

Mālama Honua Voyage

Kamehameha Schools

‘Ōlelo No‘eau (Set 1)

The following ‘ōlelo no‘eau, traditional wise sayings and proverbs, were selected to celebrate both the rich tradition of voyaging in Hawai‘i and greater Polynesia, as well as the ongoing Worldwide Voyage of Hōkūle‘a and Hikianalia.

These expressions reflect the importance of pilina, relationships or connections, and have been categorized by levels of awareness: as a **kanaka**, an individual, we recognize our personal role as we strive to make contributions to the **lāhui**, the larger social body around us. When we are attuned with our **honua**, our environment, we experience a sense of unity and oneness with the greater world. Whether crew members on a long-distance voyaging canoe, teachers or learners in a classroom, or professionals in an office setting, these wa‘a-themed ‘ōlelo no‘eau remind us to nurture and care for our pilina:

- Start your next staff meeting with a proverb to encourage teamwork
- Integrate wise sayings into lesson plans and assignments to affirm values
- Set personal, professional, and/or divisional goals inspired by ‘ōlelo no‘eau to encourage high performance, efficiency, and excellence
- Utilize ancestral wisdom in decision-making, problem-solving, and evaluation

This is the first set in a series of ‘ōlelo no‘eau that will be shared with the KS community over the course of the following year in conjunction with the Mālama Honua Voyage. Enjoy!

Kanaka

emphasizing personal growth and awareness

Aia a kau ka i‘a i ka wa‘a, mana‘o ke ola.

- Translation: One can think of life after the fish is in the canoe.
- Interpretation: Before one feels elated and makes plans, he should first secure the fish.
- Application:
 - ◊ This ‘ōlelo no‘eau is similar to the saying, “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch.”
 - ◊ While specifically referencing canoe fishing activities, this saying also serves as a reminder to remain focused on the task at hand before moving on.
- Reference: Pukui, *‘Ōlelo No‘eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*, #23, p. 5

He ho‘okele wa‘a no ka lā ‘ino.

- Translation: A canoe steersman for a stormy day.
- Interpretation: A courageous person.
- Application:
 - ◊ This ‘ōlelo no‘eau may be said in admiration of a courageous individual who braves the storms of life. The late Pius “Papa Mau” Pailug was nicknamed “Mau” for his strength on the sea, especially during stormy weather.
 - ◊ Metaphorically, this saying encourages individuals to be versatile and adaptable as they navigate through life, because the environment can quickly change from pleasant to stormy.
- Reference: Pukui, *‘Ōlelo No‘eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*, #592, p. 68

He wa'a holo nō kā ho'i, kālai kāpulu 'ia iho.

- Translation: After all, it is a worthy canoe, but you hewed it so carelessly.
- Interpretation: He is a good worker but you have treated him with such thoughtlessness.
- Application:
 - ◊ This 'ōlelo no'eau alludes to the idea that if you do not put forth the effort to build something well, it will fall apart on you when you need it the most. The proverb offers the advice to always do your best and to do it with care.
- Reference: Pukui, *'Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*, #967, p. 104

E kaupē aku nō i ka hoe a kō mai.

- Translation: Put forward the paddle and draw it back.
- Interpretation: Go on with the task that is started and finish it.
- Application:
 - ◊ This saying promotes perseverance and focus.
 - ◊ When there is a long and arduous task at hand, one can get easily distracted or bored with the work. But much like the saying "One step at a time," this 'ōlelo no'eau stresses the importance of doing things carefully and methodically in order to reach the end goal.
- Reference: Pukui, *'Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*, #319, p. 39

Lāhui

emphasizing relationship-building and social, cultural etiquette

He po'e ho'opiha wa'a.

- Translation: Canoe fillers.
- Interpretation: A derogatory remark pertaining to useless people who do nothing to help, like riders in a canoe who wield no paddle, no fishnet, and no pole.
- Application:
 - ◊ This saying is very straightforward in chastising individuals who do not contribute to the larger group or society. It thereby encourages all to pitch in and be helpful lest you be called a "canoe filler."
- Reference: Pukui, *'Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*, #897, p. 97

'A'ole make ka wa'a i ka 'ale o waho, aia nō i ka 'ale o loko.

