

Ōlelo No'eau Hawaiian Traditional Sayings related to the Environment

'Ōlelo No'eau are beautiful and evocative Hawaiian proverbs and sayings. You can use these sayings and observations to enhance information posted and shared with students, communication with colleagues, or add to your professional email 'signature' etc.. Integrating Hawaiian proverbs and poetry raises awareness of Ōlelo Hawai'i and 'Ōlelo No'eau, as well as cultivates appreciation for the Hawaiian cultural ethos of environmental guardianship.

Natural Elements

'Ōlelo No'eau # 405

Hahai no ka ua i ka ululā'au.

Rains always follow the forest

The rains are attracted to forest trees. Knowing this, Hawaiians hewed only the trees that were needed.

'Ōlelo No'eau # 2178

Mōhala i ka wai ka maka o ka pua

Unfolded by the water are the faces of flowers.

Flowers thrive where there is water, as thriving people are found where living conditions are good.

'Ōlelo No'eau # 2220

Na 'ilina wai 'ole o Kohala

The waterless plains of Kohala, where water will not remain long.

After a downpour, the people look even in the hollows of rocks for the precious water.

'Ōlelo No'eau # 2482

Ola i ka wai a ka 'ōpua

There is life in the water from the clouds.

Rain gives life

'Ōlelo No'eau # 2802

Ua ka ua, ola ka nohona o ka 'āina kula

The rain pours, life comes to the plains

Responsibilities and Living Sustainably

'Ōlelo No'eau # 64

'Ai a manō, 'a'ohē nānā i kumu pali

When the shark eats, he never troubles to look toward the foot of the cliff.

Said of a person who eats voraciously with no thought of those who provided the food, shows no appreciation for what has been done for him, nor has a care for the morrow.

'Ōlelo No'eau # 252

E 'ai i kekāhi, e kāpī kekāhi

Eat some, salt some.

Said to young people: Eat some now and save some for another time.

'Ōlelo No'eau # 531

He ali'i ka āina; he kauwā ke kanaka

The land is chief; man is its servant.

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

'Ōlelo No'eau # 2052

Mai ho'omāuna i ka 'ai o huli mai auane'i o Hāloa e nānā

Do not be wasteful of food lest Hāloa turn around and stare (at you).

Do not be wasteful, especially of poi, because it would anger Hāloa, the taro god, who would someday let the waster go hungry.

'Ōlelo No'eau # 2829

Ua ma uke ea o ka 'āina I ka pono

The life of the land is preserved in righteousness

Commitment and Perseverance (apply to a sustainable ethos and changes needed)

Ōlelo No'eau # 142

'A'ohe hana nui ke alu 'ia.

No task is too big when done together by all.

'Ōlelo No'eau # 323

E kuahui like i ka hana

Let everybody pitch in and work together

Ōlelo No'eau # 905

He po'i na kai uli, kai ko'o, 'a'ohe hina pūko'a

Through the sea be deep and rough, the coral rock remains standing.

Said of one who remains calm in the face of difficulty

'Ōlelo No'eau # 1924

Ku pākū ka pali o Nihoa i ka makani

The cliff of Nihoa stands as a resistance against the wind.

Said of one who stands bravely in the face of misfortune.

'Ōlelo No'eau # 1068

Ho'okahi ka 'ilau like 'ana.

Wield the paddles together.

Work together.

'Ōlelo No'eau # 2758

Pūpūkāhi i holomua.

Unite in order to progress

Home and Place

'Ōlelo No'eau # 2353

O'ahu, ka 'ōnohi o na kai

O'ahu, gem of the seas

O'ahu is the principal island of the group

Source: 'Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings, collected translated and annotated by Mary Kawena Pukui, Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1983