



Research Project Impact Case Study

Mātauranga Māori in Infectious Disease and Pandemic Preparedness

Short Research Title

Whiitiki Whakatika

Key researchers

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A. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed profound gaps in equity and cultural competence, demonstrating that conventional, centralised models are insufficient for protecting all communities. This context provides the non-negotiable requirement for the evidence-based analysis within the Whiitiki Whakatika report. Commissioned by Te Niwha, New Zealand's Infectious Disease and Pandemic Preparedness Platform, and undertaken by Tongikura Ltd, the report's primary purpose is to demonstrate how the Māori-led pandemic response provides an essential blueprint for a more effective, equitable, and resilient national health strategy for all of Aotearoa. The report's central thesis is an evidence-based assertion that mātauranga Māori is not merely a cultural alternative but a sophisticated, scientifically rigorous, and proven methodological approach for crisis response.

B. Impact

This research has immediate and long-term impacts that benefit Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond. These include:

Current Impact

- The research has provided for systems and solutions to be documented that are culturally anchored and resonate with Marae kāinga realities and worldviews.
- Through the process of engaging with collectives of Rangahau Participants through endorsed Māori leadership structures and where they are located, this provided contextualised community voice in the Research. Forums engaged included the National Iwi Chairs Forum, Regional iwi leaders' Forums (Te Hiku etc) It also applied models to support an Ao Māori approach that engaged with collectives in addition to individuals, with appropriate processes developed to support engagement in a Science Research Forum ie Collective consent for information shared in Wananga in addition to required individual consent, ensuring trusted relationships and a depth of knowledge that would not otherwise be accessible.

Future Impact

Various Rangahau participant groups expressed their expectations for reciprocity and relationships to ensure the research leads to beneficial findings for their region's systems. Below is an overview of a nationwide opportunity for testing and applying the Takarangi framework from Whiitiki Whakatika, focusing on diseases like measles and planning for future pandemic preparedness.

Future impact at scale includes:

- i. Māori-led governance structures and culturally grounded pandemic strategies.
- ii. Enhanced public health infrastructure and policy informed by nationwide wānanga methodologies.
- iii. Strengthening whānau, hapū and iwi resilience through applied frameworks validated by this research.
- iv. Serve as a global model for integrating indigenous knowledge into public health systems.