

UC Berkeley

Parks Stewardship Forum

Title

Nā Wa'a Mauō Marine Stewardship Program: Perpetuating the practices of our Kūpuna to care for our oceans and strengthen our next generation of marine stewards

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/23q3c5xw>

Journal

Parks Stewardship Forum, 38(2)

Authors

Pihana, Hōkūokahalelani
Puniwai, Noelani
Perry, Ho'oululāhui Erika

Publication Date

2022

DOI

10.5070/P538257521

Copyright Information

Copyright 2022 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

WE ARE OCEAN PEOPLE: INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP IN MARINE CONSERVATION

CINDY BOYKO & 'AULANI WILHELM, GUEST EDITORS

Nā Wa‘a Mauō Marine Stewardship Program:

Perpetuating the practices of our Kūpuna to care for our oceans and strengthen our next generation of marine stewards

Hōkūokahalelani Pihana
Noelani Puniwai
Ho‘oululāhui Erika Perry
Kānaka ‘Ōiwi

ABSTRACT

Nā Wa‘a Mauō means the canoes that sustain us. The Nā Wa‘a Mauō Marine Stewardship Program uses wa‘a (outrigger canoes) as vehicles to care for our oceans. The mission of Nā Wa‘a Mauō is to perpetuate the practices of our Kūpuna (ancestors) by using our Native tools and language to care for our oceans with a vision of ‘āina momona (fruitful and productive lands) through Kanaka ‘Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) stewardship. Our program hosts monthly community workdays on Hawai‘i Island, inter-island exchanges across the state, and the Honuiaiākea Voyaging program for Kānaka ‘Ōiwi youths transitioning into adulthood. The Nā Wa‘a Mauō program blends Indigenous and institutional sciences to create community-driven marine stewardship efforts that are scientifically rigorous and culturally rooted. As Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, we have generational ties to our lands and intimate connections to our environment that gift us with the kuleana (responsibility) to care for our islands.

INTRODUCTIONS

The Nā Wa‘a Mauō Marine Stewardship Program was created to develop a more holistic and less invasive way to care for our oceans that is rooted in Native Hawaiian practice. Wa‘a (outrigger canoes) are the vessels that moved our people across oceans, enabled us to gather food throughout nearshore oceans, and connected our communities among islands and across the Pacific. The Nā Wa‘a Mauō Marine Stewardship Program aims to re-ignite the ancestral

identity of wa‘a to evoke a community change that enables us as a Lāhui (Hawaiian Nation) to reach the desired state of ‘āina mauō (sustaining lands). This regenerative action intends to use our Native tools, language, and practice to shift the way we care for our oceans in Hawai‘i. Since the onset of colonization, the ways of managing our natural resources shifted from Indigenous resource management to Western resource management. This change impacted our natural resources and compartmentalized Kanaka

‘Ōiwi practice and worldview. The practice of our Kūpuna diminished and modern methods of agriculture and marine fisheries management were normalized. The long-term result was a desire among Kānaka ‘Ōiwi communities to revitalize and use our Indigenous practices to care for our islands.

Nā Wa‘a Mauō (NWM) blends Western and Native Hawaiian sciences to care for our oceans. Our marine monitoring methods fuse the mechanical components of Western science with the fluidity of Native Hawaiian science to conduct stewardship projects that are scientifically rigorous and culturally rooted. NWM provides various pathways for community participation, such as community workdays, weekend workshop exchanges, and the Honuaiākea voyaging program. Our monthly community workdays invite community members to the canoe to participate in our stewardship projects. Participants learn how to gather data using our NWM methods and engage in the larger conversation about their concerns for the future of oceans. The workdays provide a healthy space for us to gather together to address the needs and concerns of our community so we can care for and strengthen the health and wellness of our oceans.

The efforts of the NWM programs are to revitalize the identity of wa‘a as vehicles to care for our oceans, perpetuate our practices, and strengthen the next generation of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi. In order to take regenerative action, we must be innovative by combining Indigenous and institutional science and knowledge systems. Using wa‘a to conduct marine research is a holistic approach that reduces our marine impact and strengthens our relationship to the ocean and each other.

