

# Māori experiences of trauma and approaches to wellbeing



Trauma informed care national training day  
Timaru  
Dr Moana Eruera  
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# Reclaiming traditional protective practices

E taku iti kahurangi  
Taku tamahine purotu e  
Kua puta mai koe  
Ki te ao turoa nei  
Nau mai..Haere mai...  
Haere mai....

*Na Taipari Munro*

*My precious little treasure, my beautiful and  
handsome daughter  
You have arrived to the light of day to this  
physical and spiritual world  
Welcome, welcome, welcome*





# ‘Te Ao Māori perspectives on trauma

- Te Ao Māori concepts of wellbeing
- Māori experiences of trauma
- Māori definitions of trauma
- Māori theoretical understandings of trauma
- Transformative principle of mana tamaiti



# Te Ao Māori concepts of wellbeing

**Mauri Ora**  
**Mauri mate**

**Tapu**  
**violated**

**Whakamā**  
**disconnected**

**Wairua**  
**trampled**  
**disturbed**



**Māia**  
**trampled**



# Māori experiences of trauma

**“Maori experience trauma in distinct ways that are linked to the experience of colonisation, racism and discrimination, negative stereotyping and subsequent unequal rates of violence, poverty and ill health”** (Oranga Ngākau, 2018)

- Historically through colonisation
- Conflicts between values, beliefs and worldviews
- Across whānau and generations
- Within systems we are part of
- Directly to individuals
- Vicarious



# Historical spoken word

**Pre-1840**

**1840-1860**

**1870-1890**

**1940-1960**

**1900-1930**

**1970-1990**

**2000-2011**

**2012-2021**

# Maori experiences and impacts of trauma

(individual and collective)







TE TIRITI O WAITANGI  
1840

# Māori definitions of trauma

## Patu Ngākau

“A traumatic event.

The abuse, either physical, psychological or both has an impact which is perceived as an assault to the ngākau, the emotional core of a person and the location for memories”.

*Smith, 2019*

# Māori definitions of trauma

## Whakamā

“To become pale,  
associated with emotions and feelings of shame and  
embarrassment.

A sense of powerlessness which results in the external  
physical change.... the ngākau of the individual creates  
an internal state of pouritanga ”.

*Smith, 2019*



# Māori definitions of trauma

## Ngākau Riri

“Riri describes violence or anger.

Te Riri o te ngākau, to screen off, shut down or create barriers to the ngākau. The ngākau is known associated with Rongo the Atua of peace and goodwill”.

