

The Anglican Indigenous Network supports the protection of Maunakea

The Anglican Indigenous Network, a group consisting of delegates from Canada, Alaska, the United States, Hawaii, Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and the Torres Strait, stands with our kanaka maoli brothers and sisters who are protecting Maunakea.

All of our peoples understand, deeply, the importance of sacred sites, and the wisdom in protecting them from desecration. We mourn alongside the kia'i Mauna for the destruction the state seeks to impose on such a sacred site.

Theologically, we stand for the dignity of kanaka maoli people. Indigenous peoples are living, breathing, resilient persons whose cultural practices do not belong in museums, or in hotels for tourist consumption.

The conflict on Maunakea has escalated, with a “state of emergency” being called against those who are standing to protect Maunakea as a sacred place. This is not an issue of being anti-science, as Hawaiian people have a long and proud history of technological advancement. We reject the colonial history that pits indigenous peoples as ones whose intelligence is inferior.

We recognize the ‘eha,’ the hurt, that is on both sides of the issue - many of the police officers sent to keep peace on Maunakea are related to the protectors, and this is causing deep divides in the small island community of Hawaii. The police officers are upholding the law, as they have vowed to do - but sometimes the law is wrong. It was legal to bomb Kaho’olawe and to ban ‘ōlelo Hawaii from schools, though these were clearly injustices. We also encourage and respect the Kapu Aloha, which is nothing but aloha - the experience of reverence, that is being kept on the mountain. Kapu Aloha is the Way of Love, it is the journey of Jesus, and it is ultimately the only way forward.

This conflict centers on efforts to respect Maunakea as a sacred space - as ‘wao akua,’ realm of the Gods. In Judeo-Christian heritage we can well understand that, as Mt Zion was a sacred dwelling place for God. Sacredness is not merely a concept or a label. It is a lived experience of oneness and connectedness, with the natural and spiritual worlds. Nature is not inert, but a place where our Creator is known and honored. Seeing land as nothing more than something for humans to benefit from has deep colonial roots, and, for indigenous peoples, deep roots in the Doctrine of Discovery^[1].

The words of Psalm 18:2 come to mind, "The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold". Maunakea isn't simply part of what God has created, but is the very reflection of the Holy. Honoring the creation is honoring God, as an ‘ōlelo no‘eau tells us, "He ali‘i ka ‘āina, he kauwā ke kanaka." Meaning, the land is chief, and man is her servant.

We, the Anglican Indigenous Network, stand in solidarity with those kanaka maoli protecting Mauna Kea. We add our prayers for just resolution to this issue, that the dignity of all people will be upheld, and the sacredness of Maunakea will be protected.

Other examples of Indigenous sacred sites that are contested within the Anglican Communion:

Uluru – Australia

The Traditional custodians of Uluru have been arguing for decades for the closure of the 'Rock Climb' which enables tourists to climb and trample over the most sacred place for the Anangu people of Central Australia. There is a sign at the base of Uluru asking tourists not to climb the famous monolith, has not stopped thousands of people ignoring the wishes of traditional custodians and climbing the rock every year. On October 26, the 34th anniversary of when Uluru was returned to the traditional custodians in 1985, conditional on the it being leased back to government as a national park, the climb will finally be formally banned by the government. The response of many has been a clear example in racism and general disrespect for he culture and spiritual practices of the Anangu, with the daily number of climbers more than tripling in the lead up to the closure, non Indigenous people declaring it their 'birth right', and people defecating, urinating and discarding dirty nappies on and around the sacred site.

Ihumatao - Aotearoa / New Zealand

Te Ihu o Mataaho, today known as Ihumātao, was confiscated and sold by the Crown in 1863 to private landowners.

This 33 hectare block of land at the end of Ihumatao Peninsula, located on the Manakau Harbour, Auckland, is prime real estate.

The local hapu have recently negotiated with the private landowners, Fletcher Building, to return 8 hectares of the land to the iwi, which will form part of a larger housing development that Fletcher Building are planning for the area. This new development will be called Ōruarangi, and will provide a range of affordable housing for sale, with homes set aside for the iwi. Fletcher Building will be building 480 homes, with 40 affordable homes being provided for whanau within the iwi.

However, protestors have occupied the land for the last 3 years to protest the housing development. Ihumatao is located in Auckland, and is considered a wahi tapu site, or sacred, because the land was the site of one of the earliest market gardens in New Zealand and therefore a significant archaeological site.

Recently, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Adern, has intervened and announced that the development will be halted until a solution can be reached by all interested parties.

Turtle Island / North America & Kanata / Canada

There are many sacred sites upon Turtle Island or North America. Each site is unique as they belong to one of many Indigenous communities. Also, these communities are in many different geographical lands. Indigenous land was stolen by those who came seeking a better life, a life filled with riches from the land. Turtle Island is rich with minerals, natural resources, such as oil, gas, coal, copper and water. The earth was good for farming for growing a variety of crops. Indigenous communities grew foods they needed to sustain their

lives. Animals were abundant, harvested for food, clothing and tools. This connection to the land was and still is deeply spiritual.

In Canada, or “Kanata,” there are many sacred sites. Some have been abused but Indigenous people have fought to protect these sacred sites. In British Columbia, near Vancouver, the Musqueam have been fighting since 1892 to protect the Marpole Midden, a site of a once flourishing Indigenous community. Many artifacts and human remains are in this midden. Developers wanted to build 108 condominiums on this site. The Musqueam fought and so far they are winning. This midden sits upon prime real estate.

North of British Columbia, in the Yukon Territory, the Gwich'in have been desperately protecting the calving grounds of the Caribou. This is also a prime issue for the Gwich'in in Alaska. The Gwich'in have long depended upon the caribou for sustenance and clothing. However, there have been many attempts to open these sacred lands to drill for oil. Drilling will change the land and change the caribou, particularly their migration route. The Gwich'in are presently winning this battle but need much support to continue to defy big oil companies and governments who want to see the land opened for drilling. The Sacred Lands of the Gwich'in are particularly threatened by the pro – development activities of the present American government.

God is good, what God has given to Indigenous people should not be taken away. Saving sacred sites and lands is protecting the spirituality of our ancestors, ourselves and the Seventh Generation not yet born.

^[1]For more information, please see the following links:

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/topics/doctrine-discovery>

<https://www.anglican.ca/primate/tfc/drj/doctrineofdiscovery/>

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