



TODAY'S HAWAIIAN WORD IS:

## Ea

*Sovereignty, independence. Life, air, breath, respiration. To rise, go up, raise, become erect.*

### Lā Ho'ihō'i Ea

*Sovereignty Restoration Day*  
Hawai'i's first national holiday  
July 31, 1843

“The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness” is the most well known translation of our state motto, *Ua mau ke ea o ka ‘āina i ka pono*, contained in the preamble of our [State Constitution](#). Something happens, though, when Hawaiian thought is translated into another language. It can result in devaluing or misrepresenting its significance and original intent. There can be multiple interpretations.

Another possible translation is, “The sovereignty of the land is preserved through righteousness”. What is sovereignty? According to Merriam-Webster, sovereignty is freedom from external control or autonomy. Synonyms include independence and liberty. Another way to interpret our state motto could be, “The freedom of the land is perpetuated through all that is right and good and just”. This is in line with the beliefs and practices of Kamehameha III and all the ruling chiefs before him as well as all of our kūpuna. *He ali‘i ka ‘āina, he kauwā ke kanaka* - “Land is the chief, the people are its servants”. We are here to serve the land. We are not here for the land to serve us. We take care of the land (mālama ‘āina and aloha ‘āina) not because we expect anything in return, and yet, in return, the land feeds us, clothes us, shelters us, heals us.

The phrase, *Ua mau ke ea o ka ‘āina i ka pono*, was first uttered by Kamehameha III 180 years ago on July 31, 1843, at a public speech when he was restored to the throne after the takeover by Lord Paulet of Great Britain. While *ea* can mean life and to rise up, perhaps in the context of having the Hawaiian flag raised once again and King Kamehameha III restored to power, his utterance meant that the sovereignty of the land, its very freedom and autonomy is *mau*, it continues, it is preserved and perpetuated through all that is right and good and just (pono).

The word, ‘āina, carries significant meaning and encompasses much more than just land. Translated as “that which feeds,” ‘āina captures a relationship people had and have with land. Much like children are dependent on their parents to feed them, we are dependent on the ‘āina to “feed” us.

If we are good stewards of ‘āina, if we recognize our own kuleana (responsibility and privilege) to serve and protect the ‘āina, then all of its goodness will continue into perpetuity. *E mau ke ea o ka ‘āina i ka pono – The sovereignty of the land will be preserved through our pono practices.*

Be healthy, my friends. E ola!

**Liana Honda**

Native Hawaiian Health  
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