

Researchers reflections on Treaty Application in community organisations

As part of the Treaty Application in Community Organisations research project, a small group social science researchers, all engaged in research and community action in relation to Tangata Whenua – Tangata Tiriti relationships, were asked to provide a brief response to the question:

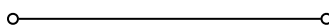
‘From your research in relation to Te Tiriti, what is the most significant idea of relevance to Treaty application in community organisations?’

Their responses were collated and circulated prior to the group coming together to reflect on what had been shared and to consider the role of a framework to guide Treaty application. Some key points from that discussion are below followed by the researchers’ responses to the question.

Though it was not the original intention to publish the researchers’ responses, as they found it valuable to read each other’s reflections it was agreed that it would be worthwhile making these more broadly available.

The researchers involved were: Alex Hotere-Barnes, Anna Parker, Avril Bell, Heather Came, Ingrid Huygens, Rachel Fabish, Rose Yukich, Suzanne Manning, Te Kawehau Hoskins¹ and Tim McCreanor.

He mihi maioha ki a koutou katoa kua tautoko i tēnei kaupapa.



Some key ideas from discussions between researchers, stemming from the above question and consideration of the role of a framework in guiding Treaty application.

- There are multiple approaches from which community organisations can learn—a range of ways of working towards honourable kāwangatanga and tino rangatiratanga. For example, models of caucusing, co-governance, and relationships between community organisation and hapū.
- There is not one route to take, there are many ways into this work, therefore resources need to reflect different motivations and starting points.
- A model or framework can be a reference point to support the work itself which is organic and contextual. The work is relational. The process isn’t linear. Decision-making/power and authority are central.
- Frameworks provide points to ponder on, to reflect on, to turn to – rather than a checklist to tick off.
- On the ground action and relationships provide the spark to bring theoretical frameworks into life.
- Disposition is important in this work: confidence, energy, a spark, a willingness to take things forward are important. Anxiety, fear and risk adverseness are barriers.
- Organisations need to see the potential and positives of engaging; what can happen if organisations trust Māori authority? Trust in the relationship is critical.
- There need to be rewards from engagement in Treaty work, though not in a selfish sense.
 - ▶ For example, in one school community it was the joy in everyday relationships and the normalisation of Māori culture and practices, which enriched families. Families were willing to share power (through organisational structural change) to uphold that normalisation. People (including governance and senior staff) recognised that the enjoyment of the school culture was made possible by the Treaty-based governance relationship from which the school culture flowed.

¹ Involved via face to face hui.

Alex Hotere-Barnes

The most relevant idea to me with regards to Treaty application is acknowledging and working with “Pākehā paralysis”. I describe Pākehā paralysis in the following way:

Emotional and intellectual difficulties that Pākehā can experience when engaging in social, cultural, economic and political relations with Māori because of: a fear of getting it wrong; concern about perpetuating Māori cultural tokenism; negative previous experiences with Māori; and/or a confusion about what the ‘right’ course of action may be.

Addressing Pākehā paralysis is important because Pākehā paralysis inhibits positive change:

- (1) *Ethics of Pākehā engagement with Māori*: Patterns of Pākehā dominance and Māori sub-ordination create an ethical minefield about *how* Pākehā can ethically engage with Māori. This complexity generates Pākehā paralysis by impeding Pākehā agency, holding back expertise and resources, thereby putting the hope of new ethical relationships with Māori at risk.
- (2) *Pākehā contributions to systemic change*: Pākehā paralysis can potentially hinder the roles Pākehā can take in positively transforming monocultural and monological systems that reproduce poor outcomes for Māori. At its worst, Pākehā paralysis results in Pākehā choosing to opt out of improving our public systems because “it’s too difficult and not my problem”.

Working with Pākehā paralysis: I have found the following interlocked capabilities and dispositions useful to consider in order to openly address Pākehā paralysis personally and structurally when working with Māori:

- *Value peoples’ cultural identity*: When Pākehā value the multiple ways our cultural identity can be expressed in relationships with Māori, we strengthen our capability to become more proactive in the relationship. This can be a proactive approach which is not naïve, but is critically aware of the power-dynamics that shape Māori-Pākehā terms of engagement.
- *Recognise the politics and use of reo and tikanga Māori*: It is important to clarify the motivations and potential of Pākehā learning and using reo and tikanga in our work, and realise the politics of accountability to Māori in this process. Pākehā accountability is a crucial, but underestimated, part of building working relationships between Māori and non-Māori. Pākehā must be able to critically discern when, how and to what purpose we use reo and tikanga Māori in our thinking and practice.
- *Be comfortable with complexity*: Developing the capability to accept cultural complexity involves clarity about one’s intentions and negotiating change as it evolves. When Pākehā acknowledge and work with our own discomforts, new forms of learning and change take place. These can strengthen our resilience in the face of paralysis.
- *Sustain the self*: “Being with” cultural complexity in Māori-Pākehā relations involves traversing twists and turns, therefore sustaining one’s involvement is a fundamental capability. No matter what the context of relationship-building with Māori, experience suggests that sustaining relationships over time has proven more effective than spreading oneself too thin, or dipping in and out.
- *Commit to evolving and long-term relationships*: For Pākehā an appreciation of long-term relationships with Māori is analogous to understandings of ‘ethical accountability’. Long-term relationships demonstrate loyalty to the genealogy of the relationship, and a respect for the skills and integrity of those involved in the relationship.

Anna Parker

Generative tension – socially just relationships

The contribution I have to offer is from the research² I undertook with third generation Treaty workers centres on the concept of 'Te Tiriti' as 'relationship-based work'. Treaty application in community organisations becomes a re-imagining of the relational space of our organisations/groups so that our organisations become the generators of socially just relationships, moving beyond a narrower interpretation of Treaty application. The challenge from the research implored us to re-examine our organisational processes from a relational lens, looking to our framing of others, examining power and what change is needed within our groups for relationships to be valued and central.

The research positioned relationships as central to social justice practice, that it is within the context of relationship that we can come to recognise the need to unfix and decentre our "meanings" and to compose our differences as generative dialogue. In the words of one participant:

[It] is about questioning ourselves, it is about questioning our identities, our relationships with each other, with the land, our history. (Hinengaro)

The process of continually questioning ourselves can "unfix" our identities, relationships and history, where rigid meanings do not serve a decolonisation practice.

The unfixing of meaning:

Within socially just relationships we have the opportunity to decentre our knowing, to disrupt our meanings, categories, and assumptions of each other, to turn towards vulnerability and responsibility. Informants problematise simple binary constructs of identity politics, and in doing so argue for an unfixing of oppositional meaning and categories, calling for more fluid relational constructions. And by recognising the nuances of power and the complexities of group and individual experiences, the entanglement of histories, informants also call into question rigid or fixed concepts of power, and of our colonial relationships. The challenge is for concepts that can address colonisation and dominant cultural power while responding to entangled relationships.

Generative tension:

Another significant strand of what contributed to a concept of "socially just" relationships, amongst the informants of the research, required an agonistic positioning of tension and differences in our relationships — where one position does not have to dominate the other, but can be held in respectful and reflexive dialogue. This composing of tension as generative, moving away from a need for consensus, requires a reworking of our methodologies for social change.

The contribution from this research that speaks to Treaty application in community organisations asks for a wide commitment from a group to engage in organisational transformation as part of the process of building Treaty based relationships. It asks for a commitment to reflexive practice, self and group review, along with processes and audits that allow for an understanding of how power operates from multiple viewpoints.

Avril Bell

I think the most significant idea I have currently is super basic – and that is that there is nothing like working together with a Māori community on a project in some kind of way as a way to learn about your/our Treaty responsibilities and relationships. It's a bit of a Nike – Just do it – message.

² See <https://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz/handle/10523/4437> for the abstract to download Anna's MA thesis.

Be prepared to be discombobulated and expect it to be painful at times. Expect to have some of your ideas, assumptions, and expectations turned on their heads. Try to roll with that. Expect to learn that Te Ao Māori is radically different from Te Ao Pākehā in some important ways and that there are opportunities to learn something profoundly new. Some of it will be exciting and expand your horizons of possibility. Some of it won't 'work' for you. Either way is ok. Aim to stay 'in relation'. Don't expect to be affirmed. Don't be too earnest – lighten up! Have a strong sense of your own project and commitments and keep turning up.

Heather Came

Some key ideas extracted from an article I am writing with Keith Tudor 'Bicultural praxis: the relevance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to health promotion internationally' to be published in the International Journal of Health Promotion and Education.

