

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

Effective Date: ~~XX/XX/XX~~

Series: Intergovernmental Relations

Part 513: Native Hawaiian Community

Chapter 3: Use of the Hawaiian Language, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i

Originating Office: Office of the Secretary

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3.1 **Purpose.** This chapter provides direction for all Department of the Interior (Department) Bureaus and Offices in the respectful and proper use of the Hawaiian language, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i. This chapter also assists Bureaus and Offices with their efforts to follow chapter 5.25 of the U.S. General Printing Office Style Manual (2016), issued under the authority of section 1105 of title 44 of the U.S. Code.

3.2 **Scope.** All Department Bureaus and Offices shall follow the provisions in this chapter in their use and treatment of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i.

3.3 **Authority.** The Native American Languages Act, 25 U.S.C. §§2901-2906 (1990), declares that it is the policy of the United States to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedoms of Native Americans, including the Native Hawaiian Community, to use, practice, and develop Native American languages. The special political and trust relationship established by Congress between the United States and the Native Hawaiian Community supports and promotes such exercise of self-determination by the Native Hawaiian Community. As a corollary to Executive Order (EO) 13175 (Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments), appropriate and meaningful engagement with the Native Hawaiian Community is furthered by the respectful and proper use and treatment of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i.

3.4 **Importance of orthography.** Certain breaks and emphases in pronunciation are significant in ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i as they distinguish the meaning of words. A commonly cited example is a set of short words: *pau*: finished; *pa‘u*: soot; *pa‘ū*: damp; *pā‘ū*: skirt. Without the proper diacritical marks (glottal stop and macron), the distinction between meanings may be unclear, especially to a novice speaker.

3.5 **Responsibilities.** Each Bureau and Office that engages in communication with the Native Hawaiian Community or produces documentation addressing places, resources, actions, or interests in Hawai‘i is directed to provide guidance and accessibility to staff for:

A. Use of diacritical marks. Some forms of the written ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i utilize the glottal stop or ‘okina (‘), which is considered a consonant, and the macron or kahakō, used only over vowels, to reflect the pronunciation of Hawaiian words from the traditional oral language. While use of the diacritical marks may not be necessary for native speakers who are able to correctly discern the intended word and meaning from the context in which it is used, the Department shall use diacritical marks to convey the intended word and meaning, except in those instances identified in paragraph C.

B. Usage of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i-specific keyboard tools, forms, and templates.

C. Standards of usage. ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i shall be used for the following, with the noted exceptions:

(1) Flora and fauna endemic or indigenous to Hawai‘i, except when the traditional name has been lost or its existence is unknown, until the species has been renamed or named.

(2) Hawaiian cultural sites and features.

(3) Geographic place names in Hawai‘i.

(4) Government units:

(a) State of Hawai‘i

(b) County of Kaua‘i, City and County of Honolulu, County of Maui, Kalawao County, County of Hawai‘i.

(5) Plural forms. Plural forms of Hawaiian nouns generally remain the same while the preceding article or numerical reference changes, thus a lei (garland), two lei, three lei. However, emphasis is placed on the first vowel when the Hawaiian word has three syllables. Thus, a kanaka (person), two kānaka, three kānaka. If a plural –s is used, see “Modified forms”.

(6) Modified forms. With the exception of possessives, modified forms of Hawaiian words do not use diacritical marks. Thus, Hawai‘i has an ‘okina while Hawaiian does not. However, the possessive Hawai‘i’s properly includes the ‘okina.

3.6 Hawaiian words and orthography. Respecting Hawaiian cultural ideology, the Department recognizes that there does not exist a single authoritative source for ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i. However, the *Hawaiian Dictionary* (Pukui & Elbert, 2003) shall serve as the Department’s baseline standard and be used for spelling and the use of spaces, diacriticals, hyphens, etc., when using ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i for non-geographic words/place names. As with other languages, ‘Ōlelo

Hawai‘i continues to develop and change. Thus, Bureaus and Offices may use other standard works such as the *Māmaka Kaiāo* dictionary by ‘Aha Pūnana Leo / Hale Kuamo‘o, but must maintain in their administrative record the reference source for the Hawaiian word(s). The *Hawaiian Dictionary* and other standard works are available on-line in a searchable database at www.wehewehe.org.

3.7 Hawaiian proper names of individuals and organizations; quotations and citations.

When using the proper name of an individual or organization, use the name(s) given by that individual or organization. When quoting or citing from published works or submitted written testimony or comments, the quotation or citation shall remain as published or submitted with no insertions or deletions of diacritical marks.

3.8 Hawaiian geographic names. When using a Hawaiian geographic name, the Bureau or Office shall use the Hawaiian names listed by the Hawai‘i Board on Geographic Names (HBGN) and the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN). If there is a discrepancy between the HBGN and the BGN, the Bureau or Office shall use the BGN name. The U.S. Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) contains the information about the official names for places, features, and areas in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the territories and outlying areas of the United States, including Antarctica. GNIS is the geographic names component of The National Map.

3.9 Background on the Relationship Between the Hawai‘i Board on Geographic Names and the BGN. In the late 1990s, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) began updating the 1:24,000 quadrangle maps of Hawai‘i. One of the features of the updated maps was to be the addition of diacritical marks to the Hawaiian names appearing on the maps. At the request of the BGN, the HBGN, which is responsible for designating official names and spellings of geographic features in Hawai‘i, began a multi-year project to review each of the over 10,000 names that appear on the quadrangle maps and/or in the GNIS and to add the ‘okina and kahakō, or diacritical marks, as appropriate. Documents available on the HBGN website list the decisions that have been rendered so far by the HBGN. As of 2022, the HBGN has reviewed all the names appearing on the USGS quadrangle maps and continues to review additional names that appear in the GNIS. It should be noted that the HBGN adopted a policy of adding diacritical marks *only* where there is solid evidence that there should be ‘okina or kahakō. Therefore, there are many instances where no decision has been rendered and the HBGN has advised USGS to leave the name without any diacritical marks until further research can be conducted. In making its decisions, the HBGN generally followed conventions developed by ‘Ahahui ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i in 1978. *Place Names of Hawaii* (Pukui, Elbert & Mookini, 1976) was considered the primary source for determining the appropriate use of kahakō or ‘okina in individual place names. The HBGN has deviated from these sources when other experts, such as native Hawaiian speaking elders from a particular area, have provided alternative pronunciations.