WARREN, Krystal Te Rina. **Te reo māori: analysing the colonial history of the native māori language of Aotearoa (New Zealand)**. Revista LinguíStica / Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Linguística da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Volume 13, n.1 jan de 2017, p. 349-366. ISSN 2238-975X 1. [https://revistas.ufrj.br/index.php/rl]

TE REO MĀORI: ANALYSING THE COLONIAL HISTORY OF THE NATIVE MĀORI LANGUAGE OF AOTEAROA (NEW ZEALAND)

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Abstract:

Colonisation has a dramatic impact on indigenous languages. Language revitalisation cannot be about the language alone; it must also analyse the contexts of power that relegate our languages to the margins of existence. This article briefly explores the colonial history of the indigenous Māori people of Aotearoa (New Zealand) and the decline of the Māori language. It then offers an overview of Māori responses to colonisation and considers Māori pathways for the revitalisation of the Māori language and the Māori spirit.

Keywords: Māori language, colonisation, decolonial responses.

Resumo:

A colonização exerce um impacto dramático sobre as línguas indígenas. A revitalização linguística não pode ser sobre a língua somente; deve-se também analisar os contextos de poder que relegam nossas línguas às margens da existência. Este artigo explora brevemente a história colonial do povo indígena Maori de Aotearoa (Nova Zelândia) e o declínio da língua Maori. Oferece-se, em seguida, uma visão ampla das respostas dos Maori à colonização, considerando os caminhos de revitalização da língua e do espírito Maori.

Palavras-chave: língua Maori, colonização, respostas de descolonização.

Tēnei te mihi atu ki te reo Māori o tēnā iwi, o tēnā hapū, huri rauna i te ao. Kia pupuri tātou i tēnei taonga i tuku iho mai i ngā mātua tupuna ki a tātou. Tēnei te mihi atu ki ngā reo Māori o te ao – tukua kia rere!

1 *Nation*: Rangitane, Maniapoto, Whitikaupeka (Mōkai Pātea)

"I pay tribute to the native language of the many nations, and many peoples across the globe. May we all cherish this gift handed to us from our ancestors. I acknowledge the indigenous languages of the world, may they flourish!"

Introduction

Māori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa[2]/New Zealand who make up approximately 15% of the national population (Statistics New Zealand, 2017; 2013). Nationally 3.7% of the population can competently speak the Māori language, and approximately 21% of the Māori population can speak the language competently (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). In 1971 the Māori language was identified as unstable (Benton, 1972) and committed members of Māori nations lobbied for the New Zealand government to formally acknowledge the Māori language and to commit to the revival of the language (Waitangi Tribunal, 1989). Since that time a number of revitalisation responses have occurred including: petitions to government, Māori performing arts, Māori language immersion education, legislative change, and broadcasting (See: Te Rito, 2008; Richards & Ryan, 2004).

The 1986 report on te reo Māori (the Māori language) identified the importance of the Māori language and the intimate connection of the language to the Māori culture (Waitangi Tribunal, 1989). Overall vitalisation efforts are perhaps spurred on by a statement made in the report:

> If the language dies, the culture will die, and something quite unique will have been lost to the world (p. 1)

As I write this paper (early 2017) there is a national call to implement the Māori language as a compulsory subject in all schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand where both the support and opposition of this strategy is voiced in the media (Row, 2017). Multiple avenues to revitalise the Māori language are required and there is continuing debate about the best method to strengthen the Māori language and increase the number of Māori language speakers (Benton, 2015). Our approach to native language vitalisation provides some avenues which may (or may not) be beneficial to other indigenous peoples, however other language revitalisation projects among indigenous peoples can offer more pathways as shared, for example, through the work of Joshua Fishman (1996) or the Welsh language revitalisation (see: Williams, 2000).

