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# Revitalizing indigenous languages through indigenous immersion education

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This article provides a context for understanding indigenous immersion education and the issues surrounding the model as a critical strategy for revitalization of indigenous languages. Through articulating narratives and drawing on literatures internationally, an image of indigenous language education models emerges. Inspired by strong heritage language learner identities, program models are shaped around building family and community relationships, revitalizing cultural traditions and practices, and re-establishing indigenous language identity in its homeland. Indigenous language immersion models vary as they are developed in vastly different contexts. Three distinct contexts — Ojibwe, Māori, and Hawaiian — are described to illustrate the diversity and range of models. The article closes with some reflections from practice that will provide a context for building a research agenda to advance the revitalization of indigenous languages through immersion.

**Keywords:** indigenous language immersion education, language and culture revitalization, Hawaiian-medium, Māori-medium, Ojibwe language

## 1. Introduction

Efforts to sustain indigenous languages, as intentional political resistance to the dominant colonizing forces, have always existed. Elders retained their languages in spite of physical and emotional punishment, traumatic encounters of children being torn away from home, and systemic abuse that was by design intended to extinguish the language and culture of its indigenous populations and assimilate indigenous identity to that of its colonizer. Some Native American people hid their children at home, keeping them from the boarding schools and raising them in their mother tongues (Adams, 1995; Treuer, 2001). Others made indigenous language efforts a part of the underground culture, like the ceremonies that were also illegal.

In this sense, indigenous immersion efforts have always existed in the hearts and minds of survivors and in the efforts of native people to use their first language. To write of this idea as if it had recently started is ahistorical. In recent generations, however, there has been a concerted effort to formally establish indigenous immersion schooling as a part of indigenous language revitalization. That said, in this article, we will bring forward our distinct ideologies, as scholars and community members involved in indigenous revitalization, and assemble some of what is known about indigenous immersion around the world. We ask: What do we know about how identity is driving indigenous immersion efforts?

The revitalization through immersion movement, as a transnational network of like-minded people, is a part of the legacy of those who somehow survived attempted language annihilation and is gaining momentum around the world. It is these efforts we turn our attention to in this article through a review of published research, as well as by collecting stories from selected programs. It is important to note that much of what is happening in indigenous communities is not currently published as research or narrative. Moreover, what has been published (including Internet sites) is beyond what we can claim to cover in this piece.

We realize that it is common academic practice to give a “bird’s eye view” or a grand-metanarrative of a field (Lyotard, 1984). However, in the post-modern and indigenous traditions of knowledge re-production, we choose to start by recognizing that our knowledge is partial (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) and constructed in this academic tradition as a starting place, a place that invites more stories and collaborations to add to what we have named. We have called on friends, relatives and comrades in indigenous language revitalization; we have read some of the literature available; we have listened at conferences and compared notes at ceremonies; we have visited, networked and learned from each other first hand. These oral and literate pieces comprise the methods that have informed what we know of the indigenous immersion movement (Dance, Gutierrez, Hermes, 2010; Hermes, in press; Hermes, 1997). And while such methods may be dismissed as anecdotal, we recognize that even as we collect information in ways that tend to be marginalized in some research circles, we are re-shaping academia through indigenous epistemologies. We unapologetically use methods (tools) that are appropriate for the work at hand. Although little published research exists to provide quantitative evidence of the growth or importance of indigenous immersion, the data are in the stories. With this in mind, we start by sampling the published literature on indigenous immersion. We move to giving a few in-depth examples of immersion models from various nations of indigenous peoples.

Although they are commonly used in schools, and in some places operationalized differently through governmental policy, there is no international definitive definition for indigenous “immersion” and “medium” programs. These terms are

often used interchangeably with operational definitions that are specific to the language group as related to historic practice, implementation, policy and funding. In this article we use the term immersion like other contributors to this special issue (see Tedick, this issue), i.e., to refer to school-based subject matter instruction in the indigenous language. Indigenous language-medium education is discussed later in this article using specific examples from New Zealand and Hawai'i.