When combined with institutional science methods, an all-encompassing approach to marine stewardship is evoked. The purpose and function for both knowl-

edge systems in marine resource stewardship enables us to be rooted in our Kānaka ‘Ōiwi practices and use modern technology to gather information. These innovative efforts further strengthen the Lāhui and help to develop sustainable solutions for our Pae ‘Āina Hawai‘i (all Hawaiian Lands).

To reach a state of ‘āina mauō, sustainable solutions must be created that evoke lifestyle changes across communities. Our efforts aim to lead by example and represent the change we want to see within our communities that is reflected in the health and wellness of our people and islands. The community-driven marine stewardship projects help us to understand our human impact on the marine environment and recognize the value of using our Native practices to care for our resources. Our community outreach efforts introduce ways to evoke change within individuals and families that reduce their ecological impact. The inclusion of community members in our stewardship efforts enables them to be part of the conversation in how we care for our oceans and ‘āina. NWM provides pathways for community-based resilience and self-determination by using wa‘a and our Native practices to mālama (care for) our resources and strengthen our people.

The weekend workshop exchanges are meant to introduce the NWM methods to other communities in Hawai‘i who are interested in using our methods to care for their oceans and to learn how other ocean communities care for theirs. The weekend exchanges are designed to exchange ‘ike (knowledge) and mana‘o (thought) to strengthen pilina (relationship). Our staff and students introduce our methods to host communities, teaching them how to conduct their own stewardship projects in their space. We then engage in community interviews where students learn from our hosts about their oceans, ‘āina, and mo‘okūauhau (genealogy) that connects them to their kuleana

The inclusion of community members in our stewardship efforts enables them to be part of the conversation in how we care for our oceans and ‘āina.



(responsibility) to mālama their space. The exchanges are opportunities for us to share space and learn from one another through food, mele (song), and wa'a.

The Honuiaiākea Voyaging Program (HVP) intends to strengthen the emotional, academic, and Indigenous self-identity of our Kānaka 'Ōiwi youth transitioning to adulthood through hands-on learning experiences, community exchanges, and ocean voyages. The hands-on learning experiences teach students about our marine environment from a Kānaka 'Ōiwi worldview.

Students are introduced to the NWM marine monitoring methods to help them develop community-driven projects that are scientifically rigorous and culturally rooted. They learn how to use Indigenous and institutional science methods in concert to steward our marine environment and develop sustainable solutions for our islands. The intent of this piece of the program is to introduce students to a marine stewardship methodology rooted in Indigenous practice. As they learn how to prioritize cultural protocol and practice into their projects, they continue to ignite their Native identity.

To advance a collective community movement towards a new and better normal that supports justice and equity for people and the planet, NWM intends to encourage community lifestyle changes through action. In order to move towards a new and better normal, we must be inclusive and provide learning opportunities for us to strengthen the Indigenous identities of our Kānaka 'Ōiwi youth and provide resources and engagement opportunities to teach others about our Indigenous ways. The diverse community opportunities hosted by NWM enable participants to better understand our impact on our natural environment and Indigenous identities and the ways we can change our behaviors and celebrate our Indigenous lifestyles. By creating and sustaining long-lasting community relationships and commitments to our future generations, we strengthen the emotional well-being and self-confidence of our kids and enable our communities to be a part of stewarding our ocean resources.

NĀ WAIWAI OF THE NWM PROGRAM EXPERIENCES TO STRIVE FOR 'ĀINA MAUŌ

The waiwai (values) of NWM guide our practices

▼ Hilo to Kona voyage with the Kimokeo Foundation. View of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa just south of Hilo. HŌKŪ PIHANA



and commitment to the next generation of marine stewards. Our waiwai build upon each other to strengthen the ‘ano (spirit) of the individual and the pilina created through the collective work of each paddler to strive for ‘āina mauō. They reflect the natural process Kānaka take on their journey to becoming kia‘i kai (marine stewards). As participants engage in our program experiences, these values become a part of their personal and collective growth. Through observation, we develop pilina with place that inspires us to tend to that space.

