Bringing the summit of Mauna Kea and the lands of Ihumātao to Te Whanganui-a-Tara, leaders and protectors Pua Case and Pania Newton come together to discuss what it means to be in Indigenous-led movements that centre Indigenous rights, rituals, and protocols. In a moving keynote conversation, they talk about the work that comes with caring for whenua or ʻāina in personal, relational, and sacred ways; they reflect on the importance of solidarities, networks, and following the wisdom of our ancestors; and they offer guidance and hope for ongoing and future movements dedicated to the protection of place.

Caring for Whenua

PANIA NEWTON & PUA CASE with EMALANI CASE & KASSIE HARTENDORP

From the summit of Mauna Kea to the land at Ihumātao, Indigenous-led movements teach us about how to care for place with aroha and aloha. They teach us how to conduct ourselves, how to stand for earth, and how to move forward with the wisdom of our ancestors. The conference theme of 'Activating Collectivity: Aroha and Power' was influenced by these movements. One of the keynote panels therefore featured leaders and protectors Pania Newton, from the movement to protect Ihumātao in Aotearoa, and Pua Case, from the movement to protect Mauna Kea in Hawai'i. These protectors came together to discuss what it means to care for whenua or ʻāina in relational, embodied, intimate, and sacred ways. As women who stand on the frontlines to protect our lands, our spaces, and our right to be Indigenous in those spaces, Pania and Pua offered us hope and the chance to rise and be braver than we ever thought we could be.

The following transcription features highlights from their conversation facilitated by conference organisers, Kassie Hartendorp and Emalani Case. Pua, Pania, Kassie, and Emalani drafted panel questions together, focusing on solidarities, networks, protocols, and ceremonies. Some of those questions and responses appear below. While Pania, Kassie, and Emalani gathered with conference attendees in

Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Pua joined them online via Zoom, bridging the divide and reminding us of the power of collectivity across our moana.

EMALANI CASE – Our first question is about networks and solidarities. What are the roles of networks and solidarities in your movements?

PUA CASE – I'm going to tell a story, a short one, that really won't epitomise my entire thought, but will give you a glimpse into both of our lives and movements. When it comes to networking and alliances, in 2010, when the spirit world asked my ʻohana to help stop the telescope, because it would change everything for us—a 30-meter, 18-storey telescope on Mauna Kea—I was really petrified. I was a middle-school teacher and all I could think of in that very moment was, 'What about my job?'. At that time, back in 2010, I even said, 'What about the construction jobs for our relatives?', and then, 'What about my safety?', and 'What about my family?', and 'What if I stood alone?' I'd never been to court before and I knew that it would lead to that. I was petrified about how I was going to stand in this movement, even though I had grown up being a kiaʻi for issues that had occurred and were ongoing. Whether it was hunting rights or Kahoʻolawe or overdevelopment, I have always been standing. But this time was going to be different.

So, what I want to honour today is what got me through the first step on becoming braver than my fear and what helped me to crawl to courage. That was the Idle No More movement in Canada. As I was struggling to see how I was going to make this stand with my family, one day, when I was new to social media, I happened to be looking on Facebook and I saw Chief Spence in Canada. She was on a hunger strike because China was coming in to try to change some rules for bringing their oil through. The Idle No More movement began soon after that. When I saw the Idle No More movement formed by four women around a table in a kitchen, I said to myself, 'That movement is going to be the movement that gets me to where I need to be for my own movement'. And true to the word, those four women and the thousands that became Idle No More, inspired me,

held me by the hand, pulled me by the hair sometimes, but brought me to my feet.

So, in a small way, what I'm trying to say is that that's what networking does, that's what alliance building does, that's what relationships do: they help you to stand, they teach you, they learn from you, they stand with you, they pray for you. Everyday I am on social media with my very best friends, leaders of movements. Like today, simultaneously, I was on messenger with Ladonna Allard and Calleen Sisk, two great leaders, just checking up on them, their health, how are they doing. That is what networking does: it builds our nation in ways that we never thought it would. To me, that is he importance of networking and alliance building. Once we build that framework, these bonds can never be broken because we will stand arm in arm in every way that we can, and we will rise. So that's my answer to that. Mahalo.

