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**Bishop Museum Celebrates Hōkūle‘a’s 50th Birthday
With New *Wayfinders* Exhibition, Special E Ola Mau Event**

*Friday, March 14 event features live music by Robert Cazimero
and a keynote presentation by Nainoa Thompson.*

Honolulu, Hawai‘i — In partnership with the Polynesian Voyaging Society, [Bishop Museum](#), the State of Hawai‘i Museum of Natural and Cultural History, celebrates the 50th birthday of Hōkūle‘a, Hawai‘i’s legendary voyaging canoe that first launched on March 8, 1975. “Hōkūle‘a’s 50th Birthday | E Ola Mau (to live forever)” will be held on Friday, March 14 from 5-9 p.m. at Bishop Museum and will feature the opening of the new *Wayfinders* exhibition in the J. Watumull Planetarium, and special programming including live music by Robert Cazimero and a keynote presentation by Nainoa Thompson, Polynesian Voyaging Society CEO and navigator.

“Hōkūle‘a’s 50th Birthday marks a half-century of cultural revival, environmental advocacy, and a renewed connection to the earth and ocean. For nearly five decades, Hōkūle‘a has served as a symbol of resilience, revival, cultural pride, environmental stewardship, peace, and hope,” said Brandon Bunag, Ed.D, Bishop Museum vice president of public programs and interim director of education. “As we honor Papa Mau Piailug as the father of our modern understanding of traditional wayfinding, we honor Hōkūle‘a as the mother of modern voyaging canoes. This celebration is more than a birthday — it honors the work that forged Hōkūle‘a’s creation and a call to action for the future.”

The partnership between the Polynesian Voyaging Society and Bishop Museum is rooted in PVS’s origins and the rediscovery of traditional wayfinding. As shared by Romee Wizza Gaoiran, Bishop Museum J. Watumull Planetarium manager:

“Perhaps the most significant event in the history of our planetarium occurred in the late 1970s. A young Nainoa Thompson, fresh from the return sail on Hōkūle‘a from its first voyage to Tahiti, was inspired to learn the knowledge of traditional wayfinding. He had a question about the moon, as he had always assumed it rose from the same position on the horizon every day, but had observed it rising where he didn’t expect it to.

He contacted the planetarium at Bishop Museum and Will Kyselka invited him to come in. Kyselka could tell Nainoa had more questions but was too respectful to ask for more of his time, so he invited Nainoa to come back. The two spent hundreds of hours in the planetarium together, as Nainoa learned the astronomy he needed to reach his goal of navigating Hōkūle‘a to Tahiti and back without modern instruments. Since that time, the Planetarium has continued to be a training space for Polynesian Voyaging Society/Hōkūle‘a navigators and crews over the decades.

In 1980, Nainoa Thompson became the first Native Hawaiian in 600 years to navigate to Tahiti from Hawai‘i and back. In the escort vessel following Hōkūle‘a was Planetarium Lecturer Will Kyselka. His book ‘An Ocean in Mind’ details Nainoa’s journey to that point and tells the story of his first voyage as Navigator.”

Opening to the public during the event is Bishop Museum’s newest exhibition, *Wayfinders: He Wa‘a He Moku, He Moku He Wa‘a, We Are One and the Same*, in the lobby of the J. Watumull Planetarium. This original, permanent exhibition celebrates the resurgence of wayfinding across Hawai‘i and the wider Moananuiākea (the vast Pacific Ocean).

“The exhibition offers an immersive experience into the world of wayfinding — an ancient practice of navigating vast oceanic distances using the stars, winds, and waves,” said Michael Wilson, Bishop Museum exhibit designer, the designer of the *Wayfinders* exhibition, and a Polynesian Voyaging Society crewmember. “Through interactive displays, oral histories, and stunning imagery, visitors will explore the interconnectedness of people, land, and sea, embodying the guiding philosophy: He wa‘a he moku, he moku he wa‘a — the canoe is an island, and the island is a canoe.”

Key themes of the exhibition include:

- Historic Voyages & Genealogy of the Canoe
 - Honoring the navigators and crew of the Hōkūle‘a’s legendary 1976 journey, which reignited a cultural awakening in Hawai‘i.
- The Art & Science of Wayfinding
 - Showcasing star compasses, celestial navigation techniques, and the wisdom passed down from master navigator Pius “Mau” Piailug.
- Community & Stewardship
 - Exploring how voyagers uphold their kuleana (responsibility) to care for the land and future generations, from fishpond restoration to cultural education.
- Navigating the Future
 - A call to action for sustainable living and cultural preservation, inspiring visitors to embrace Indigenous knowledge in shaping a thriving world.

The Hōkūle‘a’s 50th Birthday | E Ola Mau event is part of Bishop Museum’s Museum After Hours series; for more information, please visit BishopMuseum.org/Hokulea50th.

