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# Great-grandfather, please teach me my language!

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**Abstract:** Inspired by Joshua Fishman's lifetime dedication to the revitalisation of minority languages, especially Yiddish, this paper presents my personal story of the loss of the Māori language in my family in New Zealand/Aotearoa and our attempts to reverse this decline over several generations. The paper includes a description of several policy reforms and events in Aotearoa/New Zealand's history and the impact of colonisation on the Māori language, which, as seen in other colonised peoples around the world, has contributed to the decline of this indigenous language. The paper also presents the mobilisation of Māori families and communities, including my own family, to establish their own strategies and initiatives to arrest further language decline and to reverse language loss in Māori families in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This article, combining story and history, should be read as a historiography of the Māori language, based on the author's acknowledgement that other indigenous minority communities, globally, and their languages also have experienced the effects of colonisation and language loss. This article, much like a helix model, weaves together a narrative and history of Māori language loss, pain, resilience, and hope and seeks to establish that no language, because it contains the DNA of our cultural identity, should be allowed to die. A table of key landmarks of the history of the Māori language also is included.

**Keywords:** language decline, resistance, reversing language loss, Māori language

## 1 Introduction

The history of the Māori language in Aotearoa/New Zealand, its decline, and subsequent efforts to revitalise it are set in a much wider context of language loss in colonised countries around the world. It is only through globalisation and modern technology that we have come to recognise and understand these

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broader factors, including how domestic and international influences have had an impact on the historical treatment of the Māori language and its development, usage, and health. Globalisation, communication, and transport technologies have enabled us to look at the international minority language experience and to see the similarities between language groups and the effects of colonisation across borders, with other minoritised languages and ethnic groups and across continents, such as the Americas and Africa. It is by comparing and contrasting these experiences that we have unravelled a chronology, similarities, and trends to help us understand the political, social, and economic experiences of indigenous minority languages, such as Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The one constant among the colonisers, despite their varied origins, is that they all had expectations of invading new lands and asserting their power, control, and ownership over the land, people, and resources and of claiming sovereignty through the tools and techniques of assimilation and colonisation. Through studying the results of these global movements and activities, we can begin to draw significant comparisons in regard to the way that indigenous people and their languages were treated by the same coloniser in different parts of the world, often hundreds of years apart. Policies and practices of the new colonial power and settler government were part of the blueprint of colonial rule that the English colonists imposed wherever they settled. The experiences of the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand were no different from those of Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Canada, North America, Africa, India, or Australia (O'Regan 2012). Globalisation, communication, and transport technologies also have helped dislocated and historically isolated indigenous and minoritised language communities to share information more readily, to find support from one another, and to collectively look for solutions. Other indigenous and minoritised language communities may find it useful to know some of the struggles and strategies associated with the plight of the Māori language in Aotearoa/New Zealand as well as its regeneration.

When asked what one loses when one loses a language, Fishman (2007: 27) replied:

The most important relationship between language and culture that gets to the heart of what is lost when you lose a language is that most of the culture is in the language and is expressed in the language. Take it away from the culture and you take away its greetings, its curses, its praises, its laws, its literature, its songs, its riddles, its proverbs, its cures, its wisdom, its prayers. The culture could not be expressed and handed on in any other way. What would be left? When you are talking about the language most of what you are talking about is the culture. That is, you are losing all the things that essentially are the way of life, the way of thought, the way of valuing, and the human reality that you are talking about.

He also shared a story about his father's regularly asking his sister Rukhl and him, "What did you do for Yiddish today?" Inspired by Prof. Fishman's works, particularly his passion to ensure the intergenerational language transmission of his Yiddish language, this is a story of Māori language loss within my family and our struggle for language reversal. The story has been pieced together delicately over time to be respectful to my elders and family members and the decisions that they have made about the Māori language. It is a story likely to mirror that of many other Māori families in Aotearoa/New Zealand about language loss and reversal. The last native speaker in my family died in 1970. My quest to understand language loss in my family began when I was eight years old when I asked my great-grandfather to teach me my language.

My great-grandfather Teoti (George) Manning Paipeta (Piper) was born in 1881 and died in 1970. He was from Rāpaki in the South Island, from the *hapū* (sub-tribe) Ngāti Wheke of the Ngāi Tahu *iwi* (tribe). He was the second youngest child of Teera Chamberlain (1845–1917) and Teoti Paipeta (1840–1894). George was a native speaker of Māori.

My great-grandmother Agnes Flora Matehaere Fairlie, from Tokomaru Bay on the East Coast of the North Island, of the *hapū* Te Whānau a Ruataupare and Te Whānau a Te Aotāwarirangi from the Ngāti Porou *iwi*, was born in 1889 and died in 1960. She was the firstborn of Peeti Pahewa (1866–1949) and Herbert Henry Fairlie of Ayrshire, Scotland (1868–1943). Agnes, too, was a native speaker of the Māori language.

Agnes's parents had both adopted Christianity, influenced by their parents, and were both sent away to Māori church boarding schools for their secondary education. Agnes was Anglican and attended Hukarere Native Girls School in Hawkes Bay, and George went to The Three Kings Wesleyan Native Institution run by the Methodist Church, which places an emphasis on educating Māori boys. George went on to attend Canterbury College, now known as Canterbury University. Agnes's grandfather, Reverend Matiaha Pahewa, served from 1863 to 1906 as an Anglican priest of Tokomaru Bay, and so Agnes lived her early life under the mantle of Te Hahi Mihinare, the Anglican Māori mission.

