

Nā ‘Ōlelo No‘eau

‘Ōlelo no‘eau are proverbs or poetical sayings that are commonly used when speaking Hawaiian. Most ‘ōlelo no‘eau can be found in the book, “‘Ōlelo No‘eau – Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings,” by Mary Kawena Pukui. It is a valuable resource for ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and mo‘omeheu Hawai‘i (culture). There are ‘ōlelo no‘eau for all types of scenarios. ‘Ōlelo no‘eau can also be used as a motto for an organization, a classroom, or even as a personal motto.

Hana (working/task)

E kaupē aku nō i ka hoe a kō mai.

Put forward the paddle and draw it back.

Go on with the task that is started and finish it.

Ho‘okahi nō lā o ka malihini.

A stranger only for a day.

After the first day as a guest, one must help with the work.

Komo mai kāu māpuna hoe.

Put in your dip of the paddle.

Pitch in.

Kūlia i ka nu‘u.

Strive to reach the highest.

Motto of Queen Kapi‘olani.

-Strive to do your best.

Ma ka hana ka ‘ike.

In working one learns.

-Knowledge can be acquired by doing.

Mai maka‘u i ka hana, maka‘u i ka moloā.

Don’t fear work, fear laziness.

-Don’t be lazy.

Na ka ‘eleu miki.

(The prize) goes to the quick one.

-Similar to the saying, “The early bird gets the worm.”

Pūpūkahi i holomua.

Unite in order to progress.

‘A‘a i ka hula, waiho i ka hilahila i ka hale.

When one wants to dance the hula, bashfulness should be left at home.

-Don't be shy. Participate! This does not just pertain to hula. This can be used in all situations when one is apprehensive in participating in an activity.

‘A‘ohe hana i nele i ka uku.

No deed lacks a reward.

Every deed, good or bad, receives its just reward.

-Always be kūpono because there are consequences for our actions. Can also be said when karma hits.

‘A‘ohe hana nui ke alu ‘ia.

No task is too big when done together by all.

-If everyone contributes to the task, it lightens the load.

‘A‘ohe pu‘u ki‘eki‘e ke ho‘ā‘o e pi‘i.

No cliff is so tall that it cannot be scaled.

No problem is too great when one tries hard to solve it.

-Try something even though it seems difficult.

‘A‘ohe ‘ulu e loa‘a i ka pōkole o ka lou.

No breadfruit can be reached when the picking stick is too short.

There is no success without preparation.

‘Umia ka hanu.

Hold the breath.

Be patient. Don't give up too easily.

‘U‘uku ka hana, ‘u‘uka ka loa‘a.

Little work, little gain.

-You reap what you sow. If you give only a little, do not expect a large return.

Lawena (behavior)

Aia nō ka pono - 'o ka ho'ohuli i ka lima i lalo, 'a'ole 'o ka ho'ohuli i luna. (Huli ka lima i lalo.)

That is what it should be - to turn the hands palms down, not palms up.

No one can work with the palms of his hands turned up. When a person is always busy, he is said to keep his palms down.

-Said as a compliment to someone that is not afraid of work. "Huli ka lima i lalo," can be used to encourage someone to work (help out).

Aloha kekahi i kekahi.

Love one another.

He ali'i ka 'āina, he kauā ke kanaka.

The land is a chief; man is its servant.

Land has no need for man, but man needs the land and works it for a livelihood.

-We have to take care of the land.

Ho'okahi wale nō leo, ua lawa.

One voice is enough.

-When one speaks, everyone should be listening. It can also mean that only one reminder is necessary.

Mahalo i ka mea i loa'a.

Be thankful for what you have.

Nānā ka maka, ho'olohe ka pepeiao, pa'a ka waha.

Observe with the eyes; listen with the ears; shut the mouth.

Thus one learns.

'A'ohe mālama, pau i ka 'iole.

No one who takes care of his possessions has ever found them eaten by rats.

When one takes care of his goods he will not suffer losses.

-Take care of your things.

‘A‘ohe u‘i hele wale o Kohala.

No youth of Kohala goes empty-handed.

Said in praise of people who do not go anywhere without a gift or a helping hand. The saying originated at Honomaka‘u in Kohala. The young people of that locality, when on a journey, often went as far as Kapua before resting. Here, they made *lei* to adorn themselves and carry along with them. Another version is that no Kohala person goes unprepared for any emergency.

-We should never go somewhere empty handed. If you are visiting a friend, or staying at someone’s house, you should always bring something (gift, food...).

‘Ike (knowledge)

‘A‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho‘okahi.

All knowledge is not taught in the same school.

One can learn from many sources.

-We shouldn’t be ho‘okano (act superior) when it comes to knowledge. There is waiwai (value) from all resources, and not all knowledge is the same.

‘O ke kahua ma mua, ma hope ke kūkulu.

The site first, and then the building.

Learn all you can, then practice.

Inā ‘a‘ole nō pa‘a ke kahua, e pilikia ana no ka mea, ‘o ia ka ho‘omaka.

Nā mea ‘ē a‘e (other)

I ka ‘ōlelo nō ke ola, i ka ‘ōlelo nō ka make.

Life is in speech; death is in speech.

Words can heal; words can destroy.

-Be careful with what you say. It can lead to good and bad consequences.

I maika‘i ke kalo i ka ‘ohā.

The goodness of the taro is judged by the young plant it produces.

Parents are often judged by the behavior of their children.

Ua hala ‘ē ka Pu‘ulena.

The Pu‘ulena wind of Puna has passed.

-Too late! Your chance has passed. Be quick next time.

Pau Pele, pau manō.

[May I be] devoured by Pele, [may I be] devoured by a shark.

An oath, meaning “If I fail . . .” It was believed that if such an oath were not kept, the one who uttered it would indeed die by fire or be eaten by a shark.

-Similar to the saying “Cross my heart, hope to die.”

Pū‘ali ‘o Kahaunui iā Kahauiki. (Pū‘ali ka hau nui i ka hau iki.)

Big-hau-tree has a groove worn into it by Little-hau-tree.

Said when a child nearly wears out the patience of the adult in charge of him, or of a large company of warriors discomfited by a small one. Kahaunui and Kahauiki are places just east of Moanalua, O‘ahu.

-Don’t underestimate the powers of the small guy. Can also be used in a situation where the small guy is victorious over the big buy.

‘Ike i ke au nui me ke au iki.

Knows the big currents and the little currents.

Is very well versed.

Watch as the kumu act out four different scenarios. Write the corresponding number of each scenario on the line next to the 'ōlelo no'eau that best fits the scenario.

_____ **'A'ohē mālama, pau i ka 'iole.**

No one who takes care of his possessions has ever found them eaten by rats.

When one takes care of his goods he will not suffer losses.

-Word of caution to take care of your things.

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One voice is enough.

-When one is speaking, everyone should be listening. Can also mean that one reminder is all that is necessary.

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-Usually said when there is a big task to be done. If everyone contributes to the task, it lightens the load.