- Translation: A canoe is not swamped by the billows of the ocean, but by the billows near the land.
- Interpretation: Trouble often comes from one's own people rather than from outsiders.
- Application:
 - ◊ This saying emphasizes the importance of maintaining good relationships within a group (e.g. family, community, and nation), and especially with those who are closest to you.
 - ◊ In direct connection to voyaging, this 'ōlelo no'eau underscores the value of being alert and aware not only while sailing long distances over open ocean but also during shorter sails close to shore.
- Reference: Pukui, *'Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*, #229, p. 27

E lauhoe mai nā wa‘a; i ke kā, i ka hoe; i ka hoe, i ke kā; pae aku i ka ‘āina.

- Translation: Everybody paddle the canoes together; bail and paddle, paddle and bail, and the shore is reached.
- Interpretation: Pitch in with a will, everybody, and the work is quickly done.
- Application:
 - ◊ Along with promoting teamwork, this saying offers a phrase of encouragement for group members to persevere during the drudgery of a task until the goal is achieved.
- Reference: Pukui, *‘Ōlelo No‘eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*, #327, p. 40

‘A‘ohe pulu, he wa‘a nui.

- Translation: One will not be wet on a large canoe.
- Interpretation: One is safe in the protection of an important person.
- Application:
 - ◊ It is important as individuals to be very selective of our associates and acquaintances because they can bring safety or destruction.
 - ◊ This ‘ōlelo no‘eau also illustrates the responsibility of a leader to protect his followers.
- Reference: Pukui, *‘Ōlelo No‘eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*, #136, p. 17

Honua

emphasizing awareness of the greater environment for guidance, teachings, and inspiration

Ua ‘elepaio ‘ia ka wa‘a.

- Translation: The ‘elepaio or native monarch flycatcher has [marked] the canoe [log].
- Interpretation: There is an indication of failure. Canoe makers of old watched the movements of the ‘elepaio bird whenever a koa tree was hewed down to be made into a canoe. Should the bird peck at the wood, it was useless to work on that log, for it would not prove seaworthy.
- Application:
 - ◊ This ‘ōlelo no‘eau calls out the importance of paying attention to detail, a trait exemplified by traditional canoe makers who would attentively watch for the ‘elepaio in order to select an appropriate log.
 - ◊ Although specifically referencing canoe building, this saying is also a reminder to constantly search for hō‘ailona, signs or omens, to guide one’s work, lest it be in vain.
- Reference: Pukui, *‘Ōlelo No‘eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*, #2777, p. 306

‘O nā hōkū nō nā kiu o ka lani.

- Translation: The stars are the spies of heaven.
- Interpretation: The stars look down on everyone and everything.
- Application:
 - ◊ In non-instrument navigation, the stars may serve as “spies” of the heavens by predicting impending weather. According to Papa “Mau” Piailug’s navigational traditions, certain stars were not used for navigation but were nonetheless important in revealing approaching storms or high winds.

- ◊ This proverb may also metaphorically reference the role of elders in traditional Hawaiian society as guiding stars to those that seek their input and heed it.
- Reference: Pukui, 'Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings, #2513, p. 274

'Au i ke kai me he manu ala.

- Translation: Cross the sea as a bird.
- Interpretation: To sail across the sea. Also applied to a hill that juts out into the sea or is seen from far out at sea.
- Application:
 - ◊ This saying poetically draws a connection between sailing and the flight of sea birds. Birds are a welcomed sight on long voyages because they signal that land is near.
 - ◊ It also highlights the effortless and ease by which these birds frequently travel over great distances, much like skilled voyagers.
- Reference: Pukui, 'Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings, #237, p. 28

Nā maka o ka makani.

- Translation: Eyes of the wind.
- Interpretation: Clouds, which show the direction of the wind.
- Application:
 - ◊ It is always important to know the direction of the wind on a wa'a because it is the "engine" of the canoe. Furthermore, the shapes of the clouds and their position in the various altitudes of the sky can indicate the direction and strength of the wind.
 - ◊ This wise saying emphasizes the importance of being aware of one's natural surroundings. Nature can speak to us in many ways, therefore should constantly strive to be better listeners and observers of what is being communicated through the environment.
- Reference: Pukui, 'Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings, #2259, p. 247