

THE PACIFIC CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES



SELF-DETERMINATION INFORMATION PACK



KANAKY





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KANAKY

1774

British explorer James Cook names the island New Caledonia

1841

Arrival of London Missionaries Society on the Isle of Pines. The first Missionaries in the Kanak country

Arrival of the Marist Catholic Mission

1843

1870'S

Kanak revolt - The territory's indigenous people clash with French settlers over their loss of land, heralding further repression by the French.

1878

During and after the Second World War, there was an influx of French Settlers into New Caledonia

1945

The Pacific Community was founded as the South Pacific Commission by six developed countries with strategic interests and territories in the region: Australia, France, Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United State

1947

Kanaky is annexed by France, which uses the territory as a penal colony. The discovery of nickel deposits leads to the development of the mining industry.

1853

PCC General Assembly held in Lifou

LATE 1960'S

Migration of Vietnamese business people into Kanaky after the French/Indo-China War

1966

Polynesian Settlers (Mainly from Wallis and Futuna) arrive

LATE 1970'S

Tourism becomes second largest economic activity with the introduction of the Paris in the Pacific concept

1969

Fatal clashes between French forces and Kanak separatists.

1980'S

The Matignon Accord marks a reconciliation between Kanak and European communities by proposing an end to direct rule from Paris and a vote on independence in 1998.

1988

Noumea Accord sets a timetable for the gradual transfer of responsibilities from France to the territory, and postpones a planned 1998 referendum on independence.

1998

French parliament votes to restrict voting rights of French citizens in the territory - long sought by Kanaks.

2006

New Caledonia joins Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

2016

The second referendum for independence, with pro French support coming in at 53.3%

2020

The proposed date for the third referendum to be held later this year

DECEMBER 2021

Image Obtained from: Getty Images



THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

The fight for freedom. Generally speaking, the “Kanak Awakening” is situated around July 1969 when public buildings in the city of Nouméa were tagged with radical slogans such as: “Down with colonialism”, “Long live independence”, “Caledonia for the Kanaks” by militants of the “Fouards Rouges” (“Red Scarves”) of the Grand Chief Nidoish Hnaisilin. But, chronologically, it was the resistance and insurrection of the Great Chief Ataï that awakened the consciousness of the Kanak identity of a people confined to their homes in “reserves”. In 1875, there was talk of a rush for nickel ore, but the Kanaks were denied, dismissed because of their refusal to exploit their subsoil, the home of their ancestors, and their lack of interest in the economy and in cash payments. In 1878, The struggle for liberation in



Image Obtained from: Google Images

Kanaky began in 1987 after France excluded the Kanak people from the huge mining industry and confined them to reservations. High Chief Atai of La Foa united a number of tribes and launched a guerrilla war in which 1000 indigenous people and 200 settlers were killed. In 1917, Noel of Tiamou led a second rebellion in which many children were orphaned – among them Wenceslas Thi, father of Jean Marie-Tjibaou who became the most recent leader of the liberation movement. A tribal chief and trained as a Catholic priest, Tjibaou abandoned the priesthood to take up a life in political activism. He engaged in cultural and ethnicity issues, arranging the Melanesia 2000 festival in 1975 to emphasize the Kanak identity. Appointed mayor of Hienghene in 1977, he became a territorial councilor in the newly formed Independence Front, and the head of the pro-independence Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front in 1984. Tjibaou was the most influential Kanak leader of recent times and was instrumental in forcing France to sign the Matignon and Noumea agreements which paved the way for greater self-determination for the indigenous people. Tjibaou was murdered with Yeiwene Yeiwene in Ouvea by another Kanak, Djubelly Wéa. The Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre is named in his honour and recognises his contribution to culture, and ethnicity.

MASSACRE AT OVEA

As France prepared to vote in 1988, it increased its military presence in New Caledonia to 9500. Armed with knives, axes and guns, Kanak militants overran a heavily armed gendarme post at Fayaoué at Ouvea in the Loyalty Islands, killing four gendarmes, wounding five and taking 27 hostage on April 22. France flew close to 300 gendarmes to Ouvea where the militants had moved most of the hostages to a cave and demanded a referendum for self-determination under United Nations supervision. After tense negotiations, the militants released 12 hostages – one of whom was seriously ill. On May 5, gendarmes stormed the cave and killed 19 militants for the loss of two officers. The gendarmes were accused of summarily executing militants after the attack. Ouvea was a turning point in the campaign by the indigenous people for self-determination because it ushered in reconciliation talks, which led to the 1988 Matignon Accord. The Matignon and the subsequent 1998 Noumea Accord allowed for the creation of a power-sharing government and the phased and irreversible transfer of power from France to New Caledonia. It also led to the assassination of FLNKS Jean-Marie Tjibaou by a disgruntled movement member.



