

Kīpaepae are the steps for entering a house. This house is known as Hawai'i and kīpaepae is the process of integration in the landscape. It is an esoteric journey rooted in an indigenous life ways. Kīpaepae reminds us that we are in a sacred environment where ancestral, communal and individual energies exist simultaneously.

My first experience with kīpaepae was for a Mō ka Piko (building dedication) ceremony at Hawai'i Community College. Mō ka Piko literally means to cut the umbilical cord, so like a newborn, the building is now able to function on its own. That ceremony welcomed the birth of a new building that would house the development and transformation of learners, faculty/staff, administrators and community members. On a personal level, this kīpaepae marked my reintegration into the landscape of my ancestors after living in California (Continental United States) for majority of my life. Kīpaepae, whether it is for a building or a person, there is no difference.

Is kīpaepae for the orientee(s) or for the indigenous community? It is the opportunity for both to learn and grow. For the hosting community, it is a reminder that they are tied to this landscape. The landscape is not just a beautiful backdrop but ancestors who nurtured our families before us and will continue to do so after us. For the malihini (newcomer), it is a welcoming ceremony where one becomes part of the environment.

"Ho'okahi wale nō lā o ka malihini a lilo he kama'āina"
You are a visitor for only one day and then you are a native.

Welcome home.