As we mālama ‘āina (care for our resources), we become connected to the place we are tending and practices we use. This evokes ‘āina momona (healthy and fruitful lands) that is a product of our stewardship, which then leads to ‘āina mauō (the land that sustains us). In order for us to reflect our program values and strive for the desired outcome of ‘āina mauō, we have made a long-term commitment to provide more pathways for our Kānaka ‘Ōiwi children and communities to use our language and practices to sustain the health of our islands.

THE HVP EXPERIENCE

The HVP experience for our next generation of marine stewards exemplifies how wa‘a strengthens the health and wellness of our people and oceans. This next section will showcase the components of the HVP that reflect the waiwai and hana (work) of NWM.

The (HVP) was developed by the Nā Wa‘a Mauō Marine Stewardship Program to support Kānaka ‘Ōiwi high school students through wa‘a from the under-represented communities of East Hawai‘i Island. HVP provides pathways for Kānaka ‘Ōiwi youths to strengthen their Indigenous self-identity, perpetuate the practices of our Kūpuna (ancestors), and prepare themselves for adulthood. To advance Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and sustainability the HVP has made a generational commitment to Kānaka ‘Ōiwi youth by hosting six student cohorts over ten years. This long-term commitment aims to foster a generational change in ocean stewardship by revitalizing the identity of wa‘a as vehicles to care for our ocean and sustain our island communities and by helping to raise the next generation of marine



▲ Students teach visiting Kumu about their Nā Kilo ‘Āina practices. HŌKŪ PIHANA

Kilo ‘āina (environmental observation), when we observe and spend time in a place, we become inspired to tend to that place. Kilo ‘āina is an ancestral practice that Native Hawaiians have perpetuated through generations that continues today. Making observations using all of our six senses—five physical and our na‘au (gut) sense—enables us to digest all of the information our environment shares with us. As we conduct this practice over time, the space tells us more and the relationship between kānaka and ‘āina begins to become pa‘a (firm).





▲ Students collecting rubbish during our beach clean-up. HÖKŪ PIHANA

Mālama ‘āina, our kilo and time spent with place, evokes our desire to care for and give back to the place that has given to us. Tending to our oceans and ‘āina contributes to the health and wellness of ourselves and the environment. This reciprocal action strengthens the relationship between kānaka and ‘āina and awakens the desire to steward that space.



▲ Students collect water properties and environmental observations data in the wa‘a. HÖKŪ PIHANA

‘Āina momona, the reciprocity between steward and ‘āina, reflected in fruitful lands and healthy communities. The stewardship actions evoked by our mālama ‘āina practices over time will lead to ‘āina momona, the fruitful and productive lands. As we spend time with a space observing its behavior and environmental patterns, over time we learn more about how to care for it to strengthen the ‘āina momona of that space.





▲ Moku o Keawe view from the wa'a as we paddled around Lanai back to Maui. HŌKŪ PIHANA

‘Āina mauō, environmental and cultural sustainability obtained from the reciprocity between the ‘āina and the kia‘i (protectors/stewards). The ultimate goal is to reach a state of ‘āina mauō, the land that sustains us. Through our practices of kilo ‘āina, mālama ‘āina, and ‘āina momona we move towards ‘āina mauō. Our relationships build our stewardship which strengthens the health and wellness of our people and island and guides us to a state of āin mauō.

stewards who are skilled scientists grounded in their Indigenous identity as Native Hawaiians. The components of Honuiaiākea share our stewardship process, community exchanges, and voyaging experiences.

The HVP immerses students in an eight-month experience where they learn how to care for our natural resources and communities from a Kānaka ‘Ōiwi worldview. They learn the significance of cultural protocol through chants, stories, and observations. Students will use chants to request entrance to place and to thank place for the knowledge given. They will read stories to understand our generational ties to our oceans and conduct environmental observations to establish a sense of place and relationship with place.

