



TEHANI KIRBY, TRUSTEE

Captain, Traditional Navigator

Tehani Selepeo Kirby was born in 1977 in Saipan and is mixed French-Carolinian and a daughter of Jacques “Jim” and Florence Selepeo Kirby. Tehani is married to Cartfield *Temol* Sablan and mother of 4 children, Rain, Chantilly, Joseph, and Oceane and step-mom to two handsome boys, Kobe and Koji from Palau.

She graduated NMC while working for the Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA). She earned an Airman’s License as an Air Traffic Controller at Saipan’s Air Traffic Control Tower and then transferred to the Port of Saipan as a Vessel Traffic Controller being responsible for all vessels that enter Saipan waters. Encouraged by her father, Tehani obtained her Merchant Marine Document (MMD) in 2005 making her the first local female Captain in the CNMI. After 11 years with CPA, she moved to the CNMI Office of Homeland Security in 2009 as an Assistant Training Coordinator.

In 2012, She started a new career with the Bureau of Environmental & Coastal Quality under the Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) as an Enforcement Officer and Boat Captain and remains there today. Her job is to enforce DCRM Rules & Regulations and ensures compliance with permit conditions by permit holders and that public adheres to the DCRM program policy. She is also actively involved with environmental cleanups and events throughout the CNMI.

Tehani was a part of the *Okeanos-Marianas*, a traditional double-hull sailing canoe “Vaka Motu” promoting sustainable sea transportation and traditional navigation under the guidance of a few Traditional Master Navigators such as Pwo Master Navigators Cecilio Raiukiulipiy, Ali Haleyalur, Max Yarawamai, and Lino Olopai. Chief Ali gave Tehani a name, Lienmetaw, meaning “Lady of the sea”. She already had a Carolinian name, *Liemaliu*, when she was born given by an uncle who was revered medicine man and the son of a Traditional Navigator, a Healer, who came from *Pulusuk*, an Island where many great sea faring navigators hailed from and who happens to be Tehani’s grandfather. *Liemaliu* means, “the calm sea”, and she believes that it has kept her safe through her journeys as she sailed over thousands of miles throughout the outer islands of Yap and Chuuk and our Northern Islands.

Tehani believes that the Academy will provide great opportunities for our future generation, the community, other islands, and especially to encourage more women in embracing a sea faring lifestyle. Tehani’s love for the ocean has earned her a place with the Western Pacific Maritime Academy (WPMA) team and believes that the Academy will create pride and cultural recognition and becoming the center of maritime excellence.