We are cognizant of the fact that we are part of the indigenous communities we write for and about while addressing a broader community of practice including mainstream immersion educators and researchers. We will begin by making clear the contours of our particular needs how programs for indigenous immersion are shaped in response. We review what we have found in the published research in indigenous immersion. Next, we showcase selected indigenous immersion and medium programs: Ojibwe, Hawaiian, and Māori. Finally, we end where we started by looking at the greater needs for indigenous immersion education, which will provide the context for building a research agenda as defined by our histories as indigenous people.

## 2. Literature review

It is important to note the growth in the literature in the past fourteen years (2000–2014), ranging from reports of program start-ups to now conducting research on the second generation of children to attend immersion (McCarty, 2003; Rau, 2005; Schwartz, 2011, Windwalker Corporation & the Center for Applied Linguistics [CAL]. 2012). This overview is informed by a cross section of that literature focused on immersion within an indigenous language revitalization context, with many examples from the North American and the Pacific, and fewer from Africa and Asia.

### 2.1 Impact of colonialism and indigenous language revitalization

Where does the motivation to learn an indigenous heritage language come from? We know that our identity, history, culture and even cultural recovery are central. Learning an endangered indigenous language is an emotionally charged proposition and a constant reminder of our precarious state. Nonetheless, we take on the risks and challenges of immersion because of our identity: nearly all involved, including a vast majority of our teachers, are *heritage language learners* themselves (Noori 2009; Reyhner, 2010).

An historical force influencing indigenous language revitalization is patterns of colonization (Mufwene & Vigouroux, 2008). Nations who have inherited settler

colonial patterns are markedly different from those whose colonial settlers have left; nations colonized with intense racial divides and monolingual policies are in a different state than those indigenous nations where the colonials intermarried and/or developed multilingual patterns. Africa and other places of trade colonization “did not develop the kind of socio-economic structures that would entice natives to acquire the colonial language as vernacular “ (Mufwene & Vigouroux, 2008, p.4). The development of bilingualism in this context was associated with the urban elite, or the elite traders who used European languages as the *lingua franca*. Trade colonization is in stark contrast to settler colonialism, where forced language learning and assimilation were an extension of policies aimed at genocide. At the very least, in the American settler colonial context, we can assume then that our learning and re-learning of our languages is always shrouded by generational post-traumatic stress (Braveheart, 2007) and shaped by a lingering colonial school structure.

Indigenous immersion programs exist in the context of the widespread failure of colonial schooling. Drop out or “push out” rates, low scores on standardized achievement tests, tests of motivation and cultural pride, and numerous other reports indicate this failure (May, 2013). In response to this failure, indigenous immersion schooling has been a key strategy for revitalization, and a response to failed colonial schooling. Further, unlike in many immersion programs offered in modern world languages, individual fluency is not the end goal in itself. Rather, the end goal is language and culture revitalization in the larger community, and immersion schooling is one of the means to that end. The implication is that languages are being spoken outside of schools and transmitted in the homes, becoming the norm once again in the community (Hinton, 2013; Wilson, 2014). Thus, “revernacularization” is a pressing concern and a major factor in our research agenda (Wilson, 2008).

Indigenous immersion schools often think of teaching *from and through our cultural viewpoints and knowledge systems* as a part of fostering a rich language environment. For indigenous immersion schools, culture is a central driving force, although constrained currently by state regulations, academic subjects, and standardized testing. The idea that our indigenous epistemologies, through our indigenous languages, should populate the curricula in our schools is a radical idea that has not yet been fully realized. In this sense, many immersion schools are constantly pulled by the tension of the “western” curriculum on one hand, and the making of a space to develop a deeper iteration of an indigenous curriculum on the other (Adams, 1995; Harrison & Papa, 2005; McCarty, 2009; Windwalker Corporation & CAL, 2012; Yamauchi, Ceppi, & Lau-Smith, 2000).

