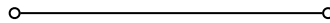


Occupational Therapy New Zealand/ Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa



Occupational Therapy New Zealand/Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa (OTNZ-WNA) is a membership body for occupational therapists.

OTNZ-WNA is engaged in a transformative journey. Active steps in past years have prepared the organisation for the journey. At the most recent AGM, members voted to move to a Treaty relationships governance model.¹ External advisors have helped the Council (governance board) to create and practice this decision-making and leadership model. In this interview Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti Council members and the Executive Director reflect on critical aspects of their journey to this point and what is needed to embed the new model of governance. This case study shows that personal and collective effort and learning by governance members, coupled with external support, can lead an organisation towards enduring change.



Key steps in the organisational journey

Conversations about biculturalism and the Treaty have been going on in this organisation since the late 1980s as part of our professional ethics and competencies. There were various steps along the way to our current position [a Treaty relationships governance structure]. Establishing relationships with Māori occupational therapists involved workforce development, supporting the Māori rōpū, and appointing tikanga advisors.

In the early 2000s we identified there was a gap as we had no Māori on our Council. We went about addressing that gap in a Pākehā way, by establishing one seat for a “Māori perspective”, however it was a beginning. The filling of that seat was determined by the Māori rōpū rather than elected by the general membership.

In 2012, a significant constitutional change was made with the addition of a rule stating:

In giving effect to the objects for which the association is established, the association shall encourage policies and practices that reflect Aotearoa/New Zealand's cultural diversity, and shall, in particular, have due regard to the provisions, and to the spirit and the intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Biculturalism was also included as one of the core organisational values at that time. These changes highlighted the need to develop our understanding of what we meant by these statements. Through discussion, we got to point of identifying that being a bicultural organisation required establishing a bicultural governance structure. Whaea Iris and Matua Rackie Pahau were engaged and they presented us with a Treaty relationships governance model that they had been working on implementing with many other groups.²

¹ Available at: <http://www.otnz.co.nz/index.php/members/otnz-affairs/governance-documents/treaty-relationship-governance-model/>

² The Community Sector Taskforce. (2005). *A New Way of Working*. Wellington. Available at: <http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/research/a-new-way-of-working/>

Building support amongst membership

As Council, we engaged in a lot of education for ourselves about the model. We had a noho marae at the beginning of 2013 where we came together and practiced working according to the model. We had three external experts in the model there to guide us in the process and they did that in a very sensitive, safe way. We could ask the questions we needed to. We practiced using the model and reflecting on it for a year before the AGM where it was introduced. This practice included having a Tangata Whenua Chair and a Tangata Tiriti Chair, and caucussing as Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti rōpū as necessary when decision-making. The year of practice gave us confidence to say to members, “We’ve been doing it for a year and it’s been working really well.”

We also focused on encouraging communication and discussion with members in a range of ways – generating conversations through our magazine (OT Insight), in special interest groups and through workplaces. We introduced the model at the 2014 AGM, in a forum where senior members of the organisation presented their views. There was a really clear timeline of our bicultural/Treaty journey up on the wall at the event which was useful. Subsequent to the AGM, we had monthly articles in our magazine to keep the subject in peoples’ minds and our Executive Director made presentations around the country.

A concern raised by some members about the Treaty relationships model was that it would be more time consuming to make decisions. An answer to that was, that as you use the model the time needed will reduce as you will have a better understanding of each other’s decisions. It is about growing understanding of different worldview perspectives.

Another concern raised in our initial discussions with members was to do with having a focus on biculturalism rather than multiculturalism. To address that we shifted from talking about being a bicultural organisation to talking about Treaty relationships.

At the 2015 AGM the motion for the constitutional change to the Treaty relationships model was put by both the Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti chairs. It was supported by a group of people who were well known and well respected within the profession – not just Council members. That was a strategic move which gave members confidence to support the motion.

Critical factors leading to change

▶ *A documented commitment*

Our organisation had a vision statement that talked about honouring the Treaty. When we looked at it and thought, “How are we actually doing that?”, we found that we weren’t. That was a big push to bring in the Treaty governance model. As a profession, we also have a commitment to occupational justice, which defines the basic value of justice underpinning what we do as occupational therapists.

New professional competencies for occupational therapists came out in 2015, which include competencies focused on the Treaty and biculturalism. That was another push for the change to a Treaty relationships governance model. The competencies are a requirement, there is no opting out, we need to know this stuff. Anyone within OTNZ-WNA saying, “I don’t want a Treaty relationship model”, would find themselves out of step with the changes in the profession.

▶ *Leadership*

There have been many people, both Tangata Whenua and Tauwi, within the profession who have been critical to the move to a Treaty relationships governance model. People who have accepted the challenge to progress awareness of the Treaty and of our responsibilities to the Treaty. There were Tauwi who went

through huge learning processes in their work with Tangata Whenua. They brought that learning back into the profession and supported and encouraged others. Supporting each other is vital to moving forward.

