

# Indigenisation of the New Zealand Library and Information Sector: Implications for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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## Abstract

This essay examines the evolving ethnic landscape of New Zealand and its implications for the library and information management sector. Since its early colonisation, New Zealand has transformed demographically, with a notable decline in the proportion of New Zealand Europeans due to population growth among Māori and increasing migration from Pacific nations and Asia. As the ethnic makeup shifts, library institutions, predominantly staffed by New Zealand Europeans, face significant challenges in meeting the diverse information needs of the population. The essay highlights the urgency of re-evaluating library staffing, recruitment, and training to enhance cultural competency and inclusivity. It also discusses how New Zealand's library and information studies curricula have increasingly integrated Māori knowledge and perspectives over the past 30 years, aligning with Treaty of Waitangi obligations. However, the representation of other ethnic communities remains insufficient. The essay advocates for a more inclusive curriculum that not only prioritises mātauranga Māori but also encompasses the diverse needs of all cultural groups, arguing that addressing Indigenous perspectives can serve as a foundation for equitable information access for all New Zealanders.

**Keywords:** Māori; indigenisation; diversity; ethnic minorities; New Zealand

## Introduction

This essay explores the relationship between calls for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in New Zealand, and the need to firstly ensure that the rights of Māori as our Indigenous people are recognised and fulfilled. Only by prioritising these needs can true DEI and multiculturalism be achieved, as tangata whenua (people of the land), Māori hold a unique and foundational place in New Zealand. This place is mandated by the obligations outlined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi), which sets a framework for partnership, participation and protection of Māori rights.

In the context of library and information studies, the implementation of a Tiriti focus involves a transformative approach to the curriculum and professional training of librarians, ensuring that these educational pathways fully incorporate the principles of Te Tiriti. The essay explores how embedding Māori perspectives and honouring Tiriti obligations are essential first steps towards making it possible for the library profession to truly reflect and serve New Zealand's diverse communities. Until these Tiriti obligations are satisfactorily resolved, other ethnic communities living in New Zealand will need to be patient.

## **Context**

Still considered a relatively young country, New Zealand is becoming increasingly culturally diverse. Originally settled by Māori (New Zealand's Indigenous people), it was later annexed by the British in 1840 after the signing of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi. (Orange, 2021). Te Tiriti was an agreement between the British Crown and Rangatira Māori (Māori Chiefs), consisting of a preamble and three main articles which were translated from English into te reo Māori (Māori language). However, due to mistakes in the translation the text of the two versions are contradictory, with the major point of contention being whether Māori ceded sovereignty to the Crown, or whether Māori only provided the Crown the right to govern their own citizens.

After annexation, formal bureaucratic structures were put in place and the influx of new settlers that followed resulted in Europeans becoming the dominant population in the 1860s (King, 1990). This led to high demand for land and other resources ultimately resulting in war between Māori and non-Māori, and subsequently the introduction of legislation that alienated land, enforced Western educational standards, and restricted the use and sharing of Māori traditional knowledge.

By the end of the nineteenth century, it was widely expected that the Māori population would die out. Walker (2004: 172), states that “for some Pakeha extinction by natural attrition was the preferred outcome... and that the Darwinian law of survival of the fittest was inexorably being played out” However, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Māori population had started to recover and grow again, with there being an increase of 40,000 between 1900 and 1936. The demographic structure has continued to change during the 20th and 21st centuries, with a significant surge of migrants occurring after World War Two and following changes to immigration regulations in the 1990s. Although New Zealand Europeans<sup>1</sup> remain the

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<sup>1</sup> There is no distinct name that can describe people in New Zealand that are of caucasian origins. The Māori term is Pākehā but this is for many a controversial name as it is often used in a derisory manner, and its origins appear to stem from a longer Māori word that translates as 'goblins from far away'. An alternative name that has in the past garnered much support is New Zealander, but demographers associate this term with nationality rather than ethnic identity.

