



The First Outrigger Canoes in BC

There are three or four separate stories here about the arrival and growth of Outrigger Canoes in BC that are all very inter-connected:

- The arrival of *The Malia OC6s in BC* is well documented in the article written by Doug Mancell of Lotus Sports Club that can be found on the CORA website at: <https://canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Malia-history-in-canada.pdf>
- The arrival of the only two known Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) OC6s in Canada are separate stories with details contributed by Grace Morissette, Jim Mancell, Garry Mancell (all three from the Lotus Sports Club), Don Mulhall of Penticton Racing Canoe Club, David Boulding of False Creek, and Boy Chun Fook of Kikaha O Ke Kai (Tacoma, WA).
- The introduction of the Calmar Canadian Class Racer (CCR) OC6 and subsequent growth in numbers to become the most prevalent OC6 in the Pacific NorthWest (BC / Washington / Oregon), is a story based on details found in an OC Paddler Forum article (<http://www.ocpaddler.com/node/2310/>) as well as information contributed by Grace Morissette, David Boulding, and Boy Chun Fook.

The Malia OC6s in BC

The article written by Doug Mancell that is posted on the CORA website provides a very detailed account of the long history of the *Malia* OC6 as it made its way to Canada. Grace Morissette, Jim Mancell, Garry Mancell, and David Boulding have provided some personal insight on the events and individuals who contributed to the arrival and growth of the *Malia* OC6 in Canada.



Original Hawaiian "Malia" during Molokai Hoe race circa 1950's

There is an article on the web that notes how Lanakila Outrigger Club's Head Coach, Al Ching, obtained the original California *Malia* mould from Tom Johnson (a paddler on the first Catalina Crossing California team), which sat in someone's backyard in California for many years

(<http://web.archive.org/web/20001206202500/http://www.sdmbbbsc.org/Malia/index.htm>).

In 1987, the year after the first dragonboat racing event at Expo 86, when Grace started paddling with the "Lotus Eaters" team, there were no dragonboats or outrigger canoes available in BC for training; practicing for the dragonboat races at False Creek or international outrigger races meant paddling repetitive lengths in two Voyageur and two tandem Clipper canoes on the 2000M Burnaby Lake rowing course.

Several paddlers, such as David Boulding and Hugh Fisher (Pemberton Canoe Association), had competed in outrigger races in California and Hawaii in the 1970's and 1980's. Hugh Fisher spent time in Newport Beach, CA training for the Olympics and was recruited to several outrigger teams for races. Hugh Fisher competed on the Blazing Paddles team that won the 1978 Molokai race with a paddler named Billy Whitford who was steering that team. Billy Whitford and Uncle Bud Hohl had a side business of building *Malia* canoes. They were looking to spread outrigger racing to other parts of North America (and no doubt finding other people to buy their boats) and perceived Hugh Fisher, with his Olympian status, to be a good person to represent outrigger canoe racing in Canada. It was understood that Hugh was given a choice of buying the "longer and narrower boat designed for taller paddlers" or the *Malia*. Hugh chose the *Malia* because clubs in California were moving to the newer boat designs and he was offered the California *Malia* mould which was just sitting in someone's backyard; having the mould would make *Malias* more affordable and be more conducive to building a fleet of boats to race (<http://ncoca.com/news/History-of-Outrigger-Paddling-in-California.html>).

The article written by Doug Mancell describes how David Boulding arranged to have Bud Hohl load the California *Malia* mould onto the Necky Kayaks trailer (to be towed by Mike Neckar, on a return trip from delivering kayaks to California), but the trailer was left just south of the Canadian border in Sumas, WA. What the article neglected to mention was that Grace accompanied David Boulding when he drove across the border and met with US Customs to import the California *Malia* mould into Canada. At that point in time, Lotus Sports Club had yet to acquire their boathouse at Barnet Marine Park and False Creek Racing Canoe Club did not have facilities for fibreglass manufacturing. Steve Schleicher, the original and current designer of the Nimbus kayak line, offered his factory in Maple Ridge, BC and skills for fibreglass manufacturing to start building the first Canadian *Malias*. In 1988, after fabrication of the first two Canadian *Malias* had begun at Steve Schleicher's shop, Lotus Sports Club acquired their boathouse at Barnet Marine Park and the two Canadian *Malias*. were moved to the boathouse where the finishing work was completed by Jim Mancell, Garry Mancell, David Boulding, Steve Schleicher (with all of the boat building expertise), Bob Disbrow, and several other paddlers. When the Lotus Sports Club finished using the mould for its Canadian *Malias*, the California *Malia* mould was delivered to Ron Kaschula of Calmar Fiberglass and made available to paddlers from False Creek Racing Canoe Club to build some additional Canadian *Malias*.

