

53rd IAA SYMPOSIUM ON THE SEARCH FOR EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE (SETI) –
 The Next Steps (A4)
 Interactive Presentations - 53rd IAA SYMPOSIUM ON THE SEARCH FOR EXTRATERRESTRIAL
 INTELLIGENCE (SETI) – The Next Steps (IP)

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PERSPECTIVES ON THE RIGHTS OF THE MOON FROM OCEANIA

Abstract

With China's Chang'e-6 mission set to retrieve lunar samples from the Moon's far side for the first time in history, the discourse around lunar rights is gaining momentum.[1] As lunar missions increase, it becomes more vital to broaden the discourse beyond viewing the moon merely for industry, or as a stepping stone for further exploration.[2]

This presentation looks to Oceania to explore sustainable approaches to the moon through working with Indigenous knowledge and relational governance, and draws on Aotearoa New Zealand's pioneering legal recognition of natural entities as persons. The legal personhood granted to Te Awa Tupua (the Whanganui River) in 2017 under New Zealand law embodies Indigenous understandings that all entities - human and More-than-Human—are related.[3] The legal precedent that recognises the river as an ancestor to the iwi Maori of Whanganui has encouraged a legal movement upholding Indigenous ontology and epistemology of eco-system sentience.[4]

Working with understandings of 'Mauri'—the life force linking and sustaining all natural entities—the research frames an ethical approach to lunar protection, respecting the moon's unique potential for radioastronomy and learning about the origins of the Universe and life across the cosmos. This presentation approaches the moon and the Shielded Zone on the Moon (SZM) as a protected site, through sharing intersectional matauranga Maori (Maori knowledge systems) and Western science experiences of environmental management. This includes communication of nature's rights and cultural storytelling, the establishment of fresh relational practices with peoples of Place, and the empowerment of Indigenous research sovereignty.[5]

Our lunar advocacy critiques conventional economic mechanisms of space exploitation, by drawing on reciprocal governance models and working with the Maori concept of tikanga (value-based Indigenous law) through an Indigenous-led research approach. Maori cosmologies expand legal work and plural imaginaries to reveal fresh cultural and ecological approaches for engaging with the moon's vital relations with Earth.

[1] The 1st IAA Moon Farside Protection Symposium, 2024

[2] Earthlaws' Declaration of the Rights of the Moon, 2022 earthlaws.org.au/moon-declaration

[3] Jason Mika, Regina A.Scheyvens, 2022. Te Awa Tupua: peace, justice and sustainability through Indigenous tourism, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 30:2-3.

[4] Miriama Cribb, Elizabeth Macpherson, Axel Borchgrevink, 2024. Beyond legal personhood for the Whanganui River, *The International Journal of Human Rights*.

[5] Latulippe, N., Livesey, B., Whaanga-Schollum, D., Jamieson, C., Clark, J., Kiddle, R. (Becky). (2023). Maanjiwe Nendamowinan: Connecting Indigenous placemakers and caring for Place through co-creative research with the Toronto Islands. *Environment and Planning*, 2(1-2), 96-120.