largest ethnic group, their proportion of the country's overall population has diminished. This has occurred through a regrowth of Māori, and an influx of peoples from the Pacific nations, and Asia and its sub-continent (Spoonley, 2020). In 2020, the report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques identified that New Zealand had become a super-diverse country, as characterised by the substantial increase in the diversity of ethnic, minority and immigrant groups present in our country as well as by a quarter of the population having been born overseas (p.72). By 2043, the overall population of New Zealand is projected to be 6.1 million people. Table One shows the proportion of population identities by ethnicity from the 2013, 2018, and 2023 New Zealand Census and the projections for 2043 (Stats NZ, 2023).

**Table 1: Ethnic composition of New Zealand's population sourced from Statistics New Zealand data**

<b>Ethnic Identity</b>	<b>Population Proportion 2013 census (4.24 million)</b>	<b>Population Proportion 2018 census (4.7 million)</b>	<b>Population Proportion 2023 census (4.99 million)</b>	<b>Estimated Population 2043 (6.1 million)</b>
New Zealand European	74.2%	70.2%	68%	64%
Māori	14.9%	16.5%	17.8%	21%
Pacific Peoples	7.4%	8.1%	8.86%	11%
Asian	11.8%	15.1%	17.25%	26%
Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African peoples	1.2%	1.5%	1.85%	3.0%

## Research problem

Despite the growing diversity of the population in New Zealand, there remains a clear distinction between the status of Māori and other ethnic minority groups. Any discussion relating to ethnic diversity is contextualised in a race-based environment, which is signalled by the need for the Human Rights Commission to have a dedicated position focused on race relations. The dialog about race relations has traditionally focused on the relationship between Māori and non-Māori, with the latter group consisting of many different ethnicities, organisations, and institutions. As already mentioned, this relationship has been dominated by the differing interpretations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Consistent breaches of Te Tiriti by successive governments have strongly influenced race relations in New Zealand and have not led Māori to a position where they can dismiss 'colonisation' as being in the past, as Māori dominate the negative social statistics associated with unemployment, low incomes, poor health, homelessness, educational underachievement and incarceration.

In an environment where these negative social outcomes are a source of tension between Māori and non-Māori, it is difficult for other ethnic minorities to get any traction related to their needs in similar social situations.

The issue of immigration policy has been a point of contention in the relationship between Māori and the government. Spoonley (2020: 86) cites the late Professor Ranginui Walker, who asserted that Te Tiriti o Waitangi was New Zealand's first immigration policy and that immigration policies implemented in the 1980s had breached the terms of the agreement signalled in te Tiriti. Mutu (2024) outlines the frustrations and anger of hapū (subtribes) and iwi (tribes) of the continued breaches of te Tiriti and states that despite their taking on supremacist titles such as the Crown, colonizer, and other official titles, they are the "British immigrants our ancestors invited to live with us, and their descendants are still our guests, in spite of their bad behavior" (pp.154).

Despite the variety of ethnicities represented in New Zealand, te Tiriti o Waitangi remains the critical factor in determining how social, political and ethnic agendas are managed, with biculturalism at the centre of these. Within an increasingly multi-ethnic nation, questions are often asked about why New Zealand continues to focus only on biculturalism rather than multiculturalism.

In the 1950s and 1960s, New Zealand was often praised for having the best race relations in the world, and te Tiriti o Waitangi was celebrated as an enlightened document (Hill, 2010). However, this claim was based on the mistaken belief that Māori people were happily integrating into European society and the adding of migrants from the Pacific and other nations would see New Zealand become a harmonious multicultural country. With the benefit of hindsight, it has been shown that this was socially naïve and wishful thinking on the government's part, as Māori had continuously expressed their discontent with approaches by successive governments to Māori affairs policies.

By the 1970s, Māori had survived policies linked to acculturation, assimilation and integration, and through a growth in urbanisation, there was an expectation that they would embrace multiculturalism. However, the myth that Māori were happy was shattered through protests, land occupations, outbreaks of violence and political activism, equated with the expression of tino-rangatiratanga (self-determination) as guaranteed in Article Two of Te Tiriti.