The "Disbrow" Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) came to the Lotus Sports Club facility at Barnet Park shortly after the Canadian *Malias* were completed in 1988.



Original Lotus Canadian Malia sold to Pitt Meadows Paddling Club circa 2016

The Lotus Sports Club Hawaiian Class Racer

It is not entirely correct to refer to the Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) that resides at the Lotus Sports Club facility at Barnet Park in Burnaby as a "Lotus" canoe, because it is a privately owned canoe belonging to Robert (Bob) Disbrow. There are six very similar looking OC6s at Lotus with teal decks and white hulls. The Belcarra, Burrard, M.K. Wong, Buntzen, and Bedwell Bay are all Calmar Canadian Class Racer (CCR) OC6s distinguished by an upward curved stern (manu hope) and a straight pointed bow (manu ihu). The teal deck and white hull OC6 without a name (aka "Disbrow") is a Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) distinguished by an upward curved stern (manu hope) and an upward curved bow (manu ihu). The Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) is often paired with a Canadian Class Racer (CCR) for the Lotus Ice Breaker double-hull event.

After racing their two Canadian *Malias* at the 1988 Catalina Channel Crossing and placing second to a team in a Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR), the Lotus Sports Club men decided that, in order to be competitive, they had to have a Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR). Bob Disbrow (investment legend; cross-country skiing patron; philanthropist; film producer) of First Marathon Securities, one of the paddlers on the Lotus Catalina team, was convinced by Jim Mancell to buy a Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR). David Boulding organized a container to hold the Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR), which was then put onto a freighter in Honolulu and shipped to the Seattle docks. David Boulding coordinated people and a trailer to drive to the Seattle docks to pick up the Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR). Grace distinctly remembers seeing the "Disbrow" Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) sitting on the beach at Heriot Bay when she was on vacation at the Taku Resort. How that Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) travelled from Vancouver to Quadra Island is a mystery.

The "Disbrow" Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) was moved to the Lotus Sports Club facility at Barnet Park with the understanding that the Lotus Sports Club could use the canoe, but any time that Bob Disbrow wanted to paddle OC6, it would be made available to him. There was an article on the internet from about 20 years ago with quite a bit more information about the Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR), but that article is no longer present.

The Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) came to the Lotus Sports Club facility at Barnet Park after the first two Canadian *Malias* were completed. Grace remembers the arrival of that Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) at the Barnet Marine Park boathouse. The guys had been making cradles for a "state of the art" outrigger canoe so that it could be stored next to the two Canadian *Malias*; Grace was there the day that the Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) arrived at Lotus. There was as much excitement as when the first Unlimited canoe arrived in the Lower Mainland. These personal insights from Grace and David have confirmed that it was indeed the California *Malia* mould that would cross the Canadian border first, leading to the first two Canadian *Malias*, followed by the arrival of the "Disbrow" Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR).



Lotus Hawaiian Class Racer with Hawaiian Hawk ama

The Penticton (PRCC) Hawaiian Class Racer

It is known that the Penticton Racing Canoe Club (PRCC) acquired a Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) in 2000. What is unclear is how this particular Hawaiian OC6 came to Canada from Hawaii.

The first time that the IVF / IPCF (International Polynesian Canoe Federation) dictated specific criteria for the design of the OC6s and made the host organization responsible for providing the OC6s and V1s was at the 1992 Natoma IVF / IPCF 5th World Sprints Championships. This resulted in the manufacture of a large number of IPCF hulls by the Northern California Outrigger Canoe Association (NCOCA). The 1992 Natoma IVF / IPCF World Sprints was well attended by West Coast (Canada / Washington / Oregon / California) paddlers.

