

Canoe Blessing

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.

Canoe Blessing Ceremony Protocol

- * 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 ihu (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 stoker) 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 ihu 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 ihu 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