



CANADIAN OUTRIGGER HALL OF FAME

Zoe Norcross-Nu'u



Summary

Zoe Norcross-Nu'u is an accomplished paddler and marine scientist who grew up playing in the waters of Burrard Inlet. While pursuing her Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Coastal Geology at the University of Hawaii, Zoe began paddling and racing surfskis and outrigger canoes. Zoe has been competing internationally in outrigger canoe and surfski racing since 1996. After 13 years of living in Hawaii where she paddled, worked in coastal resource management, and taught marine science courses at the University of Hawaii Maui College, Zoe returned home to coastal BC in 2009. She lives on a small farm in Courtenay with her two daughters, works as the Watershed Protection Coordinator for the Comox Valley Regional District, and is a partner with Hana Hou Paddlesports. [01 [02]

Early Career

Zoe grew up in Deep Cove BC and paddled in Burrard Inlet. Zoe attended Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Burnaby BC 1993-1996 earning a Chinese Studies Certificate. As an undergrad at SFU, Zoe found out that the University of Hawaii was a sister school to SFU. Because Zoe was on a President's Scholarship, it meant that her scholarship could be transferred to Hawaii. It was only meant to be for one year, but Zoe enjoyed it so much that she transferred to the University of Hawaii (UH) at Manoa. Zoe attended UH 1996-1997 and graduated with a Bachelors Science Geology / Geophysics. Zoe attended UH 1999-2002 and graduated with a Masters Science Geology / Geophysics. Zoe then moved to Maui where she worked for 8 years until 2009. After graduating with her Masters Science, Zoe was offered a job as University of Hawaii Extension faculty on Maui, where she worked for 8 years until 2009. Zoe was teaching a Marine Science Thesis Class at the college, where she also developed and introduced her own course called Topics in Sustainability. This course in the early 2000s involved bringing in guest speakers to discuss topics like climate change and sea level rise and sustainability related issues or initiatives that were happening in the Hawaiian Islands. Zoe had this dream teaching job until she relocated with her family to the Comox Valley in 2009. [12] [13]

Outrigger Canoeing Achievements

With top three finishes in both the Molokai World Championships surfski race and the Molokai to Oahu OC1 relay, Zoe's real love is for downwind paddling. We believe that the Honolulu Star Bulletin article covering the Kanaka I Kai Ka Oahu Championships from 2003-Apr-7 is the event where Zoe finished third place surfski, as the article mentions only the first and second place women. [21] 2003 was not the year that Zoe would have a top three finish in the Molokai to Oahu OC1 relay, as Zoe was with one of two womens OC1 teams who did not finish the race, when Kanesa Duncan separated her right shoulder during a water change, forcing her and partner Zoe Norcross out of the event. [22]

Zoe had three top-five finishes in Molokai Na Wahine. The 2011 Molokai Na Wahine Canada Sprint Team crew consisted of 8 women from the 2010 New Caledonia IVF World Sprints (Chelsey Brooks Tidmarsh; Cheryl Skribe; Helen Currey; Kamini Jain; Leanne Stanley; Leanne Zrum; Sheila Kuyper; Sue Porter), as well as Shannon Bell (Jericho) and Zoe Norcross. This 2011 Molokai Na Wahine crew would finish 4th Place Overall for the best ever showing by an all-Canadian Womens crew (to present day). [23] [24] [25] [26] [27]

Zoe has represented Team Canada at International Va'a Federation (IVF) World Distance in 2023. At 2023 Samoa IVF World Distance, Zoe would race with an all-Canadian crew including Leanne Stanley, Melanie Conard, Kelsey Siddall, Ashley Barker, and Cheryl Skribe that would take Gold in V6 Masters 40+ Women. [28] [29]

Coach-Builder Achievements

In 2009, Rick Nu'u, his wife Zoe Norcross, and their two daughters moved to where Don Irvine's family lived, the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island. In 2011, Rick and Don achieved a long-time shared dream and established a paddlesports business, which they named Hana Hou Outrigger. It was geared towards the manufacture of wood canoe paddles and providing coaching opportunities in

a wide variety of paddlesports. Rick's wife Zoe was heavily involved in the background of this business, most visually with the website, most effectively with her organizational skill, but most influentially as a sounding board. In January of 2013 Rick's life ended. On a trip to Maui in 2013, Don met with Mike Giblin, owner of Outrigger Zone (OZone). OZone is a world leader in the design and manufacturing of outrigger canoes. Mike was a close friend of Rick's, and Rick and Don had always wanted to sell Mike's boats, but prior to 2013 circumstances had not allowed that to happen. With new opportunities opening up, Don and Zoe agreed to become the Western Canadian distributors for Outrigger Zone, and Hana Hou Paddlesports was created. Hana Hou Paddlesports has been instrumental in assisting Western Canadian clubs with acquiring Puakea Malolo and Giblin Vortex OC6s. [31] [32] [33]