There was a time that the Māori language was the majority language of Aotearoa/New Zealand. This article considers the colonial history of the Māori language. Reflecting on the Māori creation narrative a decolonial platform is provided to understand Māori philosophies about the world and customary teaching and learning. Examining of the period of British contact with Aotearoa (New Zealand) explains the importance of the 1835 Declaration of Independence, and the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi for Māori sovereignty where an exploration of the process of colonisation identifies the impact on the Māori

2 There is regular use of Māori language in this article. Translations of the words are provided here, however the Māori language is linked to broader cosmological contexts, for example Aotearoa is one native name for our home, derived from the exclamation of the ancestor Kuramarotini who identified a 'long white cloud' (Ao-tea-roa) formation above the land when sailing with her partner Kupe (Williams, 2015). New Zealand is the colonial name for our lands. The use of either term (Aotearoa or New Zealand) is a political statement, and often both names are used together (Aotearoa/New Zealand) to identify our colonial history and to encourage a bicultural understanding of our home.

language and recognises Māori responses to the perishing state of the native language. It is hoped that this article might encourage native peoples across the world to retain their own distinct languages as a means of reaffirming indigenous identities, cultures, and knowledge systems.

Māori world view

The Māori view of the world is one that originates from our unique creation story. This creation story has been articulated well by Te Rangi Hiroa (1949). For us, Māori evolution begins within three major epochs of time which starts in a vast void of blackness, a time of great potential that we call 'Te Kore'. Emerging from that space is the period of activation 'Te Pō' - the dark night, where Ranginui (the sky father) and Papatuanuku (the earth mother) materialised and held each other close. Together they bore many children who resided in between the loving embrace. Those children each had their own talent and skills but were unhappy about the closed living quarters and they furiously debated whether they should separate their parents. Eventually one child, Tāne-Mahuta achieved the task and light poured through the darkness revealing the world of light, this moment in time we call Te Ao Mārama. Our creation narrative is reaffirmed on our national Māori flag shown here (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, n.d.). The upper black space depicts Ranginui (the sky father), the lower red area represents Papatuanuku (earth mother), and the middle white strip signifies Te Ao Mārama (the world of light). This is often referred to as 'the Māori flag' or the 'tino rangatiratanga' (Māori sovereignty) flag and ultimately represents Māori decolonial aspirations.

Figure 1: Tino Rangatiratanga flag (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, n.d.).

Māori evolution continues with the god Tāne-Mahuta who fashioned the first human in the form of a female named Hineahuone. In our narratives humankind are descendants of this union. This creation narrative clearly identifies Māori interconnectedness to the natural and spiritual worlds as well as to each other as humankind. Te Rangi Hiroa (1949) identifies that Māori relationships are further strengthened through customary Māori societal structures which are formed around our genealogical relationships. The broader Māori nation is made up of many 'iwi' or nation groups, which are in turn comprised of multiple smaller 'hapū' or socio-political units who maintain specific regional territories. These units then maintain a membership of several 'whānau' or extended families groups. This kinship structure allows Māori individuals to claim citizenship to one or more kin groups and nations.

Te Rangi Hiroa (1949) further identifies that Māori kinship and relationship to each other are also maintained through our marae (ancestral home). Prior to European contact, the ancestral home represented the heart of the Māori village with a number of Māori living quarters located in close

proximity. Colonisation and urbanisation have marginalised the Māori village and ancestral home. Today many Māori live away from the ancestral home and might return to celebrate occasions of great happiness such as birthdays and weddings, or in times of deep sadness such as funerals. Ranginui Walker (1992) suggests that our ancestral homes are bastions of the Māori language and culture, and they represent a place in contemporary society where the Māori language can be used freely without judgement and where cultural practises are openly enacted. The ancestral home has played a significant role in the continuation of the Māori language as a place where Māori cultural protocols and rituals have sustained the use of the Māori language. Through the process of colonisation Walker (1992) describes the ancestral homes as:

> 'symbols of pan-tribal resistance to Pākehā [European] dominance…. They became the focus of the cultural renaissance… fulfilling deeply felt spiritual and cultural needs'[1] as 'potent symbolic statements of identity' (p.26).