LIFEGUARD CERTIFICATIONS

During phase one of the HVP, students attain their lifeguard certifications and learn how to use the NWM Marine Stewardship methods to care for our oceans. The lifeguard certification component trains students in open ocean safety and rescue through online courses and field trainings. Participants learn

how to use GPS units to locate each other in the ocean, how to perform CPR and first aid, and how to conduct ocean rescues. The six-week training piece prepares students for their research voyages by strengthening their open ocean readiness.

Students work to improve their swimming, diving, and rescue skills, as well as complete and pass the online lifeguard training courses and open-ocean swim and rescue tests. Upon satisfactory completion of these requirements, students receive their lifeguard certifications.

NWM METHODS

Concurrently, as students are trained in open ocean safety and rescue they also learn the parts of the wa'a, how to paddle wa'a, and how to use the NWM research tools on the wa'a. In order to establish our relationship with wa'a we must know who a particular wa'a is through its parts and how it moves through the ocean as we paddle. This piece teaches students the purpose and function of all the parts of wa'a and how to paddle as one in the wa'a. They learn the fundamentals of paddling, conduct mock rescue drills from the wa'a,





▲ Ocean rescue training (top left; bottom); CPR and First Aid training (top right) HOKU PIHANA

and begin using our NWM methods to learn about our ocean environment. Our NWM methods exemplify that ocean research and monitoring can be done in a more holistic and less invasive way, one that is rooted in Native Hawaiian science and practice.

COMMUNITY INTERVIEW SERIES

The community interview series expands students' experience as they learn about the Indigenous

practices and sciences used by other Kānaka 'Ōiwi communities. The exchanges enrich their experience through knowledge sharing and storytelling, further strengthening their Indigenous self-identity. Students begin by exchanging with their families and others in their community to learn about who they are and the communities they are connected to. Students then exchange with other communities to learn about their ocean practices and how they





▲ (left-right) Students completed their plankton pulls; microscope image of zooplankton collected; paddling technique training HÖKŪ PIHANA

► Community interview with Lauren Kapono conducted by our Nā Wa'a students at Waiuli in Keaukaha, Hawai'i. HÖKŪ PIHANA

perpetuate those practices within their families and communities. The intent of this piece of the program is to have the students understand the significance of their work and how our efforts contribute to the health and wellness of our communities and resources.

VOYAGING EXCHANGES

The ocean voyaging experience enables students to apply the skills they have learned. In preparation for the voyage, students examine mo'olelo (stories), oli (chants), 'olelo no'eau (proverbs), and wahi pana (place names) of the places on our voyage. They also prepare our wa'a for our voyage and conduct cultural protocol through oli komo (entrance chant) to open our voyage. During the voyage, students will open each day with an oli komo to prepare for our voyage and the work being done on the wa'a. They then conduct their stewardship projects using the NWM methods. Upon entering our host site, we offer an oli komo to request entrance. Once granted entrance,



we enter places and prepare for our exchange. The exchanges include community interviews and NWM methods training. At the close of each day and the end of the voyage, an oli pani (closing chant) is conducted to end the day and complete our voyage.

KA MO'OLELO HONUAIĀKEA & LĀ 'OHANA

Finally, each cohort of students creates a short film, Ka Mo'olelo Honuiaiākea, that shares their personal and collective journey in the wa'a. This piece enables our participants to creatively tell their story and share it with their families and communities during our Lā 'Ohana event. Ka Mo'olelo Honuiaiākea shares their experiences learning about wa'a, their exchanges with other wa'a communities, and their personal growth experience during the program. As students move through the wa'a experience and new cohorts are invited to wa'a, we will continue to contribute to the mo'okūauhau of our mo'olelo to tell our voyaging story. Lā 'Ohana is the day we invite families and communities to wa'a to learn about our program. Attendees rotate through activity stations that highlight components of our program and, at the close of the event, we premiere our short film, Ka Mo'olelo Honuiaiākea. Our mo'olelo closes our voyaging experience with the intent to inspire more students and families to come to wa'a to care for our

Lu'uaeaahikiiekailipolipo

Ocean Exploration Trust
ship to shore exchange

with

Nā Kumu Kainalu Steward & Kalama'ehu Takahashi





▲ Screenshot from Ka Mo'olelo Honuiaiākea short film. Links depicted are in the text, below. HŌKŪ PĪHANA

oceans and strengthen the mo'okūauhau o Nā Wa'a Mauō.