George and Agnes were both born against a backdrop of 80 years of the negative attitudes of the Pākehā (non-Māori) colonisers toward Māori. Thus, by the time that their eldest child, Charlotte, was born in 1913, they had made the decision to *not* speak the Māori language to her. Nevertheless, their native language was part of their everyday lives; they would converse with each other in Māori as well as to those in the community who initiated conversations in the Māori language. *Karakia* (prayer) was a daily occurrence, as were blessing the food at all meals, planting and harvesting produce from the garden, preparing *rongoā* (traditional medicine), harvesting shellfish, and healing those who were ill in the family. These are just some examples of activities that involved the use of Māori in the home.

Little did they know that it would be over 135 years before a Māori language speaker would emerge in the family, raised like they were, with Māori language-speaking parents (and grandparents) in the home in a community where the Māori language was spoken and that they would struggle to keep the language alive in their family through the next three generations. By the early part of the nineteenth century, the Māori language was already on a trajectory of decline, beginning with the arrival of the missionaries, the establishment of mission schools, and the influence of a Western world view on Māori communities.

## 2 Influence of the missionaries on language loss

“A ‘civilisation first’ policy was instituted by missionaries in 1815 to instruct Maori [sic] in horticulture, agriculture and trade, in European manners and morals, and then seek to make them Christian” (King 2003: 141). This was the introduction of Māori to a Western world view, to the English language, and to cultural norms of Western society. It was not until Rev. Henry Williams overturned the policy in 1823 and insisted that all missionaries become proficient in the Māori language, so they could preach in the language, that Māori conversions to Christianity began. Literacy offered by the early mission schools in the north of New Zealand was embraced by Māori, especially with the production of scripture in Māori. Although it could be said that Māori interest and belief in spiritual rituals and practices were relocated in the practice of Christianity, this often occurred without Māori relinquishing their belief in their own deities. In fact, it is more likely that Māori did not so much convert to Christianity as convert Christianity, like much else the Pākehā had brought with them, to their own purposes (King 2003).

Consequently, inter-generational transmission of Māori language and culture had become threatened within Māori society, aided by the conversion of Māori to Christianity and the delivery of Western education within the mission schools in which English was the dominant language. Although Māori was the majority population at this time, this was to change by the 1860s, when Pākehā became the majority. Increasingly, *te reo Māori* (the Māori language) was confined to Māori communities that lived separately from Pākehā, despite the promise of protection of the language under Article Two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) (Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010). Table 1 presents the landmarks of *te reo Māori* in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

**Table 1:** Landmarks of *te reo Māori* in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Decade	Year(s)	Landmark	
1800s	1816	Formal education began in New Zealand with the opening of the first mission schools at Rangihoua in the Bay of Islands. The missionaries provided education delivered in the medium of <i>te reo Māori</i> .	
	1840	The Treaty of Waitangi was signed, establishing the concept of partnership between Pākehā and Māori. At this time, <i>te reo Māori</i> was the predominant language.	
	1847	Sir George Grey introduced the Education Ordinance, which is an assimilation policy.	
	1850s	The Pākehā population exceeded the Māori population. During this period, <i>te reo Māori</i> became a minority language.	
	1867	A new pattern of administration was established with the introduction of the Native Schools Act and the provision of a national system of native schools, for which the land was provided by Māori, with the government's providing the buildings and teachers. The Act also asserted that English would be the only language used in the education of Māori children, although this was not rigorously enforced until 1900.	
	1880	The Inspector of Schools, James Pope, drew up a Native School Code. Teachers were expected to have some knowledge of <i>te reo Māori</i> , which was only used in the junior classes as an aid to teaching English.	
	1896	The New Zealand Census recorded the Māori population at 42,113, the lowest point on record.	
	1900s–1950s	1907	The Tohunga Suppression Act introduced outlawed <i>tohunga</i> practices. This, like the assimilation policy, had the effect of eroding Māori society.
		1913	90% of Māori school children were native speakers of the language.
1930/31		The New Zealand Federation of Teachers attempted to include <i>te reo Māori</i> into the curriculum but were blocked by T. B. Strong who believed that “the natural abandonment of the native tongue involves no loss to Māori.”	
1940s		The 28th Māori Battalion joined the World War II allied forces. As a consequence, a generation of male native speakers across a number of <i>iwi</i> never returned home. This depleted the numbers of speakers of the language.	
1950s		The Māori urban migration began, leaving rural communities depleted. Western influences in the cities began to have an influence on Māori families, and, as a result, Māori parents raised their children as predominantly English speakers.	
1952		Māori Studies was first taught as a subject at the University of Auckland	

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Table 1: (continued)

Decade	Year(s)	Landmark
1960s–1980s	1960	The Hunn Report drew attention to the educational disparity between Māori and Pākehā. Only 0.5 % of Māori children reached the sixth form as compared to 3.78 % of Pākehā. Of significance is that this report rejected the assimilation policy. From 1900 to 1960, the number of fluent Māori speakers decreased from 95 % to 25 %.
	1963	The Currie Report emphasized the need to centralize the notion of Māori educational underachievement, which began the flood of compensatory education programs.
	1970	Ngā Tamatoa and the Te Reo Māori Society lobbied for the introduction of Māori language in schools.
	1973	Ngā Tamatoa presented the Māori language petition on the steps of Parliament.
	1976	Thirteen secondary schools were recorded as teaching <i>te reo Māori</i> as a curriculum subject.
	1979	The Te Ātaarangi Movement was established as a community initiative to teach <i>te reo Māori</i> using the “Silent Method.”
	1980	The Report of the Advisory Council for Māori education stated, “Impressive as these gains in education appear, deeply entrenched attitudes are not changed overnight ... negative attitudes to things Māori remain the legacy from our colonial history of cultural imperialism.” Television New Zealand screened <i>Koha</i> , a 30-minute Māori magazine program. Experiments and pilots in Māori radio broadcasting led to the establishment of Te Upoko o te Ika in Wellington.
	1981	The Hui Whakataura of Māori leaders proposed and established the first Te Kōhanga Reo as a response to the imminence of language death.
	1985	The first Kura Kuapapa Māori was established at Hoani Waititi Marae, West Auckland.
	1986	The Report of the Waitangi Tribunal on the Te Reo Māori Claim (WAI11) asserted that <i>te reo Māori</i> was a <i>taonga</i> guaranteed protection under Article II of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
	1987	The Māori Language Act recognized <i>te reo Māori</i> as an official language. At this time Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (The Māori Language Commission) was established.
	1989	The Education Amendment Act formally recognised Kura Kaupapa Māori and Wānanga as educational institutions.

