

2025 Senior Thesis

**Proposal for the Revival of the Ainu Language**

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## **Abstract**

Japan is and has always been an ethnically homogenous nation, one language, one race, one culture. This was the statement made in the 80s by Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, the statement that has been echoed through modern history.

This statement has never been true. From the Ryukyu of Okinawa to the Matagi of Akita to the vibrant immigrant culture in Osaka, Japan has never been and will never be a monolith. That is not to say there have been no historical attempts to make this falsehood fact.

The Ainu, a group indigenous to Hokkaido and the far eastern Russian islands, have inhabited Japan for millennia and struggled for almost as long. Through cultural suppression, forced assimilation, and systemic oppression, the Ainu and their language have become all but extinct. Despite this, the last Ainu has yet to die, and the last word of Ainu has yet to be spoken.

This paper starts by examining the current laws put in place to protect the Ainu language and the current efforts to revitalize. It will then evaluate methods used in Canada and The United Kingdom to revitalize or revive their respective indigenous languages and how these methods could be applied to the Ainu revitalization efforts. It will then utilize various current and proposed methods and point out their merits and flaws. It will then find the minimum viable solution for the language to become sustainable, focusing on children, college students, and economic factors, leading to a proposal for the strategies allowing for the implementation of the minimum viable sustainable solution.

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## 1. Intro

Like other indigenous languages, the Ainu language has a complicated history.

Though the history of the Ainu people is long, their relationship with the Japanese is relatively short. And yet in this small timeframe Japan has destroyed much of the Ainu culture. However, due to various factors including various revitalization movements and growing interest in Ainu culture, the situation has recently been improving at a steady rate.

Recently, the Hokkaido government, the Japanese federal government, various universities, movements, cultural foundations, etc. have been trying to protect the Ainu language (Foundation for Ainu Culture, 2025). However, due to limited funding and various social issues, the movements are still insufficient. Since it is important to protect all languages, the Ainu language also needs further promotion via traditional education, technology0based education, and legal intervention, despite the demerits of each option.

In terms of funding, a solution will become clear if we evaluate the weaknesses of the current system. To that end, if we consider solutions such as language learning apps, radio, and AI, the question of how much funding is needed to revitalize the Ainu language can be answered more concretely. And while there is currently no one solution, we can at least begin to make improvements by looking at the various laws, the opinions of the Japanese people, and the Ainu in pop culture.

In this paper, I will first explain the laws and movements across Japan on a national level, then explain the laws and revitalization movements in Hokkaido, then compare methods of revitalizing indigenous languages developed overseas with the methods used in Japan. Then, I will explain the various methods of revitalizing the Ainu language and consider the best methods to use in the overall solution. While it is optimal to use a variety of methods, I argue that language nests, higher education, and further representation in the media are the best solutions.

## 2. About the Ainu Language

The current situation of the Ainu language is complicated, so it is best to start with general overview. From ancient times to about 200 years ago, many Ainu people lived in a country called Ainu Mosir. Although the number of Ainu language speakers was stable during this time, everything changed in this short period of time due to discrimination and forced assimilation by the Japanese, and the Ainu language nearly disappeared (FFAC, 2025). Before proposing methods for revitalization, evaluating this history should give a good baseline for the nature of the current situation.

### 2.1. History of the Ainu Language

During the Jomon period, the ancestors of the Ainu people started to do things like pottery and trade, and little by little, they developed a fishing economy and various hunting methods. This economy, along with the geography, flora and fauna of Hokkaido and the Russian Far Eastern islands, led to the establishment of the Ainu culture as we understand it today around the 1200s (Segawa, 2016).

After that, the Ainu established their own unique religion and language.

Following this, they began to trade with Russia, China, and other countries, building positive foreign relations around East Asia (Segawa, 2016). However, around the late Sengoku Period or the early Edo Period, the Matsumae clan began to colonize Hokkaido, and the Wajin and Ainu began to fight. They were able to trade peacefully at times between conflicts, but as tensions gradually increased, the fighting intensified. Then, in the 1600s, a failed rebellion called the Battle of Shakushain led to Japan's influence growing over Hokkaido (Shindo, 2016).