CONCLUSION

To advance a collective community movement towards a new and better normal that supports justice and equity for people and the planet, NWM and the HVP intend to create community lifestyle changes through action. In order to move towards a new and better normal, we must be inclusive and provide learning opportunities for us to strengthen the Indigenous identities of our Kānaka 'Ōiwi youth and provide resources and engagement opportunities to teach others about our Indigenous ways. The diverse community opportunities hosted by NWM enable participants to better understand our impact on our natural environment and Indigenous identities and the ways we can change our behaviors to reduce that impact and celebrate our Indigenous lifestyles. By creating and sustaining long-lasting community relationships and commitments to our future generations, we strengthen the emotional well-being and self-confidence of our kids and enable our communities to be a part of stewarding our ocean resources.

The innovative design of NWM and the HVP was created to use more holistic marine monitoring methods that reduce our human impact on the ocean

and to use our Indigenous tools to study and care for the ocean. In order to achieve environmental, social, and cultural justice and equality for the planet, we must be collaborative and see the value in both Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. By blending knowledge systems and being inclusive of Indigenous sciences, we establish equity. As we begin working together in collaboration, using both wa'a and motorized vehicles when needed to care for our oceans, we become inclusive. Finally, as we perpetuate our Native language, tools, and practices by using them to care for our oceans and planet, we attain justice through equality and inclusion. Collectively, these actions evoke justice and equity for our planet.

In order to support justice and equality for our people, NWM and the HVP have made a long-lasting commitment to our communities and youth to strengthen the health and wellness of our people, places, and future. Wa'a culture reflects diversity. Each person comes to wa'a for a personal connection to the ocean without realizing their collective contribution to the health and wellness of our oceans. Every person in the wa'a has a function that enables us to move forward, and the wa'a itself carries no judgment. Each person in the wa'a holds value. This analogy is used to remind us of our individual value to ourselves and families, and our collective value to





▲ Nā Wa'a Mauō students open each practice by strengthening their paddling timing and technique skills. SCARLETT ANDERSON

our communities and planet. For us to support justice and equality for people, we must ground ourselves in our Indigenous identity as Native peoples, share our practices with our families and communities, and work together to sustain 'āina mauō. Through these pathways, Nā Wa'a Mauō and the Honuiaiākea Voyaging Program will evoke justice and equality for our indigenous practices, people, and places.

Ka Oli o Nā Wa'a Mauō

Nā Haumāna o Nā Wa'a Mauō; 2015

Kilo a pa'a
A kū nō ka wa'a
Pa'a ka pola
I kū no ka holo

*Observe until ready
Until the wa'a is revealed
The foundation is firm
It is time to sail*

MAHALO NUI

Nā Wa'a Mauō would like to send a special mahalo nui to all of those who believed in the vision of fleets of wa'a tending to and caring for our oceans. We would like to begin by sending our deepest mahalo to our 'ohana. To our parents for being our ocean, our children for being our wa'a, and our community for being our inspiration. An incredibly deep mahalo goes out to all of the Mana Wāhine that believed in the vision of Nā Wa'a Mauō: Pelika Adrade, Kanoe'ula Morishige, Ulu Ching, Cherie Kauahi, and Nāhaku Kalei. Finally, mahalo nui loa e Uncle Kurtis Kataoka for keeping our kids safe and teaching them how to mālama each other on the ocean. The love and support received from all of you made Nā Wa'a Mauō come to life and reflects the true meaning of e hoe wa'a kākou kekahi i kekahi.

If you would like to learn more about and/or become a part of the Nā Wa'a Mauō Marine Stewardship Program, please visit our website and/or social media pages.

