

Outrigger Traditions



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RESPECTING YOUR OUTRIGGER

The following article is part of THE HANA HOU SERIES found at www.holoholo.org
Respecting Your Outrigger © 1999 Kawika Sands

1. Respect every canoe as a family member. From the time a canoe is made and blessed, the canoe becomes an entity unto itself. Care for it as a loved one by maintaining it before setting out to sea and cleaning it after you return. Never step over a canoe hull or ama (exceptions are sometimes made for dry-land training or demonstration purposes). This goes for loading and unloading canoes on and off the dock. Think ahead and do your best to take the time to walk around the canoe always. In the rare instance you do step over the hull or ama, apologize to the canoe with understanding of how you have affected its spirit and make good while giving support to your family member. In Hawai`i, it is believed that to step over another is to cut their life shorter, therefore, the same applies to the canoe as all of our canoes have spirits and are considered living spirits among us. We want their spirits to live long.
2. Swearing of any kind is not accepted on the canoes and should not happen. All bad language should be left on the shore (dock) and only positive, good thoughts should be brought on the canoe. If ever you do swear you should apologize immediately to the

canoe spirit, and to your paddling-mates, and understand how you have affected the canoe. Remember your respect at all times and you are sure to have a great paddle.

3. On land, the canoe always faces the ocean. This relates back to ancient Hawai‘i when canoes were frequently used to repel attacks from other islands. "Stacking" is sometimes necessary to accommodate available space (placing the ama of a subsequent canoe on the `iako of a previous canoe).

4. Care should also be taken for the area surrounding the canoe. Pick up opala (rubbish) on and around your paena wa`a (canoe landing), halau wa`a (canoe house), or auha (canoe shed). Put things away that need to be stored without being asked. - Hoe aku i ka wa`a (literal meaning: move ahead the canoe; figurative meaning: do your share).



5. Everyone helps when the canoe is being carried, covered, cleaned or cared for. This includes loading and unloading the canoes, covering or storing them, cleaning them and washing them down with fresh water (especially the lashings) when they are dirty or after practice, and checking all parts of the canoe before and after practice. This applies to every member of the club from the first time novice to the president. From ancient times, whenever there was a large undertaking, everyone would help by doing whatever

he or she could. The strong would do the work, the old would offer encouragement and advice, and the young would bring the water and food, but everyone would participate.

- A`ohe hana nui ka alu`ia. (No task is too big when done together).

6. Customarily, a prayer is always said before every launching no matter how long or short the voyage. The prayer needn't be long and perhaps not in Hawaiian, nor does it have to be religious in nature. Doing so helps center the crew mentally and spiritually (no religious reference).

7. On water, avoid standing, arguing and swearing in the canoe. Standing is rarely a good idea for stability and safety reasons anyway. Arguing and swearing only serves to upset the entire crew's efforts and create animosity instead of aloha. Avoid tracking dirt and sand into the outrigger when you climb aboard.

-`Ike aku, `ike mai, kokua aku, kokua mai. Pela iho la ka nohana `ohana (Recognize others, be recognized, help others, be helped. Such is a family relationship).

8. Learn the particular duties that go along with the seat you sit in. Once you step into a canoe you are part of a team. Therefore every hoa wa`a (canoe mate) must work together by doing his share. The only way to know what is expected of each member is to have clearly defined assignments before hand.

-Komo mai kau mapuna hoe (Dip your paddle in. Join in the effort.)

9. See to it that personal issues are put to rest quickly instead of letting them collect and fester in your mind. Remember; what happens on land, stays on land, what happens at sea, stays at sea. Show respect, enthusiasm and commitment to your hoa wa`a by arriving on time to practice (steersmen, coaches and other leaders should ALWAYS arrive early).

-A leader is never on time, he is always early.

10. Take the time to study and learn the proper Hawaiian names and pronunciation of the things you use. On this issue, if you choose to use English (usually the case), or Tahitian, etc. that is entirely fine. But if you choose to use Hawaiian terminology, take care in its pronunciation (and use). Many Hawaiian words have multiple meanings or have different meanings if pronounced incorrectly. Lest you be guilty of `olelo ho`ohēpa (idiot talk).



The Spirit of Aloha

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In the beginning A (pronounced "ahh"), the eternal light giver, created Namaka O Ka Hai (the great power of the sea). But A saw the seas were alone, so he freed the force Pele. Pele created the lands. To keep them above her jealous sister, she constantly renewed them. The people who found these lands named it Hawai`I hailing it as a place of blessed "alo" or "aloha" meaning "in the presence of A." Life in old Hawai`I was a spiritual experience. There was aloha everywhere; in the people, plants, animals, rocks

and reefs. Even in the canoes and paddles and the tools used to make them. But aloha is more than a word, it's a way of life. If there is life, there is mana, goodness, and wisdom. If there is goodness and wisdom in a person, there is a god-quality. One must recognize the "god of life" in another before saying, "Aloha." It means mutual regard and affection and extends warmth in caring with no obligation in return. It's the essence of relationships in which each person is important to every other person for collective existence. It's to hear what is not said, to see what cannot be seen and to know the unknowable.

To say, "Aloha," to another with indifference is blasphemous, just as saying, "Mahalo," ungraciously is profane. Therefore, when one says, "Aloha," to another, one must mean it sincerely. If you are angry with someone, you must cleanse away all ill feeling before saying, "Aloha." It is said, and given, freely and without condition or expectation and with the realization that it may not be returned but it is given without regrets nonetheless. It is this concept more than any other that distinguishes the Hawaiian culture. It also allows an outrigger club and its members to grow and thrive.

