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Évènements en 2021

Conflict over the TMT atop Mauna Kea continues

Construction of the Thirty-Metre Telescope (TMT) on the top of Mauna Kea (at 4,050 metres), a dormant volcano already home to 21 telescopes, including the Canada-France-Hawaii Observatory, began in 2014. Protests forced the closure of the construction site the following year although legal challenges by opponents of the TMT proved unsuccessful. Construction was scheduled to resume in the summer of 2019 but the access road to the summit was completely blocked by Indigenous activists.¹

The conflict continued in 2021 and Uahikea Maile, a University of Toronto political scientist who is a Kanaka Maoli, stated that:

*We Kanaka Maoli have decided in our thousands to no longer respect a political and legal process that systematically ignores our voice. (...) The TMT is different from Mauna Kea's existing 21 telescopes because it would be located on a plateau that is currently completely undeveloped. In addition to the sacred nature of the entire summit, this plateau is a valuable ecosystem that must be preserved.*²

The protest against this new telescope has redoubled in intensity since 2019. Kanaka Maoli Indigenous activists want all telescopes removed from the archipelago's mountains, which they consider to be sacred. Canada is involved in the project, having pledged CAD 250 million for the Thirty-Metre Telescope.

Four of the nine directorships on the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' (OHA) Council of Representatives were up for election on 3 November 2020. The TMT remained a critical talking point, with many of the candidates campaigning on the basis of their opposition to the TMT. Following the election results, these candidates have continued to call for the dismantling of the original *Mauna Kea* telescopes. Uahikea Maile, a Kanaka Maoli Professor of Indigenous Politics at the University of Toronto, has stated that:

“The only people who should be able to decide what gets built on public land are the Kanaka Maoli «

Progress in decommissioning

On 3 June 2021, the OHA decided to dismantle the Caltech Submillimetre Observatory, the first of five observatories on the summit to be decommissioned in exchange for the planned construction of the TMT at Mauna Kea. It ceased operations in 2015.^{4,5}

On 7 August 2021, four native Hawaiian elders arrested in 2019 while protesting the construction of the giant telescope on Hawaii's highest peak were found not guilty of obstructing the mountain's access road.⁶

On 21 September 2021, the University of Hawaii and the California Institute of Technology jointly decided to decommission a second telescope, the UH Hoku Kea teaching telescope.⁷ A much smaller teaching telescope is likely to be installed at the Hale Pohaku site at the base of the summit.⁸

The death of Haunani-Kay Trask

2021 also saw the passing of Haunani-Kay Trask, who was an activist best known for promoting the rights of native Hawaiians, the *Kanaka Maoli*, and Hawaiian sovereignty. She passed away at the age of 71. Trask began her teaching career in 1981 when she started as an assistant lecturer at Manoa University. She was the first Indigenous woman to be hired as a lecturer at this university. She worked in the Department of American Studies, with expertise in feminist theory and Native Studies.^{9,10} She created a significant opening for thousands of Hawaiian scholars and also helped build bridges with allies outside the state so that the island's plight could be heard on the international stage. For many, she was also a voice for the oppressed. She was remarkable for the stance she took against American imperialism and the island's colonisation.

Trask denounced the harmful effects of America's military occupation of the territory and the impact of tourism on the Indigenous people. She also rallied against a certain concept of tourism that could be perceived as a form of colonial oppression.¹¹ Upon Trask's passing, Maile Arvin, a native Hawaiian, noted that “through her work, she was able to demonstrate to other nations that native Hawaiians can create a different future for themselves”.

According to Senator Mazie Hirono:

“Haunani-Kay was an outspoken and inspiring educator and ardent advocate who played an undeniable role in highlighting the most painful parts of Hawaii's past, inspiring countless people with the same demands.”¹²

Notes and references

1. See Indigenous World 2020.
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9. Yam, Kimmy, "Haunani-Kay Trask, renowned scholar who fought for Hawaiian sovereignty, dies at 71", *NBC News*, 8 July 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/haunani-kay-trask-renowned-scholar-who-fought-hawaiian-sovereignty-dies-n1273364> accessed 21/10/21
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11. Idem
12. Idem

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