

‘Olelo O Ka Wa`a

Hawaiian Language: paddling terms

Ha‘awina (lesson)

In every sport or job there is a special language. Words are used in this specialty like no other. For example, Navy terms. This also works for paddling the Hawaiian canoe.

If *Na Ho‘okele* (steerers) use the same language for commands universally, there will be little or no confusion on the part of the paddlers. These commands can and should be used to familiarize the crew with the language. The same language used consistently also gives *Ho‘okele* (steerer) control of the canoe and used to the idea of giving commands.

These are commands that can be used by Ho`okele in the canoe.

‘E ‘E! = pronounced ay ay (this is hard to describe..... actually a very short “e”). Get in the canoe!

HO‘OMAKAUKAU! = pronounced Hoh oh MAH cow cow. Get ready or get set!
This can be whatever you think “get set” means. Paddle across the gunwales, take a deep breath and focus.

E KAUPE! = pronounced Eh kah oo peh. Poised to plant the blade in the water.

If it’s training:

HOE = pronounced ho aee. Paddle! And off you go.

UNE = pronounced OO-NAY. To “lever.”

This is the action MUA (stroker and sometimes others) takes to help HO‘OKELE (steerer) turn the bow of the canoe going around the turn flag. This can be ANY movement of the paddle, from a J-stroke to paddling toward the hull. I have heard this term mis-pronounced UNI = OO-NEE. This word is not in the Hawaiian dictionary.

KAHI = pronounced, KAH-HEE. To “cut.”

Holds the paddle still, blade “cutting” in the same line as the canoe. No “action” taken. Or, kahi-left, planting the blade out on the left side and pulling water under the canoe to help turn the front of the canoe to the left.

All of the following terms are from either **Hawaiian Dictionary** by Pukui & Elbert or **The Hawaiian Canoe** by Tommy Holmes

Many of these terms have other meaning as well as allegorical meanings or *Kaona* (the hidden meaning) other than used here.

Some kinds of Hawaiian Canoes:

- **wa'a:** generic term for canoe
- **heihei:** a race of any kind including a canoe race
- **'au wa'a:** a fleet of canoes
- **'auwa'a 'a ho' apipi:** two canoes hastily joined to form or to use as a double canoe
- **wa'a kaulua:** another term for double canoe
- **kaukahi:** a single canoe with an outrigger
- **kialoa:** a long, light, and swift canoe used for racing & display. This term may also refer to a beautiful woman and her shape. Queen Ka'ahumanu was referred to as "Kialoa" in her youth.
- **Ko'okahi:** OC1
- **Ko'olua:** OC2
- **Ko'oha:** OC4
- **Ko'eono:** OC6
- **Wa'a 'Apulu:** an old, worn-out canoe. Also an old person. You see, the old time Hawaiians DID have a real sense of humor.

