

# **Saving endangered languages online**

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At a time when diversity in both the natural and the cultural world is enjoying renewed interest, a significant number of indigenous communities are facing the loss of their language and a way of life that has been traditionally a feature of their identity. Therefore, there is a need for partnerships which align theory with communal reflective practice. Over the past few decades a number of innovative programmes have emerged around the world with the aim of revitalising languages and cultures that are endangered or in decline. While some of these research initiatives in the past have been national in scope, more recent developments in many instances now involve transnational and international alliances and partnerships. Programmes such as AUT's MA in Language Revitalisation are urgently needed in order to equip community leaders, language activists, researchers, media workers, fieldworkers and educationalists with the professional skill-set they need in order to develop effective revitalisation programmes in their local speech communities. Building on the vibrant forum for advancing Māori scholarship and research into indigenous knowledge and sciences which has already been established in Te Ipukarea, Te Ara Poutama at AUT, the MA in Language Revitalisation Studies, will provide a model forum, and a strong opportunity for students to share indigenous knowledge and to forge resilient alliances as they explore their own and each other's perspectives on language revitalisation in a global context. This programme, which will be offered in 2013, will enable students to exercise both voice and choice in the language they are engaged in, by

- bringing theoretical perspectives to bear on local and international community experiences in language revitalisation;
- affording the graduates the opportunity to engage with these perspectives in light of their own community's experience and work in language revitalisation, without leaving their own community to travel to university and college outside the territory of their spoken language; and
- through the development of research skills in fieldwork and critical narrative, afford graduates learning opportunities and a professional qualification to take up specialist roles in language revitalisation in their own communities and elsewhere.

All coursework will be conducted via online technologies using the technological mechanisms and flexible learning support systems already established in Te Ipukarea and Te Ara Poutama. The project has developed a process for recording live webinars of online seminars and six pilot webinars will be completed over the summer period.