

Declaration of Takahiwai
Takahiwai Marae, Aotearoa (New Zealand)
February 5th, 2019

From February 4th – 5th, 2019 we gathered for the Pacific Food Sovereignty and Traditional Knowledge Conference hosted by Takahiwai Marae. We express our heartfelt appreciation to our hosts for their warm and wonderful hospitality. We also thank Te Rau Matatini, Te Kopu and the International Indian Treaty Council for bringing us together for vital discussions and knowledge-sharing about Food Sovereignty, Traditional Knowledge and Climate Change.

We were reminded at this gathering by our elders that the treasures that the gods gave us to sustain our lives, the gifts of the Sky Father and Earth Mother like the tuna (eel), plants and fish, fauna and forests still belong to us, as Te Tiriti o Waitangi also affirms.

We, as Indigenous Peoples of Aotearoa, the Americas and the world have been given the responsibility to take care of these sacred treasures, to protect and care for them, to learn from them and use them in a way that ensures their health and survival so that our future generations will also be strong and healthy. We were also reminded by our youth about the fears they have for their futures as a result of the changes they are seeing in our natural environment.

Our traditional knowledge, Indigenous sciences, and evidence-based ancestral practices are still alive and strong. These include the interconnected understandings about our star navigation systems, lunar calendars, deep and shallow fresh and sea waters, seasons, wind, weather, high and low tides, high and low energies, and the natural migration patterns of birds, fish, sea mammals and other living things. These interlinked elements make up our traditional food systems.

All parts of the universe are connected and move in natural cycles. What binds them together is the balance among all things. The balance of the sacred elements is what creates Mauri (life force). This balance needs to be restored so our Peoples, families and Mother Earth can be healed. The ancient stories and understandings handed down from our tupuna, continue to provide us with guidelines about what to do and not do, and how to be resilient. Time has passed but the stories are still here.

Indigenous Peoples did not create the imbalance that has resulted in the monumental environmental crisis called Climate Change. It was caused by the destructive, blind and callous greed of the corporations and powerful States who refuse to change their ways despite many clear warnings from their own scientists, Indigenous Peoples and the Earth herself. Indigenous Peoples of Aotearoa, and Indigenous Nations around the world, along with our traditional food sources and ways of life, are on the front lines of the impacts. The global tipping point is fast approaching. We are called upon to take radical, conscious, peaceful and sustained action for our collective survival.

We express our concern and solidarity for Pacific Nations that are already being forced to flee their ancestral homes on Islands where their survival is threatened by rising sea water because of Climate Change. How will they maintain their political and food sovereignty, national identity and ways of life

away from their traditional homelands? We call upon the countries that have caused this extreme violation of their rights to take responsibility for these impacts, and offer real solutions.

We came together as representatives of Maori and Indigenous Peoples of the Americas to express our collective commitment to work for solutions in our own communities, regions and the international arena, based on our traditional ways of knowing and being. We accept the sacred responsibility to keep these ways alive and pass them on to new generations, as they were passed down to us by our tupuna.

We therefore make the following commitments for action, as discussed at this gathering:

- 1) To protect our traditional foods from over harvesting, pollution and depletion by commercial interests; to implement our own sustainable management and monitoring tools, systems and practices to measure and restore the health of our foods and ecosystems; and to demand that governments and corporations clean up the areas where they have released contamination.
- 2) To ensure that traditional foods are maintained or restored as the basis for our family food consumption and daily diets, based on the principles of well-being and Whai Rawa (the abundance of our local/tribal and Indigenous Nation economies)
- 3) To ensure that our Peoples understand the nutritional and health as well as cultural, spiritual, environmental and economic value of traditionally-produced and prepared foods as compared to industrial, mass-produced foods
- 4) To protect the habitats of our traditional food sources from contamination due to chemical spills, pesticides use, fossil fuel production including refineries and pipelines, genetically modified plants, seeds and animals, and destruction by urbanization and industrialization
- 5) To insist that governments and UN Bodies fully respect Indigenous Peoples' food sovereignty based on our rights to self-determination, land, water, sustainable production, resource management and culture, when adopting their laws, policies and programs.
- 6) To demand that governments halt activities, policies and production methods that contribute to Climate Change and undermine our food sovereignty and take immediate and meaningful steps to transition away from all aspects of fossil fuel-based energy production and to ensure full access for Indigenous Peoples to food gathering, production and breeding areas.
- 7) To support family- and community-based, culturally-appropriate food production including gardens, gathering, seed collection and traditional knowledge-sharing among Maori as the foundation of true agro-ecology to replace fast foods, industrial farming and supermarket dependency.
- 8) To support the creation of Maori Food sovereignty zones and food production collectives to protect and promote traditional fishing, planting and gathering places and methods and defend our Treaty rights to food, lands, water and resources.
- 9) To engage actively in the new Cultural Exchange Platform for mitigating Climate Change at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, as long as our rights to traditional knowledge, cultural heritage and food production practices are respected and safeguarded
- 10) To initiate our own research projects to monitor the health of our eco-and food systems and develop programs for restoration and healing as needed

- 11) To defend the rights of Indigenous Pacific Island Peoples who are forced to leave their islands as a result of Climate Change to their political and cultural identities, self determination and traditional food sovereignty.
- 12) To seek out and listen to the time-tested wisdom of our elders and apply these understandings in response to the threats we are now facing as our tupuna also foresaw
- 13) To consistently and with clear intent include our youth and children in family food production and sharing traditional teachings, and to take time to feed and nourish them with these teachings so that our Peoples will continue to grow in strength and well-being. To listen to our youth as they propose solutions with new ways of thinking to address the crisis they are seeing in their futures, and to make space for their involvement and leadership.
- 14) To demand that States fully honor and implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties with Indigenous Nations, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and all other international commitments without qualification. We commit to hold them accountable to these international agreements that impact our rights and ways of life.
- 15) To commit to the continuation, and where needed the restoration, of our languages to be able to fully express what we know and who we are.
- 16) To insist that States and UN Bodies respect our perspectives, concerns, rights, cultural values and ways of knowing in the development of programs and policies addressing Climate Change, and ensure our active participation in assessing and evaluating their effectiveness.
- 17) To restore and implement climate and ecological care in our local/tribal economic activities and structures based on the principle of Kainga (traditional kinship-based production systems) as included in Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) and also expressed in He Whakaputanga o Te Rangatira o Nu Tireni (1835 New Zealand Declaration of Independence). We will no longer endorse the abuse of our Earth and Sky parents by the dominant economic systems.
- 18) To not waste food, to eat what we are provided by the earth and sea, to share and not take more than we need like how we lived in the past. We understand that going back to the traditional foods that nurtured us as children can provide healing for our body and soul.

Finally, and most important, we commit to reconnect with who we are, where we are from and where we stand on this earth. We commit to learn from the things we see, hear, smell, taste and feel, to have our spirits and minds cooled by the ocean and warmed by the fire. We commit to decolonize our ways of being, knowing, teaching, learning, speaking, planting and eating, to apply our ancestral understandings, stories and values to the realities we are living today, and to listen to what the life forces that surround us say to us about what we must do.

All life is connected. If we can heal our lands and our waters, we will heal ourselves. When we heal ourselves and our families, we can heal our world. We will agree to share what is most precious to us in the hopes that other Indigenous Peoples will also share what they have with us. What we are facing requires an unwavering commitment to sharing, long term vision, strategic planning, courage and caring for the mana that feeds all life. We are the change we have been waiting for. Our survival, as always, is in our hands.

Adopted by consensus February 5, 2019, Takahiwai Marae, Aoeatorā