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Table 1: (continued)

Decade	Year(s)	Landmark
1990–2000s	1993	Te Māngai Pāho, a Māori broadcasting funding agency, was established to promote Māori language and culture through the media. More than 20 <i>iwi</i> radio stations began broadcasting throughout the country.
	1997	A strong push from Māori involved in initiatives to increase the number of speakers of <i>te reo Māori</i> : 675 Te Kōhanga Reo was established in 1981, catering to 13,505 children 54 Kura Kaupapa Māori was established in 1985 Three Wānanga were established, beginning in 1981 Over 32,000 students were recorded as learning <i>te reo Māori</i> .
	1998	The New Zealand Government announced funding for a Māori television channel.
	2001	The number of Māori speakers stabilized at around 130,500 people between 1996 and 2001, constituting 25% of the Māori population.
	2004	Te Panekiretanga o te Reo (Institute of Excellence in the Māori Language) was established at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.
	2008	Te Ipukarea (National Māori Language Institute) was established at AUT University. At the core of the institute is the pursuit of excellence in scholarship, teaching, and research in <i>te reo Māori</i> .
	2011	The Waitangi Tribunal's report (WAI262) highlights the decline in the number of native speakers and children in Māori immersion education. The report further states that the language is in crisis. <i>Te Reo Mauriora</i> report reviews the state of the Māori language. It recommends sweeping changes of the Māori language sector, including tribal leadership in language revitalization efforts. Te Whare o Rongomaurikura (International Centre for Language Revitalisation) was launched at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York. Te Whare o Rongomaurikura is the international arm of Te Ipukarea.
	2013	The New Zealand Government invests \$8 million over four years for Māori language research and development.
	2014	The first draft of the Māori Language Bill, which will replace the Māori Language Act of 1987 and amends the Broadcasting Act of 1989 and the Māori Television Service (Te Aratuku Whakaata Irirangi Māori) Act of 2003.
	2016	The Māori Language Bill was passed by the New Zealand Government in April.

### 3 The Māori language and Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed on February 6, 1840, and was meant to establish a partnership between the British Crown and Māori as the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, a pact whereby the Māori chiefs and the British Crown entered into an agreement to build a nation together. Since its signing, it has been the focus of controversy and scrutiny due mainly to the fact that two versions of the treaty were produced (Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010). The Māori text, which was signed by both Māori and the Crown, was translated from the English text by a Pākehā missionary. The translation, however, was not a correct interpretation of the English text in several aspects. In the first instance, the word used for sovereignty, that which the Chiefs were asked to give away to the Queen of England, was rendered as *kawanatanga*, a transliteration from 'governor' and literally meaning 'governorship' (King 2003). The correct Māori word for sovereignty is *mana*, which means authority. Herein lies the problem: The chiefs of the day believed that they were retaining their sovereignty, their *mana*, and giving away only their right to 'governorship' of the country.

The second instance relates to the wording *te tino rangatiratanga o ratou wenua kainga me o ratou taonga katoa*, meaning, the 'unqualified exercise of their chieftainship over their lands, villages and all their treasures,' of which the Māori language is included. The issue here for Māori is that, in guaranteeing Māori *tino rangatiratanga*, the treaty was guaranteeing Māori the right to continue to manage and govern their own affairs without interference by a civil or military authority. Further debate arises from the words *o ratou taonga katoa*, meaning 'all their treasures,' which, in a Māori world view, refers to material and cultural resources that were not envisaged by the English text.

Essentially, both Māori and Pākehā believed that they had sovereignty over Aotearoa/New Zealand. The British thought that it had been ceded to them, and the Māori thought they were retaining it in the knowledge that they would never surrender their sovereignty (Hayward, as cited in Ka'ai et al. 2004). It is the English text that has been used by the Crown as the definitive version, and, to this day, this is the cause of contention between Māori and the Crown (Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010). Notably, Māori have always viewed Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a covenant that was supposed to be the basis of a national dual planning system for the development of Aotearoa/New Zealand, incorporating both Māori and Pākehā values into every aspect of decision making (Glynn 1998). Further, this covenant also was signed under the pretence that it would act to protect Māori rights. This protection extends to the Māori language and "all those things to do with pedagogy and epistemology – what counts as knowledge, how that



knowledge is to be preserved, transmitted and evaluated” (Glynn 1998: 4). Māori, however, struggled to understand how the treaty was ensuring the protection of their rights, with the introduction of the Education Ordinance only seven years after the signing of the treaty.

## 4 The 1847 Education Ordinance

The Education Ordinance provided the foundational principles for education in New Zealand, including religious education, industrial training, and instruction in the English language. As we know, language domination occurs when members of the dominant culture silence an indigenous language. This often takes place in the classroom when the dominant language is viewed as superior to the indigenous language as a result of the values and beliefs instilled in and by the school system. This ordinance was the primary cause of Māori language loss. It was intended that Māori would become absorbed by Pākehā culture and would have to adjust to this change – adapt or die, as Henry Carleton, the Under-secretary of the Native Department insisted: “Things have now come to pass that it was necessary either to exterminate the Natives or to civilise them” (as cited in Barrington and Beaglehole 1974: 102).

