

E TU HAUMARU MĀORI

First up in this new column, **VANCE WALKER** defines Haumaru Māori and suggests how it can be integrated with conventional health & safety practice for the benefit of all.



What is Haumaru Māori? Let's start with a very simple meaning for the term, consisting of *hau*, or vital essence, and *maru*, or safe. *Māori* denotes Haumaru Māori, as originating, but not exclusive to, Māori.

Practice attempts to achieve something, so a description for Haumaru Māori includes providing a safe environment to ensure something vital for a worker. This may include acute health and safety, as well as the wellbeing of their workplace, whānau, hapū and iwi and/or community.

A worker not affiliating to a Māori group can still benefit from Haumaru Māori, as it is a form of philosophy featuring basic ideas about wellbeing, values, reasoning, and mātauranga Māori or Māori knowledge. Moreover, Mātauranga Māori is a lived knowledge, which explains why it can also be an evolving philosophy, or a way of living.

The word *wellbeing* recurs because Mātauranga Māori uses a holistic Te Ao Māori or Māori world view that acknowledges the interconnectedness and interrelationship of all living and non-living things.

ACCORDING WITH TIKANGA

Points of practice difference for Haumaru Māori emanate from tikanga, the word coming from

tika meaning right or correct, thus, to act in accordance with tikanga is to behave in a way that is culturally appropriate. Te Whare Tapa Whā, karakia and the use of values such as manaakitanga or duty of care are all connected to tikanga. They can be seen as Haumaru Māori tikanga, but not exclusive to it. As illustrated by the use Te Whare Tapa Whā in workplaces, they are drawn from Hauora Māori or Māori health.

In the future, there is no reason why practices will not be uniquely developed from Haumaru Māori and connected to tikanga. Moreover, tikanga is arrived at, thus Haumaru Māori practices are constantly evolving. The substitution of hongī and harirū (handshakes) with the elbow bump exemplifies Haumaru Māori adapting and responding to a modern risk.

(Mātauranga Māori, or lived knowledge of pandemics such as the 1817 Foveaux Strait influenza outbreak, demonstrates that Māori already understood the value of rāhui, or social distancing.)

In other words, Haumaru Māori is a Māori parallel to conventional health and safety philosophy, founded on Mātauranga Māori with evolving practices that are derived from tikanga. Non-Māori can participate and contribute towards its development.

FIRST MOVER ADVANTAGE

The uplifting of Haumaru Māori practices, such as Te Whare Tapa Whā, anticipates something bigger. There is an appetite to contemporise Mātauranga Māori. It will be interesting to see how far organisations such as Māori businesses and government agencies will move to procure suppliers that are Haumaru Māori capable.

This kind of demand is not new. Such precursors have signalled an uptake of Mātauranga Māori in education, social services, health delivery and business development. The smart money is on the practitioner and company that gains an understanding and gives Haumaru Māori a go, thus achieving first mover advantage.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

We have problems. Some practices are disconnected or used beyond the remit of the Māori words or titles they have adopted. A large gap in research linking mātauranga Māori with conventional H&S practice curtails practitioners from applying Haumaru Māori. Health and safety is arguably an insular discipline, so the introduction of Haumaru Māori with its holistic characteristics curated from unfamiliar sources can result in it being sidelined.

Finally, there is no recognition of Māori cultural competency

for generalists, despite the existence of appropriate standards for decades. The history of Māori health within mainstream services illustrates the need to accredit Māori competencies early as a critical means of raising the game across the workforce.

LIFELONG LEARNING

In contrast, Haumaru Māori appeals to practitioners who are lifelong learners. It has been my experience that their reticence about things Māori is put aside once they start sharing their cultural encounters with Māori or other vulnerable workers. Those experiences are enlightening and rewarding personally and professionally. Haumaru Māori offers a positive narrative, it is a bias lens that sees it differently.

POINT OF DIFFERENCE

Cliff Curtis once remarked that Māori culture provides our only true point of difference on the screen. The same could be argued for Haumaru Māori. Curating a genre of health and safety practices unique to Aotearoa New Zealand will be difficult, but we can start to learn how by understanding Haumaru Māori.