Detailed descriptions of the *Wayfinders* exhibition features and interactives, along with a listing of additional special programming during the the Hōkūle‘a’s 50th Birthday | E Ola Mau event, can be found below.

Wayfinders: He Wa‘a He Moku, He Moku He Wa‘a, We Are One and the Same exhibition details

- Location: Bishop Museum J. Watumull Planetarium Lobby
- Hall of Teachers Interactive by Arizona State University
 - Lifesize screen. “Walk” through a Hall of Teachers to meet visionaries and leaders that contributed to the revival and ‘Ohana Wa‘a, like Nainoa Thompson.
- Wa‘a Home Port Match Game
 - Guide over 20 canoes to their homes across the Pacific Ocean in this touch-screen game. Summaries of each canoe’s origins and purposes provide the clues needed for the player to drag-and-drop each canoe onto the map.
- ‘Ohana Wa‘a wall
 - Family photo-style gallery wall featuring photos of various voyagers in recent voyaging history.
- Book Nook
 - Selection of books and guides focused on wayfinding, navigation, and astronomy available for guests to reference while in the lobby.
- Kilo Hōkū by Wayfinding Interactive adapted from VR
 - Become familiar with kūkuluokalani (Hawaiian Star Compass) and its shape on the horizon in this video interactive. Guests can step aboard a canoe deck and simulate steering a canoe using a hoe uli (steering paddle).
- Nā Lālani Hōkū Sand Table
 - Sand and shell table where visitors can play and copy patterns of the sky.
- Navigating Nature
 - Three-video wall inviting guests to observe wind, weather, waves, and wildlife aboard a canoe.
- Kani nā Manu
 - Interactive to listen and repeat the calls of seabirds found around the Hawaiian Islands.

Additional special programming during the Hōkūle‘a’s 50th Birthday | E Ola Mau event

- 5:30-6 p.m.:
 - Live music by Robert Cazimero (Gallery Lawns)
- 5:30-6:30 p.m.:
 - ‘Ohana Activities including E Kōnane Pū Kākou! (Hawaiian strategy board game), lauhala weaving with Keoua Nelsen, lei making with Maxeen Shea, ‘ukulele lesson with Pu‘uhonua Jomawan (Atherton Hālau and Bowman Hālau Wa‘a)
- 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.:
 - Hawaiian Hall Complex Tours
- 6-7 p.m.:
 - Panel presentation: “Hōkūle‘a for the Next 50 Years” (Gallery Lawns)
- 6:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.:
 - Special J. Watumull Planetarium presentations: “Mai Ka Lewa Lani: Stories From Our Sky” with Ka‘iulani Murphy, Tamiko Fernelius, and Kaleo Wong
- 6:30 p.m. and 8 p.m.:
 - Book reading: *Stars, Ocean and Voyaging Canoe* (Science Adventure Center)
- 7 p.m.:
 - Keynote presentation by Nainoa Thompson (Gallery Lawns)

Food and beverages will also be available for sale at the Atherton Hālau and Bowman Hālau Wa‘a between 5-9 p.m.

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About Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the State of Hawai‘i Museum of Natural and Cultural History:

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum's mission is to inspire our community and visitors through the exploration, celebration, and perpetuation of the extraordinary history, culture, and environment of Hawai'i and the Pacific. The Museum was founded in 1889 by Charles Reed Bishop in memory of his wife Bernice Pauahi Bishop, a royal descendant of King Kamehameha I. Today, the Museum thrives as an educational center for the community and is widely regarded as the world's premier institution for Hawaiian and Pacific content.

Bishop Museum's vast collections of more than 25 million objects and specimens represent nine disciplines and include more than 22 million biological specimens, over 2 million cultural objects, 115,000 historical publications, and 1 million photographs, films, works of art, audio recordings, and manuscripts. These collections tell the stories of the cultures and biodiversity of Hawai'i and the Pacific as well as the proud legacy of scholarly research spanning 130 years.

Bishop Museum proudly serves more than 200,000 visitors each year, including 20,000 children on school visits.

To learn more about the Museum's research, collections, exhibits, and programs, visit [BishopMuseum.org](https://www.bishopmuseum.org), follow @BishopMuseum on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), become a fan of Bishop Museum on [Facebook](#), visit Bishop Museum's [YouTube](#) channel, or call (808) 847-3511. Bishop Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Bishop Museum is proud to be an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer, and welcomes applicants from the military, veterans, and those with disabilities. Learn about careers at Bishop Museum at [BishopMuseum.org/Careers](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/Careers) and on its [LinkedIn](#) page.

[Bishop Museum Press](#) is Hawai‘i’s oldest book publisher and one of the first scholarly publishers in the Western Hemisphere, and has published over 1,200 titles and distributed over 1 million books in 72 countries worldwide.

Past news releases can be viewed and downloaded at BishopMuseum.org/NewsRoom.