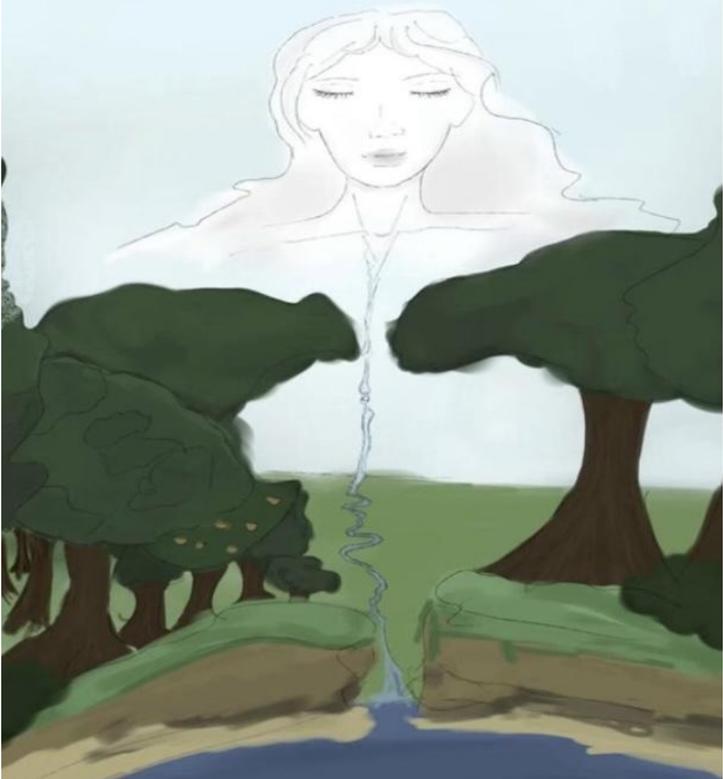


Indigenous youth & Allies speak about REAL youth safety

Dear Community...



I am sacred

I am believed

I am beloved

'Ike 'Ōpio - first edition, in awareness of MMIP

Cover Art: Tala Socco (13)
'Ike 'Ōpio staff:
Lilinoe Field-Perkins
Kuahea Kūkahiko
Noa Helelā
'Ike 'Ōpio Youth Team
(art, mana'o, writing etc.):
Kamali Makua
Talissa Gali
Kuahea Kūkahiko
Hiro Kato-Teale
Lilinoe Field-Perkins
Waiea Helelā
Ella Malarkey
Tanoë Sumic-Liu
Tala Socco
and everyone else who was part of this.

'Ike 'Ōpio is convened by
Ho'opae Pono Peace Project,
an Affiliate of
Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples.
Mahalo to Thriving Women Initiative for making this
project possible. Support from TIDES Foundation
and Common Counsel/Native Voices Rising has also
been important.

Collaborating organizations include 'Ōpio
Protectors Network, Restoring Justice for
Indigenous Peoples, Wisdom Circles Oceania, and
SOWING.

Mahalo to 'Ike 'Ōpio workshop instructors &
supporters Sierra Dew, Beki Light, Morning Star
Gali, Joanne Castillo, Noa Helelā, Liko Martin, and
Rossa Socco.

The views represented here were drawn from
collective mana'o through a collective process. No
organization or individual is specifically
represented by anything expressed. But a lot of it
needs to be a lot more obvious to everybody.

Introduction

What is Indigenous youth safety?

Adults often speak about "what not to do": don't trust strangers, don't go out alone, don't wear revealing clothing, etc.

At what point does the fear and disempowerment created by too much of this well-meaning messaging, along with the shame and blame that Indigenous youth absorb all around them, become a hazard in itself, because the focus was on what the youth were/were not doing, and not on the community stopping the harm?

'Ike 'Ōpio held many discussions on the concept of "safety," along with actual self-defense classes and other workshops.

The 'ōpio have a lot to say.

