
DEACCESSION PROPOSAL: 'AHU'ULA (FEATHERED CLOAK) AND MAHIOLE (FEATHERED HELMET) FROM HAWAII

Executive Summary	This paper seeks Board approval to proceed with the deaccession of 'ahu'ula (feathered cloak) FE000327 and mahiole (feathered helmet) FE000328/2 that once belonged to Kalani'ōpu'u, a high chief on the island of Hawai'i in the late 1770s, who presented them to English explorer James Cook in 1779
Recommendation/s	It is recommended that the Board: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Note the history of the 'ahu'ula and mahiole before and since its arrival at Te Papa b) Note the cultural significance of the 'ahu'ula and mahiole to contemporary Hawaiian people c) Approve in principle the preparation of a proposal to deaccession the 'ahu'ula and mahiole and confirm their repatriation to the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Hawaii.

Purpose

1. This paper seeks Board approval to prepare a deaccession proposal for the 'ahu'ula (feathered cloak) and mahiole (feathered helmet) associated with Kalani'ōpu'u, a high chief on the island of Hawai'i in the late 1770s, and confirm in principle the transfer of ownership of these items to the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Hawaii.

Background

2. Among the most significant Pacific cultural treasures in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) are the 'ahu'ula (feathered cloak) and mahiole (feathered helmet). They were once owned by Kalani'ōpu'u, a high chief on the island of Hawai'i, when he greeted English explorer Captain James Cook on the beach at Kealakekua Bay in January 1779. According to observer Lieutenant King in his journal, the chief 'got up & threw in a graceful manner over the Captns Shoulders the Cloak he himself wore, & put a feathered Cap upon his head, & a very handsome fly flap in his hand.'
3. Garments like the 'ahu'ula and mahiole were worn only by people of high rank in Hawaii. It was a mark of enormous respect to make such a gift, and to give it in such a way. Expedition members were particularly fascinated by the Hawaiians' feathered garments. They were a unique feature of Hawaiian culture. Some thirty cloaks and capes were brought back to England from Cook's third voyage six of those were laid as presents at Cook's feet at the same time as Kalani'ōpu'u adorned him.
4. Cook was later killed in Hawaii, but the cloaks travelled on to England. Once there the 'ahu'ula was acquired by Sir Ashton Lever for his private museum in 1781, along with many other items from Captain Cook's third voyage. The museum was acquired by James Parkinson in 1786. In 1806 the

contents were auctioned and dispersed and the 'ahu'ula was purchased by William Bullock who also had a private museum.

5. In 1819, the contents of Bullock's museum were in turn auctioned and the 'ahu'ula and other important Pacific and Maori items were bought by a Mr Winn.
6. In 1912, Winn's grandson, 2nd Lord St Oswald, presented the collection together with Winn's annotated copy of the 1819 sale catalogue to the Dominion of New Zealand, one of Te Papa's antecedents.
7. **The 'ahu'ula features in a number of exhibitions throughout the mid-20th century; 1937 Hawaiian feather work exhibition, Wellington; 1960 Aloha Week, Bishop Museum, Hawaii; 1978 Artificial Curiosities, Hawaii; 1984 National Museum re-display, Pacific Hall, Wellington; 1998 Te Papa The 'ahu'ula and mahiole are redisplayed as part of the opening exhibitions of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.**
8. An increasing number of Hawaiian artists, activists, researchers and school groups include Te Papa on their travel itineraries so they can visit Kalani'ōpu'u's 'ahu'ula and mahiole. In **2004**, members of a Hawaiian men's group Ka hale mua o Maui loa visit the 'ahu'ula and mahiole at Te Papa and conduct an 'awa (kava) ritual.
9. From 2013, Te Papa is visited by delegations from the Bishop Museum, and The Office of Hawaiian Affairs. Conversations begin about the possibility of a long term loan of the 'ahu'ula to Hawaii following on from the successful 2010 reunification of the three last great Ku images from museums in the United Kingdom and the United States. In late 2015, the 'ahu'ula is taken off display to be prepared for its journey to Hawaii. In 2016, the 'ahu'ula and mahiole go on loan to the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Hawaii. The current loan agreement expires in 2026.

