

Vince M. Okada, Ph.D., MPPM (Vincent Mitsuharu Okada)

Chair, School of Social Work & BSW Program Director
Associate Professor of Social Work

College of Liberal Arts, School of Social Work
Hawai'i Pacific University
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RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Decolonizing & Indigenous Social Work
 - Decolonizing social work education, Indigenous knowledge systems, Ainu studies, Nikkei (Japanese-American)/diasporic community resilience.
- Community Development & 'Āina-Based Education
 - Island and rural community development in Hawai'i and Japan, 'āina (place)-based & culture-based pedagogy, local history and heritage in practice.
- Indigenous Youth Leadership & Voyaging Education
 - Youth leadership development (Ainu, Hawaiian, Tokyo islands, Okinawa), voyaging-based pedagogy (Hōkūle'a), experiential learning, narrative inquiry & storytelling.
- Multicultural Education & Cross-Cultural Exchange
 - Hawai'i-Japan educational coordination, multicultural education, interprofessional/cross-sectoral collaboration.
- Social Work Discipline & Community Well-Being
 - Social work professional development and education in Hawai'i and Japan, international social work (Asia and the Pacific), community and holistic well-being.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Academic Appointments:

Hawai'i Pacific University, Honolulu, Hawai'i
Chair, School of Social Work, January 2026 - Present
Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program Director, August 2021 – Present
Associate Professor of Social Work, August 2024 – Present
Assistant Professor of Social Work, January 2019 – August 2024

Toyo University, Tokyo, Japan
International Visiting Scholar, Graduate School of Social Welfare, Department of Social Welfare,
Faculty of Design for Welfare Society
June – July 2026

Kansai University, Osaka, Japan
International Visiting Scholar, Faculty of Health and Well-Being
June 2024 – July 2024

Musashino University, Tokyo, Japan
Adjunct Faculty, Department of Social Welfare
November 2022 – Present

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawai'i
Adjunct Faculty, International Programs, Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health
January 2018 – January 2019

University of Hawai'i Kapi'olani Community College, Honolulu, Hawai'i
Faculty, International Program Coordinator, Paul S. Honda International Center/Office for
International Affairs (Currently under the Office of Continuing Education and Training)
February 2014 – January 2019

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawai'i
Lecturer, Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health
August – December 2013

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawai'i
Graduate Research Assistant, *Na Kamalei Lei Aku, Lei Mai Program Evaluation*
Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health
(Principal Investigators: Dr. Paula Morelli and Dr. Peter Mataira)
August 2010 – June 2011

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawai'i
Teaching Assistant, Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health
(Supervised by Dr. Peter Mataira)
August – December 2009, August – December 2010

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawai'i
Graduate Research Assistant, Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health
Federal Eligibility Quality Assurance Center, Hawai'i State Department of Human Services
August 2008 – June 2011

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California
Graduate Student Assistant, Sol Price School of Public Policy, Program Evaluation for the Pan
American Games, City of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
(Principal Investigator: Dr. Jonathan van Speier)
June – July 2006

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California
Graduate Assistant/Program Manager, Marshall School of Business
PRIME/PM (Professionals and Managers) Global MBA Programs
December 2005 – July 2006

Community & Leadership Positions:

League of Japan Social Work, Honolulu, Hawai'i/Japan
Co-Founder and Director of Education, March 2022 – Present

Lōkahi Foundation, Honolulu, Hawai'i
Co-Founder and President, February 2021 – Present
Co-Founder and Vice-President, April 2015 – February 2021

WISE & Healthy Aging, Santa Monica, California
Program Manager, Elder Abuse Prevention Program
April 2007 – July 2008

EDUCATION

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawai'i

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Social Welfare, May 2013

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California

Master of Policy, Planning and Management (M.P.P.M.), August 2006

Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, New Jersey

Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Recreation Professionals, Planning, August 2000

Certificates:

East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawai'i

Change Leadership Program, August 2020

Brown University Institute for Humane Studies, Providence, Rhode Island

Social Change Program, August 2008

East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawai'i

Asia Pacific Leadership Program, December 2006

PUBLICATIONS (Selected)

Refereed Journal Articles:

- Okada, V. M., Mataira, P.J., & Giroux, D. et al. (2026). Centering 'ike kupuna: Decolonizing social work education through Indigenous knowledge and pono practice in Hawai'i. *Global Social Welfare*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40609-026-00435-8>
- Okada, V. M. (2012). *The plight of Ainu, Indigenous people of Japan*. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, 1(1).