My great-great-grandparents, Teera Chamberlain (1845–1917) and Teoti Paipeta (1840–1894), in the South Island, and Peeti Pahewa (1866–1949), in the North Island, were native speakers of the Māori language. Herbert Henry Fairlie of Ayrshire, Scotland (1868–1943), a Pākehā despite having been born in Scotland, after years of shepherding on the East Coast, learned to speak the Māori language and was known to use the language frequently when conversing with his Māori peers. Fortunately, they survived the diseases introduced by the Pākehā, and the Land Wars and series of armed conflicts between the British Crown and many Māori tribes between 1845 and 1872. Living in isolated, rural, Māori-speaking communities perhaps served as their sanctuary, as they were away from communities in which English was the dominant language, enabling their children to grow up bilingual, with a knowledge of both Māori and English, with English as the medium of instruction at school and Māori as the language of the home and community.

## 5 More reforms

By the 1850s however, the European settler population exceeded that of Māori. “Nationally, the Māori population dropped from 56,049 in 1857–58 to 42,113 in 1896. As such figures became known, they contributed to a widespread belief – among Pakeha *and* Maori – that Maori as a people and as a culture were headed

for extinction” (King 2003: 224). Unfortunately, the drop in Māori population meant a loss of native speakers of the language. The introduction of the 1867 Native Schools Code to regulate the curriculum, which placed more emphasis on the English language and on having more control over curriculum content that reflected Western knowledge and values, had a serious effect on Māori people due to their widespread perception that Western knowledge was responsible for the perceived economic success of Pākehā and the key to a higher standard of living (McCarthy 1997).

These factors influenced Māori leadership of the time, who accepted the policy of ignoring the Māori language due to the belief that this would advance Māori as a people and that Pākehā knowledge would benefit Māori children. They supported a petition to amend the Native Schools Act so that “there should not be a word of Maori allowed to be spoken in the school” (Bell 1991: 67). Had this been a reform introduced in New Zealand schools today, the response by students may well have been the same as those of high school students in Soweto in South Africa in 1976 who protested in the streets of Soweto in response to the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in local schools.

The Native Schools Code followed in 1880, with an expectation that teachers should have a working knowledge of the Māori language but only in the context of teaching English to the junior classes (Walker 1990). Thus, we see the legislation of the Crown and regulation of the State education system as further marginalising the Māori language.

The 1894 School Attendance Act made attendance at school compulsory. Pākehā children between the ages of 7 and 13 were legally required to attend school; for Māori children, however, it was compulsory to attend school only up to the end of Standard Four (approximately age 10), showing that the State had different educational assumptions and expectations for Māori. The Revised Native Schools Code was introduced in 1897, allowing the Māori language to be spoken in junior classes for the purpose of teaching English. It was argued, however, that “[t]he use of the Māori language should be discontinued as soon as possible and that English should become the sole language in the classroom” (Barrington and Beaglehole 1974: 144).

By 1903, “[t]he use of Māori as a medium of instruction and communication within schools was officially discouraged by educational authorities” (Bell 1991: 67). Māori children were actively discouraged from speaking Māori in or around school and often punished if caught doing so. Punishments inflicted upon indigenous children may have varied across schools and countries but only in terms of the methods of punishment and the levels of ridicule and cruelty. In Wales, the method used to punish children was the “Welsh Not,” whereby

children who were speaking Welsh, instead of English, were forced to wear a wooden badge, the “Welsh Not” (Nettle and Romaine 2000). In the British colony of Kenya, corporal punishment and public humiliation were inflicted on children who were caught speaking Gikūyū (Thiong’o 1986). This was also the case with Māori children who were caught speaking their language in or near the school, a practice reported to have continued well into the twentieth century. With widespread prohibition of speaking one’s native language, “corporal punishment was used freely as an oppressive tool against children who disobeyed” (Ka’ai-Oldman 1988: 23).

## 6 Effects of language loss on Māori

The damaging aspect of the reforms and policies, resulting in the Māori language being denied and constantly held up to public condemnation, lay not in corporal punishment, per se, but, rather, in the psychological effect on an individual’s sense of identity, personal worth, and status in society (Fishman 1991; Hinton and Hale 2008; Walker 1990). Over time, government policies and reforms in Aotearoa/New Zealand began to compound. Māori were now a minority, indigenous people; the State controlled education; Māori had incurred huge land loss and land confiscation, causing the physical dislocation of Māori communities and cultural isolation; there was increased intermarriage between Māori and Pākehā; and the intergenerational language transmission was interrupted, all of which contributed to hastening the rate of Māori language loss. The Tohunga Suppression Act 1907 also hastened language decline. The act was designed to replace traditional Māori healers, known as *tohunga* (chosen expert, healer), with Western medicine and practices. The act essentially made criminals out of *tohunga* and forced them underground, which disrupted the transmission of the traditional cultural esoteric knowledge associated with *tohunga* and, importantly, the corpus of language that they would have as native speakers of the language.

George was a *tohunga*, a *matakite* (seer, visionary). He was sent away to the north by one of his older siblings, Kiti Couch, to keep his gift hidden from the Pākehā world and to keep him safe, particularly as *tohunga* were outlawed. Ironically, *although* he was sent to a Methodist boarding school for Māori boys, he still had to keep his gift hidden. I have often thought that the church was used like a mask – to hide George’s gift and to keep him and his family safe from mainstream society.