In 21<sup>st</sup> century New Zealand, the right of Māori to be recognised as the Indigenous people of New Zealand is still not supported by all, with far-right activist groups and political movements constantly questioning the validity of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and challenging the rights that it provides to Māori.

In a society that is determined to be seen as diverse, it is imperative that Māori needs continue to be prioritised in line with the obligations stated in the Te Tiriti o Waitangi, so New Zealand reaches a level of harmony that provides a solid foundation for policies related to diversity to be actioned. This requires a level of understanding from other ethnic communities that until things are right for Māori, it will not be possible to ‘get it right’ for all ethnicities.

The requirement to get things right does not only fall to the Crown; it is an obligation for all New Zealanders, whether they are Tangata Whenua (Māori) or Tangata Tiriti (those who belong due to te Tiriti, which includes all other members of ethnic groups). This involves Tangata Tiriti understanding what their obligations are, and the significance of Māori being the Indigenous people of New Zealand. A vital component of this is for those who are identified as Tangata Tiriti to grow their level of cultural competency in te ao Māori (Māori worldview), including understanding how the imposition of colonial policy, social and cultural norms impacted on Māori society and knowledge systems.

## **Objectives**

This essay now shifts to identifying the role that the library and information sector has in first ensuring that their services and resources are structured to meet the needs of Māori clients and how they then adapt and apply similar principles to ethnic minority groups.

The emphasis on Te Tiriti o Waitangi continues to be challenging for libraries and other information agencies, as it requires a level of cultural and political capital to understand their role in perpetuating colonial injustices, and how to transform themselves into institutions that successfully meet the cultural and information needs of Māori, including the continued protection of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) for future generations (Lilley, 2016). There is a high level of difficulty associated with this, due to the low number of Māori staff in these institutions and the general lack of cultural competency of their non-Māori staff. Therefore, despite the growth in diversity, until the institutions and the professionals they employ can get things right for Māori it is unlikely that they will get it right for other ethnic communities.

There is a strong understanding amongst the New Zealand library and information studies educational providers of the importance of embedding Māori perspectives into the curriculum (Lilley, et. al., 2023). However, this understanding has not always been apparent; the following sections of this essay show how Māori issues, including the importance of mātauranga Māori, were historically not recognised.

## **Indigenising library and information studies education**

Before 1942, librarians in New Zealand seeking formal professional qualifications were required to obtain these in the United States or the United Kingdom. The New Zealand Library Association started offering elementary level training in 1941 with the introduction of a Children's Librarian Certificate, and a year later they introduced a general training course for library staff who studied at an undergraduate certificate level by correspondence. These two courses were designed for support and intermediate-level staff. In 1946, library education at a graduate diploma level was introduced and led to the development of the Library School as an attachment to the Country Library Service (later subsumed into the National Library). The Library School remained based at the National Library until 1979. No evidence exists of any focus on Māori or Te Tiriti issues while the courses were based at National Library. Within the wider profession, there was equally little focus on these matters apart from a reference to the establishment of a New Zealand Library Association committee in 1963 to investigate providing library services to Māori communities. However, MacDonald (1993: 17) noted that despite there being a lack of evidence that the recommendations of the committee were implemented, the report remains important as it made it explicit to the Association that there were deficiencies in library services received by Māori.

In 1980, the Diploma programme became part of the Victoria University of Wellington, with the Certificate programme shifting to the Wellington Teachers College (later becoming Wellington College of Education).