During this period of rule, the Japanese government went through significant changes. As the Matsumae clan was a feudal clan, it had a lot of influence during the Edo period. This influence started to wane 200 years after the colonization with the start of the Meiji period and the rapid decline of the shogunate. Later, the Meiji government annexed Hokkaido in full, abolished all pre-established Ainu-Matsumae treaties, and increased discrimination against the Ainu. As a result, the Ainu language and religion were further suppressed, and the Wajin raped the Ainu, forced them to work essentially



as slaves, and forced them to relocate across Japan proper. The Russian government also committed similar atrocities against the Ainu in Sakhalin, such as forcing them to relocate to Hokkaido, causing the number of Sakhalin Ainu in Russia to drop sharply.

After this, the Meiji government and later governments forced the Ainu to use Japanese and banned the Ainu language. Ainu people continued to use the Ainu language and practice their religion in private, but they could not use the Ainu language in schools or in government. These heinous crimes continued despite the establishment of laws to protect the Ainu during the Meiji period and the increase in Ainu activist movements (Tabata et al., 2010).

Later, during the Showa period following World War II, despite the decrease in Ainu activism following the Taisho Democracy, activism gradually increased due to the rapid democratization of Japan. However, the Ainu language required urgent revitalization efforts (Sekiguchi Akira, 2015). Since the Sakhalin Ainu and Kuril Ainu languages have become extinct, and people living in Hokkaido never learn Hokkaido Ainu in school, it could easily become extinct as well (Mosley & Nicholas, 2010).

The Ainu language has many pre-colonization oral traditions, and many Ainu words are used in religious celebrations, so if it becomes extinct, this knowledge will be lost forever. Hokkaido's spirit does not just lie in the spirit of Japan, but the spirit of the Ainu. The very soul of Hokkaido's culture can never be separated from the Ainu, no matter how hard people have tried in the past. If the Ainu language disappears, Hokkaido's history will be lost. Hokkaido's culture, its roots, its very soul will be lost to time.

## 2.2. Current Situation of the Ainu Language

Because Ainu is a language isolate, not only is it difficult to learn, but it has no other languages to be compared to regarding teaching methods. Therefore, the revitalization movement has been somewhat delayed (Mosley & Nicholas, 2010). In the past, there was a second Ainu language native to Sakhalin, but because the last person who could understand Sakhalin Ainu died in the 1990s, it is no longer possible to revive Sakhalin Ainu with our current archives (Mosley & Nicholas, 2010). Therefore, speakers of Hokkaido Ainu are currently the last hope for the Ainu language family.

However, Ainu is difficult to learn, and if all the speakers die and the movement does not improve, it may become impossible to learn Ainu (Mosley & Nicholas, 2010).

However, the current revitalization movements have improved compared to the movements 50 years ago, and new laws have been enacted that felt impossible decades ago. Ainu is used on buses and radio in Hokkaido, and new methods of revitalizing indigenous languages have been developed during this time. However, Ainu speakers have not yet reached a stable level, as there are only 10 people who can speak Ainu at a native level (FFAC, 2025). Therefore, we must start finding a way to increase this number by remedying the negatives of current teaching methods. Starting with legal initiatives by the federal government will give a good start to this remedy.

### 3. Movements Within Japan

The Japanese federal government has enacted various laws regarding the Ainu language. Through such laws, interest in the Ainu language is now gradually increasing throughout Japan (FFAC, 2025). However, despite this, many Ainu people have pointed out that, despite such laws, hate speech has not been stopped, stolen remains have not

been returned, and Ainu rights have not been properly protected. Due to this, many Ainu people harbor the opinion that such lawmakers "only see us as a tourist resource..." (Kihara, 2024). However, the law does have some good points, and works as a good first step. Should we evaluate the weak points and focus on the good points, it will become possible to revise these laws for the better in future.

### 3.1. Laws

First, the Meiji government enacted a law that was allegedly intended to protect the Ainu people called the Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Law. In reality, it restricted Ainu hunting and took away their land. This law also banned the Ainu language and forced Ainu students to use Japanese in Hokkaido schools (Imperial Diet, 1899). This law was abolished 98 years later, but left Ainu culture and language in a fragile state.

