

## Mountain Mauna Kea



### *The hula dance lessons during the event at UVU*

On October 10, 2019, the Utah Valley University (UVU) Multicultural Center's Pacific Islander Initiative invited Mr. Lanakila Mangauil as a keynote speaker on the Mauna Kea Mountain Group. The focus of his talk was to educate people about what is happening in Hawaii on the mountain Mauna Kea. The history of the mountain is a long withstanding one. He started with the foundational background of how Hawaii became part of the United States. In 1893, Hawaii's monarchy (Queen Liliuokalani) was overthrown when a group of businessmen and sugar planters forced her to abdicate. Two years later, it became a U.S. territory. A colonial attitude was enforced and was present in government then and even now. In past years, Hawaiian cultural rituals and celebrations were banned and suppressed.

In the early 1970's, people started to advocate to bring back native Hawaiian culture. Since then, teachings of the Hawaiian culture have increased on the island. This movement became an important one when construction projects started on Mauna Kea mountain. Due to its ideal location, astronomical researchers from all over the world wanted to have a research site on the mountain. To the local people, the mountain was sacred and an ecologically important sight. The local people's feelings on the mountain being taken over by researchers was not considered and many developments continue to be put up even today.

Legal complaints have been made for further construction of telescopes (over 13 already exist), by the locals. They are sighting laws in regard to environmental prevention of damage to a

vulnerable ecosystem. One of the telescopes is larger than a football field. These are not small inconspicuous building and telescopes. Even though the telescope projects have violated a mass majority of these environmental laws, the government is reluctant to move against the projects.

When looking beyond legal issues, part of the religious beliefs of the people is that Mauna Kea mountain is sacred and a place where this world can connect with Gods above. The name Mauna Kea can be translated to “white mountain,” or purity. The telescopes is not only permanently impacting the sacredness of the mountain, but they are impacting the delicate ecosystem that has been nurtured for hundreds of years on the mountains.

Even though I have never been to Hawaii, after hearing about Mauna Kea, I truly feel for the locals whose ecosystem, culture, and spirituality has been tried across many years. The overall beauty of this mountain is being attacked and even though astronomical research is a great thing, couldn't they find another place to set up telescopes?

After learning about the mountain, other parts of the Hawaiian culture were taught such as some of the language and the hula dance. Both dance and language have deep significant meaning to the Hawaiian culture. The dances and their words used in the songs are ingrained in the culture of the native people. As a tourist or outsider, we can never truly appreciate and understand the depth and importance of it. The words of the Hula dance were taught along with a dance. Overall, this was a great event and I have learned to appreciate the challenges, culture, and the importance of holding on to traditions and pieces of the past and remind the youth and “outsiders” the meaning of it. I hope to visit this beautiful Island for myself one day and get a more in-depth taste of their culture.

**Titus Elanyu, UVU student**