

Another 'R' word - Recession:

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Some '**R**' words have a different impact on different people – on different cultures. Racism, Radical, Rights, Rangatiratanga are just some examples. So is the 'R' word of the day – Recession topically any different and is the impact the same for all.

I write this article under the shadow of my maunga and beside my tribal rivers. The impacts I share may differ for you wherever your maunga, moana and awa lie. When I've asked the question amongst my people "what impact does the Recession have on you and your whanau?", often the response that comes is 'What's different – don't we live in Recession all the time?'

There is no doubt that Maori make a significant contribution to the economy of Aotearoa. Dr Manuka Henare estimates that currently Maori contribute \$33b towards the economy. Of that figure tribal assets are predicted to rise from the current figure of \$16.5b to \$33b within the next 10 years. Maori therefore are significant contributors to the economic state of the community and with such positive financial forecasts; predictably the impact of a Recession will feature more negatively and extensively for Maori.

This paper however wishes to take a Public Health / Health Promotion perspective of what impact the Recession may be – so let's unravel some factors. My reference points will include the Social Determinants as we understand them within a Health Promotion view.

Key Determinants of Health are often categorized as being: Income – Employment – Education – Housing – Culture – Social Cohesion.

Without analyzing each individual determinant, within my area and prior to the Recession, Maori were identified differently to non - Maori. Yes, the common korero I hear is that Maori are on lower Income; have higher rates of unemployment; have fewer educational qualifications; generally rely on rental accommodation as opposed to securing home ownership; live within a society where ones cultural identity is referred to as the 'less fortunate' group; and often live in a less connected social environment.

Social determinants are linked to financial influences. The current Recession is linked to a financial 'downturn' so it seems logical to assume that if one is living in a poor state then with fewer finances that position increases **further the state of poverty**. Additionally unemployment figures in Taranaki for 2006 revealed Unemployment

(Maori) at 8%; with non-Maori as 2.8%. By 2009 these rates had increased even further. However by focusing on such statistics it becomes all too easy to realize our predicament

So lets take a view as adopted from previous Alcohol reduction promotional campaigns – “It not the Drinking which is the issue – it’s how we drink.”

“It’s not the Recession which is the issue – it’s how we manage it,”

That’s my angle so I offer one suggestion – become reliant on your Cultural Determinants of Hauora.

I don’t have any finite list describing Cultural Determinants. They will vary on where you are from and what Cultural values are of significance for you.

Some suggestions may include:

Cultural Identity; Cultural knowledge; Manaaki; Tikanga; Whanaungatanga, Aroha and the list will go on.

Recently I visited a Kaumatua service. Yes I heard some maemae within their korero that explained the hurt of not being taught te reo, but I also heard the loud volume of their waiata; the whanaungatanga that existed between themselves; the willingness to share whakapapa and find linkages that were of significance and the sharing of kai and manaakitanga, without seeking any recognition whatsoever.

A Kaumatua wanders into the kitchen carrying two full bags of puha as a contribution for kai – we all recognize this offering and it is always an absolute pleasure to experience. Embracing this whole experience was the constant sound of laughter and korero – everyone looked busy and without exception everyone was enjoying the company of others - .our inherent wairuatanga at its best!

Interesting – this pleasurable experience happening right in the thick of a Recession. We can look at the present and see Recession – then again we as Maori can chose to look at the same space as Maori and see Te Ao Maori – Te Ao Marama.

It depends on what lens you chose to wear. If you wish to find problems – then look into the dark corners – that’s where they exist, they may be hard to define, but we know they exist – especially in financial forecasts and statistics. You’ll find “financial downturns”, “declining employment”, “economic downward spirals” – with everything sounding like something from a financial review or mystery novel!

I suggest try looking at the same space through the lens of Te Ao Maori. You will find brighter areas and – it’s a healthier space. Hearing laughter, korero, waiata, it’s far healthier than listening to financial reports, falling interest rates and ‘growth’ in

unemployment. Sharing korero and making whakapapa linkages creates more fulfillment and potential positive outcomes than standing in benefit queues, seeking food vouchers or making requests for emergency grants.

The importance of Cultural determinants of Hauora ensures positive experiences.

Within the arena of Public Health / Health Promotion I would strongly advocate, especially for Maori to engage with your whanau / hapu / marae – encourage, tautoko and participate in promoting your communities Cultural Determinants of Hauora.

Like us, you may find the next purchase from your Health budget could be a Ukulele – it will produce a far healthier outcome than a packet of panadol!

Yes, we do have another R word – but I am suggesting it's the lens you chose to wear that will determine what impact that R word will have on your Hauora.

Mauriora.