Whare wānanga: early learning places

Prior to the arrival of the European, and for some time after their arrival, Māori learning spaces were intimately connected to the natural environment. Te Rangi Hiroa (Hiroa & Buck, 1926) describes the Whare Wānanga (House of Learning) as an advanced system of teaching and learning recorded in our creation narrative. The customary House of Learning prepared Māori children to actively contribute to the wellbeing of their communities based around the strengths of the learner through a sophisticated system of inter-generational knowledge transferred via various oral methods including chant, prayer, and song which demands a profound understanding of the Māori language. Renowned expert Te Whatahoro (1915) further describes our teaching and learning systems that contain intimate knowledge of the natural and spiritual worlds. Such customary Māori education involves many specialised Houses of Learning with curriculum based in the domains of Māori gods and goddesses and include subjects such as: teaching, fabrication/textiles, building, carving, weaponry, agriculture, navigation, maritime, spirituality, politics, child rearing among others (Hiroa & Buck, 1926). This system was to change with the arrival of the British colonial agenda.

Māori & Early European contact

Although Abel Tasman arrived to the bays of Aotearoa (New Zealand) earlier, the first European to set foot on our lands was James Cook in 1769. Cook stumbled across our land located in the south pacific, with the help of Tupaia, a great Tahitian navigator and interpreter (Salmond, 2006). Our land was one of many in the Pacific Ocean frequented by pacific navigators long before the arrival of any European but following Cook came many traders, sealers, and whalers before settlement took place. Early British/European folk were generally of a low moral code (Mutu, 2015) who, nonetheless, were tolerated by Māori for access to new technologies and trade opportunities. Petrie (2006) identifies that during this time, Māori were an economic powerhouse of the south pacific owning their own fleets of trade ships to move merchandise across the globe, often supplying goods to meet the shortages that occurred in the new imperial settlements. As part of the trade opportunity missionaries were

introduced to Aotearoa (New Zealand) in 1814 and established the formal European style schooling system in 1816 (Morehu, 2009). Accustom to complex learning Māori were (and still are) quick learners who were more literature than their European counterparts and adapted quickly to new technologies and the changing circumstances (Head & Mikaere, 1988). However, the education system would leave lasting impacts on Māori nations.

Founding documents

In addition to international expeditions, Māori had for some time been investigating the British imperialism with multiple visits to other colonial settlements such as the visit of Te Paahi to New South Wales in 1806 (Waitangi Tribunal, 2014). In 1835 leaders of Māori nations established and signed a Declaration of Independence (He Whakaputanga o te Tino Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni) which was written in the Māori language where with an English translation available. The Declaration had three main purposes. First it declared that Aotearoa/New Zealand is an 'independent state' of the Māori nation. Second, it identified that Māori would: create laws, dispense justice, preserve peace and good order, and regulate trade. Third the Declaration invited an alliance with Britain. The Declaration is critical to understand the colonial history of Aotearoa/New Zealand and provides a basis for how Māori viewed their place in the world at that time. It is obvious in this document that Māori identified the potential threats and advantages of maintaining relationships with the new European settlers. Five years later the Treaty of Waitangi 1840 was developed and Te Tiriti o Waitangi the Māori language version of our Treaty was signed. The four articles described the nature of a new relationship to be formed between the resident Māori and the British as new settlers in our land. Article one identified that the British Queen would be responsible for the British citizens that were now living in Aotearoa (New Zealand). Article two reaffirmed that Māori independence, as previously stated in the 1835 Declaration, was guaranteed. Article three then offered to Māori the rights and customs of British citizenship if Māori so wished to invoke that right. The fourth and final article was an oral article that ensured that the religions of all peoples (including Māori) would be protected. Today there is still debate about the context and the meaning of this Treaty due to the two language versions Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Māori language version) and The Treaty of Waitangi (English language version) (Waitangi Tribunal, 2014; Walker, 1996). One thing is for certain, Māori DID NOT cede sovereignty through that Treaty (Waitangi Tribunal, 2014).

The Declaration (1835) and the Treaty (1840) are the 'founding documents' of Aotearoa/New Zealand, these are the first written expressions of the nature of the Māori relationship with the colonial British. Since both Māori and Europeans were fluent in the Māori language during the development and establishment of these documents, there is no doubt that Māori leaders of the time set out their intentions of an ongoing relationship in a very clear manner. Importantly, the relationship with the Queen would be to control the unruly British settlers that were growing in numbers in Aotearoa (Waitangi Tribunal, 2014). One of the common myths told about Māori desire to sign the Treaty is the idea that Māori needed the protection of the Britain, however in 1840 there were approximately 250,000 Māori and around 2,000 Europeans (McKinnon, Bradley & Kirkpatrick, 1997). Therefore, it seems that the idea of 'protection' is a pure manufacturing of 'alternative facts' about the Treaty.