To combat the decline of Ainu culture and the government's apathy towards the situation, Mr. Nomura, the chairman of the Hokkaido Ainu Association, gave a speech in front of the United Nations General Assembly (Nomura, 1992), which attracted more

attention to the plight of the Ainu. As a result of this speech, the Japanese government began to pay attention to the current state of the Ainu language, leading to the passing of the "Law Concerning the Promotion of Ainu Culture and the Dissemination and Awareness of Knowledge Concerning Ainu Traditions, etc." in 1997. This law made the prime minister and other politicians work to create plans to promote and respect Ainu culture and urged the prefectural government to do the same. This led to the formation of the Foundation for Ainu Culture (Cabinet of Japan, 1997).

However, discrimination was still rampant, so in 2019, this law was abolished in favor of the "Act on Promotion of Measures to Realize a Society in Which the Pride of the Ainu People is Respected", which further promoted Ainu culture and improved the current situation of the Ainu people (Cabinet of Japan, 2019). However, the revitalization of the language and its use in official documents and schools was not protected by this law. In fact, apart from stating in Article 2 that "'Ainu culture' includes the Ainu language," the law does not at all address the revitalization of the Ainu language or the dissemination of information related thereto. Additionally, despite the repealing of the

1997 law, the Foundation for Ainu Culture is still active and disseminating information regarding the Ainu language, allowing revitalization movements outside the federal government to begin..

### 3.2. Revitalization Efforts

Currently, the Ainu language revitalization movement is gradually increasing in momentum throughout Japan, and more people are participating in the movement outside of Hokkaido. One might get the impression that only scholars and Ainu people are participating due to the obscurity of the Ainu language, however this is not the case. Pop culture tends to have a greater influence than scholars or the law, so it is common for manga artists and anime directors to have a major influence above that of scholars. Recently, a few artists of such media have taken an interest in Ainu culture, leading to the public having an increased awareness and interest in the Ainu language outside of scholarly work.

### *3.2.1. Media*

Recently, interest in the Ainu language has been growing in popularity both in Japan and internationally (Nakagawa, 2024). If popular media use the Ainu language and showcase their culture, it will undoubtedly increase the possibility that not only Japanese people will start learning the Ainu language, but foreigners as well. Unfortunately, there was initially no increase in media related to the Ainu following the first laws being passed (FFAC, 2025).

However, after the publication and popularization of the manga "Golden Kamuy" in 2014, Ainu culture spread into the pop culture world. Golden Kamuy has become a very famous media franchise, and since the creator consulted many Ainu language experts to create the series, there has not only been an increase in viewers' interest in the Ainu language, but Golden Kamuy has allowed people to learn real vocabulary from the Ainu language. Therefore, although anime is not the best solution by any means, people who want to learn Ainu can start learning more easily with the help of such programs.

Therefore, if more programs start to feature Ainu language, it will be easier and more accessible to learn Ainu vocabulary (Nakagawa, 2024).

The growing interest in the Ainu has led to an increase in other Ainu media works. In 2025, a game called Ghost of Yotei will be released as the world's first AAA game about pre-annexation Ainu Mosir. Hopefully, many people will be able to learn about Ainu culture through interest in this game. Furthermore, as this is a sequel to Ghost of Tsushima, a game that helped to raise awareness of Tsushima in real life, there is a precedent for this sort of media being helpful in the real world (Sucker Punch Productions, 2025).

#### 4. Movements Within Hokkaido

There are a few Ainu language revitalization movements that are being aided by all of Japan, but seeing as much of Ainu culture is localized to Hokkaido, there are more widespread prefectural movements in the region. Of course, Hokkaido has more Ainu people than other regions, so it may seem easier to learn on the surface, however there is the problem of there being fewer Ainu speakers among the Ainu people living in



Hokkaido. Since most Ainu people cannot understand the language, the Hokkaido government and universities within Hokkaido have begun to gather Ainu speakers and take various measures to keep the language alive. As a result, not only are there numerous Ainu language textbooks, but radio programs have also been broadcast, and games and classes for children have been created. Therefore, although Ainu is not yet fully used as a language in day-to-day life, compared to the rest of the country, Hokkaido's revitalization movement is more widespread, and their influence can be found in various places that are publicly accessed on a daily basis. Due to these factors, it is likely that Hokkaido's revitalization movements will become sufficient with time.