Book Chapters:

- Okada, V. M. (2023). *Ainu, Japan's Indigenous people*. In Tanaka, K. & Selin, H. (Eds.), *Gender, safety, inequality: Key challenges for Japan*, Springer.
- Okada, V. M. (2023). *Tabunka kyosei tte nani wo shitara iino? [Multicultural social work practice - Ainu, Japan's indigenous policies and impacts]*. In Yonamine, T., Watanabe, Y. & Nagano, S. (Eds.), *Kiso-zemi shakai fukushi gaku [Basic Seminar on Social Welfare]*, Sekai shissha. (In Japanese)

Other Publications & Reports:

- Okada, V. M. (2026). *Hawai'i no rekishi teki keiken kara miru sedaikan trauma rikai to social work jissen no hatten [Understanding Intergenerational Trauma and the Development of Social Work Practice: Insights from the Historical Experience of Hawai'i]*. *Social Work Research*, Vol. 4, No. 3: Social Work and Trauma-Informed Care. Chuohoki Publishing Co., Ltd. (In Japanese)
- Okada, V. M. & Watanabe, Y. (2024). *Datsu shokuminchika social work no jissen to kyoiku ga mezasu mono [Decolonizing social work]*. In Watanabe, Y. (Ed.), *Social Work Research*. Chuohoki Publishing Co., Ltd. (In Japanese)
- Okada, V. M. (2024). *Hawai'i ni okeru social work jissen: Tabunka kyosei social work jissen [Social work practices in understanding and working with Indigenous Peoples, and the social work education system in Hawai'i]*. In Mishina, T & Ohashi, M. (Eds.), *Journal of the Japanese Association of Psychiatric Social Workers*, Herusu Publishing, Co., Inc. (In Japanese)
- Okada, V. M. & Kobira, H. (2021). *The voices of social workers and the need for social work reform in Japan*. East-West Center e-Book. 2021.

- Okada, V. M. & Takai, Y. (2021). *Fostering the “Lōkahi generation” of young leaders from Japan through responsible educational opportunities in Hawai‘i*. East-West Center e-book. 2021.

Dissertation & Thesis:

- Okada, V.M. (2013). *In search of Ainu voices: The future of Japan’s Indigenous people—usa okay utar uaynukor wa, pirka horari, sasuyisir pakno situri kuni*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. (Chair: Dr. Paula Morelli)
- Okada, V.M. (2006). *Hawai‘i’s public schools*. Master’s thesis, University of Southern California.
- Okada, V.M., Chun, J., McCarty, S., Naghshineh, I., Takahashi, T., & Wan, A. (2006). *Prisoner’s reentry program in California*. Master’s thesis, University of Southern California.

EDITORIAL & REVIEWING ACTIVITIES

- Editorial Board, **Journal of Indigenous Social Development**, 2023 – Present (Advising Editor, 2013 – 2023)
- Guest editor, **AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous People**, 2019 & 2025
- Reviewer, **Alphaville - Journal of Film and Screen Media**, 2016

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- **International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)**
- **Asia and Pacific Association for Social Work Education (APASWE)**
- **Association for Asian Studies (AAS)**
- **Native American & Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA)**
- **Hawai‘i-Pacific Evaluation Association (H-PEA)**

BOARD SERVICE

- Board Member, **Hawai‘i Civic Club of Wahiawā**, Hawai‘i
- Board Member, **Second Nature Farm**, Waimānalo, Hawai‘i

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & SERVICE

- Education Coordinator (Japan) & Crew, **Polynesian Voyaging Society**
- Competency Development Team, **Japanese Association for Social Work Education**
- Docent, **Japanese Culture Center of Hawai‘i**
- Docent, **Honouliuli, National Park Service**

LANGUAGES

English and Japanese