Image Obtained from: "Massacre at Ouvea"
A scene from a film about the incident

THE NOUMEA ACCORD

After the Ouvea Massacre, France promised increased political power to the original settlers of Kanaky (New Caledonia). Signed in 1998, the Noumea Accord approved a 20-year transition period during which three referendum votes would be held on whether to become an independent state or remain part of France with special autonomy. Under the accord, the people of Kanaky – Kanaks and the Caldoche (French settlers) – will be allowed to vote in 2018, 2020 and 2022 to determine their political future. France will maintain control of the military, foreign policy, immigration, police and currency unless the 2022 referendum decides upon independence. In the 2018 referendum, 56.7 per cent of voters chose to remain with France but this dropped to 53.4 per cent in 2020. However, in a much earlier referendum on independence in 1958, 98 per cent of voters chose to remain part of the French Republic. The Noumea Accord replaced the Matignon Agreement of 1988 under which the New Caledonia vice-president must be a pro-independence politician if the the presidency by an anti-independence politician.

Source:France24

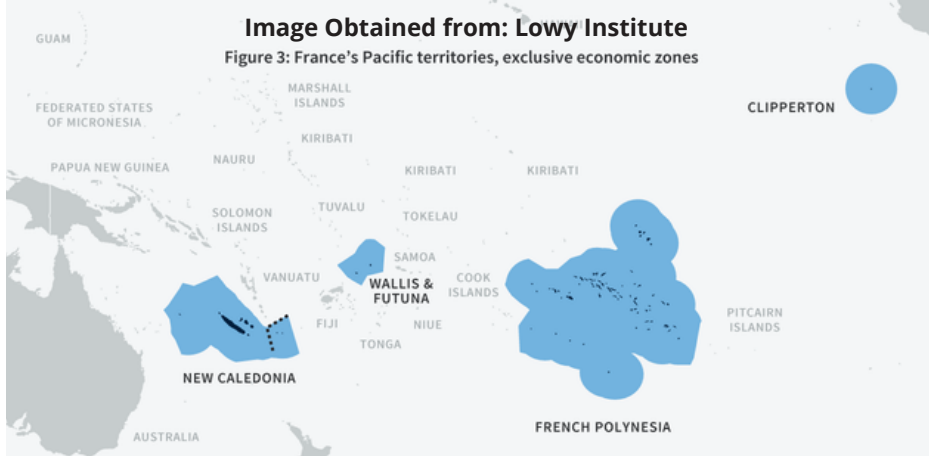


GEO-POLITICAL PACIFIC POWERHOUSE

PRIOR to the collapse of the global nickel industry in the 1970s, the mining sector was the mainstay of the Kanaky (New Caledonian) economy. With about 10.3 million tonnes of nickel reserves, it is the world's fourth largest producer with annual production of 200,000 tonnes in 2020. Nickel mining and associated industries contribute 97 per cent of the territory's exports and 10 per cent of GDP. In the late 1970s, tourism became the newest industry, promising the experience of Paris in the Pacific to the 100,000-odd visitors each year –mostly from Australia, France and Japan. But it is Kanaky's strategic position between China's expansion and the emerging Pacific frontier which gives France important status in regional and international meetings. French defence assets – naval, terrestrial and air – along with scientific research projects based in Kanaky provide the republic enviable bargaining and persuasive power in geo-political conversations. With rich reserves of nickel and cobalt on land and prospective off-shore hydrocarbon resources, Kanaky will be a key player in Deep Sea Mining initiatives taking place in the Pacific.