#### 4.1. Laws

Although Japanese prefectures can enact ordinances, the Hokkaido government has not enacted many regarding Ainu cultural preservation, so it is not compulsory for children to learn or use the Ainu language in schools within Hokkaido (FFAC, 2025). The Japanese federal government has the most power regarding laws, but since this situation primarily is a Hokkaido issue, the Hokkaido government needs to use more

funds and resources for the revitalization efforts. For example, the Hokkaido government needs to enact laws on Ainu teaching in the public education system so that children can learn the language more easily at a native level. Otherwise, the number of native speakers of Ainu will struggle to increase (Ramirez, 2021).

#### 4.2. Revitalization Efforts

Besides the prefectural government, Hokkaido University and the Foundation for Ainu Culture are carrying out the largest revitalization campaign in Hokkaido. These campaigns are not perfect since they are partially dependent on the Hokkaido government's insufficient campaigns, but there are many good points to take away from what is being done so far. Of course, there are also bad points, but the Ainu language is starting to be taught on a larger scale in Hokkaido, and Hokkaido University is researching the easiest way to teach the Ainu language. Therefore, if we look at their research, we will be able to find a more effective method by virtue of there being more data than there was a few decades ago. As such, if we can find a good solution for Hokkaido, then we can find a good solution for allowing the language to be taught

outside of Hokkaido, which will lead to more interest in the language as it becomes more accessible.

#### *4.2.1. Civilian Efforts*

Generally, children do not have the opportunity to learn Ainu language, so they do not learn it at all in their lives. Additionally, schoolteachers do not tend to understand Ainu language, making it difficult for the current education system to teach it to children. However, volunteers from the FFAC are teaching Ainu language learners to become certified Ainu language teachers, so in the future, more teachers and parents alike will be able to teach the Ainu language to children.

In addition, not only children but also adults can learn Ainu language. Currently, the FFAC has started various classes for adults and published several Ainu vocabulary textbooks on the Internet for learning the Ainu language through radio and text (FFAC, 2024). In addition to that, there is a more private academic movement, which has been started by Hokkaido University.

#### *4.2.2. Hokkaido University*

Hokkaido University is doing various things to protect the Ainu language. For example, on campus buses, announcements are made in both Japanese and Ainu, allowing Hokkaido University students to hear Ainu daily. Ainu is also used on campus maps, so Ainu is immediately visible as soon as you enter the university campus (Hokkaido University, 2024).

This allows Hokkaido University students to be exposed to Ainu daily, so Hokkaido University's campaigns become more effective over time with this immersion. Although it is not enough to fully learn the language, Hokkaido University has spent the past few decades researching ways to learn Ainu so that it can be used conversationally. Therefore, if this method is used in general Ainu language education to expose more people to it in the day-to-day lives, even more efficient and effective solutions can be developed.

In addition, since the federal government has asked Hokkaido University for advice in drafting laws regarding the Ainu, Hokkaido University's research has a great influence

on the law. If the solutions on buses and maps are effective, the government will take this solution even more seriously and possibly fund and spread it further (Cabinet of Japan, 2012). This current situation should lead to improvements in the law if further funds are provided to the university's campaign efforts.

## 5. Efforts Abroad

It can be argued that most of the measures to prevent extinction mentioned above have failed to a degree. Despite the campaigns, they were clearly not enough. Even though they have all experienced partial failure, considering that the Ainu language has yet to disappear, it does not mean that the revitalization campaign was in vain, and the campaign to protect the language is not in vain. Even these partial failures have allowed the language to grasp onto survival and have encouraged new efforts such as the rise in popular media.