PANIA NEWTON – I agree with many of the things that Whaea Pua has shared. We share similar experiences. The first time I actually met Pua was at a NAISA conference maybe six or seven years ago in Hawai'i. I had just finished law school. I had graduated in the same year, or was about to, and I went to Hawai'i as part of the Matike Mai Aotearoa Rangatahi group. It was there that I learnt about the Idle No More campaign. One of the women there—and this is not to disrespect anybody who is working in this space—shared that she was a law practitioner and that she owned her own law practice in Turtle Island. She said that at one point in her life she came to the realisation that by participating in the system she felt like she was legitimising it. That really went to my heart. I remember crying in that conference room because I was about to go and work at a law firm. It was in that moment that I was like, 'Shit what am I doing? Am I contributing to colonialism by going into this?' And so I went through a career crisis and put everything on hold. It was after NAISA that I went home and I learnt about the Fletcher development. It was the culminating point in my life where I was going through this career and identity crisis at the same time, learning about this development that was going to desecrate our whenua,

destroy our wāhi tapu, and essentially take away the last piece of whenua that Te Ahiwaru, Makaurau marae had left.

I grew up with a very interesting background. Many of you have probably heard this story, but it was at the age of nine that I was asked by my teacher at Kura Kaupapa what I wanted to be when I grew up. She told me to look at my circumstances, and I decided at the age of nine that I wanted to be a lawyer when I grew up, and I wrote that on a piece of paper and my Kaiako put it in a time capsule, and I felt like I had a responsibility to my nine-year-old self to fulfil that promise. Eventually I went on to graduate from the University of Auckland Law School, and in the year I graduated, I learnt about Fletcher Building Limited's plans to build 480 homes on ancestral land. I gave up my job and I moved onto the whenua and my cousins and I then started the kaupapa around the preservation and protection of our whenua.

Like what Pua said, many of the collaborations and alliances we have made are very much the reason why we have been able to sustain ourselves in this campaign for six years. You know, it was those different groups that inspired and motivated me and that picked me up when I was at the lowest of lows. It's really sad to think that in kaupapa you become desensitised, or at least that is the experience I had. So that's one of the sacrifices that I've had to make for the protection of my whenua.

Why are these collaborations so important? It's because, like Pua said, no one will really know the story of Ihumātao and the six cousins who have carried this kaupapa. A lot of the kaupapa came to fruition on the 23rd of July 2019 when 120 police officers and Fletcher Building staff and contractors came to Ihumātao and evicted my whanau from the whenua after we had been reclaiming it for three years. But there was a whole backstory, and it took the four years prior to gather the support that we needed and to raise awareness in order for those 11,000 people to come to Ihumātao in the first week of that escalation. It wasn't just that Ihumātao happened and everyone turned up. Like AAAP know, like Asians Supporting Tino Rangatiratanga know, like Action Station know, like many of our solidarity groups know, we made connections years before

the escalation happened. Those connections made with our whanau and our whenua were the reasons that they came back and stood in solidarity with us on our whenua.

Why were people so respectful of our tikanga and our kawa that we had laid as foundations for people to come to Ihumātao and be met with? It was because of the respect we built with those groups and those people before they came, because there are far too many times—and you must be aware of this—that alliances and collaborators may also be disablers and harmful to you or your kaupapa. So, you have to build tools in order to identify when they are good alliances and collaborators and when they are not. We had people come and tell us what to do on our whenua years before the escalation happened. We had people come and tell us to do all sorts of crazy things that didn't fit with our ethos, our morals, or our ethics and our tikanga. You have got to be staunch to your kaupapa, staunch to your tikanga; know when these collaborators and alliances align with you and your kaupapa and know when they do not; and be brave to have those conversations about when to shut things down or when to respectfully say, 'That's not our kaupapa and if you are here to stand on our whenua and if you are here to support us, this is our kaupapa and we ask that you humbly respect that and follow our whanau'. So that is what I have to say on collaboration.

