

# PROTECT KAHO‘OLAWE ‘OHANA

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## *Tahitian canoe Faafaite departs From Traditional Launching Site on Kaho‘olawe*

(Honokanai‘a, Kaho‘olawe). Shortly after 10 AM on Sunday, October 30, the Faafaite, the Polynesian voyaging canoe from Tahiti, departed the Hawaiian Islands from a point on Kaho‘olawe named Kealaikahiki, *pathway to Tahiti*. This is the first time a canoe returning home to Tahiti this way in more than 750 years.

The Faafaite is one of the 7 voyaging canoes that arrived in June with the Pacific Voyagers ([www.pacificvoyagers.org](http://www.pacificvoyagers.org)) fleet. It spent two days on the sacred island of Kaho‘olawe before embarking on its final leg home to Tahiti Sunday from the place named by the ancients to send Polynesians to their homeland.

“It was important for us to come to this island,” said Faafaite captain Teva Plichart. “To the place our ancestors studied wayfaring, to the where our tūpuna, *ancestors*, launched from, from the place named *path to Tahiti*.”

Ke-ala-i-kahiki, or *pathway to Tahiti*, is the southwest point of Kaho‘olawe that juts out, enabling seafarers studying the waters in Hawai‘i to observe both due north and south on the ocean horizons.

“Kealaikahiki is where the Kalohi, ‘Au‘au and Pailolo channels join with the ‘Alalākeiki, pouring into the Kealaikahiki channel. Pushing off from Lae o Kealaikahiki in a canoe is like pulling onto the freeway,” exclaimed Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana founder Noa Emmett Aluli. “It’s a straight shot to Tahiti from here.”

The waka, wa'a, canoe, arrived on Kaho'olawe at daybreak Friday, greeted by members of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, and joined by others from the Hawaiian voyaging community. The crew wanted to visit the island that is so historically and culturally significant in the training of navigators.

At the island's summit, Moaulanui, the group of 34 greeted the rising sun, and in the storytelling, noted similarities to places and practices. The island of Kaho'olawe, sometimes called Kanaloa, is a physical manifestation, *kinolau*, of the Hawaiian deity Kanaloa. Another kinolau is a whale, whose design just happens to grace each side of the Faafaite's hull. It is a nod to Dieter Pullman, the German benefactor of the seven Pacific voyaging canoes, who was moved to environmental action by an up-close-and-personal encounter he had with a whale. It also represents the many Maohi, indigenous Tahiti, families that claim the koholā, or whale, as their spiritual guardians.

At Moaula'iki, the voyagers saw where navigators engaged in the early phases of their traditional training, studying the stars and their movements, also benefitting from a panoramic view of 5 islands, surrounding channels, clouds and currents. Moaula was a chief from Tahiti who came up to Hawai'i. There are places named Moaula here, in Tahiti, and throughout other Polynesian Islands.

The Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana hosted a ceremony for the voyagers at Kealaikahiki. Moved by the significance of this historic event where, in October 2004, master navigator Mau Piailug directed representatives from all the Hawaiian canoes to launch from Kealaikahiki before heading south. The last time this occurred was in the 1250s.

"We've sent our canoes to Tahiti many times. We've been waiting for one from Tahiti to come visit us," said 'Ohana member Craig Neff on the significance of the occasion.

The name Faafaite means *reconciliation*. This visit to Kaho'olawe is a reconciliation between Hawaiians and Tahitians. In fact, three Hawaiian voyagers—early voyager Snake Ah Hee,

master navigator Chad Kalepa Baybayan, and navigator Shantell Ching DeSilva – are joining the Tahitians in this final leg, expected to last 15 days.

Faafaite captain Teva Plichart explains, “The name describes our mission to protect the ocean and our environment, reconciling nature and humanity. But as we Maohi revive voyaging, we are reconciling ourselves with our spirit and culture.”

*Formed in 1976, the vision of the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana is Aloha ‘Āina. Its mission is to promote Aloha ‘Āina throughout the islands through cultural, educational and spiritual activities that heal and revitalize the cultural and natural resources on Kaho‘olawe.*

[www.kahoolawe.org](http://www.kahoolawe.org)

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