hawai‘i.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**Abuse** Compared with students from other major ethnicities, Native Hawaiians are among the most likely to endure emotional, sexual, or physical abuse from someone they are dating.

**Depression** Native Hawaiians have some of the highest rates of depression in Hawai‘i; from 2013 to 2016, rates increased among Native Hawaiian adults in all counties except Hawai‘i county.

**Mental health** One-fifth (20 percent) of Native Hawaiian adults report having poor mental health—a rate that is significantly higher than the Hawai‘i total (14 percent).



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Train government agency workers in **trauma-informed care**, and raise expectations around **emotional support** delivered by government programs and services.

End **homelessness** of Native Hawaiian keiki and their families through coordinated community approaches, prioritizing permanent housing and support services.

Increase access to **mental health services** among Native Hawaiians, including in rural or remote areas, to support coping strategies for depression and suicide.

Strengthen **social and emotional learning** through educator professional development and school-wide curricula, instruction, and assessment.

Provide **mental health screening** in schools to identify and treat special needs at younger ages.

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# Kāhea—Our Call to Action

## Ho‘oikaika i ke kahua: Strengthen the foundation of Hawaiian culture-based education

“O ke kahua ma mua, ma hope ke kūkulu—*The site first, and then the building.*” PUKUI 1983, 268

The specific recommendations above acknowledge that Native Hawaiian ingenuity, wisdom, and science are needed to solve the challenges facing Hawai‘i, the nation, and the planet. Many aspects of our educational, social, and political systems perpetuate inequities and must be addressed—our kāhea (call) is to strengthen the foundation of Hawaiian culture-based education as a key driver to rebalance systems so that they are pono (proper, aligned). By so doing, we will nurture the leaders, healers, and guardians who will restore—and in some cases, transform—our systems to produce more equitable outcomes, where all students achieve at high levels.

As such, we conclude this executive summary with a kāhea to cultivate, improve, and expand Hawaiian culture-based education as a viable learning system for all Hawai‘i learners.

# 1

## Welcome and build diverse approaches

The array of educational programs and partners exploring, expanding, and encouraging Hawaiian culture-based education creates an opportunity not only to increase community access to and perpetuation of ‘āina and language, but also to experiment with various models and practices and systematically test for the conditions within those models and practices that are most effective. We expect, for example, that some culture-based instructional approaches that are highly effective within a small, Hawaiian-focused charter school may not translate well to conventional public or private schools that have large class sizes or highly diverse student populations. Thoughtfully designed experiments and learning networks are needed to test Hawaiian culture-based education approaches in different environments, which in turn will facilitate the development of robust, evidence-based strategies for scaling. Along with testing different approaches, support must be directed toward continued noi‘i (research) and the expansion of evidence-based methods in Hawaiian culture-based education.

# 2

## BUILD ACROSS ALL LEVELS

The learning system for Hawaiian culture-based education must be structured to inform multiple organizational levels and a range of stakeholders—including teachers, principals, executives, parents, and community members. The learning system must also reflect the various configurations through which Hawaiian

culture-based education is integrated and bundled into existing work and priorities. Developing the technical infrastructure to facilitate the sharing of knowledge is key to the success of a multilevel system of learning. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has fueled a greater sense of urgency to create and share digital curricula and learning experiences.

Educational organizations like Kamehameha Schools, Hawaiian-focused charter schools,

and others need collaborative workspaces, processes, and forums to help ensure that all groups, including community partners, can share and benefit from the experiences and learnings of others within the system. Special focus should be placed on educational programs and policies to reconnect Native Hawaiian youth who have been underserved by our systems of care and education.

# 3

## Utilize on-the-ground expertise

Robust learning and evaluation systems are grounded in the experience and expertise of implementers who know the work, the context, and the questions that need to be answered. Consistent with best practices in culturally relevant evaluation, our questions and learning processes around Hawaiian culture-based education must be developed from a collaborative and participatory perspective (with and by Native Hawaiians). Including voices from a range of stakeholders will ensure that findings and application of knowledge are pono, meaningful, and relevant to our communities.

A critical component of this participatory evaluation strategy will be co-developing culturally grounded instruments for data collection. This requires tools that assess not only learner outcomes, but also the contexts where Hawaiian culture-based education is practiced, as well as the ripple effects across Kanaka Maoli families and communities. One promising pathway is to adopt and refine holistic assessments within existing Hawaiian-culture based curricular frameworks such as [Nā Hopena A’o \(HĀ\)](#), [E Ola!](#), and the [Vision of a Graduate](#), which extend definitions of student success beyond academic achievement.

# 4

## EMBRACE ADAPTATION

Organizational efforts must adapt to leverage Hawaiian culture-based education as a driver of broader systems change.

Such possibilities occasionally lead to veering “off road” into uncharted territory, with a roadmap that may be sketchy or imperfect. As a learning community, we will need to find our way through rapid data-action feedback loops, drawing on cutting-edge tools and methodologies to help our organizations continually adapt. Even more critical will be leaders at all levels who are bold, courageous, and flexible enough to change directions if we find ourselves headed down a wrong path. This means our learning systems will need to adapt and evolve over time to keep pace with emergent shifts.

An educational system rooted in Native Hawaiian values, language, and perspectives is vital to provide high-quality learning experiences that meet community needs now and into the future. Locally and globally, society is facing a public health crisis, financial instability, climate change, and social upheaval. The Western-industrial model of education has failed to provide the tools needed to bring harmony and balance to our world. Hawaiian culture-based education represents a bright spot for our people, for our education systems, and for lāhui well-being.

“Ua ao Hawai‘i ke ‘ōlino  
nei mālamalama—  
Hawai‘i is enlightened,  
for the brightness of  
day is here.”

PUKUI 1983, 305

Each chapter of *Ka Huaka‘i 2021* illuminates bright spots and stubborn challenges facing Native Hawaiians and Hawai‘i. Enlightened by this knowledge, and unified in purpose, we recognize that now is the time to bring transformative change to our families and communities. Mahalo.

To provide feedback on *Ka Huaka‘i 2021*, please take a short survey at this link: [https://kamehamehaschools.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eXyH81hFYN9ASi2](https://kamehamehaschools.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eXyH81hFYN9ASi2).

To receive occasional emails regarding research updates and data briefs from Kamehameha Schools, please join our mailing list at this link: [https://kamehamehaschools.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_554fkkVFoxWjiT4](https://kamehamehaschools.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_554fkkVFoxWjiT4).

*Ka Huaka'i 2021* is a holistic assessment of education and well-being for Native Hawaiians. As an example of 'Ōiwi scholarship, this volume contextualizes recent research and data using the “Pua Model” to examine Native Hawaiian strengths and well-being in multiple dimensions: social, physical, educational, material/economic, and spiritual/emotional. 'Ike is presented at the macro level—for the lāhui and Ka Pae 'Āina Hawai'i—and by specific regions and age groups. Findings point to both positive gains and persistent challenges for Kānaka Maoli, highlighting the importance of Hawaiian culture-based education as a pathway for learners to build a bright future for generations to come.

The journey to document the educational status and well-being of Native Hawaiians began with the *Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment* in 1983 and 1993, followed by *Ka Huaka'i 2005* and *2014*.

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*Ka Huaka'i 2021* was produced by the Strategy and Transformation group of Kamehameha Schools. Visit [www.ksbe.edu/ka\\_huakai/](http://www.ksbe.edu/ka_huakai/) to access the full publication and other reference materials and studies on Native Hawaiian well-being.

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