Very little has been written about library and information education in New Zealand, with most contributions being reports of formal reviews of programmes (Graham, 1969; Saunders, 1987; Barron, 1994). Historical information about the formation of the different educational programmes is covered by McEldowney (1962), Richardson (1998), Millen (2010) and Lilley (2013). The Saunders (1987) report's lack of reference to the Treaty of Waitangi or the interests of Māori led to it becoming a catalyst for change; the report's monocultural nature was challenged by a group of students, Te Rōpū Takawaenga, who called for library education to be more inclusive of Māori and bicultural issues. There was broad support for the students' stance from the wider profession (Lilley, 2013). The social, cultural and political changes occurring in New Zealand during the 1980s had a strong influence on the New Zealand Library Association, which revised their mission statement in 1990 to include a reference to upholding the Treaty of Waitangi. Subsequently, the certificate and diploma programmes both started including more Māori-focused content in their courses.

The qualifications have continued to change and evolve, with the undergraduate programme transferring to the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand in 1998, where students can now choose to study up to a Bachelors level qualification.



The programme at Victoria University of Wellington offers students the opportunity to complete a Masters level qualification. However, despite the inclusion of courses focused on Māori issues, Te Rōpū Whakahau (the Association of Māori in Library and Information Management) was not satisfied with the slow progress towards the inclusion of Māori content in the existing programmes. In partnership with Te Wananga o Raukawa, they launched a qualification – initially a Diploma in Māori Information Management (now known as Te Puna Maumahara), which is grounded in mātauranga Māori (Te Wananga o Raukawa, n.d.). Winiata, (2021) outlines the genesis and philosophy that underpins the Puna Maumahara programme and how the graduates' knowledge and skills play a positive role in the organisation and management of iwi repositories in marae-based institutions, where graduates from this programme are typically employed.

In more recent years, the Victoria University of Wellington programme has focused on indigenising our curriculum. Lilley et al. (2023) outline how mātauranga Māori and Indigenous knowledge elements have been incorporated into the content of the core courses of the Master of Information Studies programme, and the course content reviewed and revised on a regular basis. Future developments include providing an opportunity for students to obtain an Indigenous Knowledge endorsement, a specialisation that would join the endorsements in Archives and Records Management, and Library Science that are currently available.

Indigenising the Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) curriculum at Victoria University of Wellington has included focusing on the distinction between Western and Māori ways of knowing, identifying alternative forms of collection development and knowledge organisation, providing Māori perspectives on information policy issues, incorporating Māori values into the organisational culture of institutions, identifying how research impacts on Māori, and how Māori research methodologies can provide better outcomes for Māori clients. This is in addition to two specialist courses that focus on Māori and Indigenous perspectives with regard to information.

## **Professional development**

Another major influence on increasing the degree of understanding of te ao Māori (Māori view of the world) by the library and information profession was the introduction in 2007 by the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA) of a professional registration scheme. Designed to encourage ongoing professional development, the scheme adopted a body of knowledge (BOK) based on the professional elements promoted by the International Federation of Library Associations with an additional eleventh element focused on Indigenous knowledge systems, which in New Zealand is mātauranga Māori (LIANZA, n.d.).

In addition to the emphasis on mātauranga Māori in BOK 11, other BOK elements are designed to require registrants to demonstrate how their professional development incorporates activities aimed at improving their awareness and engagement with Māori information. For example, BOK Six relates to research, analysis and interpretation of information, and one of the suggested professional learning activities includes becoming familiar with Māori research methodologies to see how they can be used to get feedback from your Māori community. Members of the scheme are required to undertake professional development across the full range of activities listed under each knowledge element. Recording the activities in a portfolio, with a reflection on what they have learned and what they have applied from the continuing professional education opportunity, these portfolios go through a triennial evaluation which is required to retain registration.

To ensure that graduates from library and information studies programmes are eligible for professional registration, LIANZA reviews the suitability of these programmes and maps the academic content in their courses against the eleven parts of the body of knowledge. In keeping with the emphasis on te Tiriti o Waitangi and biculturalism, close scrutiny is made of how each programme is focusing on mātauranga Māori across the entire body of knowledge. This assessment ensures that graduates from these programmes have the knowledge necessary to become members of the professional registration scheme and to provide services and resources to Māori users of their institutions.

