

Declaration of Pu'uhonua Village for a Nation of Hawaii
Food Sovereignty Zone
"Taro is the Ancestor that Nourishes Us"
Indigenous Peoples Food Sovereignty Conference
September 7-8, 2016, Pu'uhonua Village, Waimanalo, Oahu Hawaii
Hosted by the Nation of Hawaii and the International Indian Treaty Council

"The story of Taro or kalo begins when Wakea (sky father) and Papa (Mother Earth) conceived a daughter, Ho'ohokukalani. Daughter and father then conceived a child together, named Hāloanakalaukapapili (long stalk trembling) but it was stillborn. After the two buried the child near their house, a kalo plant grew over the grave. The stems were slender and when the wind blew they swayed and bent as though paying homage, their heart shaped leaves shivering gracefully as in hula. And in the center of each leaf water gathered, like a mother's teardrop. The second child born of Wakea and Ho'ohokukalaniher named Hāloa, after his older brother. The kalo of the earth was the sustenance for the young brother and became the principal food for the generations to come. Now, as man continues to work the wetlands of this sacred crop, he remembers the ancestor that nourishes him — Haloanaka.

The natural laws of our creation sets forth the instructions of how to care for the natural world, including the plants and animals we use traditionally for our foods and medicines. The Hawaii Story of Creation describes Taro (Kalo) as a basis for physical and spiritual life in this world. Taro along with other traditional foods place, hold and sustain us within the universe.

Our connection to the past is unbroken and Taro is part of this connection. It is traditionally the first food that our babies eat and the last food our elders take before their final journey home. Poi made from Taro is a magical food. It is a woman food, and has one of the highest protein contents of any food. It can be stored for long periods of time for traveling over the ocean.

Taro is the deliciousness of the land, the rain and water, and life itself. It is the ancestor that sustains us.

Taro was and is one of the main elements of our self-sufficient and self-sustaining food system in Hawaii, which is the basis of our sovereignty and self-determination. Our original self-sufficiency was undermined by colonization, forcing us to import more than 80% of our foods from outside, most of which are not healthy or nutritious, and forcing us to be dependent on our colonizers just to eat.

We underscore that the way our land and water is being used today and the laws and restrictions imposed by settler governments do not nourish the holistic health of our Nations. In many places Indigenous Peoples are denied access to the traditional lands and waters that they used since time immemorial to plant, gather, fish and hunt. We have heard how sometimes they are criminalized for carrying out their traditional subsistence activities. Some of our families and young people are also forced to leave their ancestral lands and move to cities and urban areas where maintaining these ways poses new challenges.

We understand that GMO's, highly manufactured commercial foods, and contaminants such as pesticides, mercury and mining wastes, have undermined our physical, spiritual, emotional, mental and environmental health. The most detrimental impacts are to our babies, children and youth.

One of the most urgent threats we are facing is climate change which is having devastating effects on Pacific Island and other Indigenous Peoples' food systems. We understand that going back to our traditional food sources is the best way to be sure we will survive what is coming as the crisis worsens.

Based on these collective understandings we have agreed to the following:

We recognize that it is our sacred responsibility to take care of Taro as our ancestor by telling the Creation story to our children, and living according to our original instructions. As Indigenous Peoples, our songs, stories, dances, languages and ceremonies connect us directly to our traditional foods, Mother Earth, Father Sky, the rain and all the sacred elements that feed us.

We recognize that Food Sovereignty is our right, based on rights recognized in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, other International Standards as well as our Nation to Nation Treaties. It is also the basis for unity, and for bringing us together as Peoples.

We affirm that Political Sovereignty is not possible without Food Sovereignty. This was well understood by the colonizers who tried to destroy our traditional food sources in order to control and subjugate our Free Independent Sovereign Nations, and who continue to abrogate our Treaties, contaminate our lands and waters with chemicals, impose alien species and GMO's and deliberately undermine our ways of life.

We understand that resisting and undoing the colonization imposed on our Peoples means restoring what was taken from us in that process. This includes restoring our lands, waters, traditional learning and teaching systems, original foods, languages, medicinal plants and animals, sacred places, and the health and well-being of our families.

We know that unhealthy, high sugar, non-traditional imported foods are weapons of colonization being used against us. In many places, more Indigenous Peoples die from diseases caused by poor nutrition than bullets. Our traditional foods, grown on our own lands, will keep us connected and strong. The health of our Nations is based on the health of our lands and waters and our women, children and coming generations;

We recognize and thank all the traditional Indigenous food growers and producers who work on a daily basis to maintain and strengthen our traditional food systems, resources and knowledge, to keep them alive as the source of our survival today and in the hard times that are coming;

We express profound appreciation and gratitude to our ancestors and Traditional Elders who kept our original practices, knowledge, stories, ceremonies and languages alive and well into this modern time despite many challenges, sufferings and struggles.

We commit to do the same for our young people and coming generations. We will teach them to honor the farmers, knowledge holders and food producers, and encourage them to work and learn along-side them so that these ways can continue into the future. We also recognize the vital contributions of the youth of our Nations to this effort, which cannot be achieved without their full and active participation.

We call upon all Indigenous Peoples and our allies, to stand with us in protecting the Taro and other life-giving food resources in their traditional forms, natural diversity and original integrity. This is our sacred responsibility as Indigenous Peoples and original human beings.

We intend to re-establish and renew the traditional commerce and trade relationships between our Nations and Peoples and our economic sovereignty and prosperity based on our traditional foods and ways of life.

We commit to honor and protect the Sacred Water on which our Food Sovereignty and all life depends. We stand in solidarity with all Indigenous Peoples who are in struggles to protect and restore their sacred waters. We support the current struggle by the Lakota and Dakota Nations at Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in North and South Dakota to oppose the Dakota Access LLC oil pipeline that threatens their main source of water as well as many sacred sites, and violates the rights affirmed in the 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaty with the United States.

We affirm that our movements for political decolonization must include reclaiming our Food Sovereignty which includes decolonizing our food systems and diets, languages, spirituality and collective historic memories. *No battle can be won if you can't feed your warriors!*

We stand in solidarity with one another in our work to restore, strengthen and defend our food sovereignty, and will continue to gather together to build our mutual support and understandings and share our strategies.

We therefore declare the Nation of Hawaii traditional homelands and territory to be a Food Sovereignty zone that will be kept free from genetically modified seeds, plants and animals as well as toxic pesticides, environmental contamination and invasive species. In this way it will be a healthy and safe place for our traditional plants, and our children, grandchildren and future generations to live, survive and thrive in good health, peace and strength.

We further declare that the process to restore our Food Sovereignty must begin immediately, and it must be done by us. We commit to take collective action to implement this Declaration, to defend our rights and our Peoples, and to build the necessary understanding among our Nations, leaders and policy-makers on all levels, as well as our youth and coming generations, to make it a continuing reality.

“Concerned that indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests”

-- Preamble, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Adopted by consensus of the participants from Hawaii and the Pacific, Caribbean, Arctic, North, Central and South America regions, September 8th, 2016, Pu'uhonua Village, Nation of Hawaii

Further Endorsed and Adopted by Consensus of the 42nd Anniversary IITC Conference September 11th 2016, Waimanalo, Hawaii

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