

Voyaging Petroglyph Artwork

"We were born to be free and the canoe is a symbol of that freedom because it allowed us to go where we needed to go to exercise our beliefs and culture. Everybody on the canoe is important; everybody has a job with all of those jobs working in unity to accomplish the voyage. The canoe is a symbol of coming together and for that we honor the canoe."

~ Kauila Clark, Native Hawaiian Artist



HAWAIIAN STAR COMPASS

Traditional Polynesian navigators depended on all of the natural elements in order to navigate. They used the stars and when those were obscured they used other indicators such as the waves, the wind, the birds, dolphins and other sea life. That created a close tie between the people and nature and reinforced their trust in Io, the Creator. Traditional Navigators today must develop that same close connection to nature. The Hawaiian star compass, developed by Master Navigator Nainoa Thompson, is not a physical compass, but a mental construct that helps the navigator memorize the rising and setting positions of stars, flight paths of birds, directions of the waves and other signs in nature needed to find their way. In the center of the Hawaiian star compass is Manu (Bird) with his beak, tail and outstretched wing-tips pointing midway between the four cardinal directions.



WA'A

The wa'a is the Hawaiian word for the traditional carved canoe with the distinctive outrigger (spars attached to a shaped log or float parallel to the hull) that helped stabilize the canoe. The single-hull version served as the workhorse for Native Hawaiians and their Polynesian ancestors and was used for recreation, fishing and short trips around the island. Larger double-hulled wa'a were used throughout Polynesia for the long voyages across the Pacific using traditional non-instrument navigation methods. The design of these ancient double-hulled wa'a served as a blueprint for the modern day voyaging canoe Hōkūle'a and the many others that followed her.



ALAKA'I

The alaka'i are the guides that help lead the way on the voyage. Manō (shark), leads the wa'a through the open ocean. Manu (the birds) serve as offshore guides, directing and alerting that land is near within miles. The nai'a (dolphins) and honu (turtle) alert the navigator that land is near.



E'ALA

E'ala, a replica of an ancient Polynesian voyaging canoe, was built in 1980 at Poka'i Bay by the Wai'anae Hawaiian Civic Club and Na Kahuna Kala'i Wa'a. The project revived the art of canoe building on the Wai'anae coast and inspired the people of Wai'anae to restore Ku'ilioloa Heiau, an ancient navigational heiau located at Poka'i Bay. E'ala was used to teach traditional navigation and for a maritime curriculum program developed for local schools that reinforced the concept of unity between the land and the sea. In 2010, Kaina Nakanealoha and Sam Kapoi brought E'ala back to Wai'anae from Sand Island where it had been sitting in dry dock. In 2014, the largest wa'a halau was built at Wai'anae Boat Harbor to provide a sheltered location to restore E'ala. The large A-frame five-story structure is open to the north and south and serves as a star compass for teaching navigation and traditional canoe building to haumāna (students) and as a beacon for the community.



HŌKŪLE'A

Hōkūle'a was the first double-hulled traditional sailing canoe built in Hawai'i in more than 600 years. Her maiden voyage around the Hawaiian Islands in 1975 was a powerful symbol of pride and dignity for Native Hawaiians. Her initial goal was to prove that ancient Polynesians made purposeful trips throughout the Pacific using only traditional non-instrument navigation skills. Constructed from detailed drawings by Native Hawaiian artist-historian Herb Kawainui Kāne, her goal was propelled by the visionary founders of the Polynesian Voyaging Society; Herb Kāne, Ben Finney and Tommy Holmes. In 1976 her 2,500 mile voyage from Hawai'i to Tahiti guided by the legendary skills of the traditional Micronesian navigator, Mau Piailug, demonstrated that ancient Polynesians were the greatest explorers on earth, navigating 10 million square miles of open ocean as they settled the Hawaiian islands and others they discovered along the way. More voyages followed as a new generation of traditional Hawaiian navigators trained by "Papa Mau" retraced the ancient ocean routes of their ancestors. In May 2014, she set sail with her sister ship, Hikianalia, on a three-year worldwide voyage that would inspire and unite cultures around the world to mālama honua (care for our island earth).

