

## **Understanding Addiction Through Whakapapa: Recognition of Collective Trauma and Colonisation Through an Indigenous Māori Lens**

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The Western preference for pathologizing behaviour results in an approach that internalises the focus of analysis to individuals – in recent years right down to the DNA level. This can be contrasted with a Māori (and arguably broadly indigenous) approach that organises the world by way of whakapapa – genealogy, a framework that seeks to understand people, their behaviours and the world around them by placing them in a web of relationships that spans both lateral and lineal time and space. It is an inherently outward focus based on connection and an ecological understanding of the world and the interrelationship between the physical, psychological, spiritual and familial aspects of health – both at an individual and communal level.

This contrast in focus comes into conflict in contemporary systems responding to addictions and harms sourced in problematic usage of substances. Recent developments in criminal justice have seen an increasing acceptance of pathological explanations for criminal harms sourced in addiction or substance use, such as acknowledgment of substance abuse disorders and FASD, but the connection to collective trauma as a result of the ongoing impacts of colonisation has gained less traction. I argue this is partly a bias in favour of Western science, but also a reluctance to acknowledge the spiritual and the collective harms of colonisation. The orthodox criminal justice system requirement for a solid nexus between individual and collective trauma belies the experience of indigenous communities, and often characterises their addictions as an individual failing.

I will argue that transformative decolonising change is required for systems to appropriately respond to the needs of indigenous peoples who have problematic relationships with alcohol and other substances.