

‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Lesson 42 (February 2021) by Kēhau Chrisman

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Ah...February! Known as the month of *Love and Romance*. This is the month to be thankful for those you love, a time to say, “I love you with all my heart”. Now, how does that translate into ‘*ōlelo Hawai‘i*?’

Aloha means love. *Wau* means me or I, and ‘*oe* means you. “I love you”, then, translates to “*aloha wau iā ‘oe*”. But what about the “heart” part?

The Hawaiian dictionary translates “heart” as “*pu‘uwai*”. But it also says that the “use of *pu‘uwai* as a center of emotions (instead of *na‘au*, ‘*ōpū*, or *loko*) is probably a Western concept, but was noted in a chant dated 1853”. (Note, though, that the missionaries arrived in Hawai‘i in 1820.) That means this use of *pu‘uwai* as “heart” is not an ancient Hawaiian concept.

More appropriately then, as the Pukui-Elbert indicate in the dictionary, the use of *na‘au*, ‘*ōpū*, or *loko* might be more appropriate. Literally, the word “*na‘au*” means intestines, bowels, guts; but it also means mood, temper, feelings. Figuratively, it may mean “child”. The word combination of *na‘au-ali‘i* means kind, thoughtful, loving, benevolent, loving heart. *Na‘au-aloha* means filled with aloha, beneficent, benevolent (similar to meaning of *aloha*).

You have similar definitions for ‘*ōpū* which again literally means “belly, stomach, abdomen, intestines”, but it also means “disposition”. “‘*Ōpū-ali‘i*” has the same loving meaning as “*na‘au-ali‘i*” (see paragraph above). But to the recipient not well-versed in ‘*ōlelo Hawai‘i*, hearing “I love you with my belly” may not come across the same as “I love you with my loving heart”! The word “*loko*” means “character, disposition, heart, feelings”. The word “*lokomaiika‘i*” (lit., inside goodness) means “good will, good disposition, generosity, grace; kind, humane, gracious, benevolent”.

In the end, I would stick with the word “*na‘au*”. It seems to be pretty common in today’s Hawai‘i. So that when you say, “I speak from my *na‘au*”, you indicate that your words come from your most inner being or soul. “I love you with all my heart”, then, becomes “*Aloha wau iā*

‘oe me ko‘u na‘au-aloha”. Oh, that sounds so romantic!



On a side note, the definition of “heart’s desire” is given as “‘*i‘ini o ka na‘au*” or “*makakēhau*”. ‘*I‘ini* means “to desire or yearn for”, and *na‘au* you now know. “*Makakēhau*” means literally “dew eye” or “misty eyes”. *Nāmakakēhau* is my Hawaiian name.