Queen Liliʻuokalani Children’s Center
Wai‘anae Unit, Heulu Hale

“Haku Mele”

1. **Definition.**
   a. **Haku.** Among the many meanings for this word the most appropriate meaning I believe is most appropriate in this case is to “create” something that brings life to whomever or whatever it is being created for:
      (1) “Hā” – to breathe, a breath, to give breath, therefore giving life.
      (2) “Kū” – to stand erect from a prone or sitting position allowing energy to properly flow from the piko o luna to the piko o lalo; grounded.
   b. **Mele.** As with this word so commonly associated with song, to sing, or the Hawaiian-ized meaning of Merry, I was given another meaning for this word, that being “motion.”
   c. When you compose a chant, song, poem, or story, the words to such give life to that place, thing, or person allowing all the life forces to connect with each other and to move forward as one, hence the creation of a “haku mele.”

2. **Components of a haku mele.** Not all the components will pertain to every composition, these components being WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, HOW, and the closing, or PANINA. A composition need not be lengthy, but given enough thought to describe in a few words that, when sung or spoken will cause remembrance. I usually like to use a 2-line or 3-line format for a composition ensuring that the length of each line is consistent with the number of syllables being used throughout the other verses as well. I will clarify as we go on. Let me use a person as an example.

3. **WHO.** Identify the person you want to honor, i.e. a parent, grandparent, spouse, child, friend, personal acquaintance. I would suggest not using the name of this person in the first verse as it will be part of the closing.

4. **WHAT.** What this person was or meant to you, i.e. mentor, confidante, provider, husband, wife, son, daughter, etc. and what part of your life did he/she impact.

5. **WHEN.** Any specific event(s) that caused such an impact at a certain time in your life or in the life of the person being honored, i.e. when starting a new project, when you needed help, guidance, or kind words of wisdom.

6. **WHERE.** A specific location that could be anywhere, from the vicinity of or within your own home, a vacation spot, the beach, the mountains that was special, a place you may remember vividly whenever it was mentioned, or you happen to see a picture of such.
7. **WHY.** The reason this haku mele is so important to you, be it to bring closure, to let specific members of the family know who this person was, or just to memorialize this person’s life for all future generations to know about. Among all these components this, I believe might be the most important and the most frequently asked by others. It is probably the one question in their minds that will linger. I would give a little more thought in this section and refer back to the WHAT in order to make sense of it all.

8. **HOW.** This is more a justification of all the components on the composer’s part, how will this honor the one being honored, in what way was your relationship with this person an important part of your life as well as the lives of others, how is sharing the special events that you were involved in with this person so significant, why at specific locations did these events occur, and how will this help in the healing process.

9. **PANINA (closure).** In closing I would use special phrases such as, “With love and fond memories I hold dear, it is you (name of the person) I honor and remember,” something to this effect that sums up everything given, all the components mentioned above, the well thought-of feelings and emotions that went into this haku mele.

10. **SUMMARY.** These are just my thoughts of how I would go about creating a new composition, a simple scenario. The most challenging is trying to sum up an important memory in both the creator’s and the person’s life being honored in a few sentences. It is not impossible because it only takes a key word or a few key words to spark a remembrance, a memorable moment, or an event. And, if you could identify a specific word for each of the components above, that would be enough to ignite that special memory the composer so lovingly holds dear.

    For places and certain things that the composer may want memorialized the same principles apply, but not necessarily all of the components mentioned above will as well.

    Sincerely,

    Moon Kauakahi