However, the methods used by the Japanese government and Hokkaido are not the only methods. Since languages are constantly changing, new methods are constantly being developed through cutting-edge teaching methods. Various new technologies

and methods of teaching indigenous languages are being developed not only in Japan but also in Oceania, Europe, and the Americas, so there is also hope for the revitalization of the Ainu language. There are many more indigenous people in Canada and New Zealand, so if Japan's efforts are effective, other countries should be able to use their research for their own efforts. Conversely, if the methods used in Japan are not sufficient, it should be effective to utilize methods from other countries.

The Ainu problem is a first and foremost a problem localized to Japan, but since there are various indigenous people in other countries, there are many solutions other than those used in Japan, even if the languages are not the same. And since technology can be used for other languages, there are many benefits to evaluating foreign methods even if they do not initially correlate to the Ainu language. If we look at the revitalization campaigns and teaching methods of indigenous languages in various other countries, we should be able to fully implement a solution for Japan.

## 5.1. Canada

Canada has particularly good indigenous education and relations. In fact, Nunavut, a territory that occupies 21% of Canada's land area, has an almost fully indigenous-led government (Dahl, J et al, 2000). Additionally, there are more indigenous people in Canada than in many other countries, so there are a lot of publicly available indigenous language education methods, and the quality is high. The federal government funds revitalization efforts and broadcasts various radio and television programs and videos in indigenous languages, just as in Hokkaido. Through such government efforts, people can learn indigenous languages for free (Government of Canada, 2025).

In addition, indigenous education is quite common compared to Japan, so various indigenous languages are taught in K-12 schools under the Indigenous Languages Act (Government of Canada, 2025). Additionally, 240,000 Canadians can speak indigenous languages at a conversational level, so children can easily learn indigenous languages through their family and friends' families (Statistics Canada, 2023).

In addition, UVIC offers classes in various indigenous languages and offers bachelor's and master's degrees in indigenous language revitalization. Approximately 10 language revitalization efforts are supported by the university, and they are currently training teachers of various other Indigenous languages (University of Victoria, 2025). Such university-level classes have made the Canadian revitalization efforts more successful, so Japan could improve their own situation by utilizing this aspect of the Canadian approach.

If Japan were to adopt the Canadian approach, it would need to offer Ainu language classes and television programs at the university level immediately. The FFAC offers Ainu language classes, but offering minors, degrees, and even just electives at Japanese universities would increase interest, even if only for university credits. And because shows like *Golden Kamuy* are effective at raising interest (Nakagawa, 2024), producing more programs like Canada's would further increase interest in the Ainu language, especially if they can use even more Ainu vocabulary than *Golden Kamuy*.



## 5.2. Isle of Man

Although the Ainu language is not extinct, there are only a few speakers, so revitalization efforts for languages that have been revived from extinction should also be incorporated into the measures to improve the Ainu language revitalization effort. A good example of such an effort is the revival of the Manx language in the UK.

The Manx language became extinct when the last native speaker died in 1974. The UK government confirmed its extinction after no speakers were reported that year (Broderick, 2017). Despite the language dying out, the Manx government has since taught Manx in schools, maintained grammar and vocabulary, and supported local efforts (Isle of Man, 2022). Thanks to this early education, there are now more than 2,000 Manx speakers, as well as more than 20 native speakers (Isle of Man, 2021).

And because children can easily learn a language at a native level (Ramirez, 2021), this level of early education is important. By adopting this solution along with Canadian solutions, the Ainu language should be able to be revived even if all native speakers have died in the future.

### 5.3. New Zealand

Generally, children can easily learn languages at a native level, so linguistic researchers often study teaching methods aimed at children (Ramirez, 2021). For example, because New Zealand has many indigenous peoples, a method similar to an immersion program for children called “language nests” was developed in the 1980s in the country (Nozaki, 2016).

In a language nest, native speakers of an indigenous language use the language with children in a community effort. Because the language is not isolated from the culture it came from, children also learn about the culture of the language they learn through speaking in groups with elders. Although this method has been reported with positive results in New Zealand and Finland (Nozaki, 2016), there is a problem in applying it to Ainu, which is that there are relatively few native speakers. Language nests are useful even with few speakers, but there are currently fewer than 20 speakers of Ainu (Mosley & Nicholas, 2010), making it difficult to realize without full cooperation of virtually all current speakers. While it is important to teach children before starting a language nest

in Ainu, because there are so few Ainu speakers in existence who could start a language nest, adult-focused solutions should be used at first to allow this method to thrive.

