

# Pacific Populations: Fertility, Mortality and Movement in Colonial Oceania - Reflection by Jayden Hooper.

In this series of talks surrounding the topic of Pacific Populations, the focus of today's discussion highlighted Cook's colonial movement in the 1830s and the impact this had on Māori population.

The lack of factual information regarding Māori population was a significant topic discussed today. Based on what was said in history, there is a claim that the Māori population has decreased by 40% from 1977. It was mentioned that there are lots of political implications of this claim, yet the underlying information does not have enough supporting evidence and is therefore invalid. There has not been enough funding yet in the research to clarify this. However, if the funding is provided, there are lots of sources of information to analyze, such as shipping history, disease history and mortality history. The talk did not discuss the exact political implications that could follow, which would have made an interesting discussion.

Looking at Cook's colonial movement, we discussed the implications of the spreading diseases, fertility and the lack of children in the Māori community.

Of all of the bad that Cook brought to the Māori people, bacterial and sexually transmitted diseases had arguably the largest impact. Tuberculosis was brought into the country causing one third of the deaths across Māori people and possibly 15% more. In 1835, the measles from Australia were brought to the South Island in New Zealand. When Māori people experienced the measles, they didn't know how to react. They would throw themselves in cold water which posed a greater risk to their health.

Fertility arose through the topic of the sex trade market within New Zealand; sailors seeking women and Māori people exchanging women. This led to a further spread of STDs which became worse when the women would sleep with Māori men after the exchange.

The lack of Māori children during this time was a major concern. There was a high ratio of men to women across Māori people during the 1840s and men would have multiple wives. This meant that lots of men would not have anyone to sleep with during this time. 40% of the female population had no children or all their children were dead which was said to be an implication of the diseases brought into the country.

Cook was aware of the diseases and made an attempt to prevent the spread without success. However, with all of these harsh realities of how Cook and his sailors affected the Māori people, they had a very reasonable and logical reaction. They lost faith in the Europeans and blamed them for bringing in the diseases.

As a European male who has grown up around a lot of Māori culture, it surprises me just how ignorant I have been to even just a taste of this history. Looking at this situation through the lens of population provides a more explicit image of the events than I anticipated. I hope this can bring a fresh perspective on the relationship between Māori and European settlers to those as unknowing as I.