A club's leaders, more than any other, should understand, and be possessed of, this concept. It is not enough to be in charge; one must lead by example. Aunty Pilahi Paki described it in this unuhi laula loa:

Akahai: kindness, expressed with a feeling of tenderness, Lokahi: unity, expressed with a feeling of harmony, `Olu`lu: agreeable, expressed with a feeling pleasantness, Ha`aha`a: humility, expressed with a feeling of modesty, Ahonui: patience, expressed with a feeling of perseverance.

These are the traits that express the charm, the warmth, the sincerity, the generosity, and the love of an intangible substance or spirit known to many in Hawai I nei as "ALOHA." Aloha is appropriate when it comes to your hoa wa'a (canoe mates) and as your competitors. Every race is an occasion for the celebration of team spirit, meeting the challenge of competition, the test of determination, and the solidarity of club pride. So how do these traits apply?

Akahai: Kindness. Help others where you can; let others help where possible.

Remember to give credit where credit is due and do not take credit at another's expense. Lokahi: Unity. Unity is to a club, what water is to a farmer. Take away a club's unity, and the club becomes a lifeless desert. By maintaining club unity you maintain a common goal and individuals are possessed with a common motive.

'Olu`olu: Agreeable. Commend in public; condemn in private. Remember a good judge of character corrects what he hears by what he sees, a bad judge of character corrupts what he sees by what he hears.

Ha`aha`a: Humility. Pride brings destruction; humility brings honor. If you are humble, you consider yourself the servant of others. You do not act or feel superior to others. Remember that a leader who excels in employing others, humbles himself before them. Ahonui: Patience. Never remember small fault; never forget small favors. The development of patience challenges the strongest by the minute to break away and take the easy road. It is something to admire and respect in someone, but often over looked because patience is hidden in all of us.

Canoe Blessing Ceremony Protocol



The following was written by Iwalani Christian, priestess, in a message to member Ina Talalemotu prior to the canoe blessing ceremony held at the Na Po' e Hoe Lokahi Double Hull Race, hosted by Mountain Home Canoe Club may 10, 2003.

* A Blessing is a consecration to invoke divine care for those things and/or persons who fulfill our lives through prayer and ceremony. A means of honoring, giving thanks and well wishes and positive energy and to dissipate any ill wishes and negative energy. To give approval and encouragement.

* Ceremony is a formal act or series of acts as prescribed by ritual, protocol or convention.

* Protocol is a code prescribing strict adherence to correct etiquette and precedence.

* Ritual is the established form for a ceremony. A ritual observance is a system of rites, a ceremonial act or action.

Some General Notes for a Canoe Blessing

Wa'a to be blessed are to be on the beach with the manu ihm (nose) towards the water just a bit over the very edge of the water. Beach should be cleared and free of any other paraphernalia. Everyone on the beach during ceremony is considered a witness/participant and will form a semi circle around the canoe. (That's everyone on the beach). Will need to facilitate 6 paddlers (they should all be kane (men), sorry wahine (women), but tradition, you know.) to paddle the wa'a out with the puolo (offering). The canoe is to go straight out, then a turn towards the East (left turn), the offering is dropped, then back to the ceremony site bringing the right side of the canoe parallel with the shore. Paddlers get out of the canoe and hold it in place till ceremony is ended. Then the wa'a is beached once again with the nose facing out. I suggest the honoree

take the kapena position (steersman) and a young member in noho 'ekahi (seat one or stroker) with a kupuna (elder) in the center. This will symbolize the generations, full circle. Bring your paddles to Blessing Area on the beach; leave your cases and paddle covers and other ukana (baggage, coats, shoes, purses, etc.) locked in your cars. Carry your paddle with the blade up, not down (so the mana does not flow out and absorbed by the sand). There is no unnecessary talking during the ceremony.

So here's the protocol (Order of things):

Clearing and Purification (so the ceremony may begin) Pa'akai (sea salt) will be passed to all witnesses/participants while the purification/clearing chant is done. Take a pinch of salt and put it under your tongue. Salt is a symbol of purification and prepares the witness to be pure in thoughts and feelings for the ceremony.

Permission

Here a prayer is offered to ask the tree for forgiveness in the taking of its life and celebrating the dawning of its life as a wa'a (canoe). A lei is placed on the manu ihm of the canoe during the prayer. A prayer to ask the ancestors presence is then done.

Blessing

The canoe is blessed with a blessing and honor chant. Noho 'Ekahi carries the offering. After the blessing chant is completed and the manu ihm is consecrated (with the pouring of 'awa and salt and water over the nose), the paddlers may recite a prayer, chant, or do a haka.

Offering

The paddlers get into the canoe and paddle out to make the offering. Paddle straight out a ways. Make a left turn. During the turn, the offering is dropped into the water. Canoe then heads straight back to shore, nose first. The paddlers get out of the canoe and stand beside it for the final prayer.

Closing the Ceremony

The paddlers get out of the canoe and stand besides it for the final prayer. The paddlers will push the canoe back up on the beach with the nose facing out. The ceremony is ended.

Hawaiian Outrigger Traditions

The following traditions should be respected and followed at all times.

Tying ti leaves to the canoe brings good luck.

Don't step over the boats at any time; walk around the canoe. Stepping over a canoe brings it bad luck. Respect the competition's boats as well.

Refer to canoe parts by their Hawaiian names.

Each canoe should be treated with the respect of a living person.

Do not sit in the boat on dry land (except for instruction), as the canoe is considered sacred and part of you. Treat the canoe as a person.

Do not swear or argue in or around the canoe. This brings bad luck and slows the canoe.

Before each race the team gathers to give blessings and prayers of hope and thanksgiving.

After each race the teammates greet each other and congratulate them on the race. When the canoes are on dry land, the nose of the canoe should point to the water. The early Hawaiians did this out of respect for the canoe and its spirit.