

7 Conclusion¹

There is no denying that Treaty application is difficult, but it can be tremendously rewarding as well, as the organisations and individuals who contributed to this book have shown. All we can do is try our best, and learn from our mistakes because, to paraphrase Freire, to do nothing is to be part of the problem.

Reflecting on Experiences²

- **Sometimes it's not clear what to do**

Even though the perception is that Māori and Pākehā get along very well there are actually underlying tensions, some of which are being addressed well and some of which aren't addressed at all. And sometimes it sits very heavily on me because I can see the needs here and I can relate them to my international and development work. I want to do more here but am unsure about being able to open that process a little bit further.

(participant from Leprosy Mission)

- **at other times there are conflicting opinions**

There isn't just one Māori opinion just as there isn't just one Pākehā opinion. We hear so many diverse opinions from people coming in to work with us. One Māori woman would say, 'I want everybody to say kia ora when they are greeting people whether you're Māori or not'. Then we'd have another saying, 'Well if you're not Māori don't say it'. In the '80s everyone was rushing off and learning Māori and then a decade or so later some Māori were saying, 'Well if you're Pākehā don't learn it until Māori have reclaimed it and learnt it'. So we were kind of, 'What do we do? What do we do? Just to be safe let's not do anything.'

(participant from Volunteer Service Abroad - VSA)

One part of the organisation might be hearing, 'When you greet anyone say kia ora', and another part of the organisation is saying, 'But we're not Māori, why would we?' It's such a minefield because you either run the risk of making a Māori person feel uncomfortable because they don't have the language and it looks like this Pākehā person does, or you have a Māori coming back to you speaking te reo leaving you thinking, 'Oops, actually kia ora is as much as I know'.

(participant from Volunteer Service Abroad - VSA)

Moving out of comfort zones

Virtually by definition, Treaty work for tangata tiriti is about moving out of comfort zones, and often this applies to Māori as well. For example, looking at the consequences of colonisation, racism, and monoculturalism is usually very painful. As with more literal trail-blazing, some find the associated stress exhilarating, but many find it exhausting. Usually a group providing leadership can only do so for a limited period of time before needing time to consolidate what's been achieved while others take over the leadership role. There is also a challenge in determining when and how far to move: Treaty work includes an unfortunately large collection of stories of people and organisations becoming paralysed and/or burned out because they tried to move too soon, too fast and/or too far in relation to their resources.

¹ From: *Treaty Journeys: International Aid Agencies respond to the Treaty of Waitangi*. Council for International Development. 2007. Used by permission.

² NOTE: The views expressed here are the participants' own, at the time of the interview, and do not necessarily represent their current views or those of their agencies.

7.1 Getting stuck

A wide range of issues can lead to dead-ends or otherwise stop a Treaty journey in its tracks. Factors which can lead to 'paralysis by analysis' can include:

- uncertainty about what to do;
- fear of doing the wrong thing;
- wanting to do the best thing;
- avoidance of tokenism;
- a sense of unpreparedness;
- not wanting to offend or upset people;
- uncertainty about who to consult;
- lack of unanimity.

Other potential problems include:

- frustration/anger because parties on either side, or even both sides, of the relationship are not behaving 'well'
- exhaustion due to factors such as
- lack of long-term support
- pressure for short-term results
- a confrontation or other type of critical incident that discourages people from proceeding.

Partly because there are so few precedents to follow, partly because different people see things differently, and partly because contexts are different, organisations often get conflicting advice on what they 'should' be doing. This, too, can lead to 'paralysis'.

Reflecting on Experiences³

It takes courage and effort to keep everyone moving. It needed someone who was willing to be courageous at the beginning. There was a lot of goodwill on the board, but not much courage, and I think we're all pretty comfortable with the status quo. We had various discussions about whether we had an obligation to be involved. Some say we didn't have an obligation, but Jonquil pretty much said, 'We do need to be involved, we're that kind of organisation, that we can't not be involved'.

(participant from Development Resource Centre - DRC)

We need to be taking time, not trying to push relationships, not trying to push organisations into moving out of their comfort zone. While you may want to challenge your comfort zone, the last thing to do is what was done to us in the eighties, which is to make people feel guilty. Guilt freezes, so the first thing would be to take time. Make sure everyone is comfortable, and be clear that it is a journey, be clear that you want to move and to bring about change.

(participant from Council of International Development - CID)

You have to progress your ideas but you also have to progress your comfort to be able to do this work. We've got a vision, we've got a plan, we've made a good beginning, but it does really require effort, and when you're moving into areas that are uncomfortable it requires your will, quite a lot of will, to get yourself over some things and get yourself to do some things that you wouldn't ordinarily do or you wouldn't feel comfortable doing.

(participant from DRC)

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