Agnes and George’s eldest daughter, Charlotte, was born in 1913 and died in 2001. They chose not to speak Māori to her; they restricted their conversations in Māori to themselves and to their peers or family members, such as their siblings. The only time that the

language was heard by Charlotte, and only at a whisper, was when her parents said prayers of various kinds for different purposes at certain times of the day and night. So, Charlotte grew up sometimes hearing the language being spoken, but not knowing how to speak it. This decision by George and Agnes, an act of love to protect their children from the harmful effects of educational policies and retribution by the dominant culture, activated the process of language decline in my family.

Although 90 % of Māori school children were native speakers of the language at the turn of the twentieth century, the decline of speakers of the Māori language was beginning to show. By this time, Māori often felt embarrassed about or ashamed of the Māori language due to the Pākehā attitude that the English language was superior. “The exclusion of the Maori language from the primary school curriculum coupled with the negative attitude of many teachers towards the language, negatively affected the attitude of Maori [sic] people themselves towards their own language” (Ka'ai-Oldman 1988: 23). The constant belittling of the Māori language had a negative impact on Māori self-esteem, with the result that Māori stopped speaking the language altogether, opting to speak only English in their everyday lives. One could hear the language being spoken freely only in communities that were, in the main, rural and isolated. Compounding the problems was the statement of the Director of Education, T. B. Strong, representing the views of the State, in 1930 that “the natural abandonment of the native tongue involves no loss to the Māori” (Barrington and Beaglehole 1974: 205). This perspective also fuelled growing Pākehā opposition toward the Māori language (Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010).

## 7 The impact of World War I, World War II, and the rural-urban drift on the language

The majority of Māori men who fought in World Wars I and II were native speakers of the language. The fact that many of our Māori men did not return from the wars changed the inter-generational transmission of the Māori language dramatically.

Agnes lost one of her brothers in World War I. He was buried overseas in Bertrancourt Military Cemetery in France. There are few Māori families, I imagine, in New Zealand who escaped the fatalities of war. The awful truth is that the death of these soldiers, such as my *koroua* (grand-uncle), also hastened the rate of language loss in Aotearoa/New Zealand, along with factors such as inter-marriage and the rural migration away from traditional communities toward urban areas in pursuit of higher education or employment. The Māori language was a casualty of these events and factors.

Beginning in the 1950s, as noted, there was a steady migration of Māori to urban centres to seek employment, resulting in the disintegration of rural Māori language-speaking communities (Benton 1981). At the same time, a policy of integrating urban Māori into the wider population, known as *pepper-potting*, was introduced, by which Māori families were placed in predominantly Pākehā suburbs, with the hope that they would integrate into the dominant society. This policy was created to prevent the development of urban Māori communities and had the downstream effect of preventing the formation of Māori language-speaking groups because Māori speakers were physically isolated from each other. In this way, English was firmly established as the language of not only the workplace but also of the local neighbourhood and soon became the primary language through which daily social interactions took place (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori n.d.). This policy had far-reaching repercussions, of which the most severe was that, for the first time, Māori children were being raised as monolingual speakers of English. These conditions led to a rapid language shift among the Māori population, especially among the first generations of Māori who were born and raised in the city.

Charlotte married Bernard Furlong (second-generation New Zealand of Southern Irish origins), and they had six children. Judith, the second child and my mother, was born in 1936. English was the language of the home, and the only time that Judith heard the Māori language being spoken was when her grandparents, Agnes and George, said *karakia* (prayers), spoken quietly between themselves. Her curiosity and closeness with her grandparents led her to ask them to speak to her in the language, but they refused her, gently saying, “It is not a good time.” Interestingly, in remembering her childhood, Judith said, “They [the grandchildren] did things, cultural things, without questioning why,” which she realises now were very much behaviours, customs, and Māori cultural practices. This included washing tea towels and other personal laundry separately from the rest of the laundry, using specific plants for medicinal purposes, and saying *karakia*, led by their grandparents, before and after meals. My mother and all of her siblings married non-Māori English-speaking people, and so the Māori language has been lost from this generation of her family.

I was born to Judith Furlong and Māhealani Ka'ai (Hawaiian, Cook Island Māori and Samoan heritage) in 1957. My siblings and I grew up in a household that was English speaking. We were raised in a small pulp-and-paper-mill town, surrounded by rural Māori-speaking communities that lived around their *marae* (courtyard, or the open front of the meeting house, where formal greetings and discussions take place – often used to include the complex of buildings around the *marae*). It was not unusual to hear the Māori language being spoken. Māori people came from all over the country to work at the mill, and, thus, the town could be described as being pan-tribal in terms of Māori representation. I was curious about the Māori language, hearing my great-grandfather George say his prayers daily and not being able to understand what he was saying, the language being spoken by my Māori peers in the school playground and on the sports field and netball court and at the local *marae*.

Then, an opportunity presented itself at primary school, when I was eight years old, through a curriculum change. Māori Club, one of many options offered as electives, was introduced, meeting once a week, and I jumped at the chance to sign up. The time was split between *kapa haka*, or song and dance, 70% of the time, and learning the language in the song, basic greetings, and one's *pepeha* (tribal sayings as identity markers), 30% of the time. We were given language exercises as weekly homework. Each week, I would take my homework to my great-grandfather and ask him for his help, which began this new aspect of my relationship with him. He was ambivalent at first about helping me. But with encouragement from my mother and my constant persistence, "Great-grandfather, can you please teach me my language," he relented. Thus began my journey to learn the language and eventually join the struggle to revitalise the language within my own family and, later, for my community.

