

Treaty Application Case Study: Leprosy Mission

The Leprosy Mission is an old organisation, born in Ireland in 1874, and established in New Zealand in 1912. The Māori name, *Te Mihana Tuwhenua o Aotearoa*, was gifted to The Leprosy Mission New Zealand in March 2003.

We approached the Māori Language Commission and others we knew who had a significant understanding of the Māori language to help us identify a Māori name that accurately reflected our organisation's role and work today. Eventually, after much discussion over a long period of time, we decided to accept the Māori Language Commission's suggestion, *Te Mihana Tuwhenua o Aotearoa*. During this process we discovered that the Māori name needed to be gifted to us. The Board of The Leprosy Mission New Zealand organised this through the Māori Anglican Church because The Leprosy Mission is a Christian organisation. A very moving ceremony took place at the Mangere Māori Church, which is part of the Anglican Diocese, and the name *Te Mihana Tuwhenua o Aotearoa* was gifted to The Leprosy Mission New Zealand. Our connection to this church was through David Pineaha Sarsfield who had been an active supporter of our work for many years.

Since receiving our Māori name we have been using it in parallel with our English name on all communications. It is now permanently on our organisational

logo. In addition, we have incorporated our desire as an organisation to work according to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in our programmes and projects work. This was endorsed by our Programmes Committee, which is a Board Committee. In our organisational Principles and Criteria, the Treaty of Waitangi is referred to as follows:

The Leprosy Mission New Zealand is guided and informed by the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, in particular, the underlying concepts of partnership, participation and protection which enhances and refines the nature of its relationships with entities outside New Zealand.

We are a member organisation of CID, which has offered Treaty workshops during the past few years, and our staff who have attended have found the workshops invaluable.

Attending two of these workshops, *Understanding the Treaty of Waitangi* and *Becoming a Treaty-based Organisation* were revolutionary learning experiences for me

personally. We discovered that the principles of the Treaty relate so well to our own organisational goals where we advocate for the human rights of indigenous peoples, mostly leprosy-affected, disabled and socially excluded people, in the projects where we work. Valuing and embedding the principles of partnership, participation and protection in all that we do is of paramount importance.

As I visit our projects around the world I am often asked if there are indigenous people in New Zealand; how I personally, and how we as an organisation relate to them; and how our cultures fit together. It's a topic of great interest to many of our partners. I am always keen to share our experiences and to talk about the Treaty of Waitangi (which is even older than our organisation!) and how it remains relevant to us and guides us in our work today.

Isabelle Duff (Leprosy Mission)

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.