That is another discussion for another day, but what we know is that the impact of the unhonoured Declaration (1835) and Treaty (1840) by British and the process of colonisation would have severe ongoing impacts for Māori, the culture and the language.

Colonisation and the impact on the Māori language

Four major impacts of colonisation on the Māori nation are examined here, where each event had its own ramification for the state of the Māori language. In the first instance the changing demographic of Aotearoa/New Zealand identifies how the majority Māori language quickly became a minority language by the mid-1800s.

In 1840 there were an estimated 250,000 (or more) Māori and 2,000 British/Europeans living in Aotearoa/New Zealand (McKinnon et al., 1997). However the new British/European population introduced a number of diseases to the country (Waitangi Tribunal, 2014). With no previous exposure to common disease such as influenza Māori population numbers plummeted to 100, 000 by 1852 (Papps, 1985; Pool, 1991). It was expected that Māori as a race of people would merely die out as acknowledged by Minister of Parliament Dr Isaac Featherston who noted in 1852 that the government must smooth the dying pillow of the Māori race (Buck, 1924). By 1896 the Māori population plummeted to about 42, 000 (Papps, 1985). In the space of only 50 years the genocide of the Māori peoples was almost fulfilled.

While the Māori population in Aotearoa was in decline, the British/European population was growing. With only about 2,000 British/European people living in Aotearoa in 1840 a further estimated 50, 000 immigrants turned up to our shores by 1852 (Papps, 1985; Pool, 1991). Over the next 40 years another 700, 000 immigrants arrived (Von Dadelszen, 1901). The population inequity symbolised a change of power and governance in Aotearoa (New Zealand), but it also reflected the state of the Māori language and culture. The Māori language that had been the natural language of Aotearoa, was relegated to the margins of society as a minority language of the country.

Table 1: Estimated Māori & European population in early Aotearoa/New Zealand

	Māori population	**British/European population**
1840	250,000 (aprox)	2,000 (aprox)
1852	100,000	50,000
1896	42,000	700,000

With an increasing number of immigrants to Aotearoa, came an appetite for the land. The colonising story tells us that Māori sold all of the land. However, we are well endowed with the experiences of our ancestors and the oral accounts of theft and confiscation as expressed in a number of Waitangi Tribunal reports (see: www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz) and other writings (Te Kawariki and Network Waitangi Whangarei, 2012; O'Malley, 2016). The New Zealand Government has on several occasions admitted their wrong doing and has apologised for their acts of theft, confiscation and war that they imposed on Māori nations across the country (for example: Waitangi Tribunal, 2014). Durie (1998) identifies that in 1840 Māori possessed 100% of our country, approximately 66, 400, 000 acres of

land; by 1852 49% of Māori land had been taken; in 1891 only 17% of the originally Māori owned land mass remained with Māori. The land had been taken by various means (Durie, 1998; Walker, 1996) that included importing British soldiers to perform military attacks on Māori settlements, and protecting the colonial acquisitions. The payment for military service was a lot of stolen land in the newly forming colonial outpost in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Alexander, Gibson & La Roche, 1997).