PUA – Before we go on, I just want to address you, my dear, because you remind me of the young women who are standing on the lines with us from the next generation. I am so honoured to be here with you, presenting with you as this younger generation, and what I really wanted to say is I wish you had come up to me at that conference years ago. What I would have said to you is, 'We need lawyers, my dear'. We need more native lawyers. We went through two contested cases representing ourselves as if we were lawyers, trying to become lawyers as schoolteachers, as cultural practitioners. It was the hardest, most excruciating thing I have ever gone through and we were looking for lawyers. So, I am telling you right now, next time you are going through a crisis you see me first.

KASSIE HARTENDORP – Ngā mihi kia kōrua. So much in every sentence, right? And how beautiful it is that we can be witness to this conversation? We are watching movements talk to each other; it's incredible. Our next question is around what it means to be an ancestral-led movement. You've utilised different tikanga, kawa, rituals, and protocols to make safe, disciplined space to protect the whenua, whanau, and people who are there. So I'm asking about those rituals. What is important to know when you are a part of an ancestral-led movement?

PUA – It's a progression to get to a point where you can actually say that it is ancestrally run and is culturally and traditionally tied to protocols and guidelines. You have to know what you're doing. Why I say that is because our first frontline action was really in 2014 when we stopped the ground-breaking of the Thirty Meter Telescope project. We had ceremonies, of course. We had rituals, of course. We actually started the day with that. But we didn't have our kapu aloha protocols in place, because I'm not sure about Ihumātao, but what I can say about Mauna Kea is that many of even our own people were coming for the first time, not having been brought up in a ceremonial or ancestral manner. Unless you're in a hālau, unless you have strong family practices and traditional ways that you are tied to, you're not exposed to that manner of behaviour and of following automatically.

So, in 2014 we had ritual and we had prayer. There were people like us who led them, who led the prayers, who led the rituals. But we were gathering people from everywhere and not everyone who gathered was native to Hawai'i. That was a challenge because we knew from the spirit world that this was going to be a global movement and that we had to let our egos go to sleep somewhere. We, as Native people, were not going to be able to do this one alone because we needed numbers and we needed the different vibrations of people who came from everywhere. So that opened us up to unification from around the world and we had to be ready for that.

By the time we did our first frontline action, we were just initiating kapu aloha, which is the manner in which we stand so that our kūpuna are always proud of us. It is the manner in which we stand solid, strong. We

don't embarrass ourselves or each other. We stand as one unit, embodied in our culture and traditional protocols and lifeways. We were just initiating that because we were teaching as we went along. We are not from one marae; we are not even from a marae system where you already have those things in place, or where, for the most part, everybody in some ways knows something and practices something. For us, that wasn't the case.

By 2019, when we went back up again for this last nine-month frontline action and occupation, we had those who came as advisors, those who stepped forward, not as leaders, because the mountain is the leader, but who served the mauna to protect the mauna. None of us ever called ourselves leaders, though other people did for sure. We were alakaʻi; we were like guides. We just stood and listened to the mauna. But we had firm guidelines and rituals, and we had practitioners and masters in place to make sure that every day we remained in ritual, even with so many different people coming, including Native people coming from different islands and different districts. It was complex. We were based in a parking lot, on an access road, in a lava field, and some days we were 30 people and some days we were 7,000 people. But we were committed to stopping 18 stories from going up on our mountain. The parking lot wasn't where we were going to determine sovereignty. It wasn't where we were going to determine which group does what, and what our future would be. We were there to stop 18 stories from going up on a sacred mountain, and that was our commitment. How we ensured and stayed strong and paʻa in that was solely by ritual. Three times a day—sunrise, noon, and sunset—you are on the ala, you are dancing, you are praying, you are chanting. Then we established a university so there wouldn't be too much idle time. You are in school, you are learning, and then you come back at 12, and then you are in ceremony again. We were keeping people engaged, keeping them busy, keeping them full, but all tied in with ritual.

