

# *Haumanu Case Study: Community of Practice*

## **Testing a way of working restoratively**

Haumanu is an approach to working in more healing-centred and restorative ways. It provides a framework and practices to operate intentionally from a place of mauri ora (connection and wellness) and to acknowledge and integrate collective trauma as it arises. If we are consciously working from a place of mauri ora together and have a way to integrate past hurts, we can design restorative human systems that promote equity and collective healing instead of recycling trauma from the past.

In te reo Māori, the indigenous language of Aotearoa New Zealand, ‘haumanu’ means to restore, rejuvenate or bring back to health. The Haumanu approach draws from Māori and Western thinking but can be adapted and applied cross culturally. See [here](#) for more on Haumanu.

Between August 2022 and March 2024, an online Community of Practice tested Haumanu thinking and practices. This is what we did and what we learned. All quotes are from participants.

# An invitation to work differently

The Community of Practice (COP) invited people to try out Haumanu ideas and practices in their lives, and especially in their workplaces. An invitation to be part of the COP was made to people who attended [an online introduction to Haumanu](#) in May 2022, facilitated by the [Centre for Social Impact's](#) Louise Marra and Tuihana Ohia. The invitation was framed in this way:

*The Haumanu Framework involves people coming together who want to work in a different way – who want to address trauma as it arises and include healing and restoration in their day-to-day work. These people are up for connecting, sharing and learning at deeper levels, for being uncomfortable, for being vulnerable – for depth work. They want to work from a paradigm of interconnectedness and from mauri (life force), and flowing energy.*

*We are creating a small community of practice for those working in this way or who wish to work more in this way, so that we can learn and grow together. We would like to invite you to journey with us as we deepen our understanding and learning of how to work in a restorative way.*

Criteria for entry were:

- > You feel called to the work and can make the time for it.
- > You have done personal self-development work of your own.
- > You are up for prototyping aspects of the approach in your organisation.
- > Your organisation supports you to prototype.
- > You are up for looking at your own learning edges in this work.
- > You are up for a creative self-evaluation process.
- > You commit to providing a koha (contribution) towards the Haumanu kaupapa (purpose).

Of the 36 people who expressed interest, 24 were invited to join and all accepted. Most were part of community sector organisations, with several from local and central government. People came from diverse fields including the arts, kaupapa Māori spaces, whānau (family) and rangatahi (youth) support services, fire and emergency, housing and philanthropy. Participants were spread across Aotearoa.

During the COP process there was some fluctuation and drop-off in attendance, with a committed core of around 12 participants. Key factors influencing drop-off were busyness and pressure at work and not feeling able to apply Haumanu at work.

## COP process and content

The COP began with a two-day online hui in August 2022, followed by seven monthly online sessions of 2-3 hours each and then bimonthly online sessions to March 2024. Participants received a slide deck about the Haumanu Framework and two workbooks – one for individual practices and one for team and organisational practices.

In the first session, participants were put into quad groups of four, and asked to meet with their quad in-between sessions to discuss particular topics and share how their prototyping of the ideas and practices was going. To support and keep people safe, one session each with an experienced counsellor was offered at no cost to participants throughout the process. Participants could pay for more sessions personally if they chose. This specialist also attended a quad session during the process.

Reflection and learning processes were woven throughout, with regular team debriefs. Towards the end of the two-year COP online interviews were held with nine consistent participants, with email feedback from two others, to unpack what they gained and learned from the COP. Despite a strong desire to come together in person, cost and schedules meant this didn't happen and the entire COP occurred online.

The COP introduced key concepts behind Haumanu, including the role of our central nervous system, the importance of leading with healing instead of trauma and ways to connect with mauri (life force or the flow of life). The Haumanu Framework was shared and individual and team practices to apply it. Participants identified what they wished to prototype in their lives and workplaces, reflected on how this went and how they might change their practice to work more restoratively. Peer support and peer learning grew as the group evolved.

## Reflections on Haumanu

*It was very valuable to be exposed to ideas that make sense and have a suite of very practical, hands-on tools to test out. A lot of the information already available on systems change is way too cerebral for me. To find a people focused approach based in self and group work and via mauri restoration is an innovation, taking us back to understandings lost and equipping us with new ideas and ways to restore ourselves and each other, so our systems work better for everyone.*

COP participants liked that Haumanu is grounded in Aotearoa and informed by indigenous Māori knowledge, its focus on healing and restoration and its ability to be quickly and practically applied day to day. They experienced it as a safe space that took the time needed to digest ideas and practices, with a flexible process that was responsive to the needs of the group. The quad process was highly valued, and these groups quickly became tight-knit.

