

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Historic Hawaiian Canoe Makes First Landing In U.S. Virgin Islands

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ST. JOHN -- The Hokulea, the decades-old performance-accurate full-scale replica of a wa?a kaulua, a Polynesian double-hulled voyaging canoe -- just accomplished another monumental touchpoint, as it arrived at Cruz Bay on Sunday at 11:00 a.m.

The U.S. Virgin Islands is six hours ahead of Hawaii time. The arrival also marks the canoe's first landing in a U.S. territory since Hokulea visited Pago Pago in American Samoa in October 2014, according to a press release issued late Tuesday.

"The U.S. Virgin Islands is similar to Hawaii, with its rich history and tropical climate," said Kalepa Baybayan, captain and Pwo navigator. "Also, much like our home, their economy

is significantly driven by tourism and agriculture. We're looking to engage with the residents to exchange ideas of Mālama Honua, of preservation and cultivation of precious resources."

While in St. John, the crew of Hokulea plans to engage with the local community by participating in outreach opportunities with the Virgin Islands National Park and the Coral Reef National Monument. The crew members also plan to collaborate with other groups and organizations such as local schools like Sprauve, Giff Hill, and St. John Christian Academy.

The leg from Brazil to the U.S.V.I. is a homecoming for Polynesian Voyaging Society Chief Operating Officer and crewmember Heidi Guth, who was born on Maui but raised in the U.S.V.I.

"Being able to connect two of my homes and families by having Hokulea visit St. John during the Centennial of the National Park Service and the 60th Anniversary of the Virgin Islands National Park is an unbelievable dream," said Ms. Guth. "I'm also excited about the opportunity to share and exchange ideas on caring for each of coastal homes, our oceans and our Island Earth. We have a common interest in natural and cultural perpetuation," she added.

While in the Caribbean, Hokulea and its crew also hope to learn more about and highlight environmental efforts such as the Caribbean Challenge, an initiative that focuses on the conservation of biodiversity within the Caribbean's national protected areas and other areas of environmental significance. The goals of the initiative include effectively conserving and managing at least 20 percent of the Caribbean's marine and coastal environment by the year 2020, and establishing long-term funding resources for marine, coastal and other environmental resources. Participating countries include Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

From the U.S.V.I., Hokulea and its crew will continue the Malama Honua Worldwide Voyage and stop in several ports in the Caribbean before sailing north and visiting cities along the East Coast of the United States. It is scheduled to arrive in New York City by June 8, 2016 to be part of the United Nations' World Oceans Day.

Since departing Hawaiian waters in May 2014, Hokulea has sailed more than 21,500 nautical miles and made stops in 12 countries and 55 ports, weaving a "Lei of Hope" around the world. Along the way, more than 160 volunteer crewmembers have helped to sail Hokulea accompanied by escort vessel Gershon II to spread the message of malama honua (or taking care of Island Earth) by promoting sustainability and environmental consciousness, as well as exchanging ideas with the countries she has visited. So far, crew members have connected with over 45,000 people in communities across the South Pacific, Tasman Sea and Indian Ocean including Samoa, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Australia, Indonesia, Mauritius, South Africa and Brazil. For a midway recap of the Worldwide Voyage.

Hokulea first set out on the Pacific Ocean in 1975. Since then, she has traveled to multiple countries across the globe, reawakening a Hawaiian cultural renaissance in the process through reviving the traditional art of wayfinding - navigating the sea guided by

nature using the ocean swells, stars, and wind.

About the Malama Honua Worldwide Voyage: Sponsored by Hawaiian Airlines, the Voyage will cover over 60,000 nautical miles, 100 ports, and 27 nations, including 12 of UNESCO's Marine World Heritage sites. Voyaging from Hawaii in 2013 with an estimated sail conclusion date of June 2017, the Worldwide Voyage is taking the iconic sailing vessels Hokulea around Island Earth and her sister canoe Hikianalia around the Pacific and the Hawaiian Islands to grow a global movement toward a more sustainable world. The voyage seeks to engage all of Island Earth - practicing how to live sustainably while sharing Polynesian culture, learning from the past and from each other, creating global relationships, and discovering the wonders of the precious place we call home.

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