Some themes came up again and again. Missing and Murdered Indigenous People. Mental health being stigmatized, and inadequate resources & support to effectively prevent suicide in a real way. Sexual predators being protected by the communities they groom. LGBTQ+ recognition needing a big step up. Cultural education harming their Indigenous identity by shoving a specific version of culture down their throat in a too-harsh way, causing disconnect from their actual roots and Indigenous self-expression. The destruction of 'āina (and the sense that they as 'ōpio are expected to do something about it in ways that may not honor their personal or generational sovereignty and self-determination), the depressing aspects of Indigenous communities, the judgment-blame-shame cycle, and intergenerational trauma all messing with their sense of culture, which many of the 'ōpio avoid community involvement with, even though their cultural identity is a crucial and valuable part of themselves that they are struggling to build.

And so much more.

This publication covers only a few of these important themes. But it is a good place to start.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous People

'Ike'ōpio thoughts



- Abuse of Indigenous youth has a long history and it affects us all. When the bones of abused youth are dug up, we feel it in our bones. When someone's sister goes missing, whether in Kansas or Kahuku, or a mahū (trans) woman is murdered, it affects us.
- The most important thing 'ōpio can do to shift the colonial violence that results in missing and murdered Indigenous People is to not be missing or murdered.
- The second most important thing we can do is spread awareness. It is amazing how little people know.
- There is already a LOT of information about MMIP on the web. People should take time to look this up. This is about the people whose land you are on right now. No matter where you are. People should not expect to be fed information.
- Mahu or Two-Spirit (transgender) Indigenous women and men are missing and murdered at extremely high rates and need to be part of the MMIP conversation. There is not even good data on this, because of erasure.

MANY KINDS OF HARM TO INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY



"Access to land and therefore relationship to land can be too forced, sometimes in a toxic way. If we have issues with somebody who is harsh or abusive, and that person is teaching us how to be cultural, it messes up our own sense of culture. Aloha'aina is supposed to be a natural thing in us but it is hard to grow when it feels shoved down our throats and we have no freedom to just be natural with the land."

"Adults often think they are being supportive but choose to ignore the actual voices of youth when we say we are being harmed."

In an English speaking, colonized society, pronouns dictate how trans people are viewed, categorized, and treated.

Protecting Trans People MAHŪ

Respecting Identities

Pronouns & more gender monickers,

She/her

He/him

They/them

Xe/xem

Vi/ir

Xi/xir

Misgendering: using wrong gendered language to refer to someone (pronouns, handoffs)

Using the right pronouns can save someone's life
Using the wrong pronouns can get someone killed

Most people don't realize that like being misgendered it just happens to trans people and puts their lives at higher risk.



Trans peopl are often misgendered by customer service, medical professionals, police, and crisis line dispatchers.

Pronouns -- important to respecting identity, validating sense of self, and protecting safety
-- frequently misgendering trans people is not only damaging to that one's self-esteem, it's embarrassing, humiliating, and can put trans people in danger.
-- misgendering someone can out them for being trans, which may lead to them being targeted for bullying, harassment, violence, and death.

Corrections--

mistakes happen; if you accidentally misgender someone and they or someone else corrects you, correct yourself and move on. Apologies are generally optional, but try not to put the person in a position where they have to do emotional labor.

good correction reaction examples--

- "he--I mean she"
- "she--sorry, they"
- "Oh my god did I say she? Sorry, I meant he."
- "she--I mean they, my bad"

bad correction reaction examples--

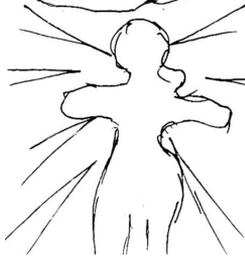
- "he--oh god did I say he?? I'm soo sorry, I really didn't mean it, I just, I've known you so long."
- "She--ugh, why do I keep messing this up?? It's just, they is plural so it's hard to understand."
- "He--I mean--she...okay honestly it's just hard because you still dress like a man, and maybe if you shaved I'd be able to get it easier."
- "He, she, they - whatever."