Despite an enthusiastic response to its introduction, the non-compulsory nature of professional registration has seen the numbers drop from 994 in June 2013 to 379 in June 2023 (LIANZA, 2023). Although this should not imply that professional continuing education about mātauranga Māori is not occurring amongst those who are not part of the registration scheme, it does make it difficult to understand the frequency, quality and impact of this training.

## **Methodology**

As indicated in previous sections considerable effort has been put into identifying how courses in library and information studies education can cover the service and resource needs of Māori clients. This section of the essay focuses on how these factors have been addressed, and is based on my personal observations as a former library professional and as a library and information academic teaching and researching at the cultural interface in a New Zealand university LIS programme.

Over the past three decades it has become increasingly imperative that LIS courses in New Zealand are more inclusive of Māori cultural values as expressed through mātauranga Māori, tikanga Māori and kaupapa Māori.



It is important to note that as an orally focused culture, Māori approaches to knowledge management are traditionally characterised by inter-personal transmission: whakairo (carving), tukutuku (woven panels), waiata (sung poetry), karakia (incantations) and tūtakiwā (place names). Known more formally as mātauranga Māori, this knowledge system recognises the interconnectedness between cosmogony, humans and the natural environment, and is underscored by te reo Māori. Mātauranga Māori also affirms Māori identity at the whānau (extended family), hapū (sub-tribe), and iwi (tribe) levels that represent its social stratification, while also recognising that each iwi may have their own knowledge system reflecting their history, beliefs and customary practices, which Doherty (2012) labels mātauranga-a-iwi (iwi knowledge system).

Tikanga Māori is translated as Māori customary values and practices (Stephens & Boyce, 2013), being derived from the term tika (right). Marsden (2003: 66) therefore associates tikanga with “the right way of doing things”.

Mead identifies the role of tikanga Māori as controlling *“interpersonal relationships, provides ways for groups to meet and interact... Tika means to be right and thus tikanga Māori focuses on the correct way of doing something ... and involves moral judgments about appropriate ways of behaving and acting in everyday life... It has correct ways of behaving and with processes for correcting and compensating for bad behaviour”* (Mead, 2016: 13-14).

Tikanga Māori is therefore a critical component of mātauranga Māori (Māori ways of knowing), and although it is understood by the legal profession as being the first law of the land (Ruru, 2018; Williams, 2013), it is not enforceable in New Zealand’s law. Tikanga Māori is primarily exercised and practised by Māori in culturally important places and ritual interactions. Knowledge of how tikanga Māori is applied is not restricted to Māori – many non-Māori also have a rudimentary understanding of it, although it is not universally understood or necessarily accepted as valid by all New Zealanders. It is also difficult to teach our library and information studies students how to engage with and perform specific tikanga, as this is knowledge that is complex, and often varies according to the context, as it drawn from a vast corpus of knowledge that is often dependent on how it is applied in specific contexts, situations or even geographic areas. Although we are able to provide students with some basic understanding of the importance of these differences, the overall complexity of Māori knowledge systems requires more time than is currently available within a crowded curriculum. Ideally students would come pre-equipped with this knowledge; however, as they come from a variety of disciplines and cultural backgrounds it is not unusual for them to have had little or no exposure to te ao Māori.

It is only in more recent years that Māori cultural knowledge and values have become more visible, but by no means a compulsory, component in the school curriculum.

Kaupapa Māori, like tikanga Māori, draws on the knowledge embedded in mātauranga Māori. As a concept, it emphasises situations and activities are Māori focused. Therefore, kaupapa Māori is recognized as creating an environment where 'being Māori' is prioritised, and where Māori language, culture, knowledge, and values are accepted in their own right (Smith, 2021). The creation of a kaupapa Māori-led activity, therefore, provides a framework for Māori to succeed as Māori. In a kaupapa Māori framework, many of the same principles and values are applied as those that constitute 'normal' behaviour in a tikanga Māori sense.

