

## Painted Mural Depicting Cultural Ecosystem Services in He'eia



A painted mural depicting cultural ecosystem services in He'eia was one art-focused intergenerational engagement opportunity supported by the 2022 NERES Science Collaborative Catalyst Project "[Cultural Ecosystem Services in Estuary Stewardship and Management](#)" (Photo credit: P. Pascua; Mural Credit: A. Matsuura et al.)

### **Mural description provided by Aubrey Kealohi Matsuura, Native Hawaiian Artist**

This painting is a reflection, and visual representation of the rich discussions had amongst He'eia organizations during workshops and conversations convened by the Catalyst project. As the artist participating in this empowering project, it was a privilege to listen to the many discussions and visit the people and places contributing to the

beauty of He'eia, O'ahu. What I gathered from observing all conversations was the desire to ensure that the *waiwai* (*fig.* things of high value, *lit.* abundant waters) of He'eia remains for generations to come. That desire was shared by those who are descendants of He'eia, those who engage daily, those who protect, those who empower through education, and those who revitalize, reinvigorate, and reimagine *waiwai*.

When I think of generations past and generations to come, genealogy is the foundation. In this piece, the carrying net or the *kōkō* represents that continuum. Like a genealogy, a net stems from one strand that continues to expand and grow as each new row of eyes are added. The net also functions as a carrier, and in this image, it is what carries the *waiwai* of He'eia. The pattern that descends from the net represents what I see as rain cascading along the Ko'olau mountains. Perhaps it's the *ua* 'Apuakea (a famous rain of the surrounding area) or perhaps another *ua* that frequents the area. The rain speaks to the abundance of this place, especially its freshwater resources. That abundance then flows into the *piko* or the starting point of the net to represent the source, the intention, and the reasons why these organizations and individuals commit to their work. Generations to come are the driving force. The 'anae (mullet) represent *Meheanu*, the *mo'owahine* (cultural dieties often associated with water bodies) who guards, protects, and dwells within He'eia fishpond. Just like Meheanu, these organizations are here to protect these resources to ensure that they are healthy and thriving.

### **More about this mural**

In-person learning and exchange, in particular with community partner organizations was a high priority in this project. In addition to the development and refinement of a series of tools and resources to inform the practical application of cultural ecosystem services methods, the project approach focused on convening in-person gatherings to deepen dialogue and shared learning. This included a Reserve Exchange (and methods pilot) that engaged staff from both He'eia and Kachemak Bay Reserves, and a He'eia Reserve Community Partner Family Day. Valuing and creating a space for diverse forms of interpretation and communication, the He'eia virtual exchange and in-person family day resulted in the development of this painted mural characterizing cultural ecosystem services experienced across the ahupua'a of He'eia. The mural was created by Native Hawaiian artist Aubrey Kealohi Matsuura and completed in part by the Reserve's community partner organizations.