

Whanganui river in New Zealand has been granted legal rights of a human being.

Written by Cassandra De Silva Correspondent New Zealand

Sunday, 16 April 2017 16:49 - Last Updated Monday, 17 April 2017 06:37

When you consider nature as another human being, nature will care you as a part of her. For the first time in the world, New Zealand has granted 'a river' the same right as a human being.

Whanganui is a river in the North Island of New Zealand which is the 3rd longest river in the country. Starting from Mount Tongariro, the mighty river passes 290 kilometres and kisses the Tasman sea at Wanganui. Flowing through the Whanganui national park, the river has 239 rapids.

The river is the Central Point for the Maori tribe 'Whanganui'. Ancestors of the Whanganui Iwi (Tribe) has lived their life around this river and have considered this river as a part of their lives. The river provided them water, fish and means of transportation and nurtured the soil around. Whanganui iwi considered the river as an element of physical and spiritual well-being of their lives. Along the river, there are so many small settlements and the Maori population who live in these settlements make most of their needs from the river. However, in today's life, greater portion of Whanganui tribal members have moved to bigger cities, but they still respect and are connected to their ancestral river.

The situation in Whanganui was muddy and rocky during the creation of Treaty of Waitangi, the final settlement between Maori and the Queen of the British Empire. The White Skinned New Zealanders or known as Pakeha was not allowed to travel along the Whanganui river for several years, and there was no interaction between the Maori settlements on the river bank with the ruling New Zealanders. According to stories, after signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, the river Whanganui was opened again for public transportation and seeing long lost Whanganui tribal citizens on both sides of the river had been a major tourist attraction for the Whites.

However, the Whanganui tribe was not happy about how the new governing party cares for their sacred river and been fighting to obtain its rightful rights for over 140 years. The tribe considers the river as an ancestor and wanted the government and everyone else in New Zealand to think the same. This law suit had been dragging for more than a century and finally earlier this year (2017), the Government of New Zealand accepted the Whanganui river and granted the legal status of a living entity.

This new status will allow the authorities to penalise anyone who abuse, pollute, or damage the river in any mean considering it as, harming the tribe or a person.

Whanganui river in New Zealand has been granted legal rights of a human being.

Written by Cassandra De Silva Correspondent New Zealand

Sunday, 16 April 2017 16:49 - Last Updated Monday, 17 April 2017 06:37

The river will be represented by both Maori and Kiwi parties, whenever required and hopefully the new status will help to minimize human manipulation of the natural river structure.

This new approach is a novel way of looking at environmental protection. Considering the nature as another human being help creating an emotional bond with the nature. Hopefully, this would be a trend that other countries would adapt soon.