Four main benefits were experienced by participants:

## Increased knowledge and understanding, strengthening of practice

*I have a more expanded and nuanced understanding of trauma, in personal and societal levels. I can understand more of this dynamic that can feel overwhelming.*

*System change needs individual systems being settled, being connected, being landed. The whole idea of your own system connecting with others, our interrelatedness is huge.*

*It [haumanu] creates from mauri ora, the idea of where you create from, that was hallelujah.*

*Can't change others, only yourself.*

## Personal insights, connection, confidence and transformation

*I gained a sense of agency - I have to take responsibility for myself and how I get triggered.*

*Got a lot from understanding in a deeper way how trauma works, how it affects our lives and our brain. From a personal lens being Māori, how that history reflects itself today, with me, whānau, marae, hapū. Had a lot of revelations about that as a result of this process, and from a whānau perspective where we are sitting, is we are still in fight, flight mode, and are not really conscious of that. Another pearl was realising I'm so busy looking after everybody else, that it's hard for me to sit still and be still for myself.*

## Insights into work and team dynamics

*As a team we work together on the surface, we help people drill down into their own trauma and healing but we struggle with that level of intimacy with each other. We are asking people [we support] to open their soul to us, but we don't do that with each other.*

## Affirmation, hope and support

*Liked the acknowledgement that we all have our skills and medicine to bring.*

*It's given me hope. The reconnection back to Te Taio [environment] is the feeder, your base, you have to be connected there, that is so important to me. That never ending pool of mauri [life force] and energy that you can get from being connected there.*

## Learning about restorative practice

*Haumanu gives us a literacy for seeing how stuff impacts on our nervous systems - until we do we will repeat the same old shit. Most people get that once you start talking about it.*

People who are called to this work want change and are ready for it. Many are already working in these ways. What people find helpful is having language, a framework and practices that can strengthen what they are already thinking and doing.

Intergenerational trauma is within all of us, and unpacking personal and collective intergenerational trauma together is both liberating and unifying. We have more commonalities than differences among us.

Trauma work needs a slower pace. It requires making time to pause, reflect, reconnect with nature and with others. It is about building trust and connectivity in our spaces, acknowledging and dissolving hurt energy together and creating from spaces of mauri ora.

People felt that if we slow down, build trust and connection and create space more regenerative work will happen. Connecting as teams at work is so important, but trust is required to do this restorative work as it requires people to be open, vulnerable and willing to look at themselves and how they show up. Not everyone wants to work in these ways and that should be respected. Small pockets of people working in these ways are a start.

People observed that restorative work reinforces many existing processes in the workplace such as karakia (opening prayers or blessings), waiata (song), regular reflection and deep learning spaces. The work surfaces different world views in teams and reveals biases that we all hold.

The purpose of the work is to find and use practices to enable mauri ora (wellness), and there are endless ways to honour people's own cultures, life experiences and knowledge systems in this work. We start with ourselves:

*We need to practice what we preach - a lot of this work is done in the mirroring of how we, as individuals, show up ourselves in a collective - then it becomes kind of contagious.*

*Teams want to dive into systems change without noticing we are the system.*

Through the COP people learned more about the fundamental nature of trauma and mauri ora - and that trauma is experienced collectively so has to be healed collectively. The healing of trauma is too much for one nervous system to do on its own.

Restorative work requires us to work at deeper levels, to focus on how we are as people, to bring our whole selves into the workplace, which can be uncomfortable.

Participants noted the vital importance of centring Papatuanuku or the earth in this work, in order to act from a connected place and design systems that are good for the earth and all living things.

*In order for us to progress as a race we need to get real about that [centring Papatuanuku] and live it. The environment is central to all we do going forward. That is in itself a healing mechanism.*

Everyone has their own medicine to bring to this work of restoration, including their cultural identity:

*A piece I enjoyed looking at is what are my indigenous [Pasifika] practices, it has got me deeply thinking about that. In full respect of Māori culture here, I am curious about my own ethnic make-up and indigenous make-up, embracing that to bring into the mahi [work]. Bring my own deep connection to culture. These are deep layers for Pasifika.*

The Haumanu approach has much to offer the work of healing the wounds of colonisation:

*Thirty years ago I went to a psychodrama group, there were Māori and tauīwi [non-Māori] practitioners, they said how can we heal this mamae [hurt]. Everyone wanted to heal it, but what they realised was Māori and tauīwi have to go away and heal, they can't do it all together. Even through a robust and well-meaning process, we couldn't get that restoration when those feelings came up. Haumanu is a way to do it.*

Focusing on strengths and connecting with mauri ora, or the flow of life, can take a lot of unlearning:

*All of our systems have come out of punitive power and control, this [Haumanu] comes out of strengths and mauri ora, it's very different.*

Ultimately, people felt that Haumanu helped them to be more real with themselves and others, and especially at work. Working more restoratively means that people check in with each other and work in more vulnerable and connected ways:

*The more connected we are the more amazing things we can do together.*

It was noted that these ways of working take time to land and need to be practiced time and again. Unpacking Haumanu ideas and practices so they can be more easily grasped and applied is core to the ongoing work. There were calls for training on the 'how to of Haumanu, which is another key focus moving forward.

