|  |
| --- |
| **Title of Research Presentation**  Wai ora: Connecting tangata (people), hauora (health), and taiao (environment) through participation in waka ama. |
| **Maximum 2500 characters (including spaces but excluding title)**  **Background/Objectives**  Indigenous health promotion focuses on indigenous worldviews and especially the close relationship that people have with the environment, with culture, and tradition. These values are inherent in the practice of waka ama, which as one of the fastest growing sports in Aotearoa New Zealand, is increasingly used as a vehicle for health promotion. This research explores the social, cultural, and health benefits of being involved in waka ama and how it aligns with values inherent to indigenous health promotion.  **Methods**  Located on the Clive River in Hawke’s Bay, Heretaunga Ararau O Ngati Kahungunu Waka Ama Roopu was established in 2001. With a fleet of waka, the group has affiliations with Ngāti Kahungunu, Kohupatiki Marae, Waka Ama Kahungunu (regional organisation) and Sport Hawke's Bay. Using a kaupapa Māori framework, kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) interviews and visual video footage provided the data for this research which was then thematically coded under different headings linked to indigenous health promotion.  **Results**  Results highlighted the multifaceted benefits of participating in waka ama. As well as the physical benefits for paddlers, it also has a strong tikanga which encourages language revitalisation with the use of te reo Māori through karakia, waiata, and the general terms used associated with waka.  It also created opportunities for participants to experience and connect with the natural environment enabling better understanding of how the wellbeing of the environment connects to the spiritual, cultural, and physical health of people.  **Discussion**  While participants recognised physical and mental health benefits associated with their participation in waka ama, they also demonstrated a deepened relationship and understanding of their awa and their connection and responsibilities to the environment. An awakening of understanding around te ao Māori had also sparked the desire for participants to extend their knowledge by engaging in te reo Māori courses and learning about kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and traditional navigation techniques centred on the stars and landscape. The knowledge gained from participants provide evidence of effective ways to improve health and wellbeing within communities with a particular focus on waiora, the spiritual connection between hauora and the environment.  **Keywords**  Waiora, Hauora, Indigenous Health Promotion |