Propositions from Te Tiriti Praxis

Alice Walker (cited in Parmar 2011) talked about activism as being her rent for living on this earth. Given the colonial legacy of injustice, deprivation and disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous people, we the authors argue that embracing Tiriti-based praxis is our 'rent' for living on this land. We have each wrestled with the application of Te Tiriti for considerable time: the first author from the perspective of a seventh generation Pākehā New Zealander engaged in anti-racism activism over decades; the second author from the standpoint of anti-racist activism overseas and, since settling in Aotearoa New Zealand, being engaged in bicultural dialogue in his profession.

The following four propositions have emerged from ongoing dialogue with activists, practitioners, and academic colleagues and teaching Te Tiriti to students from diverse backgrounds.

- (1) That practitioners learn the history of the land on which one practices
- (2) That the practitioner observes and nurtures cultural good manners
- (3) That the practitioner actively support the continuation and restoration of indigenous control and authority
- (4) That the practitioner prioritise work that advances indigenous aspirations.

Ingrid Huygens

Affirming Māori authority

From my PhD research³ into the Treaty journeys of diverse community organisations from 1984 – 2000, narrated at Treaty Conference 2000.

The most significant idea of relevance in Treaty application, appearing early in most of the Treaty journey stories, was the (new to many Pākehā) notion of 'affirming Māori authority'. It seemed that this was the fundamental shift that organisations and individuals made, and that many diverse actions flowed from this idea – re-constituting the organisation with a new constitution, restructuring its institutional structure, creating specific authority positions for Māori – either as mana whenua, or as experts in serving Māori clients, providing new or changed services built around Māori needs and values, redistributing resources towards Māori needs, professional development for staff about the Treaty and Māori tikanga, and so on.

Furthermore, when organisations viewed Māori authority as an autonomous authority, this led to a shift in the relationship between Māori and non-Māori in the organisation. Where there had been a relationship of

³ See <http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/handle/10289/2589> for the abstract and to download Ingrid's PhD thesis.

Pākehā monocultural dominance, and an assimilative dynamic, now there was a relationship based on mutual agreement, with processes for consulting each other, taking each other into account, and being accountable to each other.

Of course, organisations also reported that monoculturalism, racism and assimilative pressures continued, and that there was much discomfort and struggle in the journey of Treaty application.

Often, efforts at Treaty application led to Māori authority being affirmed in particular sites in a larger organisation, rather than the whole organisation – a particular department or maybe a service team. The tensions at the interfaces between value systems would create difficulties for the staff, particularly the Māori staff involved. These enclosed sites of affirming Māori authority often struggled to survive.

References:

Huygens, I. (2006). Discourses for decolonisation: Affirming Māori authority in New Zealand workplaces. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 16(5), 363-378.

Also Chapter 9 in my PhD *Processes of Pākehā change in response to the Treaty of Waitangi* (2007).

Rachael Fabish⁴

I think the most significant idea for Treaty application in community organisations is the need to let go of “expert” status. Perhaps this will not be equally true for all forms of community organisations, but in the spaces I have worked (anarchist collectives and the sexual violence specialist sector), which aim at changing social norms, there are often strong assumptions about Pākehā activists having the answers to society’s problems. So much of the thinking that has been done around challenging the privileged forms of knowing in the academic arena can also be extended to community spaces. And for Pākehā to partner with Māori, we need to recognise that Māori frameworks and solutions are equally valid to mainstream/Western approaches.

Among many social services that community organisations attempt to provide, Māori are often seen as “hard to reach”. This deficit model doesn’t acknowledge that dominant approaches are not universally appropriate. Plus, all issues in Aotearoa are “Māori issues” and Māori knowledge(s) and practices offer valid solutions to those issues. Giving up expert status ultimately means giving up power and control, and is necessary for shared decision-making.

For me, recognising the “insider’s epistemic privilege” of Māori – who have the ability to understand Māori experience intimately from lived experience – means accepting a great deal of “epistemological discomfort” for Pākehā. I say Pākehā, rather than Tauīwi or other specific people who are also involved in community organising, because I don’t expect non-Pākehā to experience the same assumption that their way of knowing is the only way. This “epistemological discomfort”, from realising that the world is not the way we understood it to be, leaves all of our models for change or analysis about the state of the world open for challenge. It’s confusing and can be “paralysing”.