## 8 More reforms

The 1960 Hunn Report was significant in proposing a society that should embrace and respect Māori as a minority group in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Although some recognition of biculturalism emerged within the classroom, the Hunn report's vision of a pluralistic society never came to fruition, as people involved in State education across the country were resistant to changing their attitudes as entrenched negative attitudes from teachers and administrators about the value of the Māori language had been set firmly in place with the 1847 Education Ordinance and then reinforced by subsequent reforms across the next 140 years. Tragically, by this time, only 25% of Māori could speak their native language compared to over 90% in 1900 (Ka'ai-Oldman 1988).

A decade later, in 1970, Ngā Tamatoa and the Te Reo Māori Society lobbied for the introduction of the Māori language into schools. Then, in 1972, seeking to revive the Māori language, Ngā Tamatoa petitioned Parliament to promote *te reo Māori*. In 1973, Māori Studies courses in all seven teachers' colleges around the country were introduced, and in 1974, the Department of Education established six new posts for Māori Advisors. Despite these efforts, and the minor recognition of the Māori language in the education sectors, little was accomplished in terms of compensating for the damage inflicted upon the health of the language (Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010), and the Māori language continued to suffer. Overall, participation in mainstream education came at a cost for Māori: their language, culture, and identity (Glynn 1998; Harrison 2007).

In 1970, the Māori community in my hometown established a Māori Community Centre and a *kapa haka* group, including a junior group and a senior group for adults. I signed up for the junior group and became part of the *mātawaka* (pan-tribal) Māori community

in my town. We travelled to Australia when I was 11 years old and performed in places from Sydney all the way up the east coast to Brisbane. We also performed at the very first National Māori Performing Arts competition in Rotorua later that year. My world was consumed by Māori culture – I loved it! In 1971, when I was 12, I started high school and, for the first time, *te reo Māori* was introduced as a taught subject. Of course, I chose to take Māori. I loved the classes, which involved the occasional field trip to a *hui* (gathering) at the *marae* within the community. It was there that I observed language and cultural lore being practiced, and I was like a sponge: I soaked it up. I was fortunate that my Māori teacher, John Hunia, took an interest in my learning and encouraged my studies. A watershed moment in my life was being selected as one of the students to attend a *wānanga* (a residential gathering to meet and discuss particular matters), and it was there that I met great Māori leaders, such as John Te Rangiāniwaniwa Rangihau and Timoti Kāretu. They became my mentors, and I was inspired to continue on to a university.

While I was at university, I frequently made the long journey home to my *hapū* (sub-tribe) to attend all sorts of occasions, including *wānanga ā-hapū* (a sub-tribal gathering to meet and discuss a variety of issues), and to learn from other great Māori leaders, such as Auntie Ngoi Pēwhairangi, who was the co-founder of the Te Ātaarangi Māori language programme established in 1979, which became popular among Māori communities. I was fortunate that she took me under her wing and nurtured me. I learned from her what Māori female leadership is all about. She would say to me, “Some people are weavers of *harakeke* (flax) and *kiekie* (an epiphyte), like my daughter-in-law, Connie, while others are weavers of people, like you.” She instilled in those of us whom she nurtured that some are meant to remain home and keep the home fires burning, while others are meant to go out into the world and gather knowledge and resources to bring back to the people at home to benefit from this knowledge. She taught me the importance of *rāwaho* (people who live away from their home communities) and *ahikā* (people who live in their home communities) working collaboratively so there are always safe pathways home for all tribal members.

## 9 Te Kōhanga Reo and a cultural revolution

The establishment of Te Kōhanga Reo (immersion Māori language preschool) in 1981 is best described as an act of resistance by the Māori people. It grew out of the desire to educate their children in Māori from a Māori world view and is a result of Māori communities’ working together with the Māori Affairs Department to arrest the rapid decline of the Māori language. The aim was to have every child who was enrolled in Te Kōhanga Reo to become bilingual by the age of 5. On a day-to-day basis, Te Kōhanga Reo were to be operated by elders who were native speakers of the language (Ka’Ai 2004; Walker 1990). Te Kōhanga Reo is heralded as one of the most dynamic and innovative educational programs for the revitalisation of the Māori language in

Aotearoa/New Zealand. It transformed communities, inspired and liberated Māori families, and had an emancipatory effect on the education of Māori children (Ka'ai 2004).

In 1984, I gave birth to my only child, Rachael Te Āwhina Ka'ai. I raised her as a single mother and sought opportunities to raise her in the Māori language, particularly because there were no speakers of the language in my immediate family. With my great-grandfather's passing when I was 12 years old, my exposure to the language and native speakers was limited to formal lessons as a second language learner at high school and, thereafter, at university, to the *marae* and to *kapa haka*. Thus, I went outside the immediate family for help. With the establishment of Te Kōhanga Reo in 1981 and their proliferation across the country, including Auckland, where I was living, my daughter and I were fortunate to have been noticed by Tuki Nepe, also from Ngāti Porou, and embraced by the Te Awhireinga Kōhanga Reo *whānau* (family). I drove one hour there and one hour back home every working day of the week to take my baby to Kōhanga. I was determined to expose her to Māori language educational and cultural contexts, no matter what it took. Rachael was exposed to the native speakers whom I was so desperate to have around her. It was an exciting time, but one when demands were upon all of us due to the expectation that, as parents, we should give to the movement whatever and whenever we could as recognition of the time and gift of language that our elders were giving our children. Our commitment was expressed in many different ways:

- Making illustrated story – books with Māori language script every week as well as other resources such as wall friezes with the Māori alphabet and colourful signage for items within the Kōhanga, as identified by the teachers
- Travelling great distances to do our shopping at places where there was a speaker of the language
- Making little cards that contained a request to speak to someone who spoke the Māori language and using them in such places as banks and petrol stations to politicise the importance of the language
- Going to classes to learn the language with other parents
- Committing to speak the language to our children in the home
- Helping to write documentation required to get funding
- Helping to write curriculum
- Writing up the critical pedagogy of the Kōhanga
- Taking one aspect of Kōhanga as a topic for our master's degrees and doctorates
- Fundraising to keep our Kōhanga open, to pay our elders, and to purchase much needed resources
- Donating food, money, resources, and time to help out

It was a time of Māori people mobilising themselves and taking control of their own destiny in terms of the education of their children, a time of having a say in whose knowledge is taught and in what language, and a time to say *no* to Pākehā education in Aotearoa/New Zealand.