Jane Hopkirk was the first person in the Māori perspectives role and she has always been quietly in the background of the organisation – advising, supporting, encouraging, pushing ... She has had networks and given guidance. She is very strengths-based, she believes in people and has brought people into the organisation. She has been vital.

Three years ago was the first time that there was more than one Māori member on Council (there were three) and that has really helped in terms of the development of the model. Having the first Māori president of the organisation, Karen Molyneux was also critical to the change to a Treaty relationships governance model. She had a vision and she has kept us going in the right direction. She provided confidence and trust that this is where we would head. Having her leading all the way through was important. If there had been changes in the president that could have altered the flow. Our role now is to embed and secure the Treaty relationships governance model as a process that can be followed by others.

▶ *An approach*

The most useful tool for us has been the Treaty relationships governance model that Iris provided. We have developed it and worked it through to make it work for us. Every building has to have its foundations and Iris provided that framework so we could build our own structure on that.

It was also valuable to have information on what caucusing is and how it works. You don't have to go into caucus for every decision. It is there for when you want to. We only caucus if the discussion round the table is going to two worldviews and isn't culturally safe. Caucusing doesn't just have to come about because of a difference of views between the two houses. One of our caucus discussions came about because a person within one of the houses disagreed with the others and wanted to discuss it.

▶ *Support/advisors*

We have found tikanga advisors to work with us through our networks and other key people who are well connected and have advised us. At times it has taken a while to find the right person to come on.

As an organisation we don't have specific hapū/iwi relationships as we work nationally from our membership base. We have local area networks which come and go but we do not have regional subgroups of Council. If we are organising a conference we always work with mana whenua. It is easier to do that when we have tikanga advisors, to open those pathways and make those negotiations safe.

We were encouraged by Iris to talk to people in our workplace and to talk to kaumātua about the change to our governance model. Through doing this, it was good to see how much support there was for this approach elsewhere and to see that that sort of change is not just happening around this table.

The wisdom and strength from Iris and Rackie has been vital to this journey. As well as providing the Treaty relationships model, they worked with our organisational values and provided values in te reo Māori. They created a waiata for us linked to our values and the name of our organisation.

▶ *A commitment to learning and reflection*

This journey is not only about organisational development, it is also about personal development. At a personal level, upskilling about the Treaty and finding mentors is important. Most people in Aotearoa don't understand the complexities of the Treaty and what happened after it was signed. The deeper journey into a personal understanding of the colonisation process and its impact can be an emotional rollercoaster ride.

Talking with each other and practising how we would promote the model was important. In a telephone meeting we took turns to describe the model to each other then reflected on that. It was scary but really good.

We have often talked about other organisations doing this and we have taken confidence from knowing that others are using this type of model. Some of us have been involved in other organisations and have brought the learning back from them.

The way ahead

We are a governance group in transition. We have passed the motion but don't move formally to the model until our next AGM. We will vote for co-presidents then. In the meantime, we have changed the rules, the name/branding/acronym and position statements. We still have a lot of work to do on our policies, procedures and protocols to really embed the governance model. It is not as easy as changing a name and putting in co-presidents. We need to have some deep, philosophical discussions to work out a new way of operating.

It is so new, that we don't as yet have a strategy if something unexpected or unusual occurs. We automatically fall back to the model that we know and have relied on. So it is a work in progress, it is about learning and developing and maintaining our awareness of the new processes. It is easy to go to default, to what you have been doing for years and years.

We are using this model but Māori are only 3% of occupational therapists – so it is going to be a lot of work and a challenge to find and support Māori to meet the demands of the leadership roles the model establishes. Part of the strategy is to look at leadership building and succession planning, and to identify the talent. We need to be proactive in getting members of the Māori rōpū of occupational therapists to enrol as formal members of OTNZ-WNA so they can become Council members. Council members are supposed to have two years of practice, though exemptions can be made and we need to be flexible as there may be great people who don't meet that requirement.

Reflections and advice

In working to make these sorts of organisational changes, it is important to have faith in the vision, particularly at times when it might seem like you are not moving forward. Don't be scared, it is enriching, so approach it with an open mind. Educate yourselves about what the Treaty was and is. Be kind to each other. Involve kaumātua and advisors.

At the start you need to talk, talk, talk, so you and others get more confident with understanding the model and explaining it to others. You need to be honest and have integrity in what you say.

As Pākehā this is about thinking differently, not always having the answers, and being okay to admit you don't know. Being honest that we don't know how it is going to work but that we respect both parties – there is equal respect and equal responsibility. That goes both ways, this is new for us as Māori as well, this isn't the same as going off to a hui and following a tikanga process.

This approach isn't about two separate things, it is about creating a third space, a together space that maintains the integrity of both sides. That is what we are moving towards.