The Pacific NorthWest Outrigger Racing Canoe Association (PNWORCA) was just getting established in 1992 and the Columbia River Outrigger Canoe Club (CROCC) in Portland, OR was formed in 1992. The Gorge Outrigger Race had not yet achieved the attention that would eventually make it one of the most popular races in the Pacific NorthWest. By the early 1990's, the Race Around The Island (RATI) hosted by Columbia River Outrigger Canoe Club (CROCC) in Portland, OR, had become the Pacific NorthWest race for BC / Washington / Oregon / California paddlers.

There do not seem to be any written records, but PNWORCA paddlers recall that California teams trailered older OC6s (*Malias*; Bradley Racers; IPCF '92 hulls; Hawaiian Class Racers) to the Portland RATI race, sold them to PNWORCA clubs to help build up the Pacific NorthWest OC6 fleet, then bought newer OC6s such as the Bradley Striker and Force Five to upgrade the California OC6 fleet.

Apparently, someone at the Penticton Racing Canoe Club made a deal with a California club (possibly at a Catalina Channel Crossing race) to have a Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) delivered to the Columbia River Outrigger Canoe Club's Race Around The Island (RATI) in 2000. Kikaha O Ke Kai of Tacoma, WA did not have an OC6 at that time and had their eyes on that Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR) but someone named Dave Olds, towed that OC6 from Portland, OR to Seattle, WA. Don Mulhall, of the Penticton Racing Canoe Club, drove to Seattle during rush hour and picked up the boat with a trailer borrowed from Vernon Racing Canoe Club. Don towed the HCR to Canada where it joined the club's Dennis Campbell Rhino (acquired in 1999) to become the second OC6 in Penticton.



Penticton (PRCC) Hawaiian Class Racer with Hawaiian Hawk ama

The Calmar Canadian Class Racer

For the record, everything in this story is off-the-record, hear-say, second-hand, and subject to interpretation.

In the early 1990's, CORA and PNWORCA clubs struggled to acquire OC6s to support the growing number of outrigger canoe clubs. Ron Kaschula of Calmar Fiberglass had shops in North Vancouver, East Vancouver and New Westminster and was manufacturing / repairing just about anything fiberglass since before 1990. Sometime around 1992, a Canadian Class Racer (CCR) OC6 started appearing at BC clubs – referred to as a "Calmar". It was discovered that when the Canadian *Malias* overturned, they rode low in the water; David Boulding, Hugh Fisher, Don Irvine, and several others had input into designing a canoe that would increase paddlers' safety in colder BC water. The Canadian Class Racer (CCR) was designed with more flotation, a bumpy front nose to hold the covers, and more strength in the seats which resulted in a stiffer boat with more flotation in the rear.

There is an article on the web that notes how Ron Kaschula of Calmar Fiberglass approached PNWORCA in 1996 / 1997 and offered to deliver a number of Canadian Class Racer (CCR) OC6s to PNWORCA clubs that had an OC6 fleet that did not support the needs of their paddling community. PNWORCA boats at that time consisted of IPCF boats from the 1992 World Sprints, several old Canadian *Malias* from BC, a Hawaiian Class Racer (HCR), and one older Bradley Racer. This article also notes that there were other competitive canoes available such as the Mirage or Bradley, but if a club was looking for good training boats that would help to build up a canoe program, then a Calmar Canadian Class Racer (CCR) would suffice.

Walter Guild, manufacturer of the Hawaiian Class Racer (CCR), requested that PNWORCA take measurements of some of the Canadian Class Racer (CCR) OC6s. The length, width and shape of the Canadian Class Racer (CCR) OC6s were very similar to the Hawaiian Class Racer (CCR) OC6s, except that the bow of the Canadian Class Racer (CCR) was pointed and the gunwales were raised to support heavier crews.

How the Canadian Class Racer (CCR) came to be so similar to the Hawaiian Class Racer (CCR) in style, yet suited so well to the Pacific NorthWest paddling community, remains a mystery.

Since 1994, at least seventeen CORA clubs, two non-CORA Canadian clubs and ten PNWORCA clubs have at one time or another had at least one Canadian Class Racer (CCR) OC6 in their fleet. There are presently at least sixty Canadian Class Racer (CCR) OC6s in the Pacific NorthWest.



Lotus Calmar Canadian Class Racer (CCR) with original Calmar Ama