



Archie Kalepa's Wild Ride

Legendary Hawaiian waterman conquers the mighty Colorado River.

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I am certain that someone somewhere will have something to say about SUP coverage in Arizona no less. But there was no way I wasn't bringing this to the world, just on the photos alone. Apparently Hawaiian watermen put a little more emphasis on the 'waterman' than just strictly the 'Hawaiian' part. Recently, veteran surfer/lifeguard Archie Kalepa paddled 187 miles through the Grand Canyon. Now, this technically qualifies as a world record, but I doubt Archie did this to see his name go down for some obscure feat.

"When you're put in that situation, the westernization gets stripped away and you're back in tune with Mother Nature and your surroundings. It allows you to become more clear on your beliefs; more focused on the issue at hand, which for all of us was water. It's a big issue, but when you look at it in that environment, it's a simple one."



Courtesy Expore.org/Aaron Huey

Kalepa recently paddled 187 miles through the Grand Canyon with leaders of Native American tribes on a cultural expedition.

Kalepa paddled these storied waters with leaders of American Indian tribes who were in the midst of a 17-day rafting trip through the Canyon, put together by a group called Explore.

Not only did it give Kalepa another great life experience, but it also made a connection between the Hawaiian culture and Native Americans.

"The way the American Indians think and how we Hawaiians think is so alike. So many of our spiritual beliefs are similar, we felt like family - like cousins. We really connected. The knowledge they have of their culture goes way back, even further back than what I know of mine. I learned so much more about water than I would ever learn if I was just in Hawaii."

The Hawaiian hero regarded this as one of the top challenges in his life, including navigating a class 10 rapid called the Lava . The trip not only made cultural connections, but obviously brings attention to issues of the environment and native peoples, which are often closely connected.

You can read more at Explore.org, which seems to be a very interesting organization. And if you want to continue to make fun of that less-than-proficient surfer at your local break who tools around on an SUP, that's fine. Just know that you're last shred session wasn't anything compared to Kalepa's.