*Smith, 2019*

# Maori theoretical understandings of trauma to inform interventions

## Dynamics of Whanaungatanga (DOW)

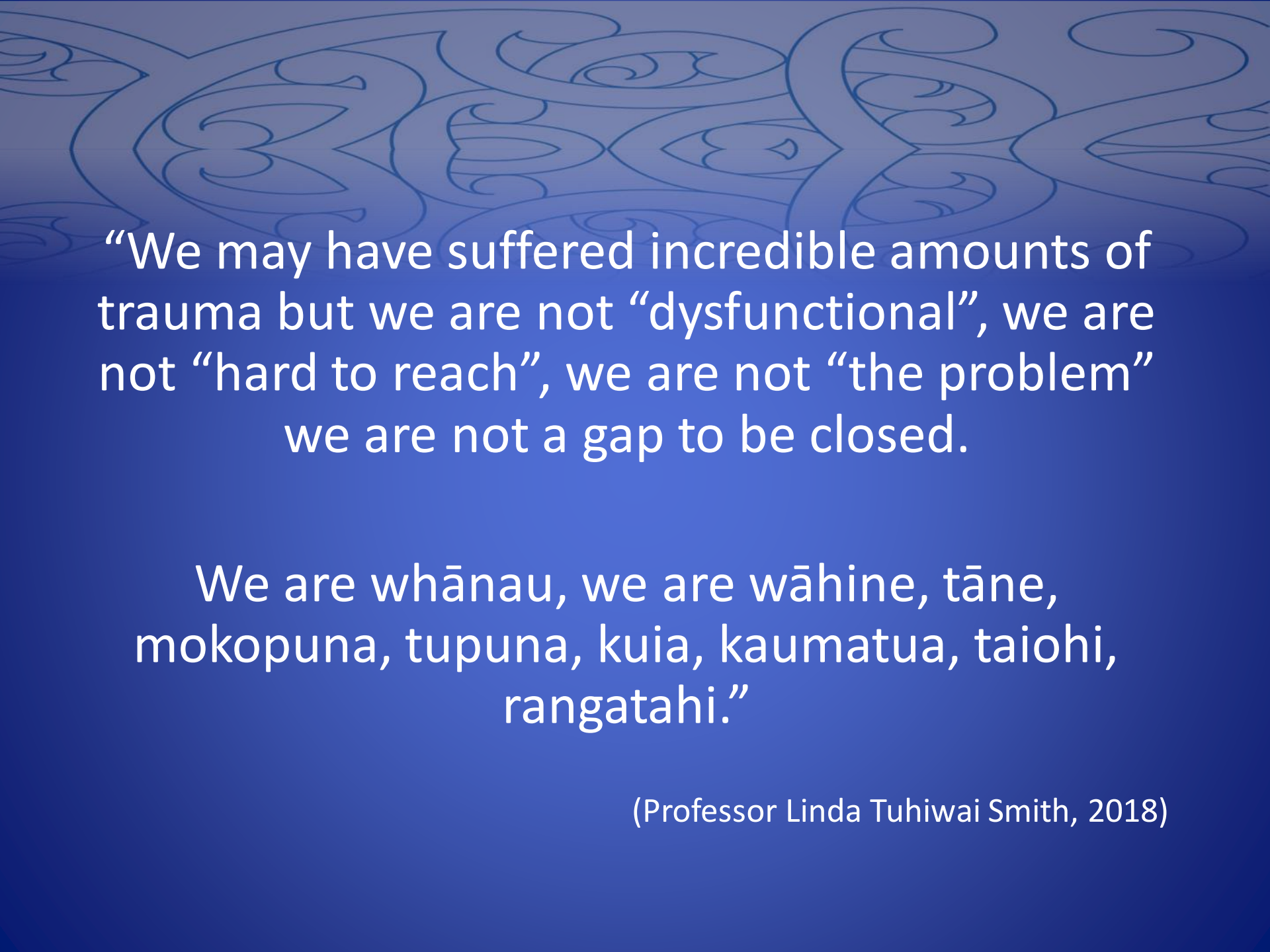
“Abuse is a violation of ones tapu. It is a perpetration or an act of violence referred to in Maori as a ‘hara’ which subjects the victim to a state of ‘noa’ or tapu restriction. The concept of noa depicts a person being in the state or absence of mana, that is having no power to effect change... abuse is a violation against the victim, the perpetrator and both of their whanau collectives. The effects of the violation and prolonged state of noa make them vulnerable to further abuse and violent behaviour themselves. The prolonged state of noa is called ‘whakama’... in this sense whakama refers to the symptoms of prolonged unaddressed abuse (an externalisation of the victims hurt emotions and a subconscious plea for help to be cleansed from the violation of their tapu. The manner in which to restore violations of tapu is held within the practice of ‘hohourongo’, hohou (to enter) rongo (peace).