## 2.2 Indigenous identity development

Situated within the larger goal of language revitalization and indigenous nation building, indigenous immersion education is inherently political, and revitalization is deeply identity-driven (Hermes, in press; Pease-Pretty On Top, 2003; May, 2013; McCarty, 2003; McCarty & Zepeda, 2006; Smith, 1999; Timutimu, Ornsby-Teki, & Ellis, 2009; Wilson & Kamanā, 2006, 2011). Here we use identity to refer to a person fluent in a specific discourse (and language) that is recognized by others in that specific sociocultural context (Gee, 2000–2001). Reyhner (2006) points out that indigenous identity has much to do with establishing connections, building relationships, and understanding ourselves in relation to all the things around us.

Speaking through an indigenous language is one of the deepest forms of identity reclamation and validation for people of indigenous heritage. We propose that through our research and experience, we have observed identity as a driving force for models of immersion we see in indigenous communities. Some suggest post-colonial political dynamics, especially internalized oppression,<sup>1</sup> present the biggest ideological and emotional challenges to successful immersion programs (Bishop, Berryman & Richardson, 2002; Hermes, 2007; Johnston, 2002; May, 2013; Warner, 1999; Wilson & Kamanā, 2011).

The goal of revitalization is intergenerational transmission (Fishman, 1996; Hinton, 2011) — thereby deeply influencing program design (Warner, 2001). The broader goal can also be thought of as community building (Fishman, 1996). These two ideas — intergenerational transmission and community building — inform the literature on indigenous immersion. First speakers of our languages, (often elders) work with second language (L2) learners to ensure that they have the proficiency needed to teach in immersion settings (Hinton, 2013). In this way, identity, deeply rooted through language and relationship, is the individual expression of group indigenous sovereignty.

The cultural and linguistic survival and sovereignty of indigenous people on a community level can be understood by looking at identity questions on an individual level. What do indigenous language immersion schools do to strengthen contemporary indigenous identities? Since revitalization of cultural knowledge and identity are central goals to immersion schools, a closer look at this link is necessary (Durie, 1998; Johnston, 2002; May, 1999; Wilson & Kamanā, 2011).

Through indigenous immersion schools, language exerts a strong effect on identity formation, regardless of the ethnic or racial identity (Timutimu, Ornsby-Teki & Ellis, 2009; Wilson & Kamanā, 2011). Students report feelings of pride in their Native identities (Harrison & Papa, 2005), although some may find the burden of cultural and linguistic responsibility to be a lot to bear (Hinton, 2011; Luning & Yamauchi, 2010). Not much is formally known about the effect of

indigenous language learning on the learners' identity formation. However, many programs seek an *indigenization of the education system* as a strength-based place from which dynamic indigenous language and culture rich environments can further foster the cultural identity and positive sense of well-being, self-image, and homeland connection (Durie, 1998; McCarty, 2005; Reyhner, 2010). Preceding language immersion schools in North America, culture-based schools worked for two decades to bring culture, or change the base of American schooling to represent the culture of Native American people. Growing indigenous identities in school settings through immersion education is a different approach to the identity work that many indigenous peoples of the Americas recognize needs to be done within educational systems (Reyhner, 2010).

### 3. Indigenous immersion program characteristics and challenges

Indigenous immersion program models are diverse and distinct to place, language, identity, culture, and history. Internationally, they share some common issues and epistemological challenges in the development and implementation of their models. These elements include shared community vision, legal status and governmental support, shortage of licensed teachers who are proficient in the target language, and resources including facilities, lack of curricular materials, and financial support, especially in the initial start-up phase. (Kawai'ae'a, Alencastre & Housman 2007; McCarty, 2005; Tapine & Waiti, 1997; Wilson & Kamanā, 2001, 2006, 2011; Wilson & Kawai'ae'a, 2007)

Community and government responses to language endangerment are highly context-dependent, and program models emerge from what the community has the capacity to enact (King, 2001; McCarty & Watahomigie, 1998; Murphy 2012). Partial immersion, total immersion (including language nests), and two-way immersion (see Tedick, this issue) are all common program models found in indigenous immersion programs (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). For example, Rough Rock Demonstration School (Navajo) started in the early 1970s as a bilingual English/Navajo program and has since shifted and expanded its model to three Navajo immersion schools in response to increased community concern (Holm 2006; Johnson 2013; Johnson & Legatz, 2006; May, 2013; McCarty, 2008).

