

YACHAY WASI Sacred Sites Event - Submission 10 - USA - Received April 21, 2006

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My name is Kealoha Pisciotta. I am writing in my capacity as the President of the Native Hawaiian organization Mauna Kea Anaina Hou. I am also writing on behalf of the Royal Order of Kamehameha I, KAHEA: The Native Hawaiian Environmental Alliance, and Na Koa Ikaika o Ka Lahui Hawai`i regarding one of the Native Hawaiian Peoples' most sacred Wahi Pana (sacred places) and the place of our origins, Mauna Kea, Hawai`i.

Mauna Kea — The Temple: Protecting our Sacred Sites

Mauna Kea is one of two great mountains located on Hawai`i, the largest island of the Hawaiian archipelago. Its summit rises from the depths of the vast Pacific Ocean reaching approximately 14,000 feet in elevation. It is considered the highest place on earth when measured from the ocean floor. Because of Mauna Kea's pristine and rarified atmosphere, it has become a highly sought after location for doing world class astronomy and military research. Indeed it is the world's premiere astronomy site and hosts the world's largest and most advanced astronomical facilities.

We are writing to share our story of how our Sacred Mountain — Mauna Kea — continues to be occupied, desecrated, and destroyed by some of the richest and largest nations in the world, nations that hold treaties with the Hawaiian Kingdom. These countries include but are not limited to the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Netherlands, Australia and Japan.

In 1893, several U.S. American businessmen living in the Hawaiian Kingdom with the assistance of the military forces of the United States of America took over our homeland, later imprisoning our Queen. Thus began over 100 years of occupation of our Kingdom by the United States of America. The Indigenous Peoples of Hawai`i remain in political limbo, with our nation occupied and not protected under domestic policy; thus we are denied access to our resources, traditional and national lands, and trusts.

(N.B. For more information regarding the legal history of this occupation please see the full Memorial and accompanying Pleadings — Lance Paul Larsen vs the Hawaiian Kingdom filed at the Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague — at <http://www.Alohaquest.com/arbitration/synopsos.htm>.

The summit of Mauna Kea represents many things to the Indigenous Peoples of Hawai`i. The upper regions of Mauna Kea reside in Wao Akua, the realm of the Creator. It is also considered the Temple of the Supreme Being and is acknowledged as such in many oral and written histories throughout Polynesia, which pre-date modern science by millennia.

It is home of Na Akua (the Divine Deities), Na 'Aumakua (the Divine Ancestors), and the meeting place of Papa (Earth Mother) and Wakea (Sky Father) who are considered the progenitors of the Hawaiian People. Mauna Kea in every respect represents the zenith of the Native Hawaiian Peoples' ancestral ties to Creator and Creation.

"Some just look up and see a mountain...but for the Hawaiians, it's like building a McDonald's at Stonehenge."

*Ira S. Rohter, Associate Professor of Political Science
University of Hawai'i at Manoa*

From the Native Hawaiian perspective, the issue is of a **religious and spiritual nature**. As kahu (religious guardians) of this place, our kuleana (responsibility) to this temple is ancient. It is our duty to proclaim its sanctity and work to protect it, so that its greatness and purpose can be shared with all of mankind. We must be allowed to continue our work, and to honor and protect our ancestors there.

The Delicate Environment Threatened

Mauna Kea is also home to some of the most rare and endangered species in the world. One particular and unique bug species population has been reduced by 99.7% in less than ten years. Hawai'i now is classified the Endangered Species Capitol of the World. According to the Kumulipo (Hawaiian Chant of Creation), all living things no matter how big or small have purpose and make complete the whole. When a living thing ceases to exist, the process of Creation is unbalanced and begins to unravel.

Healing Waters Threatened

Mauna Kea is the principle aquifer for Hawai'i Island. For the last 30 years human, hazardous and toxic waste created by the observatories has been introduced into the ground and possibly into our aquifer systems. Every year approximately 500,000 gallons of human waste is introduced into sub-standard sewage and leach field systems. There have been numerous toxic spills including seven (7) documented spills involving elemental mercury. Lastly, we have recently acquired information to substantiate the peoples concerns that depleted uranium is being used at the military training areas around our sacred sites, pristine water shed lands and the last remaining habitat on our island of our native birds in. In a tradition that continues to this day, the waters, snow and ice are harvested from the summit of Mauna Kea for medicine. Due to possible contamination by human and toxic waste, we are not sure if the waters can be used any longer for healing.

Where are we now

Regarding our pending cases and situation on Mauna Kea we can report that while we have made substantial gains for the protection of Mauna Kea's delicate and sacred resources, against militarization and over development by multinational conglomerates, many threats continue to be quite volatile and pressing. For example a major federal case against NASA found in our favor, and we await a second case that is in state appeals court. Recently, a documentary film reporting on the Mauna Kea situation has been completed by the film production team Na Maka o ka Aina (Eyes of the Land). The name of the film is "Mauna Kea: Temple Under Siege".

On the other side of things last month one of the premier shrines and memorials (a standing prayer platform and stone alter) that stood atop Mauna Kea for over ten years was destroyed. Two Native Hawaiian soldiers killed in the U.S. War in Iraq, personal belongings were destroyed during the destruction also. Later that same week another religious shrine was destroyed in Honolulu, on the grounds of the Iolani Palace. This shrine had been built in 1993, during an event commemorating the 100th anniversary of the overthrow of Hawai'i's Queen, by the U.S. and during the ceremonies approximately 20,000 Hawaiians marched in the streets. These two incidents occurred right after the news hit that NASA cuts made by U.S. President Bush, included a NASA project set for the construction of four to six more telescopes atop Mauna Kea.

We continue to seek peaceful solutions to resolve the issue without violence or litigation. However, the September 11 tragedy issued forth extreme military expansion on and around our Temple which continues to cause great fear and concern for the success of our deliberations and general alarm over the buildup of occupying forces. Mauna Kea belongs to the World for Peace and Aloha. We have asked those occupying our temple to accept the responsibility to maintain reverence and respect for the laws of the Temple and its place in the context of Creation, for it is said that all who enter the temple of Heaven are bound by the laws of Heaven. And so it is.