



Kituwah Academy's students at the Cherokee Indian Fair Parade. Photo: Jamie Malcolm-Brown, Cultural Survival

LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION IN AOTEAROA AND THE UNITED STATES

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL #4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

POSSIBLE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why are endangered languages a global issue?
- Why are so many languages facing extinction? Who has been involved in this process?
- How is language connected to other parts of a society like the economy, education, government, and culture?
- Why is language diversity important?
- How is language connected to identity?
- How is language connected to power?

BACKGROUND

There are around 7,000 languages spoken on earth and experts say that almost half of these will disappear in the next 80 years. Some estimates say that one language disappears every 2 weeks. Many of these languages are spoken by indigenous and first nations peoples native to the land they live on. The disappearance of language is often connected to other political, economic, environmental, health, land, and education challenges faced by indigenous and first nations peoples throughout the world. Many of these groups have been fighting dominant governments and cultures against genocide and for their freedom of government, culture, language, and rights to land for centuries. There are also other global developments that have contributed to these processes, such as globalization and technology.

The loss of language is a global problem because of the culture, history, traditions, independence, worldviews, and knowledge language holds and supports. Language shapes how people view, understand, and interact with the world and people around them. With every lost language is a lost history and culture.

There has been an increased awareness of endangered languages in recent years which has increased the efforts to save them. This process of saving endangered languages is called “language revitalization.” The United States and New Zealand (Aotearoa in Māori) are two places where there are thriving language revitalization efforts.

Māori people are the group native to Aotearoa. There are around 100 Māori iwi (or tribes). Māori is one of three official languages in Aotearoa (the others being English and New Zealand sign language). Despite being an official language of the country, and the native language of the country's indigenous population, it faces endangerment as the number of speakers has declined throughout history. Beginning in the 1980's, there have been efforts throughout the country by the government, schools, music, television, and radio to preserve the language and the culture, traditions, and worldviews it encompasses. These efforts are ongoing and will take more time and resources before the work is “done.”

While the exact number is not known, it is believed that there were once over 300 native languages spoken in the United States. Now, it is estimated that there are 175 languages spoken by over 573 Native Tribal Nations and native groups (573 tribes are recognized by the US government, but there are more that are not because it can be challenging to get this recognition). Some say that it could go from the 175 languages spoken today to just 20 by 2050 if revitalization efforts do not happen. The revitalization challenge is different in the US, as there are 175 languages to preserve, rather than the 1 main language in Aotearoa. Similar to Aotearoa, there are many revitalization efforts in action throughout the US, especially in schools.

In both Aotearoa and the United States, many of the native languages now endangered were once banned and punished by governments in efforts towards cultural genocide. In the United States, young Native American kids were sent to mandatory boarding schools where they were punished for speaking their native languages, practicing their religion, or participating in other cultural practices. Now, these groups are facing, and stepping up to, the challenge of preserving and growing languages and cultures that for so long faced (and still face) formal and violent efforts to erase them.

RESOURCES

Personal Stories

Aotearoa (New Zealand)

- [Esther Rakete's story \(Liberate Ed\)](#)
- [Mana: The power in knowing who you are | Tame Iti \(TEDxAuckland\)](#)
- [Māori speaking non-Māori relate where they fit in te ao Māori \(Marae Tv\)](#)

USA

- *Music Video: [Prayers in a Song by Tall Paul \(PBS\)](#) (Lyrics [HERE](#))
- * [Living Language \(The Ways\)](#)
- * [Indigenous Language Revitalization, April Charlo \(TEDx\)](#)
- * [Our Mother Tongues: Voices](#)

Art and Images

Aotearoa (New Zealand)

- * [Māori Language Week protest march \(NZ History\)](#)
- * [Māori protest movements \(Te Ara\)](#)
- * [Te reo Māori recognised as official language \(NZ History\)](#)

USA

- [Photos: Before and After Carlisle \(Radiolab\)](#)
- [Assimilation through Education \(Library of Congress\)](#)

Articles

- [Languages: Why We Must Save Dying Tongues \(BBC\)](#)

Aotearoa (New Zealand)

- * [Piecing Together Māori, Word by Word \(Cultural Survival\)](#)
- * [In New Zealand, a Translated 'Moana' Bolsters an Indigenous Language \(NY Times\)](#)
- * [This New Zealand Band Is Trying To Save Maori Culture One Head Banger At A Time \(NPR\)](#)

USA

- * [Learning Language Through Hip Hop \(The Ways\)](#)
- [Navajo Presidential Race Shaken By Language Gap \(NPR\)](#)
- [Revitalizing the Ojibwe Language \(Penn Arts & Sciences\)](#)
- * [Hawaiian Language Revival Used as Model for Other Indigenous Languages \(NBC News\)](#)
- [Saving America's Endangered Languages \(Cultural Survival\)](#)
- [Promoting Legislative Advocacy: What Laws Currently Exist? \(NCNALSP\)](#)

Data & Maps

- [Interactive map: Native Land](#)

Aotearoa (New Zealand)

- [Māori language likely doomed, despite recent uptick in speakers - study \(Newshub\)](#)
- [Ngā puna kōrero: Where Māori speak te reo – infographic \(Stats NZ\)](#)

USA

- [Native American Translations For 27 State Names \(Native Languages\)](#)
- [National atlas. Indian tribes, cultures & languages : \[United States\] \(Library of Congress\)](#)

Videos

- [The Māori Visit Wounded Knee \(Rising Voices\)](#)

Aotearoa (New Zealand)

- * [The importance of correctly pronouncing Māori words \(Finnian Galbraith\)](#)
- [Indigenous peoples around the world still look to Māori for leadership and guidance \(Marae Tv\)](#)

USA

- * [The Lakota Language Nest - Lakǰó'iyapi Hoǰpí \(Lakota Language Consortium\)](#)
- [First Speakers: Restoring the Ojibwe Language \(TPT\)](#)
- * [Waadookodaading: Ojibwe Language Immersion School \(The Ways\)](#)

* = this resource includes a solution