THE PROTESTANT CHURCH OF KANAKY NEW CALEDONIA

Formed in 1958 as a wave of self-determination swept across the Pacific, the (then) Evangelical Church in New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands was born out of the work of the London Missionary Society. It played host to the first Pacific Conference of Churches general assembly in 1966 at Lifou in the Loyalty Islands. The PCC spread throughout the region and will return to Lifou in 2022 for its general assembly. With 40,000 members, the church was formed in 1841 by Samoan missionaries Taniela and Noa who used their knowledge of Pacific culture to assimilate with the Kanaky and then work on conversion. French Catholic missionaries arrived three years later. The LMS provided the first ethnological studies of the indigenous people and produced a translated New Testament – the work of Pastor Samuel MacFarlane – in the local Drehu language in the 1860s. In 1902, Pastor Maurice Leenhardt landed in 1902 and started primary and secondary education for the local population in 1903. This legacy remains today with a network of church schools throughout Kanaky continuing to provide education to children. The church created strong links with the Kanak people and was involved in the formation of the first two political parties created to represent the Melanesians in politics, beginning in 1947. The Association of Native Caledonians and French Loyalists (Protestant) and Union of Caledonian Indigenous Friends of Freedom (Catholic) later formed the Caledonian Union. After decades as the main proponent for independence from France, the Caledonian Union became part of the FLNKS (Kanak and Socialist Liberation Front) which represents the freedom struggle. Renamed in 2013, the Evangelical Church in Kanaky New Caledonia has been an active member of the PCC since 1966, participating in assemblies and conferences and represented on the Executive Committee. Cultural identity remains an important part of the ECKNC as it accompanies the indigenous people in their search for dignity, freedom and a new identity.



THE ISSUES

In 2002 the EPKNC Synod identified the looming social crisis in Kanaky (New Caledonia) and set about training its national leadership. Reflecting on its missionary task, the synod described its vision as "a church united in diversity in order to witness faithfully to God's mission here and everywhere". In all its actions the church tries to be the visible and intelligible witness of God's presence in the society and the world. With 40,000 members, 70 pastor and 94 churches, the EPKNC is influential in the Kanak community which comprise 42 per cent of the population. The remainder is French (37 per cent) and immigrant groups from Pacific and Asian territories held by or previously administered by France (17 per cent). Through its system of 21 primary and 11 secondary schools, the church is in a position to influence the young people, especially in the indigenous community. Apart from leadership training, the EPKNC ministers to a population facing social problems such as alcoholism, suicide among young people, an increase of divorce, precarious life situations and drug addiction. Kanaky, like other Pacific countries, is threatened by global warming and ecological problems linked to development. These issues are addressed under the programmatic areas of the Pacific Conference of Churches' current work plan which runs until 2023.



THE PCC AND THE KANKY CHURCH

Today the PCC is involved with projects around young people in Kanaky as they journey towards a future in which they desire greater freedom to make choices about leadership and resources. Pastor Billy Wetewea – a graduate of the Pacific Theological College, Suva – is the link between the PCC, the local church and the young people. It was intended for the PCC to visit the youth of Kanaky in 2021 to express the solidarity of the Pacific with the struggle of the indigenous people. But the COVID-19 Pandemic disrupted these plans and work must now continue to create programmes which raise youth awareness in Kanaky on how to resolve long-standing community issues in a peaceful manner. With rising unemployment, alcoholism, drugs and suicide, it is important that the church empowers young people to see a bright, inclusive future for all people. It is in this critical area that the PCC is involved – through Pastor Billy – in helping the church and, more importantly, the youth. Giving the young people a voice in politics, creating pathways for them to seek help and address common issues is just part of what the PCC does to support its member church in Kanaky. And in 2023, the PCC General Assembly will return to Lifou with a special solidarity visit to the young people, the leaders of a new Kanaky.

THE KANAK IDENTITY - DO KAMO

At the centre of Kanak ideology – and even theology – is the concept of Do Kamo (The Authentic Human). It is a concept important in the religious ethnology of Mauritius Leenhardt. It was championed by freedom fighter Jean-Marie Tjibaou as he attempted to consolidate the many ethnicities of the French New Caledonia into a united people. Kanaks believe the authentic human lives in every human being, whether Melanesian, European, Polynesian, Micronesian or elsewhere. The notion of Do Kamo from a Christian perspective suggests that in the Kanaky context, all people can live together in dignity with shared responsibility for the environment, governance and humanity. In its mission, the Protestant Church in Kanaky New Caledonia or EPKNC has initiated theological reflections on several themes such as “To walk together” ; “Fellow citizens of a New country” ; “Family, and the Gospel in a changing society”, in order to accompany the people of God in their search for emancipation. The EPKNC has been a member of the Pacific Conference of Churches for more than 60 years. In a colonial context, the colonizer and the colonizer take up the challenge of emancipating themselves in order to create a new country with transformed inhabitants in order to attain the perfect stature of Christ, essential osmosis for the construction of the new country. The EPKNC is convinced that it is possible to settle the colonial dispute through the reciprocal recognition of the other, of his dignity, of our dignity. This goes through the path of forgiveness, reconciliation, reparation for injustices committed for the liberation of victims of colonial history. The people of Melanesia are generally happy and accommodating. And they welcome visitors with open arms. Their culture involves planting enough food to share and giving land to accommodate those in need, willingly. The Kanak desire is to be allowed to achieve independence in dignity and continue to live alongside all Kanaky residents – irrespective of ethnicity – in peace and mutual prosperity.

