

Indigenous Lifeworlds: Recognition, Resistance, Response to State Harm

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Indigenous lifeworlds are characterised by rich and diverse webs of relationships with land, water, lifeforms and knowledges. While these lifeworlds continue to be nurtured they have been disrupted by colonialism and dispossession. Dispossession is the essence of colonisation. It creates enduring, embedded forms of harm. It is one of the purest forms of colonial violence and has had significant intergenerational reach. The Māori experience of colonisation is reflected in the experience of Indigenous peoples in other settler states who have been systematically dispossessed, alienated and harmed by state policies and practices, and where they continue to be overrepresented in every negative social indicator, including removal of children, abuse in care, high rates of incarceration and drug harm. In Aotearoa, Māori disproportionately experience the negative impacts of alcohol and other drugs, with nearly all measures of drug use, addiction, and related harms (including health outcomes and criminal justice sanctions) highlighting inequities when compared to non-Māori.

I argue that the impact of state harm and state violence on Māori has led to high levels of drug harm that is amplified by state responses of incarceration and systemic marginalisation. The warehousing of Māori in prisons and the ongoing carceralisation of Māori communities has resulted in a profound unfreedom that is experienced both inside and outside of the wire. Drawing on David Nixon's notion of slow violence and the concept of disasters of everyday life I look at collective rather than individualised harm. The focus then moves to Indigenous solutions to harm that demonstrates the power of lived experience and expertise to support healing and transformation for Māori.