Inspired by the Hawaiian/Māori "language nest" pre-school and school program models, some indigenous immersion schools share common characteristics. These characteristics include: (a) total immersion and indigenous immersion starting as early as infancy; (b) tendency to add grades "up" (that is, they begin in infancy/preschool and add a higher grade each year); (c) family involvement; and (d) delayed introduction of the majority language (Grades 3–5) with wide

variation, depending on local and national policies (Kawai'ae'a 2012; McCarty, 2009; Te Rūnanga Nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, 2008).

Across many of these schools, we see tension between indigenous and western epistemologies. First, there is the tension between the goals of "academic achievement" (based on standardized norms) and language revitalization for community-building. Some research cites overall student achievement on standardized tests as evidence of the success of indigenous immersion schools (see Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, this issue). However, this tells us little about the achievement of other purposes and goals of the schools, such as the quality of language acquisition, language transfer back into the homes, and whether language gains are bringing us closer to revitalization of our languages (May, 1999; McCarty, 2005, 2012; Slaughter, 1997; Reyhner, 2010).

Some studies indicate that there are positive ripple effects from the immersion schools in indigenous communities. For example, student learning of the heritage language and in some cases the "indigenous national or official language" can inspire family and community enthusiasm toward language learning (Luning & Yamauchi, 2010; McCarty, 2003; Wilson, 2014). One of the assets found among immersion school families and parents are the formation of interconnected support groups (Wilson & Kamanā, 2001). A vertical two-way transmission between home and school suggests that immersion schooling could be a strategy to start community language revitalization (Luning & Yamauchi, 2010; Hinton, 2013).

Teacher certification is a huge area of tension for indigenous immersion programs (Durie, 1998; Johnston, 2002). For example, in the U.S., indigenous immersion programs that are state-supported are also required to have certified or licensed teachers and in most places lack accountability measures and adequate support systems to ensure the teachers' ability to deliver instruction through the indigenous language. Teacher shortages also limit the ability of programs to develop full indigenous immersion models and expansion of new school sites (Kawai'ae'a, 2007; Wilson & Kawai'ae'a, 2007).

Lastly, the issue of student assessment is a challenge for many indigenous immersion programs, as assessments should align with specific instructional languages and cultures (Peter, 2007; Peter & Hirata-Edds, 2009; Peter, Hirata-Edds & Montgomery-Anderson, 2008; Peter et al., 2003; Rau, 2005). But federally-mandated testing, currently driven by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (in the U.S. and similar nationalizing language policies in other countries (e.g. Norway [Sami], New Zealand [Māori]), force schools into using standardized tests conducted in the official national language (e.g. English) to measure and validate students' progress on assessments developed for mainstream education. This type of discursive practice, standardized testing, is contrary to the primary goal of indigenous language revitalization. And yet, depending on an indigenous school's funding



source, they are typically beholden to these tests, and in some cases schools are penalized as low performing schools if they resist, certainly within the U.S. context (Wilson, 2012, 2013).

In the next section, examples of indigenous immersion program models bring to life these very characteristics and challenges.

#### **4. Examples of indigenous immersion program models**

Three models have been selected to illustrate the diversity of language revitalization efforts internationally and the effects that language immersion has on the formation of indigenous identity. Each of these school sites has grassroots/community action beginnings and illustrates the importance of indigenous language vitality based upon many factors, including the crucial availability of fluent speakers of endangered languages, increasing family/community commitment, and raising social consciousness about the importance of indigenous language revitalization.

Two of the models are portrayed from an insider perspective, as we are participants in the development of the schools as parents, grandparents, and educators. The remaining model is portrayed from outsider perspectives based on familiarity with the context through visitation, relationships, and networking. For this example we asked administrators to provide a personal description of the school model and philosophy. Together these indigenous language models represent a broad diversity of real challenges and progress made for indigenous language situations internationally. They also demonstrate how language serves as the essential vehicle for which indigenous identity is practiced, understood, and expressed.