Discussions took place amongst the Kōhanga *whānau* nationally about the likely detrimental effect on their children of transitioning from Kōhanga into mainstream schools. Fearing the continued failure of mainstream schools to educate our children, using our own critical pedagogy and immersion in the language, once again, Māori parents mobilised. Out of this collaborative effort, Te Kura Kaupapa Māori (immersion Māori language primary school) was born.

## 10 Establishment of Kura Kaupapa Māori and Kaupapa Māori education

In 1985, the first Kura Kaupapa Māori was established at Hoani Waititi Marae in West Auckland but, again, was not funded by the education department. The promise of Kura Kaupapa Māori was that it delivered a dual curriculum that was required by the State but delivered through the Māori language and world view.

My daughter, Rachael, transitioned from Kōhanga Reo to Kura Kaupapa Māori. She did not take formal English lessons at Kura until she was 10 years old, as I was influenced by all the literature and research at the time, such as Cummins [1981], suggesting delaying the learning of English until a child is 12 years old. Unbeknownst to me, Rachael taught herself to read English long before she went to formal English classes, mostly through television and print material such as cereal boxes. But literacy and oracy in the Māori language was my primary concern. This was confirmed for me when, one day, we were riding in the car, and Rachael said, “Titiro, Māmā (Look, Mum),” pointing toward a shop that had the sign “Chemist” hanging outside the shop, “Ko Hēmi tērā (There’s Hēmi).” Hēmi was one of the boys at her school. On hearing this, I immediately became worried, as we were far away from where Hēmi lived. So, I pulled the car over, and, after much discussion, I ascertained from Rachael that she was looking at the sign, “Chemist.” Apparently, all she could see was **CHEMI**st. I knew then that she was interpreting the literate world around her through a Māori language lens. I cannot express how delighted I was, especially because Rachael was only 8 years old.

I often watched Rachael sleep and wondered what language she was dreaming in. As she grew from being a toddler to a pre-schooler who was attending Kōhanga Reo, I still had no idea what language she was dreaming in. Then one evening, she spoke in her sleep. The words she uttered were in Māori, and my heart skipped a beat. I was ecstatic. I felt such a huge sense of satisfaction that, as a single mother, I had achieved such a milestone and quietly confirmed to myself that I was on track to break the cycle of language loss in my family.

Service to community is critical in terms of ensuring that what we learn when living outside the community is taken home to benefit our community. A request

from my rural community took me on a four-month journey of travelling every weekend (driving 10 hours each way) to share my knowledge and experience from setting up a Kura Kaupapa Māori (immersion Māori language school) in Auckland with my own tribal community and show them how they could establish their own Kura Kaupapa Māori for their children. It was an intense time for all of us involved in the establishment of the *kura* (school) as we were criticised by some of our own community and tribal members for “taking our children back into the deep dark ages” and for “doing our children a grave injustice.” But we persevered, and, on February 11, 1991, we opened our school, Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ngā Taonga Tūturu ki Tokomaru. Despite the strong lure for families in Tokomaru to move away to seek employment and financial security, our little *kura* remains open today, 25 years later.

This is testament to the strength of my community and their commitment to their language and identity. The teachers in the *kura* are all trained and from the *hapū*, so they have a vested interest in teaching future generations of families who will succeed them. The *kura* is more like a *Kura ā-hapū* (immersion Māori language primary school that operates within a sub-tribe) because the curriculum is delivered through the world view of the *hapū*, thus building the children’s knowledge of their genealogy, oral narratives, and environment while simultaneously increasing their confidence in their identity.

## 11 1987 Māori Language Act to the 2014 Māori Language Bill

In 1986, the *WAI11 Report of the Waitangi Tribunal on the Te Reo Māori Claim* asserted that *te reo Māori* was a *taonga* (treasure) and, consequently, was guaranteed protection under Article II of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The following year, 1987, the Māori Language Act recognised *te reo Māori* as an official language. At this time, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (the Māori Language Commission) was established. After 14 years of Māori’s struggling to have their education system recognised as legitimate by the State, in 1989, the Education Amendment Act formally recognised Kura Kaupapa Māori, ensuring the flow of revenue from the Ministry of Education. Other initiatives also flourished during this time, including the establishment of Te Māngai Pāho, a Māori broadcasting funding agency, to promote Māori language and culture through the media. More than 20 *iwi* radio stations began broadcasting throughout the country. This was followed, in 1998, with an announcement from the government that there would be funding for a Māori television channel.

In 2014, the first draft of the Māori Language Bill was published. The purpose of the Bill is to affirm the status of the Māori language as a *taonga* of *iwi* and Māori as an official language of New Zealand and to establish a new statutory entity, *Te Mātāwai*, consisting of 12 members. The members include seven appointed by *iwi* clusters, three by Māori language stakeholders, and two by the Minister of Māori Affairs on the Crown's behalf to provide leadership to *iwi* and Māori in their role as *kaitiaki* (guardian) of the Māori language. A supporting role is played by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, responsible for promoting the Māori language, and Te Māngai Pāho, responsible for the provision of funding for broadcasting and program production.

