

**MEDIA RELEASE - AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV  
STIGMA INDEX: MĀORI PARTICIPANT REPORT 2021**

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On Waitangi Day 2021, Te Whāriki Takapou launches the first-ever report on the experiences of Māori People Living with HIV (Māori PLHIV) in Aotearoa New Zealand. The report addresses the health and wellbeing of 37 Māori PLHIV who participated in the HIV Stigma Index survey. Waitangi Day was chosen as launch day because Te Tiriti guarantees Māori PLHIV the right to live free of stigma and discrimination.

The report finds that the challenges facing participants as a consequence of HIV-related stigma and discrimination are significant and require urgent attention. Māori participants reported they were more likely to struggle with their mental health, and less likely to receive support. And compared to non-Māori living with HIV, participants were more likely to struggle to meet basic living needs – despite a high level of education.

HIV-related stigma and discrimination is not a new problem. The issue was reported at the first ever national HIV/AIDS hui held in Auckland in 1995 and this report indicates no progress has been made. While discriminating against a person for having HIV is illegal in New Zealand and New Zealand is a signatory to an international HIV and AIDS human rights framework, these facts alone have not reduced HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

Participants reported their ability to work, to form close relationships with whānau and friends, to disclose they were living with HIV, to gain accommodation, and to access health services were all affected by the verbal abuse and discrimination they experienced as a consequence of living with HIV. Furthermore, some participants had lived with HIV for two and three decades and they reported no noticeable reduction.

The report calls on government to implement, with urgency, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and New Zealand's HIV and AIDS international human rights framework to eliminate HIV-related stigma and discrimination for Māori and all other New Zealanders living with HIV. Rights-based approaches must underpin employment, education, sexual and reproductive health services, general health and social services, housing and all domains of public life in New Zealand. To achieve anything less puts New Zealand in breach of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and human rights legislation and agreements.

The report is available to the media from Te Whāriki Takapou website on 6 February 2021 <http://tewhariki.org.nz>

**Contact:**

Dr Alison Green (PhD)  
Chief Executive, Te Whāriki Takapou

Email: [alison@tewhariki.org.nz](mailto:alison@tewhariki.org.nz)