

# Legal Aid, the Justice system and Māori in NZ

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Stephanie Northey



# Access to Legal Aid in Aotearoa New Zealand

Access to legal aid in New Zealand is determined based on the individual's income and the merit of their case. This ensures that those who cannot afford legal representation are still able to access the justice system.

## Eligibility Criteria

To qualify for legal aid, individuals need to meet specific financial eligibility criteria set by the Ministry of Justice.

## Application Process

Applying for legal aid involves submitting an application form and providing supporting documents to prove eligibility.

## Legal Aid Providers

Legal aid services are provided by a network of lawyers who have contracts to provide legal aid services to the community.



# Calls for Transformative Change in Aotearoa's Justice System

There have been growing calls for transformative change in Aotearoa's justice system to address the systemic issues and disparities faced by marginalized communities, including Māori.

**1**

## **Rethinking Punishment**

Shifting the focus from punitive measures to restorative justice approaches that prioritize healing and rehabilitation.

**2**

## **Community- Led Initiatives**

Empowering communities to play a central role in finding innovative solutions and reducing reliance on the justice system.

**3**

## **Cultural Responsiveness**

Embedding cultural values and practices within the justice system to better address the needs of Māori and other diverse communities.

# Māori Land Alienation & Loss

Māori land alienation and loss have had profound impacts on Māori communities, contributing to social and economic disparities and affecting their involvement in the justice system.



## Historical Background

The loss of ancestral land through colonization has resulted in the displacement and marginalization of Māori communities.



## Cultural Significance

Māori land holds great cultural significance, as it is intimately connected to the identity and well-being of the Māori people.