##### **4.1 Ojibwe immersion — Wicoie Nandagikendan and Waadokoodaading Ojibwe Immersion schools**

In the upper Midwest of the U.S. around the year 2000, two Ojibwe immersion schools opened. One in the Twin Cities of Minnesota, Wicoie Nandagikendan (Early Childhood Immersion Program) and another in northern Wisconsin, Waadokoodaading Ojibwe Immersion School. In 14 years both schools have survived and grown with needs for a growing infrastructure, and in particular the need for proficient Ojibwe speakers to staff programs. These first schools that opened were immersion survival schools initiated by families and/or students who had taken Ojibwe language classes. Ojibwe was taught as an L2 in tribal and public schools and had not produced any fluent speakers. Despite the fact that Ojibwe is one of the most frequently taught indigenous languages (J. Nichols, personal communication, May, 2005), families realized that their parents, the current

generation of elders who were raised first in Ojibwe, were quickly passing. The window of opportunity to work with them was narrow.

Today, the revitalization movement in these two states is strong. A cadre of L2 speakers has grown to pull along other learners, making learning more efficient and effective than it was ten years ago. An advanced adult immersion camp, Ojibwemotaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminang (OOG), brings together these learners through a competitive process with the expressed intention of creating immersion teachers. This is a sort of “finishing school” for advanced proficiency. Adult classes at higher education institutes, largely taught by applied linguists, tend to use the grammar-translation method for teaching, and actual socially-situated speaking opportunities outside of the immersion schools and ceremonies are still rare. Hence, OOG strategically fills a gap between learning the grammar patterns and writing text and using Ojibwe to communicate.

The current programs have been inspired by the Hawaiian model, meaning they seek full immersion (at least 90% of day), starting in pre-school and growing from the ground up, providing some language classes or social events for parents and often requiring parent volunteer hours. Subject to federally mandated state testing, currently the schools do allow for instruction in English. Some programs have a designated English class, taught in English starting in the first grade. One out of five subjects taught in a day, this is approximately 20% of the program in the English language. Programs have worked closely with elders to produce curriculum and new vocabulary. Because Ojibwe lacks a written children’s literature tradition, this is an especially time-consuming job for teachers who must both produce curriculum and teach.

As the Ojibwe language is sacred to us, and many people in the schools are bound by ceremony and shared cultural traditions, this offers multi-leveled relationships and deep ties among school staff and families. The drive is to revitalize and rebuild community and relationships through our traditional language. Students and families are not motivated by the promise of a better job by joining these communities; in fact, many families who have not joined immersion are concerned with their children passing and doing well in school to secure employment:

The U.S. Department of Education reported in 2011 that the graduation rate of Minnesota Native American high school students was 42 percent, half the graduation rate for their white peers. Minnesota is one of eight states whose graduation rate for American Indian and Alaska Native students is less than 60 percent. (Red Lake Nation News, 2013, p. 1)

With these stark statistics in mind, the “choice” to place one’s child in an indigenous immersion school is not an easy one, as it’s a choice between two equally

compelling selections (Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh, 2012; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008). For Native Americans, success in school in the L1 (English) is such an uncertain proposition that enlisting in the immersion movement requires a leap of faith.

#### 4.2 Māori immersion — Mana Tamariki

One of the most advanced community action initiatives has been the *te reo Māori* (Māori language) revitalization movement in New Zealand. Beginning in 1981 with the *Te Kōhanga Reo* preschools and continuing on to the first *Kura Kaupapa Māori* (Māori philosophy) primary school in 1985, Māori language immersion education currently enrolls nearly 9,000 students across 470 *kōhanga reo* preschools and 17,343 students in Māori-medium programs, Levels 1–2 which incorporates 51%–100% Māori language use (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2010, 2013, 2014). These programs function in a range of settings. Approximately 6,000 students are enrolled in stand-alone *Kura Kaupapa Māori* where the whole environment is a total immersion Māori language environment. The remainder are enrolled in stand-alone *Kura ā-iwi* schools that operate from a tribal perspective and mainstream mainly English language schools where the Māori language is the language of instruction in immersion classes. The term “Māori language immersion education” is used to describe a broad range of schools using Māori language instruction from 0–100% Māori language use (Levels 1–6) (Table 1). Māori-medium schools are tied directly to a school funding operational definition that includes additional funding for schools at Levels 1–2. Recent data confirms that students totally immersed in the Māori language within a *Kura Kaupapa Māori* environment equal or surpass mainstream English language students in achieving secondary school qualifications (Schwartz, 2011).