It is never trans people's job to educate

Publicly misgendering can out someone as trans, making them potential targets of harassment and violence.

It is your job to educate yourself.

Sharing space with transphobic people



Trans people already experience so much harassment and violence out in the world, and should have a safe space to come home to

Sharing space with transphobic people can be extremely damaging to trans folks' safety, self-image, and esteem, as well as overall mental health.

Pronouns -- important to respecting identity, v get it easier." "He, she, they - whatever."

Correct people who misgender trans people

- It is your job as an ally to correct people
- It is NOT the trans person's responsibility to correct anyone; it is often awkward and uncomfortable to be the one correcting someone on your own pronouns, and a lot easier for someone else to do it.

Transphobic Gaslighting



Regular Exposure to transphobic people can increase dysphoria, leading to negative body image, self-conscious thoughts, self-loathing, and suicidal ideation.

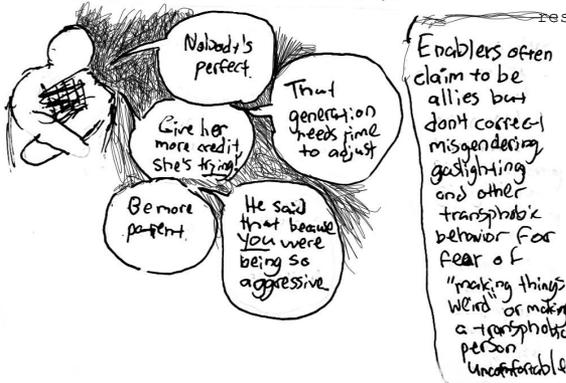
It is the responsibility of the transphobic person to work through their issues or remove themselves from spaces where trans people are trying to exist

Enabling Behavior

Enabling transphobia is as bad as transphobia itself

It is NOT the trans person's responsibility to educate, tolerate, or appease to a transphobic person in any way, and putting that responsibility on a trans person is incredibly damaging.

Enabling transphobia validates transphobic people & makes them think their behavior is okay & justified



Safe spaces-- the environment a trans person lives in is very important to their overall mental health and well-being.

Purposeful vs Accidental misgendering

Accidental misgendering -- slips, habit, etc.

many people will naturally have a learning curve with learning pronouns, especially if the trans person just came out. Sometimes this will lead to "slips" where someone messes up pronouns or doesn't hear themselves and out of habit says the wrong pronoun. Most trans people are understanding of this, and as long as the person corrects themselves, either when corrected or when they remember, it generally isn't too damaging.

Purposeful misgendering -- resistance, refusal, etc.

This usually if not almost always is done by transphobic people who refuse to accept a trans person's identity and refuse to even try to use the correct pronoun or otherwise affirm them. *This is extremely damaging and should not be allowed for a second!!*

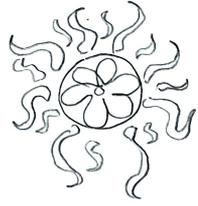
It also sometimes occurs with people who are lazy and "support trans people" but don't want to put in the effort it takes to change their speech patterns or think about what they are saying. While usually less malicious, this is neglectful at best, and still is inexcusable and needs to be addressed and minimized as much as possible

DEMILITARIZE

How the US Military harms Indigenous Youth:

- Sex trafficking. Military are biggest consumer of paid sex in Hawaii. Violence is also a problem, especially against trans women.
- Pollution. The US military is the biggest polluter in the WORLD. Kāpūkākāī (Red Hill) is a good example and there are lots more.
- Recruitment: Indigenous people die in wars at higher rates than others. Recruitment is pushed in schools.
- Occupation & theft of land harms Indigenous youth on every level.
- Settler colonialism. Displacement.
- Gun culture and extremism are high.
- Sexualization and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples has been part of militarization everywhere.
- Making us a target for other countries to bomb could take away our ENTIRE future.
- This does not apply to every person in the military but does apply to militarization as a whole.





