Treaty Application Case Study: Development Resource Centre

The Development Resource Centre (DRC) was established in 1993 when a group of NGOs (Non-Government Organisations) collaborated to create a specialised library on development and the environment. Since then we have expanded to offer a range of development information and global education services to people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

So here we were informing and educating people, talking about indigenous people overseas, and it was like, what about the indigenous people in Aotearoa New Zealand, what's our position there, what are our policies, what are our practices for working with Māori in schools and in the community? We did two Treaty trainings and at Board meetings we made a commitment to the Treaty. It was also one of our values but very little was actually being done. There were some explorations of what the Treaty meant, we had a little bit more of Treaty awareness training and we agreed that we really wanted to get more training, more advice, and work more deeply on it.

There was a core group appointed within the DRC to front, and be at the forefront, of this particular project. They were people who had prior knowledge, who had done a fair bit of work, and were at the right points themselves to be grappling with this. Along with Denis Grenell from Te Aratiatia, who we had got in touch with through Literacy Aotearoa, we did a project plan together and mapped out where we were heading and the key tasks involved. That changed and moved but it gave us the framework and it also gave us an opportunity to get to know each other better.

The other key thing was that because of the size of the organisation, everyone was involved when we did the base Treaty training, including staff and all of the Board members. We had to decide which version of the Treaty we were actually honouring, so part of the training was dedicated to that and to ensuring that everyone was happy with the decision. That was when we committed to the Māori language version, Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Under international law the indigenous language version of a treaty is the one that is recognised and at the DRC we aim to promote the voices of marginalised groups. For those reasons it made sense to recognise Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

When we started looking at what was involved for us and how that linked to our values and principles, we realised the enormity of the work. At a Board meeting the realisation came that if we were going to be successful in this work we were going to have to have reciprocal strategic and operational relationships with organisations that had similar values and were working towards a better world.

It feels like we are making very slow progress and we're stalled a bit at the moment, but in actual fact we have done quite a lot of things. We've got some really good relationships that we are developing further and we are getting better at making connections with Māori. We are in a process of building the capacity of staff to feel informed and educated about the Treaty. We still have a long way to go but we recognise the importance of getting this right and continuing to do more. The Board is very supportive so we are lucky that we have that support to move ahead with this work, that, as an Aotearoa based NGO, we think is incredibly important.

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Jonquil Brooks (DRC Director from 1995-2005)

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.