He Tohu Ora: Background

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As described by Te Whare Tapa Whā model of health, Māori wellbeing encompasses taha wairua (spiritual health), taha tinana (physical health), taha hinengaro (mental/emotional health) and taha whānau (family health) [1]. Further dimensions of Māori health are illustrated by Te Pae Māhutonga model of health promotion, which includes mauriora (cultural identity), te oranga (participation in society), toiora (healthy lifestyles), waiora (physical environment), ngā manukura (community leadership), and te mana whakahaere (autonomy) [2]. Te Pae Māhutonga highlights the importance of other determinants of health, for example mauriora and culture, which is a central determinant of Māori health and wellbeing [3]. Mauriora is reflected in the Index through indicators reflecting cultural identity and participation in Māori society.

Both Te Whare Tapa Whā and Te Pae Māhutonga are holistic models of health that recognise the interrelated nature of aspects of wellbeing. For example, a contaminated water or food source might affect environmental, physical and spiritual wellbeing. To experience good health, all aspects of wellbeing need to be strong and balanced [4].

Whānau is a core aspect of wellbeing for Māori. Whānau can extend beyond immediate family and households to include extended family, neighbours, close friends and even communities [5]. Being in regular contact with whānau may provide an individual with maanaki (support, hospitality and care), access to Māori culture, and sense of identity [5]. The Whānau Ora outcome framework has informed indicator selection for He Tohu Ora. Whānau Ora is a nationwide initiative that provides a whānau-focused and strengths-based approach to support whānau development. It is built on a Māori cultural foundation and utilises the collective strengths and capabilities of whānau to achieve better outcomes in areas such as health, education, housing and employment [6]. Whānau Ora is achieved when whānau are: self-managing and empowered leaders; living healthy lifestyles; participating fully in society; confidently participating in te ao Māori; economically secure and successfully involved in wealth creation; cohesive, resilient and nurturing; and responsible stewards of their natural and living environments.

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