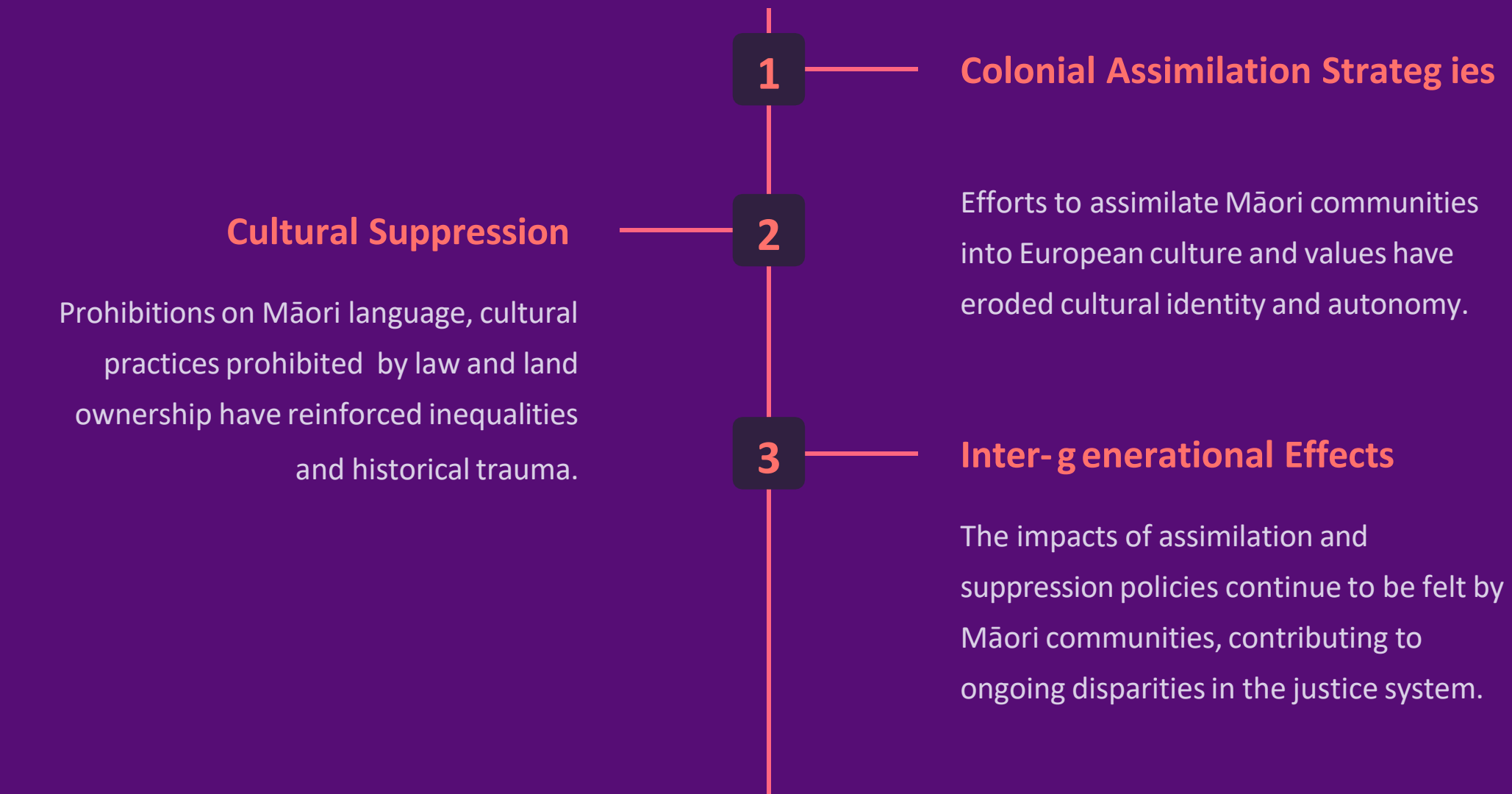
**kōrero  
māori**

## Community Impacts

The loss of land has disrupted traditional ways of life and community cohesion, contributing to social and economic challenges.

# Assimilation & Suppression

Assimilation and suppression policies have resulted in significant cultural and social disconnection for Māori communities, impacting their engagement with the justice system.





# The "Urban Drift" & Its Impact

The "urban drift" refers to the migration of Māori populations from rural to urban areas. This transition has had lasting effects on Māori communities and their interactions with the justice system.

## 1 Breakdown of Support Networks

The urban drift has disrupted traditional kinship networks and community support systems, leading to increased vulnerability.

## 2 Socioeconomic Disadvantage

Māori individuals and families who moved to urban areas often faced socioeconomic challenges, including poverty and unemployment.

## 3 Overrepresentation in Justice System

The urban drift has contributed to higher rates of Māori involvement in the justice system, reflecting the systemic issues they face.



**Māori make up 52.3% of  
prisoners; only 17% of  
population**

**Tamariki Māori make up only  
25% of all children in Aotearoa,  
however, they represent 68%  
of the children in state care**



# Calls for Change Remain Largely Unanswered

Despite calls for change, transformative initiatives that address the systemic issues faced by Māori in the justice system have not been fully implemented, perpetuating the existing disparities.

## Structural Barriers

Structural barriers within the justice system, such as institutional racism and bias, continue to hinder meaningful progress.

## Lack of Resources

A lack of adequate resources and funding allocated to addressing these issues has further delayed the necessary changes.

## Advocacy and Activism

Strong advocacy and grassroots activism have been instrumental in raising awareness and creating momentum for change.



# Persistent Themes Across Decades

The persistent themes in the justice system that disproportionately impact Māori communities have remained largely unchanged over the decades, emphasizing the need for substantive and lasting reform.



## Disproportionate Incarceration

Māori individuals are overrepresented in the prison population, highlighting systemic biases within the justice system.



## Social and Economic Disparities

Māori communities face higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and other social inequities, contributing to their interactions with the justice system.



## Cultural Connection & Empowerment

Fostering cultural connection, empowerment, and self-determination within the justice system is crucial to addressing these persistent issues.

# Te Ao Mārama: Inclusive and Transformative Justice

An inclusive and transformative justice system is essential to address the historical and systemic issues faced by Māori communities and to ensure equitable outcomes for all individuals.

1

## Te Ao Mārama the vision

A judicially led initiative for a holistic court experience, ensuring everyone is seen, heard, and understood. Welcoming all, irrespective of means, culture, identity.

2

## Cultural Responsiveness

Embedding cultural values, practices, and representation within the justice system to create a more inclusive and equitable environment.

3

## Collaborative Partnerships

Forming partnerships between the justice system, Māori communities, and other stakeholders to co-create innovative solutions and address systemic disparities.