

Treaty Application Case Study: Young Women's Christian Association of New Zealand

The YWCA began its Treaty journey as a result of two events. The first occurred in the early 1980s when the first ever Women and Violence Conference was held in New Zealand, and the YWCA was one of the co-ordinating groups. A consequence of this conference was the emergence of two community groups, one Māori and the other Pacific Island, wanting to establish their own services for Māori and Pacific Island women. As is the case today, to obtain development funding groups have to be incorporated and/or registered as trusts. Neither of these groups had such recognition, so the YWCA became the umbrella group supporting their applications for funding, and once obtained, became the NGO with responsibility to manage the Māori Women's and Tangata Pasifika Projects. The focus was to develop services, facilities and processes within culturally appropriate kaupapa. The YWCA, at this time, was very much a European organisation, modelling much of its processes and practices on Westminster systems. Its work with both these groups was driven by the 'C' in its name – the Young Women's Christian Association. However, because these projects operated independently and differently, there was a noticeable tension between YWCA governance and the project managers due to government accountability requirements. Basically all three groups worked in very different ways and these ways of work were unknown to, or not understood by, the other parties in the relationship.

At the same time the YWCA selected, for the first time, a young Māori woman and a young Fijian woman to be part of the six person delegation to the 1987 World YWCA Council meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. At this World Council the YWCA of New Zealand was advocating for a more inclusive Credal Basis to ensure wiser inclusion of women as members. These young women (aged 30 years and under) returned expressing a number of concerns, related not only to the voices of young women not being listened to, but also to the added barrier of being non-European.

There were subsequent challenges within the New Zealand structure to ensure the voices of young women were heard and listened to. The YWCA of New Zealand struggled with this issue but has returned to subsequent World Councils, with the result that in 1999 at least 25% of all leadership in the organisation is young women. For the first time, in 2003, the World Executive comprised 50% young women.

Young women also continued to question inclusion in Y programmes, activities and leadership on the basis of indigeneity and ethnicity. Since then the Y has taken resolutions from Aotearoa to World Councils,

and in Korea in 1994 the World YWCAs became signatories to the Mataatua Declaration. This was great triumph for the New Zealand delegation; however, there was little evidence of any other activity or advocacy on behalf of First Nations women. In Brisbane 2003, a pre-council meeting was held of First Nations women, with approximately 140 women attending. A resolution on indigenous women in YWCAs throughout the world and several recommendations were adopted at this World Council meeting. It was hoped the World YWCA would add its voice to the call for the adoption of the Draft Declaration for Rights of Indigenous Peoples, under the United Nations Human Rights Charter. The YWCA of Aotearoa is seen as rather radical within the YWCA movement.

So how did the YWCA make these moves and statements, and within what kaupapa? In 1989 we had our national convention, and it was the last of the truly traditional ones. At this meeting it was agreed to appoint a national young women's coordinator. At that same convention, there was also a presentation to request money be spent on a Treaty of Waitangi audit on the YWCA. How did the YWCA manage or work with indigenous groups, women and children? Could this in part help the Y members to understand why there were so many differences between the two projects that had been slowly developing over the previous 4 – 5 years? The Māori Women's Project was no longer operating under the auspices of the YWCA even though there were funds still held for them, and the Pacific Island women were saying, 'We now

want to be incorporated, so we wish to have our money removed from the YWCA and given to us'. The audit did not reflect well on YWCA institutional practices. Many women were also incredibly

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'unknowing' about race relations and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, even though most members were extremely aware of the issues that arose because of the Springbok Tour. The Treaty of Waitangi audit was actually driven by white women within the Y and really challenged the membership. Many left — they did not want to be involved in an organisation that was becoming strongly feminist and prepared to challenge its own position of dominance and power over other women.

Māori women were very noticeable by their absence because they had basically gone off on their own separate path; although there were many Māori women active in Y programmes and activities. At that stage there were four or

five Māori women in the New Zealand Y involved at any level of leadership or governance. Informally these women began to collect together at national meetings, to talk and to support each other. From this was established an informal group called the Māori Women's Caucus. It was our own little support network and we were sort of tolerated. We had no resources, but as we gained confidence we kept challenging the Y about selection of delegates to World Councils. We also identified that there was money in the reserve fund for the 'Māori Women's project'.

So we were pushing and challenging. We had no authority, but because of the audit there was this consciousness that somehow we had to be

inclusive, and ever since there has been this inculcated appreciation of the Treaty. As a result we were able to argue for inclusion of two Māori women on delegations, and for vestment of the Māori Women's Project funds in the Māori Women's Caucus.

The YWCA, at its national meeting in 1993, also agreed to acknowledge Te Tiriti o Waitangi: the principles that were identified with, and agreed to, are those principles articulated with the Māori version Treaty of Waitangi. A lot of the Y's will come in and say, 'We can't get young women, or we can't get Māori women to come on our Boards.' Although there is good intention there is still a lack of understanding that you can't go and get people and bring them into your organisation, you have to go and be with them in their environment, in their space. Now that is whether they're young women, or whether they're Māori women, or whether they're Pacific Island women or migrant women, you go to them. The YWCA of New Zealand also became the YWCA of Aotearoa New Zealand to publicly state its position to the New Zealand and international community.

We made a commitment to resource sharing and it happened externally with the Y, as a result of the audit. There are many examples of partnerships throughout the Local and National Associations. In the early 1990s the YWCA accessed funding for Māori Women's Welfare League to be able to run its own exercise and fitness programmes that had been adapted and modified from a Y programme

So we can really say that the Treaty audit set off a chain reaction. We formally changed the name from the Māori Woman's Caucus to Wahine o Wairoa and made it constitutionally part of the organisation, and at the same time in 2001 funding from reserves was handed to Wahine o Wairoa. Each year, in addition to the affiliation fee from each local association to

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was Māori or Pākehā. We were sisters standing together, working in partnership to improve the world for all women and girls.

The culture of the Y is strongly acknowledged as Eurocentric. Yet it wishes

the National Association, 10%, is now given to Wahine o Wairoa.

Wahine o Wairoa is trying to develop its own kawa and a kaupapa, a way of work. We're recording it, we've developed some policies and we've started to record both our journey and that of the YWCA as a whole. One of our kaupapa is that we need to demonstrate partnership the other way as well. We make funds available for local associations to run Treaty of Waitangi workshops, and help fund delegations to international conferences. It's been a practice since 1991 to always pay for at least one of the Māori woman, so that the Y can pay for one as an official delegate, but the second one is paid for by Wahine o Wairoa. When we went to Brisbane, we also paid for a kuia to go for the whole delegation, and we provided funding for another 15 young Māori women to go.

We trained everyone in waiata and we selected a kaiwhakahaere for the entire delegation. Every time we presented a resolution we got up and did a waiata; every time we spoke to someone we got up and we did this whole cultural practice. It was not just Wahine o Wairoa speaking, it was the YWCA of Aotearoa New Zealand. I would say every single person on that delegation was proud – whether she

to work in a bicultural way. By being bicultural it can network multiculturally. However it acknowledges its history; it acknowledges its roots; it is based on Christianity; it's based on the fact that its international structure is predominantly a Eurocentric model. However, it works by consensus, so the consensus of the time is that to honour the Treaty is not just about this notion of 'the same', you know, half to one and half to the other. It is about equity. It is about supporting both in a partnership, recognising and respecting those things valued by each, and ensuring that voices of all are heard when it comes to decision-making.

Lisa Hayes (YWCA)

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.