

# Using Indigenous Values to Underpin Harm Reduction for All

Whakaiti Pāmamae Kai Whakapiri



# Traditional practices

‘Harm Reduction’ as an international movement, is not Indigenous and, as such, has not been in the forefront of Māori approaches to addressing and reducing drug harm per se, Māori have long-held values, practices, and interventions that are our own Indigenous ‘harm reduction’

- Rāhui: a device for separating people from tapu things. It is commonly deployed to protect natural resources or people (such as temporary fishing bans).
- Karakia: traditional incantation, ritual chant, chant, intoned incantation, charm, spell - a set form of words to state or make safe a ritual activity.
- Tohunga: skilled person, chosen expert, priest, healer - a person chosen by the tribe as a leader in a particular field. Tohunga guide people to ensure customs are observed and protected them from spiritual forces or spiritual harm.
- Whānau and hāpū support: Traditional family and sub-tribe structures were supportive and ensured the care and support of each other.
- Values: e.g., Manaakitanga: the process of showing respect, generosity and care for the people, their whānau and communities. It also means to show respect and care for their information and stories. Mauri is the essential life force within a person, place or object.

# Māori began drug (alcohol) harm reduction in the 1860s

Māori wardens are a harm reduction intervention that date back to the 1860s, thanks to a recommendation from Māori rūnanga (tribal councils), designed to curb the negative impacts of alcohol on Māori.

The warden roles, which are held by Māori, were formally recognised by an act of law in 1945, and today there are more than 900 nationwide.

Their main powers under the Act relate to alcohol, with the ability to warn a licensee to stop serving liquor to a Māori, order any Māori to leave a hotel, seize liquor at a Māori function, or take car keys.



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# Our new term for Harm Reduction

## Whakaiti Pāmamae

**Whakaiti**, literally means to  
'make small.'

**Pāmamae**, harm.

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## Kai Whakapiri

**Our new generic term for 'drugs'.**

While there were no traditional names for individual drugs, there were negative and stigmatizing terms such as "taru kino" meaning "bad or evil thing" and 'whakapōauau', meaning "thing to make one confused."

**Kai Whakapiri** reframes the term drug from the stigma and discrimination that comes with addiction and drug use and instead associates it with the human need of seeking connection.



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# Māori values to underpin harm reduction practice for all

- In mid-2022, NZDF was commissioned to produce national harm reduction guidance as part of a group of special addictions projects.
- Towards this, the NZ Drug Foundation and Te Rau Ora worked together to host a series of 'hui Māori' to develop values that could guide harm reduction practice in Aotearoa.
- These were also brought to non-indigenous forums with other groups, including hundreds of people who use drugs, so they could explore and reflect on these values.
- This Indigenous-informed approach to harm reduction could be a positive example for others to use

# Māori values to inform our practice

## **Manaaki** (caring/supporting)

Harm reduction puts people first. Everyone has mana and everyone is entitled to be treated with respect and dignity. We meet people where they are at, without coercion, judgement, or discrimination.

## **Tika** (justice)

We do the right thing for the right reason. We are guided by evidence from the people we are supporting that our work is having the intended impact.

## **Pono** (honest/true)

We behave with honesty and integrity. This includes knowing ourselves so we can be present with people without judgement.

## **Aroha** (love& compassion)

We have an absolute focus on the person, their whānau, and their community, respecting their mana, autonomy, and human rights.

# Māori values to inform our practice

## Mana takitahi

(autonomy)

We understand and support positive changes that the people want to make that minimise health, social, and legal impacts without requiring them to commit to stopping or reducing use.

## Ka noho matatapu

(confidentiality)

We know our role and relationship with the people we support. We are clear with boundaries including confidentiality.

## Kotahitanga

(unity)

We are connected with others who use harm reduction approaches and stand up against coercion, judgement, and discrimination of people who use substances.

## Wawata

(aspirations)

We understand the impacts of colonisation and protect space for whānau, hapū, and iwi to set and reach their own aspirations.



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Whare Tukutuku



TE RAU ORA

# Living and lived experience feedback

*“Being an expert in your own experience.”*

*“Whānau wouldn’t feel judged.”*

*“Things would be so much better.”*

*“Provide more equity for our Māori whānau. Giving effect to Te Tiriti (participation/access to Harm Reduction).”*

*“Tino Rangatiratanga.”*

*“Acceptance, education, understand.”*

*“[These values are] A great leap forward – people/whānau first, not labels/diagnosis.”*

*“Connections at the forefront of our approach.”*

*“Community would get on board, attitudes would change.”*

*“Stories told and voices heard. Honesty.”*

*“Much better! More inclusive! Safer! (including culturally)”*

*“Wellbeing unique to each rohe.”*

*“Is this how we should behave as humans? It feels like it would be revolutionary, which says so much about our current system. I’d hope this would mean less social oppression and stigmatisation and an Aotearoa where we respect everyone’s human rights. A place where people can thrive in their own life choices – not just struggle to survive.”*

*“It would be a much safer, caring place.”*

*“Be useful to use these values and information to apply to hiring people on OST.”*

*“Stops the stigma.”*

*“Smashing the expert-learner, doctor-patient, provider-client power structure.”*





“Tino Rangatiratanga.”

– Lived and Living Experience Forum participant



International Indigenous  
Drug Policy Alliance

[Wharetukutuku.com](http://Wharetukutuku.com)



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**Whare Tukutuku**



**TE RAU ORA**



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