

# Book review



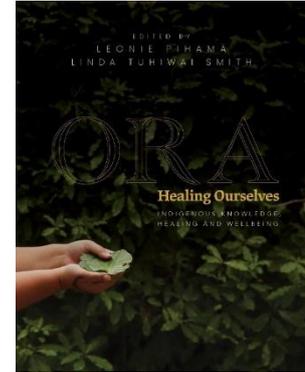
## Ora: Healing ourselves - Indigenous knowledge healing and wellbeing

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*E nga mana, e rau rangatira ma, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou, katoa.*

Reviewing this important publication is a privilege. Its release this year is timely and comes at a time when Māori, all New Zealanders, and all of humanity are experiencing and witnessing changes that they did not expect to see in their lives. The scarring and damage of different environments, fauna, flora, and creatures living on the land survival threatened, acceptance that many rivers, streams, and the different oceans which have fed and sustained many different populations both human and other life forms are polluted and now threatening the “Ora” or wellbeing of all.

This publication is worth reading and is of interest to a wide audience, as it combines academic research and recognises the importance of communities being engaged and supported to develop their own models of health and wellbeing and the ability to implement strategies to achieve, “Ora.” This state of being, our health and wellbeing, may be threatened or subject to change, often by forces outside of individuals, families, whānau, communities, and nation’s control. We are reminded in this publication that alone individuals, struggle to survive and our strength, vitality, and Ora, however, comes from being part and connected to a collective, membership and participation in the activities of different collective groups.

For Māori addressing trauma, healing and recovery occurs by having a strong empowered sense of cultural identity, understanding the importance of your own whakapapa, belonging, participating, and contributing to the ongoing development of whānau, hapu, iwi, local, ancestral, and different marae, and connection with different communities. Authors in this publication remind us that our identity, our value, and our ability to support each other are related to our strength and flexibility of connections so that we can support each other across generations, and address, and redress intergenerational trauma.

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We have recently seen this with the recent Māori, whānau, hapu, and iwi leadership in action to eliminate and then manage COVID in their whānau and communities. Māori leadership occurred spontaneously. This was often at odds with the Government and the health sector's response, delays in policies and delivery of resources often occurred after events had occurred. Māori requested and advocated their right to be proactive in the design and delivery of appropriate health messaging and provision of culturally appropriate safe COVID testing and vaccination services.

Many lessons have been learnt regarding COVID in Aotearoa and relationships between Māori and non-Māori. This experience now shapes current and future development of health and disability services for both population groups and has highlighted the importance of listening and hearing from Māori about their lived experience in access and use of Crown funded health and wider related services. Further the request by Māori for self-determination through co-governance, management and now the purchase and delivery of services through "Te Aka Whai Ora". This is a Māori health authority given some degree of responsibility to address and redress issues of inequalities, racism, structural discrimination, and the development of a Māori and non-Māori health workforce that is fit for purpose to engage and to work with Māori whānau and communities. Further, the need to design new models, frameworks, and services that are founded upon Māori values and principles to achieve outcomes that Māori identify as important for them.

This publication will help develop new services for Māori and non-Māori, as academics, researchers, Māori psychologists, and communities have shared their respective knowledge, ability, and evidence that the current western model of focusing on the individual to address trauma is ineffective. Those involved in this publication advocate we need to move from the paradigm of focusing on the external factors that affect individuals, whānau and different groups "Ora", to understanding the importance of the intergenerational effects of colonisation, loss of connection with whenua and the need to be able to care and look after our natural and spiritual environments we share with others to uplift our mind, body, soul and connections to achieve and maintain "Ora". We are reminded that the sense and feeling of "Ora", is an internal experience and we need to work together as collectives to change and shape the environments which we live, play and care for each other.

New health and disability legislation "Te Pae Oranga Healthy Futures Act," (2022), recognises the importance of human connection with each other. The key role of Iwi leadership in current and future health developments is the importance of Whānau Ora for the health and wellbeing of current and future generations. Information in this publication will be of value to different professionals and organisations that want to collaborate with Māori, not to dominate or take further resources, but to walk alongside to support healing and recovery from intergenerational, collective, and current trauma experiences.

The second part of this book provides the opportunity for Māori and non-Māori to learn from other indigenous peoples, especially those in America, of their experience of trauma, tribal-led interventions to address trauma, and to build resilience so that the past can be understood from different indigenous lenses. Despite the loss of land and the removal of people from their own land, displaced to live in other tribal areas, they can see, feel, and experience the sacrifices that their ancestors have made for their ongoing survival, and the ability to be creative and connected to parts of their environments for survival and "Ora".

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Learning from other Indigenous peoples reminds us also to protect and care for our water and food sources, our important relationship to care, protect, and spiritually relate to all the different creatures we live with. Healthy food, good nutrition, clean water supply, environments free of pollution and contamination, and clean air are all fundamental to “Ora.” The question that this publication raises is whether we are too late as members of collectives to redress our dysfunctional relationship and our ability to care and protect our whenua and the natural environments we share with different life forms to have and support “Ora”, for all.

*E kore au e ngaro, he kākano I ruia mai I Rangaiātea  
I will never be lost for I am a seed sown in Rangaiātea.*

**Reviewed by Dr Lorna Dyall QSM, Ngati Maniapoto, Ngati Paoa**

*Disclaimer: Please note these reviews are not intended as endorsements or recommendations from the Mental Health Foundation. This feature introduces resources that may be useful for individuals with an interest in mental health and wellbeing topics.*