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MAU PIALUG

Mau Pailug (1932-2010) was a Pwo (Master) navigator from Satawal skilled in the traditional Polynesian non-instrument method of navigation called “wayfinding” that uses information in the heavens and other clues in nature to navigate vast distances of open ocean. By the 1970s, Mau was one of only a handful of traditional navigators in Polynesia. There were none left in Hawai‘i. In 1976, Mau used this knowledge to successfully navigate Hōkūle‘a and its crew on a 2,500 mile journey from Hawaii to Tahiti—an ancestral route he had never traveled. Greeted by a crowd of 17,000 Tahitians, the voyage reawakened a sense of pride for Native Hawaiians and other Polynesians in their great voyaging heritage. In 2007, Mau’s dedicated efforts to pass on his knowledge to a new generation culminated when he initiated 16 of his students as Pwo (Master) navigators—the first time in 50 years the sacred ceremony was performed. A Pwo Navigator demonstrates their knowledge, courage and a deep commitment to serve their community and teach others. Five Hawaiians (Nainoa Thompson, Bruce Blankenfield, Chadd Onohi Paishon, Chad Kalepa Baybayan and Milton “Shorty” Bertelmann) became Pwo navigators that day, ensuring that wayfinding will live on for future generations.



HAWAI‘ILOA

Construction of Hawai‘iloa was led by Wright Bowman Jr. and completed in 1993. The canoe further recovered knowledge and skills associated with traditional Hawaiian canoe building. Its hulls were carved from two 400-year-old, 200-foot-long Sitka Spruce logs donated by Alaska’s Tlingit tribe. Logs from the native ōhi‘a and hau trees were used for other parts of the canoe. The project also brought greater awareness of the need to care for Hawai‘i’s forests. Its maiden voyage in 1995 to Nuku Hiva via Ra‘iātea and back recreated an early settlement voyage to Hawai‘i and served as a tribute to the great mariner Hawai‘iloa, hero of the ancient Hawaiian legend that tells the story of how the Hawaiian Islands were settled. The legend has been found to be consistent with current anthropological and historical beliefs.



MAKALI‘I

Makali‘i was constructed by brothers Clay and Milton “Shorty” Bertelmann with assistance from many other community members and cultural organizations. Before its construction began, the Kūpuna and Papa Mau instructed them to first build a single-hull fishing canoe using only traditional materials. After the successful construction of this smaller canoe named Mauloa, the team was given the blessing to build Makali‘i, the Hawaiian name for the Pleiades star cluster. Her maiden voyage in 1995 took her to Taputapuātea, Raiatea, in Tahiti Nui, and Nukuhiva in the Marquesas Islands as part of the Na ‘Ohana Holo Moana (“The Voyaging Families of the Vast Ocean”) where they were joined by five canoes, Hawai‘i Loa, Hōkūle‘a, the Maori canoe Te ‘Aurere, and two Cook Islands canoes, Takitumu and Te ‘Au o Tonga. Today, Makali‘i is the focal point and primary classroom for Nā Kālai Wa‘a Moku O Hawai‘i, a non-profit organization dedicated to the maintenance of cultural values and customs through the teaching and application of non-instrument and open ocean voyaging.



HIKIANALIA

Hikianalia was built by the seven waka moana of the Pacific Voyagers in Aotearoa from a Salthouse Boatbuilders template. She was designed specifically for the Mālama Honua Worldwide Voyage in the same model as the Pacific voyager canoes that have been sailing the Pacific promoting healthy oceans. The only difference is that both of her hulls contain an electric motor powered by on-board photovoltaic panels combining the latest ecological technology with the heritage of the voyaging tradition. Hikianalia is the Hawaiian name for the star Spica which is a sister star to the star Hōkūle‘a (Arcturus) because they each break the horizon together at the latitude of the Hawaiian Islands. She was launched for sea trials on September 15, 2012 and set sail from Aotearoa to Tahiti on October 9, 2012. Hikianalia has her own sail plan for part of the Worldwide Voyage but she will begin and conclude the voyage side by side with Hōkūle‘a.



MOI‘KEHA

Moi‘keha, one of the most famous navigators of Hawaiian legends, was an ali‘i nui (chief) from Moa‘ulanuiakea, Tahiti who had a son, La‘amaikahiki with his first wife Kapo. Moi‘keha then fell in love with Luukia and took her as his lover. When this relationship was sabotaged by Mua, he took his sisters, brothers, priests, navigators and lookouts on a voyage to the Hawaiian Islands. His siblings and other crew members made their homes at different locations on Hawai‘i Island. When Moi‘keha reached Kaua‘i, he fell in love and married the daughter of an island ali‘i and had five children. When his father-in-law passed, he became the ali‘i nui of Kaua‘i. He loved Kaua‘i but at an old age yearned to see his first-born son, La‘amaikahiki. He asked his youngest son, Kila, to voyage to Tahiti where he found La‘amaikahiki and brought him back to Moi‘keha on Kaua‘i. La‘amaikahiki shared music and dance with the people of Hawai‘i and it is said that he was the first one to bring an akua or god to Hawaii.

To learn more about the Polynesian Voyaging Society, Hōkūle‘a, its Mālama Honua Worldwide Voyage and information about the skills and knowledge required to navigate using only the stars and other clues in nature, visit www.hokulea.com.

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