Pioneering Achievements

At the 1999 Molokai Na Wahine, 58 Womens crews crossed the Kaiwi Channel. Zoe was a member of a FCRC crew that was the first and only Womens crew to cross the Kaiwi Channel iron in a 6-person outrigger canoe in nearly 50 years. Three years before the 1999 Molokai Na Wahine, a group of women who had completed Molokai Na Wahine numerous times, decided they were up for a new challenge – a return to the original concept of human endurance that was conceived by Toots Minvielle – to cross the channel using only six paddlers. Linda Gehring, steersperson for the crew, and paddler Rome Esperanza worked for three years to gain support for their goal. The crew also had a mission – to finish within two hours of the winning crew, as well as a cause – to raise money for breast cancer research. Over the three-year period, changes were inevitably made to the crew, as personal commitments and new opportunities arose for some of the members. The final crew of Linda Gehring, Rome Esperanza, Peed-Jean Saldania, Rachel Lyon, Zoe Norcross, and Erica Klohn came together in March 1999. The crew completed the Dad Center race as a six-person crew, finishing 26th out of 31 10-person crews. [41] [42]

HCRA had initially given permission for the iron crossing but after 1 year of training and shortly before Molokai Na Wahine, HCRA changed their mind and threatened to revoke racing permissions for one year for any clubs that provided a canoe or assistance. Rick Nu'u was coaching at FCRC in 1999 and Mel Whittall arranged for Rick and Zoe to meet and discuss the HCRA situation. Rick Nu'u was racing with Team NZ/HI at the time and Rick started discussions with Karel Tresnak and Nappy Napoleon to find a solution. Rick / Karel / Nappy located a Bradley Lightning at Waikiki Surf Club that belonged to Michael Thompson, HCRA President at that time, who was away in Tahiti, and as the canoe did not belong to a canoe club, the sanctions would not apply. Nappy handled the logistics and had the Bradley Lightning loaded on a barge and shipped to Molokai. The crew followed the rules by having an escort boat and 4 "spare" paddlers for changeovers, if need be, and Rick Nu'u on the escort boat as a coach.

The crew completed the Molokai Na Wahine in 7 hours 31 minutes, just over an hour and a half behind the winning 10-person crew. They found that having a close bond as a team was an integral part of their success, on a challenge as physically and psychologically demanding as a 41-mile iron race requires excellent communication and support amongst all team members. [43] [44] [45] [46] [47] [48] [49] [50]

Exemplary Achievements

Zoe has made significant community involvement and sustainability contributions. Waterbucket eNews is published by the Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC and celebrates the leadership of individuals and organizations who are guided by the Living Water Smart vision. The March 2024 edition featured Zoe Norcross-Nu'u, watershed protection coordinator with the Comox Lake Regional District. Zoe Norcross-Nu'u, a marine scientist who previously taught at the University of Hawaii Maui College, is in her second decade with Comox Valley Regional District after joining in 2012. Her responsibilities revolve around the Comox Lake Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) which was completed in 2016. In 2008, the four Comox Valley local governments stepped up and volunteered to be a demonstration region for rollout of the provincial Living Water Smart and Green Communities initiatives. As of 2012, this "convening for action" process morphed into the present-day Georgia Basin Inter-Regional Educational Initiative (IREI). The objective of the Comox Lake Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) is to guide the management of the Comox Lake watershed for the long-term protection of drinking water at the highest possible quality. [61] [62]

Before moving to Vancouver Island, Zoe was a coastal geologist in Maui, where Zoe developed and taught a university course on sustainability-related issues and initiatives as part of her job. During this process, Zoe came to understand what a dire predicament we face regarding climate change, population growth, and pressures on our natural resources. Zoe and family moved to a farm in the Comox Valley and tried to live a lower-impact lifestyle. Zoe decided to renovate a character-filled 125-year-old farmhouse on the property and make it as cozy and efficient as possible. Natural building techniques were used including a chip-slip thermal mass exterior wall and a passive solar design. Zoe then had Viridian Solar Co-op do a solar panel installation at Minto Road Farm for the farmhouse and the barn to try to achieve net zero. It is a testament to Zoe's commitment to the environment and low-energy living that this investment with a reasonable payback period has achieved great success. [63]

[63]	Solar Panel Installation at Minto Road Farm & Zoe	https://viridiansolar.ca/projects/minto-road-farm-courtenay-comox/
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