Significance for Hawaiian people

10. The journeys of the 'ahu'ula and mahiole from Hawai'i and through the hands of private collections and institutions, brings into relief their long disconnection from the people who created them. Their travels are part of a devastating history of colonisation and cultural loss in the Hawaiian Islands. However, these cultural treasures are now on a trajectory that gives them new purpose and relevance almost 250 years after they first left Hawai'i.
11. The 2016 loan of the 'ahu'ula and mahiole was greeted with much celebration and reflection in Hawaii. There was international media coverage of the event. Commentating on the significance of the cultural treasures return, Pacific Studies and Hawaiian scholar Dr Emalani Case has written:

“For us, right now, these objects represent hope. They represent a past that lives and breathes in the present, a past that can and will continue to inspire. They represent our ali'i, and their skill and resilience. ... We can only imagine what they will come to mean in the future, what they will continue to teach us about ourselves, what they will continue to whisper and tell us when we are ready to listen, what they will continue to reveal about our pasts and our presents when we are prepared to follow.”

Alignment with Te Papa's Strategic Direction and Priorities

12. The proposed deaccession aligns with two of the desired outcomes of Te Papa's Strategic Narrative (2016):
 - Successful establishment of a meaningful presence and mutually supportive relationships among the Pacific communities in New Zealand and the Pacific region
 - Te Papa makes a valued and positive contribution to addressing the contemporary issues faced by Pacific peoples in New Zealand and across the region

13. It is also mandated by Te Papa's Collection Policy 2018-19 that states that

- Te Papa will Deaccession a Collection item/taonga that: is to be Repatriated, or is to be transferred to another museum or collecting institution, or research will determine Collection items/taonga no longer relevant to Te Papa's strategic priorities, and will ensure no legal conditions preclude Deaccession.
- Research and consultation will support the Repatriation of a Collection item/taonga, or the transfer of legal title to another museum or collecting institution.

14. The repatriation of the 'ahu'ula and mahiole demonstrates Te Papa's leadership on cultural issues relating to the Tuia Encounters 250th anniversary of the first meetings between Māori and Europeans during James Cook and the Endeavour's 1769 voyage to Aotearoa New Zealand.

15. A zoom conference with OHA (Office of Hawaiian Affairs) and the Bishop Museum on the 29 January expressed the importance of this kaupapa for Hawaiian people. If successful, they would like to hold a special event in late September-October to communicate this to the world.

Collection relationships

16. Te Papa has a small collection of objects with associations to the voyages of James Cook, and a small collection of cultural items from Hawaii. None of the cultural items have the direct association with an indigenous Pacific person of such cultural and historical significance.

17. Although geographically and physically disconnected from the Hawaiian people, the objects have not remained isolated and static. The 'ahu'ula and mahiole have been subject to numerous pilgrimages from Hawaii and have been on long term display

Consultation

18. Legal advice may be required regarding the procedure for the deaccessioning of a gift, and what parties associated with the original donor need to be advised/consulted.

19. As the deaccession proposal is developed, consultation will progress with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the Bernice P. Bishop Museum.

Valuation

20. In 2015, an insurance valuation was made by Malcolm Davidson is an approved government valuer for the Cultural Gift Program in Australia. The 'ahu'ula was valued at \$6,933 000 and mahiole at \$969,532.

Associated Costs

21. The 'ahu'ula and mahiole are already in Hawaii and no transit is necessary. No further conservation work is required for this deaccession.

Risks

22. Some Te Papa stakeholders may not understand the cultural significance of the 'ahu'ula and the mahiole and the importance of this repatriation for Hawaiian people.

23. A communications strategy around the announcement of the repatriation will be developed.

Recommendations

24. It is recommended that the Board:

- **approves** the development of a proposal to deaccession 'ahu'ula and mahiole subject to the consultation taking place.