She walks past the kalo patch
Thinks a little greener everyday
looked up to la to touch her face
but a skyscraper had taken its place

Blue hula girl
Dancing on ancestors bones
With a lei of plastic leaves
Under skyscraper homes

You dock too many feathers
from the birds at the pet-store
they escort you out

Cus you don't know where you
are

Cus you don't know where you
are

from "Blue Hula Girl" (song)

© Lilinoe Field Perkins

SEXUAL PREDATORS IN YOUTH SPACES

*aka the problem everyone knows is happening but no one wants to be
the one to say anything about.*



Predators do not just groom the victim.
They groom the whole community.
-ella

Adult Predators in youth space:

- are MUCH more common than the community wants to admit.
- often do not come off as "creepy" at all. In fact they can be respected leaders with lots of credibility.
- are devastating to the youth, who will be affected their whole lives, especially if others are turned against them.
- are devastating to the community, which often splits over who is believed, dissed, defended or shunned.
- are often skilled confidence artists who build both the youth's confidence and the community's confidence with style and charisma. They particularly cultivate things that would make it appear impossible they could be an abuser.
- are particularly a problem for community leaders who are deeply and publicly invested in them (cultivating these investments is part of community grooming process). A person the leader has already strongly aligned with being outed as a predator could potentially destroy their whole organization/movement/etc. This leads to leaders, who are often caught off guard, protecting abusers as damage control to protect their movement or organization. They are attacked for this, and become defensive, which leads to rifts.
- are often deeply wounded themselves. The rush of power that comes with abuse temporarily fills a deep hole in their soul.
- are not known to ever permanently heal. Abuse is a serious problem that will resurface if there is access to youth. It is unlikely that ceremony or therapy would heal this problem; even if it did, there would be no way of knowing for sure that it did or did

net work.



unseen harm

A lot of the harm to youth by community abuse is invisible. Here are some of the effects that might be missed:

ostracism - shunning, avoidance, blame, rumors etc are very common in abuse situations. This may be because of actual manipulation by the abuser, and/or because of the discomfort of those who feel torn by conflicted feelings or not knowing who to believe. Close friends may be lost. Ostracism is extremely painful.

displacement - the presence of an abuser, amplified by lack of community support, can cause survivors to avoid spaces they would otherwise access. In reality, this means young people may give up their dreams as artists, poets, athletes, musicians or other work completely, because the abuser has influence in these circles.

blackmail - part of the process of grooming is often a supportive confidante role played by the abuser. By the time actual abuse takes place, the abuser has many personal secrets from the victim. Knowing that the abuser has this information, and terror of them releasing it helps to keep the victim silent. This same technique is used in human trafficking, which can involve blackmail over sexual photographs.

desolation - there is practically nowhere to turn for a youth who speaks up. No resources, no hotline, no nothing. Chances are that they will be interrogated and dissed. Even if they are believed there is no good solution, and their freedom is more likely to be limited than the abuser's.

What needs to be done about predators:

- Youth need to be taken seriously. 92-98% are telling the truth; those who are not usually have a clear motive. A thorough and fair investigation of the situation is needed, until confirmed either way.
- Often, more victims can be found. Multiple victims with similar stories and no reason to lie is reasonable confirmation. Even with no confirmation, victims are probably telling the truth.
- Default needs to be that the person stop working with youth immediately (not only if "proven"). If confirmed, this should be permanent. A new career is needed.
- Education is key. Everyone has the responsibility to educate themselves.
- If friends and family want to support someone who has abused, great. They should support honest healing, and a new career that does not involve youth work, and also gives space to those who were abused and might be displaced by the presence of someone who has harmed them. Denial of abuse and defense of the abuser is NOT helpful to anyone.
- Youth who have been abused need encouragement, support, validation. It is a LOT to heal from. Some abused youth are eventually able to do great things with the mana of their own healing process. Others are lost to drugs or suicide. Strong support may be a major difference between these outcomes.
- Inflammation should be kept to a minimum. Community inflammation increases when abusers are defended. This creates Polarization with some defending the victim and others defending the abuser. Polarization creates rifts that agitate the community, forcing everyone to choose sides.
- Establishing informed protocols for the handling of abuse situations should be done in every organization in ADVANCE of any possible incident. It really could happen to any organization, and it is much harder to deal with after it happens, with no protocols.
- Ongoing community conversations to figure this all out. None of us has all the answers. The level of trauma makes it hard to talk about. But we need to do that to find real solutions.





