



# Te Wero

## Challenging Inequalities in Health

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## Inequalities in health are:

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- unfair
- unjust
- avoidable
- unnecessary

# What causes inequalities between groups?

The unequal distribution of the determinants of health

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# Fundamental drivers of inequalities in health

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- Socioeconomic circumstances
- Social exclusion "the process by which individuals are denied the opportunities to participate in the activities normally expected of members of that society"
  - For example: sexism, racism, class.



# Why should health promoters be concerned with inequalities?

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- Inequalities can be reduced
- International recognition that equity a key health goal
- Government priority
- Health promotion recognises its importance
- Inequalities can be reduced by health promotion action
- There is much to gain



# Equity a central concern in health promotion

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- Ottawa Charter – advocate for health and equity in all sectors
- Jakarta Declaration goal is to increase health expectancy, and to narrow the gap in health expectancy between countries and groups
- Bangkok Charter recognises increasing inequalities within and between countries



## What do we have to gain?

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- a fairer society, where everyone has the opportunity for good health
- an inclusive society, where everyone has a sense of belonging and feels that their contribution is valued
- better health and wellbeing for the population as a whole, not just for those groups who are currently experiencing relatively poor health
- a stronger economy



BUT:

Limited evidence of success

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“Unfortunately participants in health promotion activities are often those who need them least” (Glasgow, 1999)





# Cause for optimism about our capacity

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- Recognise its importance
- We can build it into needs assessment
- Range of strategies for intervention
- Evaluate our efforts



# What can health promoters do to tackle inequalities?

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Health promotion must have two goals

- Improving health
- Tackling inequalities in health



# Practice Treaty-based health promotion

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- Te Tiriti o Waitangi founding document of New Zealand
- Te Tiriti concerned with health
- Health promotion ethics include:
  - recognising Māori as tangata whenua and acknowledging te Tiriti o Waitangi
  - commitment to equal health status for Māori



# Build an equity lens into our work

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- Assess needs of those least advantaged
- Intervene with those least advantaged
- Use strategies to intervene at all levels
- Evaluate interventions for progress in tackling inequalities
- Amend programmes accordingly



## End victim blaming

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The Titanic, a tale of health inequalities

- 2,220 passengers - 1500 deaths
- age, gender and social class inequalities
- policy responses -
  - critique rationing of services
  - eliminating barriers to access
  - system response & responsibility

Papaarangi Reid



# Watch our gaze

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What we look at is

What we see

This frames how we intervene



# Take a comprehensive approach to tackling inequalities

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- Build Healthy Public Policy
- Create supportive environments
- Strengthen community action
- Develop personal skills
- Reorient health services



## Be leaders for equity

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- Engage in the political and policy-making processes in health and other sectors
- Become politicians and managers across all sectors





# Focus on Institutional Change for Equity

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Institutions matter - they structure the development and implementation of policy, programmes and services

Examine our own and other institutions for:

- Ideas - define the “conventional wisdom”
- Organisational structures - frame what is possible
- Processes and rules - dictate how we work



## Use tools to assist us

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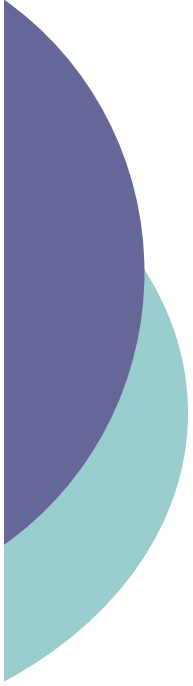
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- TUHA-NZ
- NZ Dep
- Decile rankings in schools
- Intervention framework
- HEAT tool
- HIA with equity focus
- Planning and evaluation templates



# Support each other

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- Training
- Mentoring
- Team work
- Talk about the challenges
- Work strategically



## My challenge to you

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Take a moment to identify one thing that you will commit to doing to tackle inequalities in health when you get back to work tomorrow



# Conclusion

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Health promotion has a significant contribution to make to tackling inequalities in health by:

- Adopting two goals – health & equity
- Treaty-based practice
- Using an equity lens in all work
- Watching our gaze
- Taking comprehensive action
- Engaging in political and policy-making processes
- Changing institutions
- Using the tools available & support each other
- Remember the Titanic - end victim blaming - challenge the system