## 6. Technology

In modern society, technology has the biggest impact on every part of life. In every country that has Wi-Fi access, people can learn languages on the internet. Therefore, if we can make more Ainu lessons outside of those on the radio, it will become easier for the public to learn the language. A major disadvantage of radio is that you can't practice conversation, but since the internet allows you to talk to various people anywhere through text and voice chat, this problem could be solved through online language learning applications.

However, technology is changing now, which complicates finding the most effective method. Previously, you could only learn languages through mobile apps and websites. Although the situation is still the same in that regard, AI is now starting to be used to learn languages. By comparing AI and traditional technology learning methods, we can see which is the more effective method.

## 6.1. Radio

Sapporo Television Broadcasting (STV) is currently broadcasting an Ainu radio program, so people around the world can listen to Ainu language lessons for free. In addition, various texts containing vocabulary and grammar lists are published on their website, and recordings are also uploaded on to the site, so you can learn Ainu anytime, anywhere (STV, 2024).

However, solutions such as Language Nests are effective because they allow you to talk to native speakers. Although this radio program is very effective for listening and learning vocabulary, it is difficult to become fluent because you cannot talk to Ainu speakers. It is nearly impossible to become fluent if you cannot converse with even fledgling speakers, but since you can learn Ainu words and grammar for free on the radio, this radio program will without a doubt be effective if used in conjunction with other solutions.

## 6.2. Apps

Language apps are a relatively new field, so there is little research, but they are useful for people living in rural areas with little access to universities but decent internet access. Therefore, if language apps are effective, they could allow people to learn Ainu anywhere (Izutsu, 2007). However, language apps and radio have the same problem of making conversation difficult to achieve due to their general lack of social interaction.

Some argue that conversation can be practiced using various apps, but the actual effectiveness of the apps is still unknown. Due to the lack of research into language apps, it is not clear whether Ainu can be learned through such apps, despite the large number of users. Therefore, learning a language through an app is not a good solution until further research into its credibility can be done.

## 6.3. AI

AI is not to be used on its own as the sole solution, but after the development of the initial Ainu language teaching AI, various effects can be seen. Since conversations can be conducted through AI, there is arguably, an advantage compared to apps that do not

allow conversation practice. However, since AI can make many mistakes, more attention is required than with apps that do not use AI, such as Drops (Okuda, 2022).

In fact, it is said that 20% of even specialized language teaching AI's answers are incorrect, so it still requires a lot of supervision. However, since it is capable of voice recognition and pronunciation learning, if the program is improved and used together with radio programs and Ainu language textbooks, the problem of not being able to converse on the Internet may become less of an issue. AI is constantly developing, so comprehension of the text could improve soon (Okuda, 2022). And although it is not yet a good solution at present, if other solutions and AI are used at the same time, it might become a sufficient solution after the AI is improved.

## 7. Future Solutions

Although there are few Ainu speakers, they seem to be at a stable level at present (FFAC, 2025). However, since people living in Hokkaido generally do not understand or learn Ainu, there is a high possibility that Ainu speakers will reach extinction level soon. Since language learning takes a lot of time, solutions for the near future are the most

important solutions, rather than immediate solutions. Therefore, by combining all the solutions currently being developed, we can put forward proposals for the revival of the Ainu language for adults and children.

### 7.1. Child-Centric Solutions

Children are the most important resource for the Ainu language because they easily acquire new languages (Ramirez, 2021). There are various solutions, but since children can acquire a language through immersion more easily than adults, children can easily learn Ainu if they are placed in a language nest and Ainu is used in common media such as radio and television (Nozaki, 2016).

