Rubbing Petroglyphs at Outrigger Hotels

By Dr. Richard Kelley

Hospitality can be a little hard to define, but like many other things in life, you know it when you experience it. At Outrigger and OHANA Hotels and Resorts, we work hard to provide guests a unique hospitality experience reflecting the distinctive culture of the areas in which our properties are located. This week, I would like to focus on a special hospitality experience we provide in the lobbies of our two Waikīkī beachfront hotels – introducing our guests to Hawaiian petroglyphs.

What are petroglyphs? They are pictograms or images created by picking, carving or engraving on the surface of a rock. The word is derived from Greek. “Petra” means “stone,” and “glyphen” means “carve.” In Hawaiian, petroglyphs are called *ki’i pohaku* – “images in stone.” Found worldwide, petroglyphs are, in effect, monuments that record the efforts of first peoples to represent things of great importance and transmit information to future generations.

I first came in contact with petroglyphs many years ago when I was with my family on the island of Lana’i. We found several depictions of human figures engraved on the surface of several large stones in a field not far from the airport. It was great fun for my then very young children to hold a piece of paper against the rock, rub it with charcoal or crayons, and capture the images created by early Polynesian visitors or Hawaiian inhabitants of that area many hundreds of years ago, perhaps as far back as one or two thousand years.

To prevent damage to these priceless ancient images, it is now illegal to take such rubbings. However, thanks to the passion and expertise of Honolulu artist and journalist Lynn Cook, guests at our Waikīkī beachfront hotels now have the opportunity to learn about petroglyphs and reproduce the ancient images by making rubbings from replicas of the engraved stones.

Cook is a former newspaper reporter from the Pacific Northwest and has worked in Hawai’i for over 30 years as a freelance writer. She often covers stories that share the arts and culture of the Pacific with a global audience. Her passion for petroglyphs began when she was a young girl sailing in the Canadian Gulf Islands, between Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia. She was assigned to the bow to peer into the water and watch out for rocks. Once, she spotted one with a carved face staring right back at her. Leaning over the rail to get a closer look, she fell in. Since then, her fascination with petroglyphs has taken her from Hawai’i to Tahiti and from the U.S. West Coast to New Caledonia, about 900 miles east of Australia. She has written a book on the topic, *Petroglyphs From Hawai’i Journal*, available from Bess Press (http://besspress.com).

Twice a month, on Fridays at 10 a.m., Cook sets up a table in the lobby of the Outrigger Waikīkī, near the Hawaiian canoe and the Herb Kane mural of voyagers, and invites our guests to join her in taking rubbings from replicas of petroglyphs found in various locations around the Hawaiian Islands. Two Wednesdays a month, she holds classes at the Outrigger Reef. Guests can transfer their rubbings to an attractive greeting card to send to friends and family. Cook also allows guests to use her collection of rubber petroglyph stamps to make personalized bookmarks and cards.

Guests also learn about the amazing similarities between petroglyphs found all over the Pacific, from the western shores of Canada and Alaska to New Zealand, Australia and New Caledonia. Lynn relates how elders have told her about “people in the big canoes” who came from “out there” across the ocean to carve images on great coastal boulders. Our guests also learn how the Hawaiian double-hulled canoe *Hokule‘a* proved such long-distance voyaging to be possible.

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What a great experience available weekly to our guests, free of charge!

As highlighted in last week’s *Saturday Briefing*, Outrigger Hotels and Resorts was just recognized by Market Metrix as the company with the highest measured Hospitality Index of all hotels in the “Upscale” category in 2011. The Market Metrix Hospitality Index, based on 35,000 customer interviews conducted each quarter, is the largest and most in-depth measure of hospitality company performance. Winners in other categories included Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, Drury Inns, Affina Hotels and Wingate Inns.

Many, many members of our ‘ohana work very hard to create the atmosphere of hospitality recognized by Market Metrix. Lynn Cook’s weekly petroglyph sessions are a small but important part of making our guests feel special while they stay in either of our Waikīkī beachfront properties. I hope all our Waikīkī employees will encourage future guests to take advantage of this unique cultural experience.

Lynn Cook shares her passion for petroglyphs with our guests by teaching how to create gift cards with petroglyph figures

Personalized petroglyph card