### **Culture and identity in New Zealand libraries**

Like other colonised countries, early libraries in New Zealand were created by settlers and were mostly private or subscription institutions charging members a fee for belonging, asking for contributions to the collection, or using some other form of fee raising to make their collections viable (Fields, 2018). As 'colonial constructs', libraries were an enigma to Māori. Although libraries in New Zealand started collecting Māori literary resources into their collections very early on, Māori were notable as non-users of these facilities. This is illustrated through the thoughts of participants in a series of hui (Māori gatherings) aimed at understanding Māori information needs. The comments referred to the threatening nature of libraries, how clinical and impersonal they appear to Māori, and their tendency to be monocultural in nature (Szekely, 1997: 14). Although these comments were made after the developments in the next paragraph, they do show that at least amongst some Māori there was some lingering hesitation to use a library.

However, the decision by the New Zealand government in 1985 to alter the power of the Waitangi Tribunal to hear retrospective claims back to 1840 began to change all this. This development required claimants, iwi researchers, Tribunal staff, Crown representatives and other interested parties to research and compile information relating to claims being made to the Tribunal. The historical information sources the researchers required were in library and archival institutions, leading to increased usage of these facilities, particularly by Māori. This resulted in a higher demand for Māori professional staff, especially from major research and larger public libraries and archival institutions, who suddenly had to provide specialist Māori information services en masse, leading to many of these institutions creating Māori specialist positions to provide these services.

It is now standard procedure for larger public, research and academic library systems to have at least one dedicated position for a Māori specialist. However, even though these positions are classified as professional roles they are not always held by individuals with

library and information science training, as there is a national shortage of Māori who have chosen to gain qualifications in this area.

## **Conclusion**

The statistics in Table One demonstrate that the expected change in the country's demographic profile creates a need for the LIS curriculum to be more inclusive to ensure that a large proportion of New Zealand's ethnic population is not disadvantaged in the future, and that members of other diverse community groups can equitably access information. However, in keeping with te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations to Māori, there is first a requirement to ensure that the curriculum is aligned and inclusive of the needs of Māori. Until LIS education gets it right for Māori, it is unlikely to get it right for those who belong to other ethnic communities.

Fortunately, the thought that is being invested in the Indigenisation of the curriculum provides a useful pathway for developing and adapting content that represents the needs and worldviews of the other ethnic communities present in New Zealand.

Setting a solid foundation for our students to understand the importance of non-Western ways of knowing will enable the programme to critically assess how we deliver content that assists students to understand the information needs of other ethnic communities represented in New Zealand. This foundation will enable the construction of a curriculum that is inclusive, relevant and responsive to the needs of ethnic communities will ensure that graduates from our programme will have an understanding of the cultural nuances of these communities and be able to deliver services and resources that meet their needs, thus making a strong contribution to a more socially cohesive New Zealand.

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## Glossary of Māori words

Hapū	Māori sub-tribal grouping
Hui	Māori gatherings/meetings
Iwi	Māori tribal grouping
Karakia	Incantations/Prayer
Kaupapa Māori	Māori focused agenda/issue
Māori	Indigenous New Zealander
Mātauranga-a-iwi	Tribal knowledge system
Mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge system
Pākehā	Māori term for European New Zealander
Rangatira	Māori Chief
Tangata Tiriti	People of the Tiriti (non-Māori)
Tangata Whenua	People Indigenous to the land
Te Ao Māori	Māori view of the world
Te Puna Maumahara	Diploma in Māori Information Management qualification
Te reo Māori	Māori language
Te Rōpū Whakahau	The Association of Māori in Library and Information Management
Te Wananga o Raukawa	Raukawa school of higher learning / tribal college
Tikanga Māori	Māori values and beliefs
Tino-rangatiratanga	Self-determination
Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi
Tukutuku	Woven panels
Tūtakiwā	Place names
Waiata	Sung poetry
Whakapapa	Genealogical links
Whānau	Extended family grouping
Whakairo	Carving