Therefore, if the above solutions are used, the number of native Ainu speakers will increase, and it will be easier to use Ainu in the language nest and on radio and television (Koslova, 2021). If the number of people who understand Ainu increases, learning will become even easier, therefore Ainu language education should be promoted so that Ainu can be taught not only to current children but also to future children (FFAC, 2025). A lot of funds and teachers are needed, but language nests and

media need to be used immediately since reviving a language becomes more expensive than revitalizing one. Every yen spent now will save far more in the future, while also allowing for more adults to speak the language the sooner we do fund these efforts.

## 7.2. Adult-Centric Solution

Of course, solutions for adults are important because we need to have adults who can teach children before implementing solutions for children. The solutions are different for adults, who always learn languages slower than children (Ramirez, 2021). Currently, Hokkaido University has many young adults and teachers who hear Ainu daily. It is a somewhat new method, but if such a solution is effective, and it is implemented throughout Hokkaido, everyone can learn Ainu every day for free. Therefore, even if they cannot speak Ainu, they will be able to understand everyday words (Hokkaido University, 2024).

This solution alone is not enough, but if people know everyday words, it should be easier to improve their conversation skills (Koslova, 2021). And later if classes to learn Ainu to become a teacher become common, both children and adults will slowly gain



easy access to Ainu language teachers. This solution requires a lot of funding, but if it can be implemented with relative haste, it will make Ainu a commonly used language within at least a localized area.

### 7.3. Regarding The Money Problem

The issue of funding raises various ethical issues. Ainu people have the opinion that "they (the government) only see us as a tourist resource...", so if tourism is used, people will think that Ainu are being exploited for profit (Kihara, 2024). However, if nothing is done, the Ainu language may become extinct, so compromises are necessary to solve the problem.

The Japanese government has a lot of funds and can easily fund the Ainu Cultural Foundation. Furthermore, since the federal government already allocates funds for cultural activities, including already funding the Ainu language revitalization movement, using this money for Ainu language education should be effective in the long run (Ministry of Finance, 2024).

Furthermore, if the government's funding for cultural activities is not enough, revenues from tourism and universities can be used to further invest in Ainu language education. This solution will not only further increase funding for Ainu language revitalization, but also reduce government expenditure, so that the Ainu language revitalization movement will always be funded, even if laws, ruling parties, etc. change. For this reason, although the problem is complicated, it can be solved if the people agree.

The federal government needs to continue to provide funding to the FFAC. If the Hokkaido government goes further and uses tourism revenue, the federal government can provide Ainu language education without needing to draw further from other funding reserves. Furthermore, if universities offer Ainu language classes, they can collect revenue not only from Japanese people but also from foreigners who are interested in the language and are willing to study in Japan to learn it.

Therefore, if universities in Hokkaido can collect a lot of revenue through this solution, other universities will be able to offer Ainu language classes as well due to the

increase in speakers who are able to teach the language and established funding incentives. This will not only make it easier to learn the language, but also reduce expenditures for the Japanese government. This solution will result in a slight commercialization of Ainu culture, but it is a better solution than extermination.

## 8. Closing Thoughts

There are good and bad points to the Ainu language revitalization movement, and the current movement cannot be said to be sufficient. However, if we utilize the ongoing movement with some edits, we should be able to see results. Since a lot of research is being done on various revitalization methods in foreign countries, if we utilize information from abroad in tandem with the movement of Japanese foundations and universities, there is still hope for revitalizing the Ainu language.

However, the financial problem is big. If the Japanese federal government does not enact sufficient Ainu language laws, universities and public interest foundations will not have enough funds. It is not impossible, as the federal government has enacted many effective cultural laws and started to establish foundations this century. Since

people are interested in Ainu language due to recent promotion through media

(Nakagawa, 2024), if the government tries to look for people who want to learn Ainu language, it should be quick and easy to find them.

The Ainu language is not a useless language that should be extinct, it would be absurd to say that of any language. Ainu culture is Hokkaido culture, so if it is not protected, the spirit of Hokkaido will die. Various solutions are effective, and many people have gained an interest in the Ainu language through the media and various movements. The federal government and the Japanese people need to make Ainu a commonly learnable language, even if it will be a slow and time-consuming process. This is not only to protect the language, but to protect the very soul of Japan: its culture.

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