This new Bill however, is not universally supported by Māori, primarily because some are questioning the status and role of Te Mātāwai and the wisdom of having *iwi* be responsible for the revitalisation of the Māori language when, some would say, *iwi* have allowed the language in their areas to diminish and even to die out. *Iwi* did little, after they settled their treaty claims with the government, to rehabilitate the language in their tribal areas. Thus, despite the huge gains that Māori have made, we are still in a struggle with the government about language rights, language revitalisation, accessing the appropriate resources to ensure the survival of the language, and who should control these resources while also considering the efficacy of lobbying for a National Languages Policy. Nevertheless, efforts to revitalise the language continue, including Kaupapa Māori education for students 0–18 years old and bilingual units within mainstream education; community initiatives, such as Kura Reo, Te Ataarangi, Māori4kids, Māori4grownups, and Kapa Kōrero; Facebook networks, such as Hei Reo Whānau and He Tamariki Kōrero Māori, and other media efforts; Te Panekiretanga o Te Reo (Institute of Excellence in the Māori Language) broadcasting initiatives, such as television programmes and *iwi* radio stations; and *kapa haka* and Māori music, research projects, and dissertations and theses produced in both Māori and English.

In 2007, Rachael Ka'ai married Dean Mahuta from the *hapū*, Ngāti Mahuta, and from the *iwi*, Tainui. Like Rachael, Dean was educated in immersion Māori language schooling, so he spoke the Māori language. They met at university in their first year of undergraduate study. They both went right through university without a break and attained their master's degrees and doctorates. When Dean first arrived at university, he registered his interest in writing all of his assignments in the Māori language. As Dean of the School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies at the time, I employed the help and expertise of my colleague and mentor, Professor John Moorfield, to negotiate a new university policy to enable students to write their assignments and dissertations in the Māori language. After a long internal approval process, the university approved the policy. So began the journey of "indigenising" the academy to understanding the importance of the value of the Māori language and culture and the link to identity.

Rachael and Dean are both senior lecturers at an Auckland university. They teach the Māori language, teach subjects in the Māori language and supervise dissertations and theses written in English and written in the Māori language about aspects of Māori language and culture. They are passionate about the language and are engaged in activities to help to maintain and develop their own language proficiency and to see the language flourish in the future. They have assured me that their home will be a Māori-speaking home, with the Māori language being the first language of my *mokopuna* (grandchildren), and that, as graduates of Te Panekiretanga o te Reo, they will feed the language and cultural knowledge learned from Te Panekiretanga to my *mokopuna* and, in the process, reverse language loss in our family.

## 12 Conclusion

Joshua Fishman dedicated his life to the revitalisation of minority languages. Inspired by his and my own elders' determination, I set a course in place from an early age to become involved in Māori language revitalisation strategies and initiatives to help reverse language loss in my family. This pathway led me to become involved in Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori as a mother, as a member of a *hapū*, and as an academic through our research projects in Te Ipukarea (National Māori Language Institute) and Te Whare o Rongomaurikura (International Centre for Language Revitalisation at the Auckland University of Technology). Importantly, however, I was involved in raising my child, as a single mother, in the language, with no other language speaker in my home to help me. It has been a long and sometimes lonely, but rewarding, journey.

It is often stated by language activists that it takes only one generation to lose a language and at least three generations to revive that language. The arrest of language loss in my family and intergenerational language transmission now rests with my daughter, her husband, and my future grandchildren, who will grow up in a Māori-speaking home as first-language speakers, 135 years and six generations since the first native speakers in my family, whom I knew, were born. Like many Māori families, I am pinning all my hopes on the next generation and future generations. If my grandchildren should one day ask me, "Grandmother, what have you done for our language?" I can tell them this story so they can appreciate *te mana o te reo* (the status of the Māori language) and its struggle for survival. Currently, fewer than 4% of the national population in Aotearoa/New Zealand speak the Māori language well enough to hold a conversation, so there is much still to be done.

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## Glossary

Ahikā	People who are living in their home communities
Aotearoa	New Zealand
Haka	Traditional Māori dance
Hapū	Sub-tribe
Hārakeke	Flax
Hui	A gathering such as a meeting
Iwi	Tribe/s
Kaitiaki	Guardian
Karakia	Prayers
Kaupapa Māori Education	Immersion Māori education system, including Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa and Wharekura
Kiekie	Epiphyte
Kura	School
Kura ā-hapū	Immersion Māori language primary school that operates within a sub-tribe
Marae	Courtyard: The open front of the meeting house, where formal greetings and discussions take place
Mātāwaka	Pan-tribal
Matakite	Seer, visionary
Pākehā	Non-Indigenous New Zealander
Rāwaho	People who are living away from their home communities
Taonga	Treasure
Te Ipukarea	National Māori Language Institute
Te Kōhanga Reo	Māori language preschool
Te Kura Kaupapa Māori	Immersion Māori language primary school
Te Māngai Pāho	Māori Broadcast Funding Agency
Te Mātāwai	New entity that oversees the health of the Māori language in New Zealand
Te Panekiretanga o te Reo	Institute of Excellence in the Māori Language

Te reo Māori	Māori language
Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori	Māori Language Commission
Te mana o te reo	Status of the Māori language
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	Treaty of Waitangi
Te Whare o Rongomaurikura	International Centre for Language Revitalisation
Tohunga	Chosen expert, healer
Waiata	Songs
Wānanga ā-hapū	A sub-tribe gathering for meeting, discussing, and deliberating
Whānau	Family
Wharekura	Immersion Māori language secondary school