Legislation and law then cemented the suppression of the Māori nation even though 1840 signalled the promise of a new relationship with the British crown. A plethora of legislation was passed to actively disadvantage Māori, however education law had the biggest influence on the state of the Māori language and spirit. Established in 1816, Missionary Schools aimed to provide a British style education to Māori children. The language of instruction was the natural language of the land – the Māori language until formal laws to 'govern' the land were sought. At this point education became a significant method of colonising and oppressing the Māori people and the language. The 1844 Native Trust Ordinance openly stated its purpose as 'assimilating as speedily as possible the habits and usages of the native to those of the European population…' The Education Ordinance 1847 then granted government subsidies to mission schools to implement: English language, religious education, and industrial training. This was the first introduction of the English language into the formal British education system, and signalled the move to supplant the Māori language with the English language. This agenda was furthered by the 1858 Native Schools Act that provided grants for Māori children to attend boarding schools. The aim of the grants and the schools was to remove the child from the 'demoralising influence of Māori villages' (Barrington, 1970, p 28). The intimate learning spaces of old were becoming a memory, and the knowledge transmitted through the customary Whare Wānanga (House of Learning) was legislated into the margins of colonial society. In the next decade the 1867 Native Schools Act required Māori to supply school sites and funds if they wished to establish a local school. At this time, schools transitioned their teaching to the English language. Māori students were socialised away from their customary ways of knowing and increasingly socialised into colonial society. While some school instructors continued to teach in the Māori language, or at least consent to the use of the Māori language, the legislation identified that teaching should take place in the English medium (Waitangi Tribunal, 1989). Another decade later the 1877 Education Act established public schooling to the country. Customary Whare Wānanga (Houses of Learning) were all but dis-established; Māori children were no longer offered the diverse range of curricula or acknowledged for the strengths that they demonstrated. Furthermore, Māori connections to the natural and spiritual worlds were being systematically eroded. The 1880 Native Schools Code actively discouraged the use of the Māori language within school grounds, and corporal punishment for speaking the native tongue was enforced. Many experiences of elders who suffered beatings for speaking the Māori language are recorded, and the historic trauma of those beatings has permeated the Māori nation in many insidious ways (Waitangi Tribunal, 1989; Selby, 1999). In 1894 the School Attendance Act forced all Māori children into the oppressive school structure through compulsory attendance. The final blow to the customary Māori knowledge system was the 1907 Tohunga Suppression Act that outlawed native healers, teachers, specialists and experts. The new laws were being implemented with swiftness and solemn consequences for those who breached them. Overall the colonisation of our education system significantly impacted our complex Māori knowledge systems, customs and language.

Essentially, the 1835 Declaration of Independence and the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi were ignored by the British settlers. The native population declined and immigrant population increased, native lands were stolen and a full time militia was imported, legislation was enforced, European education was implemented and the immigrant population became invading colonists. In a short amount of time Māori moved from sovereign nations to diminished impoverished landless oppressed colonised peoples. The Māori people along with the Māori language were left to languish.

Māori responses

Contrary to popular colonial belief, Māori did not cede sovereignty and neither did we accept the cruel process of colonisation. The 1835 Declaration and the 1840 Treaty were both strategic documents that expressed the sovereignty and independence of Māori and outlined the intended relationship with British colonial settlers. Those two actions form part of our legacy of Māori resistance and our ongoing demands to acknowledge Māori sovereign rights.

Throughout our history Māori continue to strategize, protest, and call for change (Walker, 2004). These responses include delegations to the monarch in London, letters soliciting support for Māori sovereign rights (and those indicated in the Declaration and the Treaty), and the establishment of the Kingitanga – a Kingship to provide a unified voice for Maori as a counter measure to the British Queen (Walker, 2004). By 1842 Māori had already established Māori language newspapers and were sharing the current events of the time in them (Keegan, Cunningham & Apperley, 1999). Quite often the newspapers were a means of communicating trading prices or issues with colonial settlers and today they remain a resource of the Māori language (see Niupepa Māori: Māori newspapers, www.nzdl.org). In 1860 Māori refused to relinquish lands which led to the outbreak of land wars in Aotearoa (for example see: O'Malley, 2016). Many Māori fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, and children were killed because they opposed the British theft (O'Malley, 2016), in other places Māori offered peaceful resistance as in Parihaka but the violation of women and children persisted (Scott, 1975). Today many accounts of those events and the immediate outcomes of those events are remembered in Māori language song, chant and in the oral traditions of our peoples. While the general population of Aotearoa/New Zealand seems to have forgotten our national history, for Māori people these events are explicitly recalled in many of our cultural rituals.

Demands for the colonial settler government to honour the 1840 Treaty continue to this date, and a number of protests have opposed ongoing government underdevelopment of Māori nations (Harris, 2004). A leading protest in the early 1970s was instigated calling for recognition of the Māori language after sociologist Richard Benton (1972) identified that the Māori language was in serious decline. Motivated by the findings two groups of young Māori, Ngā Tama Toa and Te Reo Māori Society, petitioned the government to allow the Māori language back into the school curriculum (Te Rito, 2008).