One excellent school example is *Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Mana Tamariki*, located in Palmerston North in the Manawatu region of the North Island. *Mana Tamariki* opened in 1990 as a *kōhanga reo* preschool later establishing the *kura kaupapa Māori* portion of the school to provide a total immersion (Level 1) Māori school experience from preschool through high school. Enrollment of the child is a family experience, and at least one parent must speak only Māori to the child at all times. The ‘at-least-one-parent-rule’ was established in 1995 and has yielded positive Māori language results (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009; Toni Waho personal communication, May 8, 2014). Toni Waho and his partner Penny Poutu are two of the key drivers of the school. Toni was asked to describe school mission and model, which has the intergenerational transmission of *te reo Māori* within families as one of their principal goals.

**Table 1. Māori language immersion levels — Program models**

<b>Māori-medium Education</b>	
These programs offer Māori language at Level 1 (81–100% instruction in Māori) or Level 2 (51–80% instruction in Māori).	
<p><b>Māori-medium Models</b> — teach all or most curriculum subjects through Māori. These include Kura Kaupapa Māori, Wharekura, designated character schools.</p> <p><b>Kura Kaupapa Māori Schools</b> — are Māori immersion schools that are established by Māori to express Māori aspirations, values, principles, and practices with the goal of revitalizing Māori through Te Aho Matua o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori. They are strictly Level 1 schools. They receive additional funding to maintain their high Māori language standard environment. Full-time Level 1 teachers also receive an additional salary allowance.</p> <p><b>Kura Teina</b> (Mentored schools) — Kura Kaupapa Māori school communities that have applied to the Ministry of Education to become a stand-alone school. The kura teina operates and teaches children, either at the primary school year levels (Years 1 to 8) or at the wharekura school year levels (Years 9–15).</p>	<p><b>Kura Tuatahi</b> — Primary schools (Years 1 to 8, ages 5–13)</p> <p><b>Kura Arongatahi</b> — Composite/area schools are full school sites from Years 1 to 15, ages 5–18).</p> <p><b>Wharekura</b> — The secondary programme of a Kura Arongatahi (Years 9–15)</p> <p><b>Kura a-iwi</b> — Tribal schools that are established as special designated character schools. Their curriculum is based on their tribal foundations and may or may not run total immersion programmes. Like Kura Kaupapa Māori, they receive extra funding if their Māori language programmes meet Level 1 or 2 criteria.</p> <p><b>Immersion classes</b> — Māori language classes that meet Level 1 or Level 2 criteria and operate within an English-medium school.</p>
<b>Māori Language in English-Medium Models</b>	
Level 3: 31–50% instruction in Māori	Level 4b: At least 3 hours of instruction in Māori
Level 4a: 12–30% instruction in Māori	Level 5: Less than 3 hours of instruction in Māori
<p><b>Schools with Māori-medium education</b> — Some students have Māori language up to 50% of the time and the rest have no Māori language in instruction.</p> <p><b>Mixed Māori Language in Education Schools</b> — All students are either involved in Māori-medium education or have Māori language in English-medium education.</p> <p><b>Schools with Mixed Māori Language</b> — Some students have Māori-medium education, some have Māori language in English-medium education and some have no Māori language.</p>	
<b>No Māori Language in Education</b>	
Level 6: Taha Māori	No Māori Language Instruction

... Children enroll from as early as possible (below 1 year in most cases) and are able to be provided for up until they are 18 years old. Just prior to secondary school (year 8) they begin formal instruction in the English language for a morning a week, having been totally immersed for between 9–11 years, raised in a family where at least one parent speaks only the Māori language to them at all times. In junior secondary school their Māori language programme is 80%, and their English language programme is 20% of their school week. In senior secondary school their programme does not drop below 51% in the Māori language. This is a unique community in the national Māori language landscape.