What should NOT be done about predator abuse:

- nothing. Which is the standard response.
 - youth should never be interrogated, asked to "prove" what happened, expected to reveal themselves by name (or treated like they do not have a "case" if they don't), made to face the person named in any form, made to participate in any healing process or ceremony without their full, free, enthusiastic consent, or shunned "while looking into it." Community abuse is the community's responsibility. Period.
 - Ceremony such as ho'oponopono should never be used to "heal" a predator or an abuse situation. Even if it did work, there would be no way to know for sure that the effects are permanent. And these processes should never involve the youth at all (unless the youth is clearly calling for this on their own).
 - Ceremony and healing processes may be ok for treatment if they do not cause hurt or displacement (ask), and are not used to appear to "settle" the matter in any way. If the youth chooses to initiate ceremony later on their own, this is their decision. However, **once abuse has taken place, an adult should not be considered "safe" to work with youth, ever.**
 - Condemnation (as opposed to clear, strong holding of responsibility) of the predator is not very helpful, if it can be avoided. Anyone has the right to condemn abuse, and also, it is better than no response or a response that hurts youth further. Hearing about abuse can trigger strong community reactions. But large condemnation (which may also be a reaction to denial or inaction) tends to polarize and inflame communities and make people defensive all around.
 - the problem should not be treated like it is over because the youth became a legal adult or abuse happened long ago. That is not the point. Abuse of power and trust (both the youth's and the community's) is the point. Abuse is often not reported long after it happened.
- 

Suicide & Indigenous Youth

Suicide is very high among indigenous folks, largely due to colonial shame culture that has been ingrained in modern indigenous cultures.

Suicide rates are ultimately a form of cultural genocide .

Native people are societally taught and retaught self-loathing, and are taught to pass these teachings down generations and frame it as tough love .

Genocide + Suicide

The causative link between genocide and suicide has been proven (Rwanda, North America, Australia and more).

Incremental genocide (actual, deliberate death resulting from destruction of sacred places, inability to practice culture, historic erasure, forced assimilation, intergenerational trauma, colonial microaggressions, overt racism, etc) has been linked to self-destruction in countless forms.

Indigenous youth are survivors, facing trauma every day.

It is the community's responsibility to support the youth.

Read more:

Genocide and Suicide amongst Indigenous Peoples: North Meets South (1999)

http://www3.brandonu.ca/cjns/19.2/cjnsv19no2_pg337-363.pdf

Suicide among indigenous peoples: introduction and call to action
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16574610/>

Don't shame anyone for being suicidal

Examples:

“you’re stupid for thinking about that”

“suicide is selfish”

“coward’s way out”

“you’re being manipulative”

These types of statements can be very damaging, especially from family members, as we hold family opinions very high, especially in indigenous families.

Shaming suicidal people actually just feeds suicidal ideation.

Thoughts like “I’m selfish for being suicidal” can lead to thoughts like “well I really should die then.”

What can you do instead for suicidal folks?

- Consistently checking in
- Reminding people they are loved and cared for
- For some people, comforting physical touch is helpful (obviously only consensual touch)
- Socializing with good safe people can be very helpful (but not over socializing)



Indigenous Youth

Carry heavy burdens
All have ancestral trauma
Most have life trauma
Are sensitive to trauma
Don't need more trauma



Heal the Earth and history
as they heal themselves
Are walking ancestral knowledge
struggling to survive

Are deeply affected
by what happens to the land
water, people

Can fix stuff
But are often broken

Need freedom and support
Not more abuse

Might not seem to be
paying attention
But they are.



(mana'o)