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Bishop Museum Invites Community to Ho‘i i ke Kai: Launch of the A‘a

Free event at Ke‘ehi Lagoon Beach Park to celebrate Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole’s storied 40-foot racing canoe and its return to water

Honolulu, Hawai‘i — [Bishop Museum](#), the State of Hawai‘i Museum of Natural and Cultural History, invites the community to a free event celebrating Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole’s storied 40-foot racing canoe, and its return to water for the first time in more than a decade. Ho‘i i ke Kai: Launch of the A‘a will be held at **sunrise on Saturday, Nov. 8, 2025 at Ke‘ehi Lagoon Beach Park.**

“They don’t exist for display. They exist for the ocean.”
— Billy Richards, Polynesian Voyaging Society navigator and Bishop Museum board member,
referring to wa‘a (canoes) made of koa, like the A‘a.

The A‘a, also affectionally known as the ‘Ā, is a 40-foot koa wa‘a commissioned by Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole and is considered to be the first custom-built, six-seat racing canoe of its kind. The vessel was crafted in 1902 by Henry Weeks in Kailua, Kona. At the time of its creation, the A‘a was said to be the most perfectly built and fastest racing canoe in the islands, inspiring all other racing canoes that came after.

The A‘a was in its prime between 1906-1910 when it and its all-Kānaka ‘Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) crew from Kailua-Kona competed against O‘ahu’s racing teams. Support for the A‘a was widespread across the Hawaiian Islands, and its success brought great pride to the lāhui (people).

After the passing of Prince Kūhiō in 1922, the A‘a was gifted to Bishop Museum in 1923 as part of the Kapi‘olani-Kalaniana‘ole Collection, named in honor of both Prince Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole and Queen Kapi‘olani. Since 1952, the wa‘a has been co-stewarded with the Dowsett ‘Ohana, being instrumental in launching Lanikai Canoe Club.

The A‘a was recently featured in Bishop Museum’s J. M. Long Gallery as a focal point of the exhibition, *Kū a Lanakila! Expressions of Sovereignty in Early Territorial Hawai‘i, 1900-1920*. This exhibition was inspired by the story of the A‘a and how koa canoes played an important role in asserting Native Hawaiian traditions during the early territorial period. *Kū a Lanakila!* explored how Kānaka ‘Ōiwi engaged in public ceremony, competitive sports, and political activism to maintain their identity and agency in a time of profound change.

In continuing that legacy, Bishop Museum invites the community to gather to perpetuate the life of the A‘a as it returns to the ocean newly repaired. The recent repairs were made possible by the Friends of Hōkūle‘a and Hawai‘iloa, Tay Perry, Ryan Olivares, and the Dowsett ‘Ohana.

“The A‘a marked the beginning of organized canoe racing in Hawai‘i, and it’s also a link to our past,” said Tay Perry, master canoe builder who led the recent repairs to the A‘a in preparation for the launch. “It stands alone as the oldest canoe built for racing.”

Ho‘i i ke Kai: Launch of the A‘a

- Saturday, Nov. 8, 2025
- 6 a.m. – Noon
 - 6 a.m.: Sunrise Ceremony honoring the A‘a and its launch / return to water, supported by canoes from racing and voyaging clubs and organizations.
 - 7 a.m.: Paddle Out
 - 8 a.m. – Noon: Talk story / oral history sessions with master canoe carvers and koa canoe stewards about the importance of koa canoes in Hawai‘i
- Free to the public*

*Attendees are asked to help provide an attendance headcount by registering via the following link, where they can also view additional information: BishopMuseum.org/Aa.

Bishop Museum extends its mahalo to community partners Friends of Hōkūle‘a and Hawai‘iloa, and The Oahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association.

Bishop Museum invites members of the news media to cover the event, with VIP parking and interview opportunities available for attendees. Please RSVP with Lance Aquino via the contact information above.

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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, follow @BishopMuseum on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), 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 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. Bishop Museum hosts a restaurant and gift shop on campus, [Tūtū's Place by Highway Inn](#) and [Shop Pacifica by Nā Mea Hawai'i](#).

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