> 'The people involved in the Te Reo Māori Society and Ngā Tamatoa hailed from all the tribes. Many were first generation city-dwellers, their parents having migrated from their rural villages to the cities after World War II, as

> part of the mass urbanisation of the time. For some of these migrant families, physical detachment often led to a detachment from the culture and language of their rural beginnings. Many people of this generation of Māori bore an unwarranted shame that was not of their own making – that of not knowing their own native tongue.' (Te Rito, 2008, p.2)

The petition was about the Māori language; however its intrinsic link to the culture was not understated. The aspiration for the Māori language was and is a mere reflection of the aspirations for Māori in general to flourish. The petition itself resulted in the establishment of Māori Language Day to commemorate the Māori language in classrooms across the country bringing national attention to the Māori language and in 1975 the campaign evolved into Māori Language Week.

Furthering Māori protest efforts, in 1975 Whina Cooper, aged 79, marched over 1,000 kilometres on foot from the northern most tip of Aotearoa to the steps of parliament. Whina's mantra for the protest march was 'not one more acre' and opposed ongoing theft of Māori lands (Walker, 2004). During the 1970s several land occupations also took place to reclaim stolen lands, but the processes also called attention to the dispossession of Maori nations, the transgression of Maori rights, and a demand to honour the Treaty of Waitangi (Harris, 2004). During the 1970s Māori communities were seriously considering what action was required to maintain and enhance the Māori language and the lives of Māori people. By 1980 Richard Benton (1991) identified that the number of native Māori language speakers (those whose first language is Māori) was less than 20%; and communities prepared further responses to the outcomes of colonisation. One such response was the emergence of 'Whakatupuranga Rua Mano – generation 2000' (Winiata, 2006) – a development plan to advance the aspirations of three particular iwi (Māori nations). This plan resulted in the establishment of the self-funded 'Te Wānanga o Raukawa' in 1981, the inaugural Māori tertiary institution. It was part of a strategic plan to grow the knowledge of the Māori language and custom, among other expertise (Winiata, 2006) and paved the way for other Māori tertiary institutions to reclaim our customary knowledge and language.

At the same time serious concern for the state of the Māori language prompted Māori communities across the country to establish Kohanga Reo (Language Nests) in 1982 (Tomlins-Jahnke & Warren, 2011). The Māori language immersion early childhood (preschool ages 0-4) education centres were established by elders and other adults as a means of revitalising the Māori language and Māori educational philosophies. The initiatives were not funded by the government, and Māori communities rallied together to support their children and grandchildren attending the centres (Tomlins-Jahnke & Warren, 2011; Tamati, 2000). Kohanga Reo flourished with around 704 centres in existence by the new millennium (Tamati, 2000). The Kohanga Reo appeared on marae (ancestral homes), garages, and in homes across the country, these centres signalled a renaissance for the Māori language and culture, but moreover, Kohanga Reo signalled a renewed spirit and commitment to the development of Māori children in a Māori way. Simultaneously, Māori language communities developed other teaching and learning programmes for the Māori language. Operating again outside of government structures, 'Te Ātaarangi' emerged as a total immersion language program to teach adults how to speak

Māori (see: teataarangi.org.nz). Kura Kaupapa Māori or Māori language primary/elementary schools (ages 5-12) were established in 1985 (Ministry of Education, 2010). Again, the government refused to fund the schools and once again Māori communities united to supply a physical location, teachers, resources, administration, and all other necessary services required of a school (Tomlins-Jahnke & Warren, 2011). It would seem that the old assimilation policies and agendas of the government in the 1800s had persisted into the late 1900s. It would take nine years of Kura Kaupapa Māori operation for the colonial settler government to fund these schools, but it was clear that Māori were demanding a different approach to education (Tomlins-Jahnke & Warren, 2011). Wharekura or Māori language secondary/high schools (ages 13-18) then followed on from Kohanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori, completing Māori language education options from early childhood through to secondary/high school (Tomlins-Jahnke & Warren, 2011).

