

# Hack Aotearoa

## Article #2

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JANUARY 17, 2020

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# Who owns Māori data?

*by Jamie Small*

Different people have different feelings about their personal data, who it is shared with, and how it is used.

As a population, Māori have a different approach to data than Pākehā, says leading Māori data and information specialist Kirikowhai Mikaere.

“Data is not a new space for us, for Māori,” she says.

Consider the carved poles in a marae, or traditional Māori tapestries.

“The weaving holds data and, depending on your skills, you can translate that data,” Kirikowhai says.

But Māori are not a homogenous population, and different iwi (tribes), hapū (sub-tribal groups) and individuals have different approaches to their data.

“We have tribal groups wanting to access and have possessions of data for their own development.”

Some of Kirikowhai’s main concerns in her roles with the Iwi Chairs Forum Data Leadership Group, New Zealand’s Data Ethics Advisory Group and the Manaaki Ora Trust are partnership, governance and ownership of Māori data.

“Māori data should be subject to Māori governance,” she says.

Caleb Moses is a Māori data scientist working for Dragonfly Data Science.

One of his projects is helping an iwi radio station in Kaitiāia, Te Hiku Media, use their 30 years of audio recordings to advance Te Reo Māori in the digital world.

The data, an extraordinary collection of the history of spoken Māori language, can be used to make Te Reo Māori transcription apps and digital voice assistants like Siri or Google Assistant.

A unique aspect of this project, he says, is that Te Hiku Media owns all the data and the project itself.

Usually data projects like this are owned by universities, Caleb says, but it is important for Māori organisations to own Māori data.

“The subject of the data should have control over it ultimately, not just where it is being stored.”

He says people often ask him how to make sure there is adequate Māori representation in their projects, and he finds this question hard to answer.

“If you wanted to go down our route then you would find a Māori organisation that had an express interest in what you are interested in. Then you would ask them ‘What would you do?’ And then you do that.”