WHERE DOES THE PCC STAND?

Supporting the oppressed is a requirement of the Gospel. The Pacific Churches are concerned that the liberation of the Kanak people is still stifled because the so-called “European” population and the other communities represent a majority demographic mass. The churches affirm the call by the EPKNC for the continued implementation of the Noumea Accord, the only way to achieve the integrity and cultural, political and social unity of a people still under French domination. Such an ethnic instrumentalization remains a phenomenon of polarization in Kanak soil. There is still a balance of power in the territory which is unfavorable to the Kanak people, to their legal interests, to their interests which come from their right, their natural right and their character as an indigenous people. The PCC supports the EPKNC call for the Caledonian people to take an act of faith in the individual choice at the December referendum. As a family of churches in the Pacific, the PCC and its members stand with the EPKNC to build bridges between groups, whatever the outcome of the referendum, in the hope that this may bring about true and lasting peace. It is important to us that all members of our family. For we cannot truly be free until all Pacific islanders taste the sweetness of liberty. All the Pacific Islands, heirs to a thousand-year-old civilization and called upon in its mission to announce the Gospel, will announce this Good News in a globalized world. “Are we not called upon to form the authentic humanity, the Do Kamo? This Man or Woman, emancipated according to Christ, responsible, free and united to bring his part of humanity to the world; to exchange and live new relationships of interdependence where everyone is responsible at home and in communion with all the others; to safeguard the divine Creation and live the Peace of God in fraternity, here, and now as elsewhere; and to continue the Great Commission of Our Lord, to make all nations his disciples.

DO YOU WANT TO HELP?

When it comes to self-determination, everybody can lend a hand, even you. If you'd like to help by becoming an advocate on the issues you've seen here, send us an email at media01.pcc@gmail.com and we'll be happy to put you in touch with our staff to work out a personal plan.

Should you wish to help financially, email us or contact our General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan jamesb@pcc.org.fj for details on how you can make a difference.

We also have a limited number of internships available. So email the Programmes Manager, Frances Namoumou, francesn@pcc.org.fj to see how you can join our staff for a temporary position and help in the struggle for Pacific freedom. Thank you for your interest and God bless you!



THE REFERENDUM OF 2021

Kanaky (New Caledonia) elected its first pro-independence indigenous or Kanak president. Louis Mapou's election means that for the first time in nearly 40 years the government of New Caledonia will be led by a Kanak independence leader. This is significant, coming six months ahead of the self-determination referendum in December. Political tension is rising as Kanaky moves towards the final step in its three-referendum self-determination process. The decolonisation process began under the 1998 Noumea Accord with residents offered the opportunity to decide between remaining with France or choosing independence from the republic. In 2018 and 2020, a majority voted against independence, but the winning margin shrank from 56.7 percent to 53.3 percent, leaving the electorate as divided as ever.

THE KANAK STAND ON INDEPENDENCE

The churches – Protestant and Catholic – encouraged the creation of political parties in Kanaky and supported the indigenous cry for representation in the legislative assembly. They also trained several key figures in the independence struggle through their schools and seminaries. The Eglise Protestante de Kanaky Nouvelle Calédonie has been particularly close to the indigenous people and their tradition in the struggle for independence. On August 31, 1979, the then Evangelical Church in New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands (EENCIL) declared: “In the multicultural country that is Kanaky New Caledonia, where the Kanaks have become a minority at home, people in exile on their own land, the church reports that only the Kanak people, colonized, can claim their independence from the international rights (UN). “The Kanak people who claim their dignity must respect the dignity of other ethnic groups in New Caledonia.” Today, the Church respects their choice and seeks to create links between opposing groups. Whether it is YES or NO, the EPKNC recognises that Kanaky's people must end up with a dynamic solution in which all are invited to live with the other.