While these efforts were taking place at the grassroots level, Māori across the country had convened to call attention to the breach of the Treaty of Waitangi with regard to the state of the Māori language (Waitangi Tribunal, 1989). Māori insistence for official recognition of the Māori language resulted in the 1987 Māori Language Act, and the establishment of Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, a national Māori Language Commission to govern the development of the Māori language. From this position Māori broadcasting gained a space on the airways in the form of Māori radio in 1987, and decades later a Māori television station was established in 2004 (Walker, 2004; Smith & Abel, 2008). The process was a highly contested by non-Māori who thought that Māori might be receiving special privilege in receiving the radio and television broadcast frequencies (Smith & Abel, 2008). Regardless, both radio and television provided a liberty for the Māori language to be heard in homes and common living across the country which is now accessible across the world. Some 40 years after the initial petitions to government to protect the Māori language our first piece of legislation written in the Māori language emerged - Te Ture mō te Reo Māori: the Māori Language Act 2016. This Act acknowledges the status of the Māori language and in addition to the Māori Language Commission it establishes a forum for regional representatives on language revitalisation.

Even through the oppressive legislation Māori have responded in a myriad of ways to maintain Māori sovereign rights which has often involved the Māori language. Arguably the largest Māori development movement has taken place in reclaiming our Māori language education spaces (Te Rito, 2008). Of critical importance here is to identify that the Māori language carries with it profound cultural value systems and understandings (Fishman, 1996). In this sense, the revitalisation of the Māori language is also about the rejuvenation of the Māori spirit.

Naming Māori education:

The establishment of Māori education institutions are major feats where Māori language and education philosophies are the norm. They are sites of resistance against the oppressive legislation and agendas of the colonial settler government. This resistance is also present in the language used in the naming of our education spaces as described by Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2012):

> 'By 'naming the world' people name their realities. For communities there are realities which can only be found, as self-evident concepts, in the indigenous language; they can never be captured by another language' (p.159)

Māori have experienced the renaming of our world, even in the education sector. The term 'Wānanga' comes from the customary Māori learning houses or 'Whare Wānanga' as described in our creation narratives as the place our ancestor Tāne-Mahuta retrieved our original knowledge. The initial names for contemporary Māori tertiary institutions was 'Whare Wānanga', however the government opposed the use of this phrase as they deemed that 'Whare Wānanga' should be reserved for western universities (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999). In this way the full term is co-opted by the government and Māori are denied customary use of this phrase (see: Waitangi Tribunal, 1999; Smith, 2000). Māori then elected to use 'wānanga', a more simple version of the phrase at least for the time being. In contrast, the use of the phrase 'Kohanga Reo' or Language Nest garnered no such opposition, perhaps reflecting the newness of the phrase and the initiative. By the time the Māori language primary schools were established Māori were much more aware of the profound impact that Māori education was making. The term **'Kura Kaupapa** Māori' utilised two distinct terms:

Kura: to educate, to teach, to gather to learn, school (Moorfield, 2003).

Kaupapa: topic, plan, purpose, agenda, programme, initiative (Moorfield, 2003).

Kaupapa Māori: Māori agendas, Māori purposes, Māori topics, Māori institutions, Māori ideology, Māori principles (Moorfield, 2003). This implies that **Kaupapa** Māori approaches are based in Māori customary knowledge, practises and values (Pihama & Cram, 2002). This term is also expressed in Māori research (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012).

The use of the phrase 'Kura Kaupapa Māori' identifies that these places of learning emerge from knowledge that is distinctly Māori, and from pedagogy and philosophy that reflect Māori ways of being. The term is carefully constructed so that it could not be co-opted by the state. Finally the use of the term 'Wharekura' reclaims a customary house of learning that is described as the original house of learning in our creation narratives. This term is used for Māori language secondary/high schools.

Examining the names of Māori education institutions highlights two key factors. First, Māori wish to express our world as we understand it, couched in our own narratives and philosophies of the world. Second, naming our world is continually contested by colonial power structures.

Te Reo Māori: the state of the Māori language

The impact of colonisation on the Māori language is undeniable. The 1980s brought the organic creations of Kohanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Maori into Māori communities that sought to re-instil the Māori language as a native language for young people. At the time less than 20% of Māori people

were native speakers of the Māori language (Benton, 1991). By 1996 the official New Zealand census identified that 25% of Māori could converse in the Māori language (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). There seemed to be an increase of speakers, but by the 2013 census the statistics showed a decline to 21% for Māori who could converse in the Māori language (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). By this time the number of children conversing in the Māori language was recorded and showed that 5% of Māori children could converse in Māori. No analysis of the education system of those children took place; however a corresponding 5% of Māori children happened to be in Māori language education – Kohanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). It is no coincidence that the role of the Māori language schooling system has become the bastion of language for our young people, and for future generations of Māori language speakers.