PANIA – Reaching the point where we could say that this was a tangata-whenua-led campaign was a progression. We had to come to a certain level of comfortability, as rangatahi of our marae and as new protectors

or activists, saying that our kaupapa would be one that reflected our tikanga and our values and principles, and one that was representative of our whanau and our marae. In order for us to be able to call ourselves a tangata-whenua-led movement meant that all the decisions being made were by tangata whenua, were by our whanau and supported by our allies and non-tangata-whenua whanau.

It meant, too, that all our tikanga were put to the forefront. I remember during the escalation, just as a reference point, a lot of our tikanga that were practiced. A lot of you would have come and experienced a pōwhiri, or a whakatau, or at least a kai of some sorts. These customs of feeding people and welcoming and centering people on our whenua were so important in terms of maintaining our tikanga and our kawa—just by doing things the right way, or our way. This is the custom of getting to know who your visitors are and what their intentions are. So, you deal with that first and foremost before you invite them through and you sit down and have a kai with them and then you find out what their kaupapa is about. That tikanga was vital.

You would've also seen planter boxes and kai that was being grown on the whenua. The tikanga and the pūrākau that come with growing our own kai and drawing on the stories about Rongomātāne and Haumiatiketike, our atua of peace, also helped to maintain our peaceful, non-violent kaupapa on the whenua. That was really important. It was also very important in terms of leveraging police and government. Some of us took part in planting rākau at the feet of the police officers. This was done to push them back another paddock. That was a powerful action. But it was no new action because we learnt that from the Parihaka movement. We learnt, too, about the power of karanga and karakia through what we saw at Te Kopua and being peaceful on the whenua at Takaparawhau. We Māori are very lucky that we have so many successful and amazing examples to look to in terms of leadership and in terms of action. But for us, it was always about making sure we drew on atua Māori and we drew on tikanga that aligned with our kaupapa, which was around peace.

I remember the first hui that I had with my cousins when we

established what our kaupapa was about. First, our mission was to ensure that no development happened on our whenua. Our vision was to preserve, conserve, and protect our wāhi tapu for future generations. How we were going to do that was by staying staunch to our values, our tikanga around whanaungatanga, kaitiakitanga, aroha, and hūmārie. I really loved Pua's kōrero around having to put your ego to sleep. Too many times I was criticised in the media personally for my kaupapa to protect my whenua. It wasn't about me and it should have never been about me, but it was because that's how they divide and conquer us. They tax our energies so that we will one day just fall off because we just can't take it anymore. But we had to put our egos to the side, and we had to remind ourselves, ko te whenua te take. I was never to go out and attack my uncle or attack other people who attacked me publicly because that was not the kaupapa. The kaupapa was always about protecting this rare cultural heritage landscape, protecting our wāhi tapu, because it's important to the people of Ihumātao, it's important to our nation's history, and it's important to our future generations. For anyone out there looking to start, or who are continuing their tangata-whenua-led campaigns, know that you don't have to look too far for great examples of leadership and activism. Know too, that you come from a rich whakapapa, and that we come with our many tupuna who walk alongside us.

PUA – Beautifully said.

EMALANI – We are going to ask one last question. How have your movements changed, contributed to, or influenced how we will go forward?

PUA – 'He pala Mauna a Wākea i luna'. That's what I would say. 'Mauna Kea is the sealant; Mauna Kea is the unifier'. What happened for us happened in a way that couldn't have occurred on any other ʻāina, on any moana, at any kai or kahakai. What happened could only happen on the mauna. The mauna, being the world's highest mountain from the seafloor and what we regard as the most sacred, brought us all together in a way that we have not ever been brought together before, and helped us to stand as

we have never stood before.

You know, in Hawai'i, no one was looking at the native people and saying, 'oh, wow we knew that would happen', you know? People around the world were shocked. They probably didn't even know that a Native people were still standing, struggling, and ready to warrior-up. They probably saw us as they always do: a beautiful landscape, hula dancers, beautiful culture. That's what they know of us; that's the extent. Everything is flowing in paradise and they have no idea that we have an issue for every minute of the day on a small little island that we must protect with everything we have.