WEBSITE <https://www.kahalemauo.com/nawaamauo>

INSTAGRAM @h-pihananness

FACEBOOK /nawaamauo

YOUTUBE <https://bit.ly/nawaamauo>

EMAIL nawaamauo@gmail.com





Citation for this article

Pihana, Hōkūokahalelani, Noelani Puniwai, and Ho‘oululāhui Erika Perry. 2022. Nā Wa‘a Mauō Marine Stewardship Program: Perpetuating the practices of our Kūpuna to care for our oceans and strengthen our next generation of marine stewards. *Parks Stewardship Forum* 38(2): 265–274

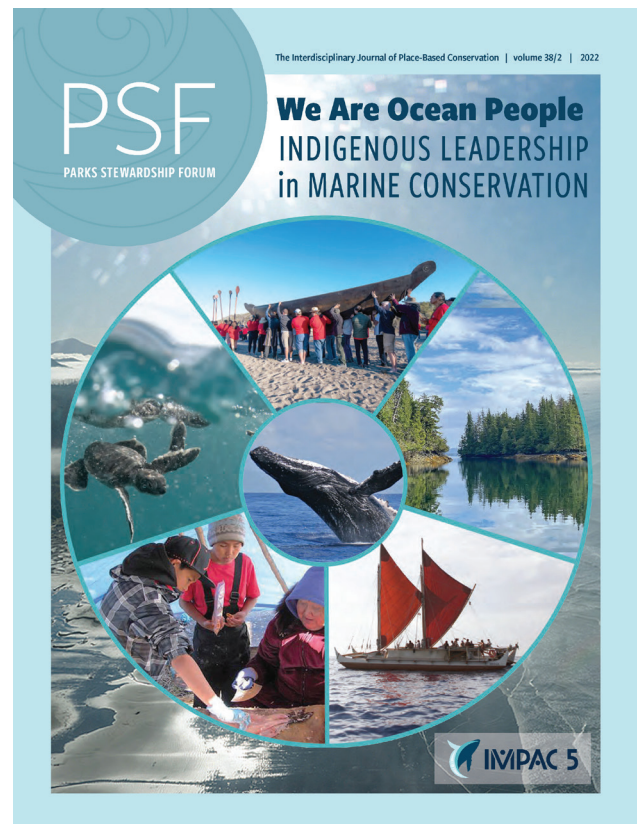
Parks Stewardship Forum explores innovative thinking and offers enduring perspectives on critical issues of place-based heritage management and stewardship. Interdisciplinary in nature, the journal gathers insights from all fields related to parks, protected/conserved areas, cultural sites, and other place-based forms of conservation. The scope of the journal is international. It is dedicated to the legacy of **George Meléndez Wright**, a graduate of UC Berkeley and pioneer in conservation of national parks.

Parks Stewardship Forum is published online at <https://escholarship.org/uc/psf> through **eScholarship**, an open-access publishing platform subsidized by the University of California and managed by the California Digital Library. Open-access publishing serves the missions of the IPPB and GWS to share, freely and broadly, research and knowledge produced by and for those who manage parks, protected areas, and cultural sites throughout the world. A version of *Parks Stewardship Forum* designed for online reading is also available at <https://parks.berkeley.edu/psf>. For information about publishing in PSF, write to psf@georgewright.org.

Parks Stewardship Forum is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

The journal continues *The George Wright Forum*, published 1981–2018 by the George Wright Society.

PSF is designed by Laurie Frasier • lauriefrasier.com



On the cover of this issue

- CIRCLE DESIGN, clockwise from top:
- Northern Chumash ceremony | **ROBERT SCHWEMMER**
 - Haida Gwaii | **CINDY BOYKO**
 - The Polynesian Voyaging Society’s voyaging canoe Hōkūle‘a | **NOAA**
 - Elder teaching youths, northern Alaska | **US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**
 - Baby Honu (sea turtles), Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument | **NOAA**
 - Center: Humpback whale, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument | **NOAA**

Background: Pacific Rim National Park Reserve | **PARKS CANADA**