

# Cook Islands Māori Culture and Language

## Te Akono'anga e te reo Māori Kūki 'Āirani

*Kia orana, Turou, 'āere mai ki te 'epetoma o te reo Māori Kūki' Āirani - Welcome to Cook Islands Language Week!*



The Ministry for Pacific Peoples is supporting and promoting the Pacific languages and cultures of Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Fiji, Niue and Tokelau.

The diversity and richness of Pacific languages and culture is unique to New Zealand. Supporting and highlighting the language and culture of Pacific peoples is a priority for the Ministry.

Since 2010 the Ministry has supported the promotion of seven Pacific languages and cultures in order to improve language retention and to celebrate what is uniquely Pacific peoples' way of life.

### The Cook Islands

Named after Captain James Cook, fifteen small islands make up the Cook Islands spread over 1,800,000 square kilometres. The capital Avarua is located on the island of Rarotonga. There are more Cook Islands Māori living in New Zealand than there are in all of the Cook Islands combined.



### Population

The Cook Islands Māori ethnic group is the second largest Pacific population in New Zealand and accounts for 1.5% of the total population. 20.9% or 61,839 people in our Pacific population are of Cook Islands heritage.



As of 2013 there were

# 8,121

**Cook Islands Māori (Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Āirani) speakers<sup>1</sup>**

They're also a very young population with a median age of 20<sup>1</sup>.

Of the population, 93.1% or 57,588 people resided in the North Island and 6.9% or 4,251 people resided in the South Island. 86.5% lived in urban areas (with populations with 30,000 or more).

The most common regions were Auckland with 59.5% or 36,810 people, Wellington with 11.5% or 7,113 people and Waikato 7.8% or 4,839 people<sup>2</sup>.

1. Source: Contemporary Pacific Status Report (2016) Ministry for Pacific Peoples, New Zealand. ISSN 2537—6878 (Online).

2. Source: 2013 Census ethnic group profiles: Cook Islands Maori (2014) Statistics New Zealand. [http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request\\_value=24709&tabname=Keyfacts](http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24709&tabname=Keyfacts)

# 73.3%



of the Cook Islands Māori population living in New Zealand left school with a formal qualification (level 1-4 certificate or higher) compared to 79.1% of NZ population, with 8% of the Cook Islands Māori population having completed a bachelor degree or higher, compared to 20% of the NZ population<sup>3</sup>.

84.1% of Cook Islands Māori people have access to a mobile phone and 61.5% have access to the internet.

## Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Āirani – Cook Islands Māori Language



- Cook Islands Māori language or Māori Kūki 'Āirani or Rarotongan is the country's official language
- **Cook Islands Māori is closely related to New Zealand Māori but is a distinct language**

- Cook Islands Māori is an Eastern Polynesian language that belongs in the same language family as the languages of New Zealand Māori, Hawai'i and Tahiti
- Cook Islands Māori has a number of dialects: Pukapuka; Aitutaki; Ngāpūtoru (the dialects of Ātiu, Ma'uke and Miti `āro); Mangaia; Manihiki-Rakahanga; Penrhyn (Tongareva)
- There are five vouvera (vowels): a, e, i, o, u. These have the same pronunciation as other Pacific languages, including te reo Māori (NZ language).

## Ngutu'are Tangata - Family

Cook Islands culture highly values the extended family and it is common for a number of generations to live in the same household.

Descent is traced bilaterally, with equal weight given to both sides of the family.

## Cook Islands Māori Cultural customs

### Peu - Culture

Reo (language) connects us to our peu (culture), mana, and the vauerua (soul) of who we are.

Whether through 'imene (song), 'ura (dance), pe'e (chants), uapou (forums to discuss Biblical topics), or family and community gatherings, the use of our reo helps us to connect as tangata Māori Kūki 'Āirani (Cook Islands people), and to our ta'onga (treasures) and our peu.

### Atua - God

Spiritual beliefs and values are a key part of the lives of many Cook Islands Māori people.

**Reo and peu are celebrated in communities through aro'a (love), ora'anga vauerua (spirituality) and akarongo (faith).**

Whether through traditional beliefs and values, exploring our legends, or celebrating and coming together as communities in churches, our beliefs and values help us to learn more about our language, culture and identity.



3. Source: Contemporary Pacific Status Report (2016) Ministry for Pacific Peoples, New Zealand. ISSN 2537—6878 (Online).

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