

Indigenous rights and alcohol policies in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Kristen Maynard and Cathy Bruce

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Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand



Introduction

- Mihi ki a koutou.
- Ko wai maua?
- Te Whatu Ora.
- Outline of presentation:
 - Background information about Māori and alcohol in Aotearoa
 - Te Tiriti o Waitangi and key findings on how alcohol law can give effect to it
 - How government agencies can support change
 - Concluding thoughts.

Alcohol – a colonial tool with devastating effects

- There is nothing to suggest that Māori produced or took any alcoholic-related substance before colonisation.
- Māori avoided alcohol for some time when it was first introduced.
- Alcohol helped to facilitate land alienation.
- For some, alcohol became a means of dealing with hardship.
- Our ancestors foresaw the impact that alcohol would have and were active in trying to control the effects – prohibition, petitions, and Māori wardens.
- Māori efforts to control the effects continued through to the 21st century.
- Despite these efforts, alcohol has had and continues to have a significant impact on the lives of many Māori families and communities.

Continuing impact of colonisation

*Settler colonisation – a **structure** rather than an event.* (Wolfe, 2006)

- Today Māori experience a disproportionate amount of alcohol-related harm, which has been persistent over time.
- There are signs of alcohol encroaching into Māori cultural practices and spaces.
- Alcohol policies continue to be developed in isolation to the social determinants of health and systemic causes.
- Alcohol law favours commercial interests over Māori and community concerns.
- Māori have had little to no influence on alcohol decisions in their communities.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi

- Constitutionally significant and foundational to the Aotearoa government.
- Signed between Māori and representatives of the British Crown in 1840.
- Contractual relationship recognising Māori rights such as tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and equity.
- There are synergies between Māori Treaty rights and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (eg, right to self-determination, right to good health).

Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Alcohol law

- In 2021, Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency now part of Te Whatu Ora commissioned the work on the Treaty and alcohol law report.
- A rapid review of relevant literature and engagement with a range of key stakeholders and informants across the sector informed this work and produced a range of potential ideas for legislative change.
- Key themes/findings:
 - General and explicit references to Te Tiriti are required throughout the alcohol legislation.
 - There is a need to shift the current power imbalance and ensure that Māori communities can effectively participate in alcohol decisions.
 - New or strengthened measures must be included to restrict alcohol advertising/sponsorship, reduce alcohol availability, and increase the price of alcohol, with the additional revenue tagged to initiatives designed to eliminate inequity.
 - Appropriate accountability and monitoring structures are needed to measure progress toward achieving equity.
 - The process for redesigning alcohol law must also be Tiriti-consistent.

How government agencies can support change

- Putting Te Tiriti o Waitangi at the forefront of our work and embedding Te Tiriti-dynamic practices
- Development of a national alcohol harm minimisation framework which centres Te Tiriti o Waitangi and equity - <https://www.hpa.org.nz/national-alcohol-harm-minimisation-framework>
- The framework recognises the importance of Māori voice and kaupapa Māori initiatives.
- The programme of work is aimed at supporting whānau and communities to develop kaupapa Māori solutions to minimising alcohol harm and improving wellbeing.
- Māori-led reframing of the narrative examples:
 - First 1000 Days: Minimising alcohol harm and improving maternal wellbeing through life-course approach.
 - Amohia Te Waiora: We're stronger without alcohol is a strengths-based message of mana motuhake/self-determination; to rise up and make our wellbeing a priority <https://www.hpa.org.nz/campaign/amohia-te-waiora>
 - Supporting Māori-led research.

Concluding thoughts

- A Treaty or Indigenous rights-based analysis supports calls for rebalancing power, greater Indigenous/community participation and for the inclusion and strengthening of evidence-based measures that would work toward achieving equity.
- It's not enough to just talk about addressing systemic/structural factors – there is a need to further define what fundamental systemic change looks like and take action toward it.
- What we can do now is:
 - continue to expose cultural and corporate systemic bias, the myths that support this and to advocate for Indigenous rights to be embedded in alcohol laws
 - support Indigenous peoples to lead and define the pathway forward for them
 - for those who work in government agencies, ensure policy development involves and addresses the needs of Indigenous communities.

For more information

- For a copy of the Treaty and alcohol law report – <https://www.hpa.org.nz/sites/default/files/Te%20Tiriti%20o%20Waitangi%20and%20alcohol%20law.pdf>
- Herbert, S., & Maynard, K. (in press). Māori and alcohol in Aotearoa New Zealand. Section in 'Gender-responsive approaches to the acceptability, availability and affordability of alcohol'. World Health Organisation.

Ngā mihi maioha ki a koutou katoa