



Emergency Proclamations and Community Resilience in Hawai'i

Version 1.0

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Summary: The focus of this evidence synthesis is to provide context for the scope and meaning of emergency proclamations in the state of Hawai'i, specific to Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander health beliefs and worldviews. Consistent with the funding guidelines of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD) at the Department of Health (DOH), weather-focused, federal and state emergency proclamations declared between January 1st, 2018 and October 21st, 2021 are presented. Federal and state definitions related to disaster response are provided alongside an annotated bibliography of selected cultural health frameworks as a foundation for understanding a case study from Sust'ainable Moloka'i and their community-driven crisis management at the onset of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020.

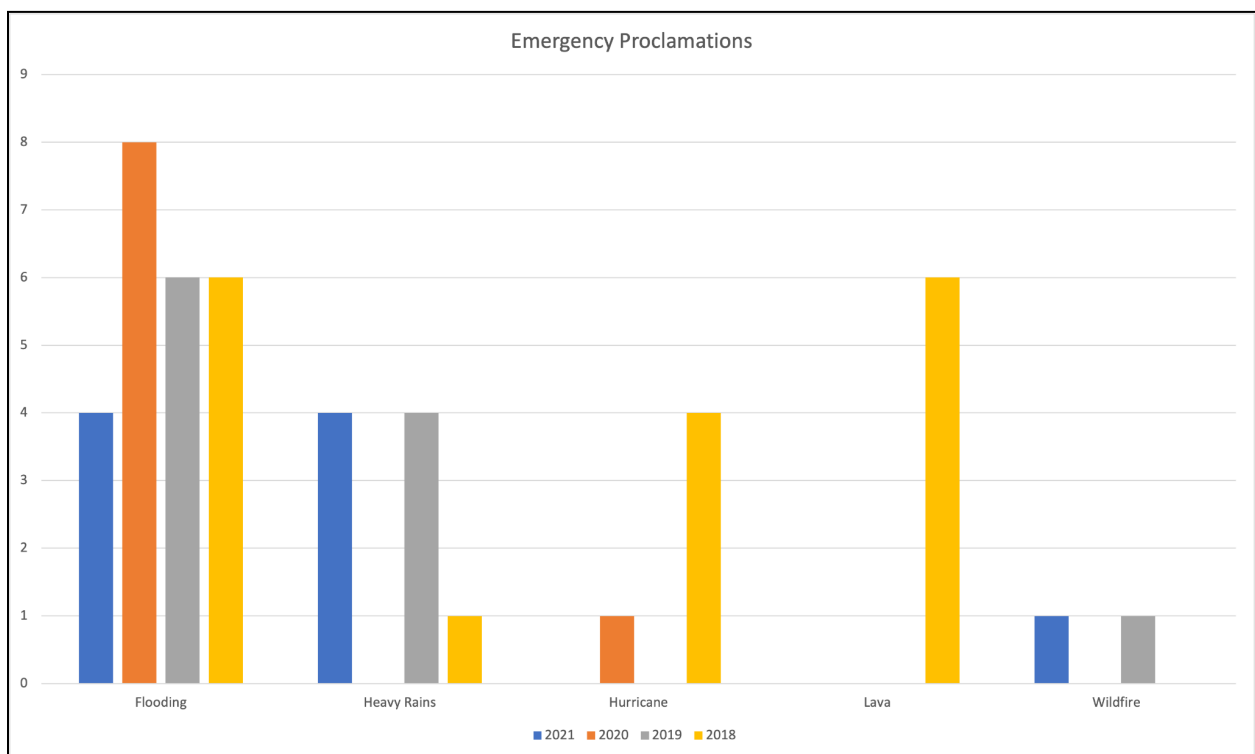
Background

Emergency proclamations are acts of governance that declare a state of emergency, coordinate response efforts and allocate funds to minimize harm. As an isolated archipelago in Oceania, Hawai'i faces emergencies that are unique among the contiguous United States. The purpose of this evidence synthesis is to provide context regarding the types of natural disasters common to the Hawaiian islands as well as the cultural

frames that govern community response. A case study is provided to demonstrate how cultural health frameworks have been successfully applied in Hawai'i to improve collective resilience in the face of disaster.

Methodology

Weather-focused, federal and state emergency proclamations covered by the State Disaster Response funds provided by



the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) were provided by ADAD. Federal and state definitions related to disaster response were pulled from SAMHSA Technical Assistance Publication Series (TAP) 34, federal policy 44 CFR § 206.171 and Hawai'i Revised Statutes §127A-2. Cultural frameworks presented in the annotated bibliography were identified by cultural advisors to the project and ratified by

the ADAD project coordinator and clinical psychologist supervisor. The case study was selected in response to needs and priorities raised by ADAD providers at the first monthly meeting following the COVID-19 lockdown. Using a talanoa approach (Violeti, 2006), or talking story, to conceptualize a cultural workforce training in relation to disaster.

Results/Findings

In looking at the data on disaster response, we began with statewide emergency proclamations since 2018. What we found was that although when we think about natural disaster in Hawai'i we may think of volcanic activity, we found other issues such as invasive species in the axis deer and the overwhelming majority of proclamations related to COVID-19. Apart from the pandemic, the majority of natural disasters are related to hurricanes, heavy rains and the flooding that results.

While we have been taught to believe in heavy rain as a disaster, Hawaiian epistemology teaches: "Ola i ka wai a ka 'ōpua" there is life in the water from the clouds. Rain gives life. Here, we present a culturally anchored approach to mitigating the mental health impacts of surviving natural disaster by flipping the script.