So, the mountain enabled us to come together, all islands, all continents, and all of the world, but most importantly, Native people, our Kānaka Maoli, were able to come together in ritual. We were given permission to do something that, as a collective, we have not been able to do. We were able to say the names 'Wākea', 'Papahānaumoku', and 'Pele', and did not have to say, 'Oh, no, are there Christians around here?' I mean no offence, but we got to be the pagans that we are proud to be. We got to be those warriors—the maka kā'eo—that still live within us. This gave us permission and so we rose in the stance of the people before us. The mountain did that for us. So now there are movements in Hawai'i being led by people who have gone to the mountain, received the highest training they could—kapu aloha, all the guidelines, the chants, the songs and prayers—and who went to their own mokupuni and are now able to stand in their own way. They are not mimicking us. They are using what the mauna taught them and they are standing in their own movements in a way that they wouldn't have before had they not been unified by Mauna Kea. So, Mauna Kea, 'He pala Mauna a Wākea i luna'. Mauna Kea is the unifier for all as the highest mountain from the seafloor. Eō!

EMALANI – Eō!

PANIA – For Ihumātao, I hope that people saw the power of rangatahi-led movements, and, through the SOUL campaign, what biculturalism should look like in Aotearoa. I hope, too, that they saw rangatiratanga and

mana motuhake in action through the decision to move onto the whenua in 2016, through the decision to give birth to our children on the whenua, through the decisions to establish our own nursery on our whenua, and to refurbish the existing footprints to create education centres so that we are able to share the history of why Ihumātao is so significant. That is what tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake look like in practice. Far too many of us actually sit at home waving around our rangatiratanga flag saying, 'We've got mana motuhake' or 'We deserve it because it's our right'. But not many of us are going out there and taking it back and that is what Ihumātao was about. It was about reclaiming our rangatiratanga, reclaiming our mana motuhake, and reclaiming our tikanga and our kawa pertaining to our whenua.

One of my highlights of this whole six-year struggle was to see my whanau move from hopelessness to empowerment. I hope that Ihumātao has been able to encourage other whanau to stand up to protect their whenua, their maunga, their moana, and their whanau. That is the experience I had when I went to that conference at NAISA and I learned about what was happening with Mauna Kea and I learned about the Idle No More campaign, and that is what we as Indigenous communities can collectively share. I hope you go out there and smash it, but remember, be humble and always have respect for one another, and remember that it's the kaupapa that's the most important, not our own interests, not our egos.

PUA – Before we close, I really need to pay tribute. We cannot end without making sure that the thread between us at Ihumātao and Mauna a Wākea is everlasting and strong and I didn't say enough about it. When I came to Aotearoa some years ago, I was met at the airport by Ngāhuia Murphy and Ninakaye Taanetinorau and they took me to see Aunty Rose Pere up in the Tūhoe mountains. Why? Because they knew I needed it. They wanted to take me to where the great warrior is still held in spirit, in the DNA, and I needed that to be able to go home and to stand another day. While this is not about the two of us alone, we do represent the very many who stood longer than we have, those who are standing with us, and those who will stand after.

I have been to Ihumātao. I have laid my prayers there. I have done my dances there. I have stood there as strong as I could so that I could say I was there. On the ala, when there was frontline action at Ihumātao, we started by saying that we were sending our prayers to Aotearoa, to Ihumātao. Not only did we do that, but there were those who came from Ihumātao and stood on the ala and cried with us, and sang with us, and ate with us, and slept beside us to solidify and to honour each other, and that was essential for us. Then there were those of us, kiaʻi of Mauna a Wākea, who went to Aotearoa and stood in those lines. Lastly, when you folks came back with 'Kū Haʻaheo' from Ihumātao to Mauna a Wākea, boom! That was it!

We are one with you and we will always be one with you. I have to say that because that is why we are here. We are here to say, 'If you have your own movement, make sure you are connecting with other movements'. If you haven't reached out to Mauna a Wākea, we are right here. We need all the help we can get, and we will give everything that we have to everyone else who is standing, because we understand. But for today, we will say Mauna a Wākea to Ihumātao. That was our hashtag, so I am going to end with that. Mauna a Wākea to Ihumātao.

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