The outcomes for the students are immense and there is no doubt in the minds of the leadership of this community it is the partnership forged between families, their children and the educators that is the primary contributing factor. If one party is not on board with the programme, the child will not thrive. Teachers cannot dictate and must work in partnership to build a learning programme and learning environment that is relevant, valued and desired by the recipients and their families. Parents must make the language commitment, turn their lives around to reorient to a Māori language journey for their descendants and engage with the educators as partners. Students must have a voice, even from the earliest years about what they learn and how they learn. Through *Te Aho Matua* — our national philosophical, educational and pedagogical guideline — the commitment of *Mana Tamariki* to the holiness — the indigenous spiritualism — of the child and their wholeness — not just one narrow aspect of their development but their total development — in partnership with the family and school is what works for *Mana Tamariki*.

Children graduate from *Mana Tamariki* as young adults, highly proficient bilinguals, steeped in Māori values and beliefs attaining the national senior secondary qualifications enabling them to continue their education at tertiary level, including university if they choose. They are proudly held up by their community as *raukura* — plumes of adornment — for their families, tribes, and nations as keepers of their Māori ways that they may pass on to the next generation through their indigenous language. (Toni Waho, personal communication, May 8, 2014)

### 4.3 Hawaiian Immersion and Hawaiian-medium education — Ke Kula 'o Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u

In contrast to New Zealand's definition for Māori-medium education, the Hawaiians use the term Hawaiian-medium for schools which seek revernacularization of Hawaiian by maintaining it as the primary language of the school, including operations and administration (Kawai'ae'a, 2012; Wilson & Kamanā, 2011, 2006; Wilson, 2008, 2014). The statewide program is referred to as *Ka Papahana Kaiapuni Hawai'i* or the Hawaiian language immersion program. The Hawai'i model for Hawaiian immersion/medium education has grown from its early grassroots

beginnings with the establishment of the Pūnana Leo preschools (<http://www.ahapunanaleo.org/>) in 1983 and the first Papahana Kaiapuni Hawai'i or Hawaiian Language Immersion Program in 1987 (<http://www.k12.hi.us/~kaiapuni/>). The Hawaiian language revitalization movement has made its greatest impact through education P–20. There are 11 Pūnana Leo preschools and 20 Hawaiian immersion/medium schools across the state serving some 2,500 students. Students may also pursue Bachelor's and advanced degrees through Hawaiian at Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College (College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i — Hilo (<http://www.olelo.hawaii.edu/khuok/mhh.php/>)). The movement has created increased interest and commitment to learning Hawaiian as demonstrated in the 2010 census, which estimated around 24,000 speakers of Hawaiian at varying degrees of proficiency (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

There are multiple models of Hawaiian immersion/medium education in Hawai'i that are offered through regular public and charter schools K–12. The perpetuation and revitalization of Hawaiian language is the goal for all programs. Depending on school facilities, availability of proficient and licensed teachers, curriculum, funding and administration, full and partial Hawaiian immersion and Hawaiian-medium schools are offered.

On Hawai'i island in the small town of Kea'au (near Hilo) stands a Hawaiian-medium school called Ke Kula o Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u (Nāwahī). The site is unique as it offers a kaia'ōlelo or total Hawaiian-medium educational experience from infant/toddler through high school in collaboration with the 'Aha Pūnana Leo, Department of Education, State Public Charter School Commission and Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College. Nāwahī is “designed for families, teachers and staff who have chosen to speak Hawaiian as the first and main language of the home, and also those who are in the process of establishing Hawaiian as the dominant language of the home” (<http://www.nawahi.org/>). Hawaiian is used exclusively by its teachers, staff, and students with growing numbers of its families raising their children through Hawaiian. Kauanoē Kamanā, principal of Nāwahī, shares her thoughts about Hawaiian-medium education:

When we think about language, we think about culture. When we think about culture, we think about authentic reality. And, so were not really talking about language methodology but instead the reestablishment of Hawaiian identity for Hawaiian people and for all people who identify with Hawai'i as their home. (Kamanā, television interview, February 1, 2011<sup>2</sup>)

The Kumu Honua Maui Ola Philosophy drives the development of the Hawaiian-medium model. Nāwahī, which enrolls 95% Native Hawaiians, has yielded positive results including 100% graduation and 80% college attendance consistently. Education is experienced as a family commitment to quality education through

the revitalization of Hawaiian for today and generations of tomorrow (Kawai'ae'a, 2012; Wilson & Kamanā, 2011; Wilson, Kamanā, & Rawlins, 2006).