One outcome of Māori educational institutions is an increased success rate of Māori students. An analysis of national secondary/high school achievement standards shows that Māori language schools, outperform mainstream students (Warren, 2014). In general mainstream schools the 2012 national achievement rate across the last three years of school was around 78%, in comparison the national Māori pass rate was only 68% (Duff, 2013; Education Counts, 2013; New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2013). This indicates a major disparity for Māori children in the New Zealand education system. In contrast, Māori students who attend Māori language schools, (immersion school and schools with compulsory Māori language) averaged a pass rate of 89%. In most cases those schools are low-socio economic and statistically should have low pass rates, but instead boasted 100% pass rates for some of their year groups (Warren, 2014).

In current day Aotearoa/New Zealand mainstream English language education is failing Māori children. Māori schooling on the other hand is proving to not only allow successful completion of national testing standards but also successful acquisition of language and culture. Young Māori excel within systems that are founded upon the Māori language and culture – in spaces that embrace their identity and reconnect them to our creation narratives. This often surprises people to find that a native education system works for the native population. However, it is not a surprise to those who committed their children to Māori language education over the years. In the establishment of Māori language schooling Graham Smith (2003) identified that the general sentiment of parents and families was that they felt they could not do 'any worse' than the mainstream English language education. Those stalwarts believed in our cultural origins, and refused to be severed from the strong narratives of our ancestors. It is from within this deep knowing that Māori children (and their families) were relieved from the oppressive education system of the colonial state, and Māori language and cultural values were re-imbedded into the learning spaces of our children. It is important to remember that our deep and profound histories are entrenched in the use of our language, and that our Māori language institutions are sites of resistance to colonisation. In essence the use of our own language exhibits our aspirations to *be* Māori, and to proclaim our connection to our own world and creation narrative.

Conclusion

The state of the Māori language is an outcome of colonisation; its decline reflects the changing power structure of Aotearoa within the process of colonial settlement. Exemplified in Māori education initiatives are the continuing efforts of Māori to seek recognition of Māori sovereign rights - the Māori language is a key indicator of that realisation. Māori language revitalisation efforts are more than just the revival of vocabulary and grammar. In reference to research theory and understanding our own world Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) says:

> 'Part of the exercise is about recovering our own stories of the past. This is inextricably bound to a recovery of our language and epistemological foundations. It is also about reconciling and what is really important about the past with what is important about the present, and reprioritizing accordingly.' (p.40)

As Māori we can celebrate some great advances in our struggle to revitalise the Māori language, such as new generations of Māori language speakers. However we cannot be complacent about the survival of our language when only 21% of our people can converse in the Māori language, and only 5% of Māori children (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). The repossession of the Māori language is a political statement and there is still some way to go to secure the Māori language as a flourishing language. We must collectively continue to foster a love for the language and our culture so that it may be nurtured in the hearts and minds of all citizens in Aotearoa/New Zealand; and at the same time we must deconstruct the colonial power structures that show no love for our language, our culture or us.

I implore all citizens of the world to pay heed to the state of all indigenous languages, lest a language be lost taking its unique culture with it. For Aotearoa/New Zealand, the survival of the Māori language is the survival of the Māori culture and the Māori people. Perhaps this final statement is best described by Sir James Henare:

> 'The language is the core of our Maori culture and mana. Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Maori (The language is the life force of the mana Maori). If the language dies, as some predict, what do we have left to us? Then, I ask our own people who are we? … according to Oliver Wendell Holmes… 'Every language is a temple in which the soul of those who speak it is enshrined.' Therefore the taonga [treasure], our Maori language, as far as our people are concerned, is the very soul of the Maori people. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but suffer the loss of his own soul? What profit to the Maori if we lose our language and lose our soul? Even if we gain the world. To be monolingual, a Japanese once said, is to know only one universe. . . .' (Waitangi Tribunal, 1989, p. 34).

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Recebido em 28/03/2017

Aprovado em 18/04/2017