Cultural Frameworks

Reframing disasters as adverse events to maximize the resources disasters may

provide is the foundation for many indigenous frameworks. For Native Hawaiians, the cultural framework of *Ka Hōnua Maui Ola* means *The Earth's Healing*. Heavy flooding and hurricanes are classified in the western sense as disasters, however, Indigenous ways of knowing may see these natural events as a provision of resources, like an abundance of water, waiwai, equaling wealth. Furthermore, the results of these events may be exacerbated because of the erasure of traditional practices and ancient systems. For example, before colonization, Native Hawaiians used ahupua'a as a system for water management that was a "self-sustaining unit and extends the elements of Hawaiian spirituality into the natural landscape." In Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island cultures, taking care of the people, the land, and nurturing our spiritual connections provide balance through all elements.

The *Nā Pou Kihī* framework stresses the importance of balancing these elements as critical to the health and well-being of Native Hawaiians and the 'āina, the land

that feeds. This idea is also rooted in the Indigenous framework for health, *Pilinahā*. In this framework, the four vital connections of place, community, past and future, and one's better self are pivotal to living a whole and healthy life. In *'Ulu Kukui O Kaulike*, a culturally-grounded policy strategy stemmed from *Mauli Ola*, the work being done now to reintegrate Indigenous knowledge as the norm to inform policies related to health, education, our environment, and even disaster preparedness, will serve as seeds that will grow into trees to protect future generations from having to battle to have our cultures engrained in the values of Hawai'i.

Examples of Culturally Anchored Disaster Response during COVID-19

The following case studies emphasize examples of culturally anchored disaster response during the pandemic.

Ka Hale Pōmaika'i

As Hawai'i entered lockdown, the first positive case of COVID-19 presented significant challenges to the island of Molokai as it occurred at the only available grocery store. The following account was transcribed from the monthly Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division Provider Meeting that took place on April 3, 2020¹:

¹ This recording is publicly available at: <https://health.hawaii.gov/substance-abuse/prevention-treatment/provider-meeting-recording/>

“Hi guys ... Today I am the only one working and I'm going to be going out into our garden to harvest bags of food for ... 14 additional families that have called since we have been on the Zoom meeting this morning. It has been nonstop, the phone ringing from six in the morning till midnight for almost 3 days because we've had a [potentially positive case], one of our community members in the hospital waiting for the test results to come back and we have our first case on Molokai. It's a different feeling in a real community than, I would imagine, in a place where you could actually spread out and maybe not ever know the person who is sick. So all of our stores are closed down. We have no way to buy food and so then that's why people are calling us for our farm ... I will be alone harvesting ... so please don't expect your quarterly report on time with all this going on. We really do need to feed our community. Most of them are people in recovery, people from the recovery community, clients and everybody seems to be in crisis at the moment. We have Zoom related recovery meetings and also ... we set everybody's phone with a WhatsApp so that they can call in and that they could participate online ... they can actually get a virtual signature so it's pretty much all of our haumana are being cared

for in this way we have lost a few when this happened ... really grateful for my staff they're doing what they can as well as taking care of their own family and really grateful more than ever for the fact that we can grow our own food and I'd like to leave you folks with this ... we're having a lot of deer burger, stir fry, deer chili, I mean it goes on and on and I could give Forrest Gump a few hard rubs! Love you guys and that's it for me. ... I just wanted to say we don't have any grocery stores over here so the guns [deer hunting] are going all day and all night. We have no stores. We have no place to buy food. Kay. Just letting you know.”

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Ka Hale Pōmaika'i
Kaunakakai, HI on Molokai
Island

Sust'āinable Moloka'i

Aunty and her two children living in Moloka'i during the pandemic their local grocery store had to close down due to a positive case in the store. Their local grocery store had to temporarily close down due to an employee positive COVID-19 case. Aunty and other families were able to shop at other grocery stores however they had to ration their groceries shopping. As children are zooming for school at this time, teachers and students

shared their new daily lives. A student mentioned that local food producers were donating to food banks and selling food at a drive-thru pick up by the farm. Aunty and her family drove to pick up fresh locally grown produce, morning caught fish from local fishermen, and an 'ulu tree to plant in their backyard. Aunty and her family were able to eat healthy, shop locally to support locals serving their community, and family bond by slowly growing produce to sustain their own food demand at home.

During the pandemic noticed the increase of food demand but low import supply and the community turned to local food producers such as Sust'āintable Moloka'i. Moloka'i is known to have an abundance of fishermen, ranchers, and farmers who were able to provide for the community. Sust'āintable Moloka'i played an important role in inquiring about food security as a traditional practice to keep the longevity of food abundant. In the Nā Pou Kihī framework, Ka Mālama Nohona sustainability in plants but also community support and resources for families in their daily living and in preparation for crisis situations. Instead of having to ration foods and rely on grocery stores local farmers were able to put up stands to serve the community. Families are not only able to obtain fresh produce and meats from local farmers for produce and hunters for fish and meat. Local farmers created classes rather online or pick-up plant instructions on how to do sustainable farming. Exemplifying Ke Ao 'Ōiwi from the Nā Pou Kihī framework by allowing access to cultural foods as a form of

health practices for Native Hawaiians. The Moloka'i community members were able to come together to connect with one another through healing the thought of food disparity when opening up opportunities that have been present even prior to crisis time. Helped heal families by farming, cooking and growing food together. Provide income and job security for local food producers. Similarly in White Bison's framework on the Wellbriety Movement that "leadership exists to serve the people first" and implementing teachings of elders as a guidance to direct traditional ways to their natural order can heal the community through interconnectedness. In disguise, healing the earth, ocean, mountain, and people to be prepared and thrive for the next crisis that may arise.

Conclusion

With each proclamation of an emergency, there is an unheard community story. Here, we hope to show how the cultural frameworks and case studies demonstrate the importance of *talking story* and hearing community voices as a meaningful data collection method that provides invaluable knowledge through lived experiences.

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