## 5. Agenda for future research

Indigenous language immersion is growing internationally through community action and grassroots efforts and the development of governmental structures to ensure the revitalization of indigenous languages for future generations. Areas of need and potential research agendas include the following.

1. Indigenous identity studies — Speakers of indigenous languages recognize that language holds the key to understanding the depths of indigenous knowledge and thought, and is also the vehicle through which indigenous identity is expressed, practiced, and understood. Language is essential in developing strong cultural identity and sense of self. Many families choose indigenous immersion/medium education as a value-added, culturally-grounded experience for building strong cultural identity. Limited studies have been done with indigenous immersion/medium students about how those school experiences impacted their lives as adults. Valuable lessons could be learned from future research in this area to assist families, communities and schools in a variety of ways.
2. Governmental policy and support — In the U.S., only Alaska and Hawai'i have official status for their indigenous languages. In other countries like New Zealand and Norway, the indigenous language has official status. Further research on effective policy change strategies and government initiatives that support and increase the vitality of indigenous languages is needed.
3. Innovation of school models — Indigenous immersion/medium schools have many challenges in creating and sustaining their models, and too often communities are left with making tough choices about the kind of school model that can realistically be implemented versus the kind of model they would optimally like to develop. Much remains to be learned about the successful components of different kinds of indigenous immersion/medium models and their best practices.
4. Curriculum development — Schools commonly address governmental requirements for education through integration of subject-matter content and skills with school-created curricula that is reflective of indigenous worldviews and relevant to the language and culture. Future research in this area would provide educators with more effective strategies for curricular development to ensure student success.

5. Student assessment — Student assessment is a critical problem. In the U.S., federal funding for states is tied to accountability issues that are often measured up against national content standards through the societally dominant language (e.g., English). For example, assessing reading in English before English literacy skills are formally addressed within the indigenous language immersion/medium curriculum conflicts with the school's curricular plan for English literacy instruction. More research needs to be done on other viable ways for assessing student academic success and language growth in the indigenous language to better inform decision-makers, policy, and practice.
6. Teacher preparation and recruitment — Teacher preparation programs delivered through an indigenous pedagogy and epistemology framework that includes high levels of language proficiency in the indigenous language and culture are strong areas of concern for schools, families, and communities with indigenous immersion/medium programs. Finding enough teachers who are proficient indigenous prepared educators in the language and culture and who possess the skills and dispositions for teaching is a never-ending challenge. More research in this area could better inform practices for improving teacher preparation programs and recruitment of new teachers for this distinct teacher need area.
7. Higher education and workforce — Although students are continuing into higher education, little is known about how well indigenous immersion graduates transition into college, graduate, and enter the workforce. In addition, even less is known about graduates who pursue options other than post-secondary education.

In conclusion, indigenous communities around the world have made great strides in revitalizing their languages and cultures through immersion education over the past 30+ years. Much remains to be done, but the tenacity and passion of indigenous educators are strengthening with each new generation of speakers, and there is much hope for the future of our languages.

## Notes

1. "Internalized oppression" refers to the dynamic of taking up historical means of oppression (from the outside) and re-enacting them internally. In this context, for example, this takes the form of individuals attacking each other around issues of identity and authenticity. As part of a generational post-traumatic stress dynamic, this is common among Native American people, as the history of language loss was built on the idea of destroying integrity and identity. Internalized oppression is an individualized application of hegemony.



2. The television interview can be seen in its entirety at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tem891UiOUI&list=FLO6FpO2WWD4UpY3XK6kT-PQ&index=6>.

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