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## Listening for *Aloha* in APEC

100 Voices Helping APEC Remember the Future

by Noel Gould, Esq.

Since Australia launched APEC in 1989, it has been like an emerging constellation and community of navigators for wayfinding in the Asia Pacific Century.

Indeed, there are many reflections in APEC of the learned wisdom and shared leadership that blessed the great oceanic migration thousands of years ago from the coasts of China to New Zealand and Chile, with Hawai`i as the midport.

At the start, Australia convened just 12 of the Pacific Rim economies in Canberra to have a look: itself, plus Brunei, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and the United States.

But as the Cold War maps of the Pacific gave way to the new charts of world rounding commerce and civics, APEC soon added China, including membership for Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei (1991), Mexico and Papua New Guinea (1993), Chile (1994), and Peru, Russia and Vietnam (1998).

First APEC wayfinding lesson: it's impossible to see where we all might be going in this century from any one side or hemisphere of the Pacific Rim.

And as the growing constellation of APEC Economies came to model the span of stars that guided the voyages of the ancestors, APEC's mission also moved forward to match the collaborative spirit and practices of those wise farmers and fishers who became the first deep blue navigators by joining their knowledge of land, sea and sky.

As the developing economies increased their numbers and influence in APEC, capacity building became as important as trade and investment, and most came to see that they are actually interdependent.

Second lesson of APEC wayfinding: collaborative and communitarian systems naturally connect commerce and civics for sustainability.

And next week, as China's strengths in the wake of western recessions remind all that the leadership in this century is pivoting to where the paddles first reached into the water, Hawai`i is, again, serving as a midport, for the good of the yet to be completed journey.

Yet most of us know more about the great oceanic migration of thousands of years ago than we do about today's APEC.

That is mostly because two of APEC's finest features run counter to the quick looks of popular news media: APEC is a voluntary and consensus process, with no regulatory and

enforcement mechanisms. So, it's hard to find a fight, with the attendant drama news shows like. And since the showcase meetings of APEC Economic Leaders annually rotates through all the 21 Member Economies, even if you could find a fight, it doesn't stay in one place long enough for all the reporters and TV trucks to find a place to park.

So, while the great ocean migration cultures can help APEC remember the future, each year, the whole process needs eyes that can see, ears that can hear, and voices that can share the wisdom of the ancestors and the needs of the future with the APEC officials and business leaders of today.

Since 1998, the APEC Voices of the Future has tried to do just that by bringing teams of young navigators-in-the-making from the many APEC Economies into the annual convening.

In a few days, over 100 Voices students and educators from 17 APEC Economies will arrive in Honolulu to bring their cultures and their concerns to the many meetings and discussions the rest of the world will only see a headline about. Their average age is 20 years and most come from developing communities.

So that these students and educators from the *waka moana* can help all assembled in Honolulu next week listen for the *Aloha* in APEC, the Voices program will conduct its Opening and Closing Ceremonies at Kamehameha School, the official Voices education partner for 2011.

The Princess' testimony that forgiveness allows the ancestors' greatest gifts to come forward to host and strengthen the best learning for the future will inform the many sightings and messages the Voices delegates bring to this year's APEC proceedings.

As the Voices students fan out from Kamehameha's campus to go to the meetings with the APEC Business Advisory Council, APEC CEOs, and a number of APEC Economic Leaders and Senior Officials, they will be like a great claw sail, reaching out to bring more of the fresh wind APEC needs to realize its mission of supporting sustainable and shared growth and prosperity.

As they do, they will help official APEC remember the future of the collaborative and communitarian blue green voyages of their ancestors.

All are invited to follow the students' spirits filling the sails over the next week at the "Join Us" page at [www.apecvoices.org](http://www.apecvoices.org).

*Noel Gould, Esq. is the cofounder of the APEC Voices of the Future, and was born at Honolulu's Tripler Hospital to an Australia mother, whose own Asia Pacific odyssey served as the inspiration for the program.*