***Pa Henare Tate (2002)***









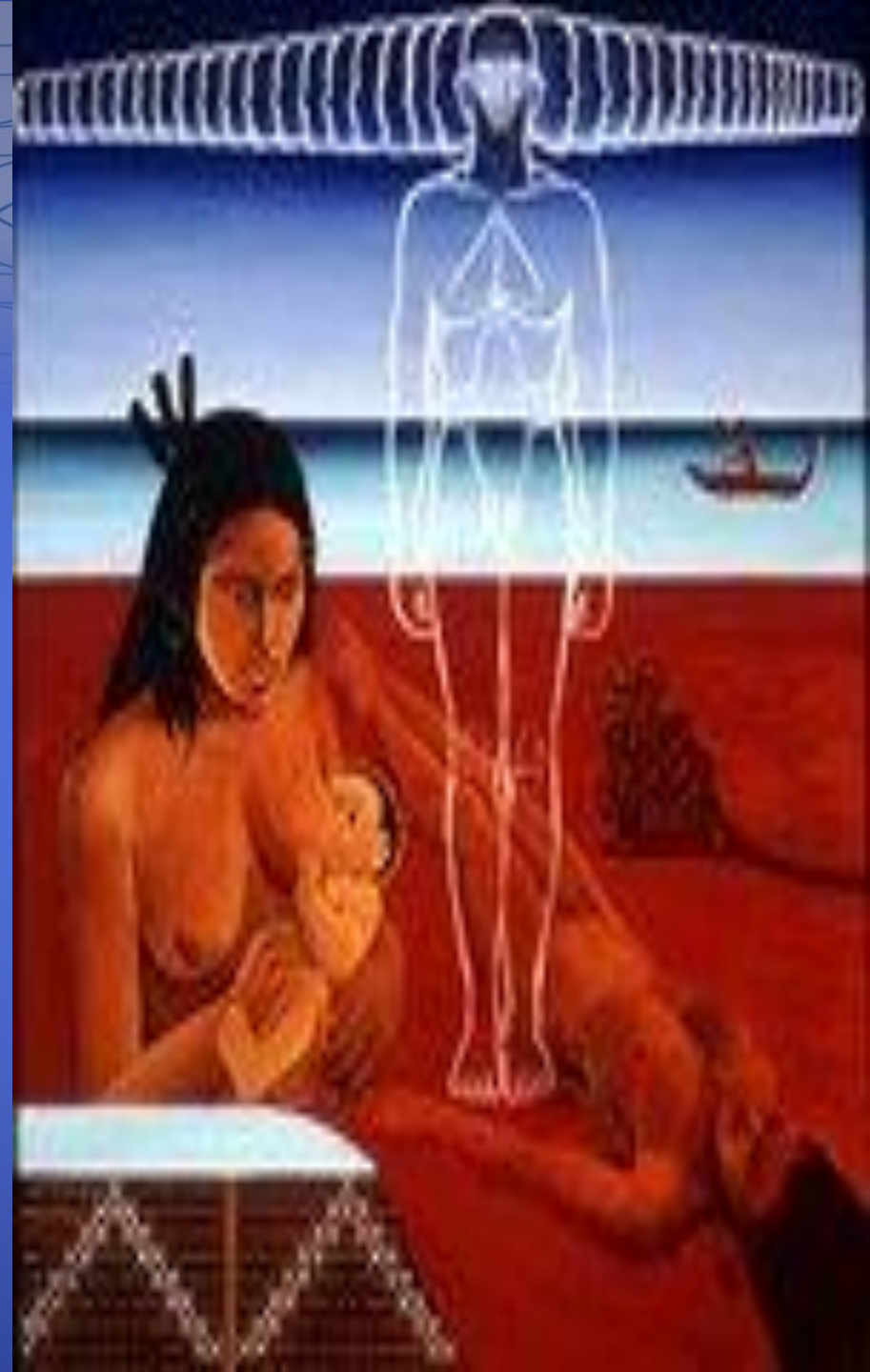
“We may have suffered incredible amounts of trauma but we are not “dysfunctional”, we are not “hard to reach”, we are not “the problem” we are not a gap to be closed.

We are whānau, we are wāhine, tāne,  
mokopuna, tupuna, kuia, kaumatua, taiohi,  
rangatahi.”

(Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 2018)

# Whakamana te tamaiti

- Recognise trauma in its cultural forms/descriptions and its individual/collective impacts (violation of whakapapa)
- Respond/engage applying knowledge of 'tapu o te tangata' other Te Ao Māori wellbeing principles
- Regulate using tikanga (protocols/predictable/rhythm)
- Restore and heal (hohouterongo practices),



# “Disrupt thinking to challenge the status quo”

- Western mis-framing of NZ history with minimal recognition and application of indigenous knowledge
- Responsivity barriers - in our attempt to mitigate appear to entrench the cycle (and maintain status quo)
- May be ‘new’ interventions but they are not indigenous interventions
- ‘ Just because it is evidenced doesn’t mean that it works, and just because there is no evidence doesn’t mean that it won’t work’.

Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 2018



# Critical reflections

How do we understand Maori cultural constructs such as 'te tapu o te tangata' and 'mana' to inform our work with Maori?

What is our ***Maori theory of change*** that supports us to shift 'states of ora' Maori?

What ***practice gifts*** are we as Maori prepared to share with Tauhiwi who work with our people?

What are the commonalities between Maori and Western notions and expressions of wellbeing and trauma and what is different?

What do Tauhiwi practitioners need to support working with Maori?

