

CAUCUSING

Caucusing is a practice that is designed to support effective communication and decision making in a group situation. Its main benefit is to provide a way for a wide diversity of points of view to be encouraged, acknowledged and worked with in situations where common understandings need to be reached and decisions made.

Caucusing in the Tiriti/Treaty relationship model is essentially concerned with cultural difference rather than differences of opinion within the same or similar worldview perspective.

There are three different stages of caucusing:

1. At the start of meetings
2. At decision making points in meetings
3. At points where meetings are “stuck” on an issue

ELEMENTS

The following elements of this model are relevant to an understanding of the dynamics of caucusing:

1. Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti
2. Cultural difference around worldview values and beliefs
3. Cultural safety, and
4. Inclusiveness

The Tiriti/Treaty Relationships model ensures a place for Tangata Whenua perspectives in decision making through acknowledging key values and beliefs from Te Ao M ori. It also signals the cultural dimension in the range of Tangata Tiriti viewpoints that exist in any community. This is helpful when acknowledging community diversity in practice.

The generic lists of worldview values identified in the model signals cultural difference not cultural sameness. Caucusing acknowledges cultural difference which is the key justification for the practice.

When caucusing is practised there is recognition of the importance not only of cultural safety but also a commitment to the notion of including diverse viewpoints in an integrated way in discussion and decision making. This is respectful of worldview differences within communities.

Caucusing can therefore be used as a tool for

- Hearing the diverse voices of our communities
- Empowering cultural difference rather than marginalising it, and
- Improving ownership of decisions made through increasing people’s participation in decision making processes

There is no restriction on the number of sub-caucus groups that can be set up in terms of the Framework. Tangata Tiriti commonly create sub-caucus groups to reflect cultural identity from a Pasifika, or other ethnic or cultural group perspective.