But I see engaging with this confusion as vitally important. I think the danger with Pākehā learning about the Treaty and colonisation without being willing to embrace “epistemological discomfort” leads to a “tick-box” approach to being “good Pākehā”, re-establishing those Pākehā as experts in ethical practice etc. This stops people from really listening and being open to the genuine difference Māori colleagues/partners offer. An awareness of colonisation or Te Tiriti principles cannot be simply added onto existing models of

⁴ To download Rachael’s thesis search *Black Rainbow: Stories of Māori and Pākehā working across difference* Fabish, Rachael (Victoria University of Wellington, 2014)

working/thinking that an individual/organisation holds – those models of working/thinking themselves have to be open to challenge.

That's not to say that all non-Māori models should be thrown out in favour of appropriating Māori ones. Pākehā attempting to "become" Māori is another form of trying to re-gain expert status.

I like the idea of "ignorance" as an ethical practice, which always acknowledges the limits of shared understanding. This does not mean lack of engagement – I find a great deal of reading and thinking is needed to make sure there is enough common ground to allow me to really listen to what Māori practitioners say, so we are not just "talking past each other". But it is in those conversations that I am most reminded of my limits.

I think that this ability to let go of expert status and see the difference that presents itself in any encounter with another person is really useful for many kinds of community organisation. I find the most hope in approaches that are difference-centred and see people as experts in their own lives, in control of their own healing/growth/change. This means not only being better Treaty-partners, but also doing a better job at offering the kind of support (or social change) we hope to give all people who access our services.

Rose Yukich

PhD candidate/Te Puna Wananga/University of Auckland⁵

Whilst the struggles over the Treaty in education policy rhetoric from the mid-80s to early 90s seem to have little relevance to Treaty application in community organisations, one of the ideas emerging from the research may be of value to the discussion. I have collected the stories of former politicians, public servants and teachers involved with the early history of national curriculum development with a focus on two key documents – the 1987 *Curriculum Review* and the 1993 *NZ Curriculum Framework*. The influence of existing relationships, attitudes and beliefs the policymakers brought to the task was a key factor in the Treaty being included in these curriculum policies.

In the mid-1980s when the members of *Curriculum Review Committee* were first meeting, the Treaty and its discursive possibilities were still 'new' for both Māori and Pākehā that I have spoken with. The Waitangi Tribunal Wai 11 Te Reo claim, for example, and its flow on effects were yet to unfold. What was *not* new for the participants (in fact it was based on years of experience in their schools and communities), was their desire to do well by all children in the education system, and in particular to improve the schooling experience of Māori students. To that end, their stories feature personal and professional cross-cultural entanglements that pre-dated awareness of the Treaty. When the Treaty 'arrived' in the *Curriculum Review Committee's* discussions, it mapped onto existing relationships and practice, onto ideals of social justice/doing what's right. The Treaty was understood as adding value, a strategic lever to promote and legitimise pre-existing aspirations and an ongoing sense of responsibility about working for change. It was not so much the Treaty itself (although this was important), but who and what in the participants' professional practice the Treaty represented and supported. Whilst the context for the policymakers working on the second curriculum document in 1993 was markedly different to that of the 1987 *Curriculum Review*, a similar theme is emerging from my study – the Treaty discourse re-named or re-described what individuals were already committed to in terms of Pākehā responsibility and justice for Māori.

The main idea out of all of this that might be useful for the community organisations project has something to do with 'warming up' the Treaty. The Treaty can be experienced as a cold, legalistic object imposed from without. Or alternatively working with the Treaty signals the beginning of a discussion about how the

⁵ <https://unidirectory.auckland.ac.nz/people/r-yukich>

experiences, wisdom, and relationships internal to the integrity of any organisation and its people can lead to exploring not just the associated challenges and risks, but also the common ground the organisation already shares with Treaty discourses.

Suzanne Manning

My research explored the Playcentre Federation as a case study in applying Te Tiriti o Waitangi, from the 1989 commitment to biculturalism through to the election of Tiriti-based co-presidents in 2011 (Manning, 2014). A further study looked at the biculturalism evident in Playcentre Awareness Week posters from 1990, 2006 and 2010 (Manning, 2013). From these analyses I have come to the conclusion that Tangata Whenua representation in governance structures is vital to effective implementation of Te Tiriti in community organisations. There is no substitute for people who have the lived experience of being Māori being present at the decision-making table, and this representation needs to be built into the organisational structure so that it does not have to be re-negotiated at every election. Even with the best intentions from Pākehā, it is easy to overlook the Māori perspective when it is not something that one lives with on a daily basis. Pākehā need to be reminded, and a Māori presence in the governance structure provides that reminder.

Achieving representation in governance, however, is generally a long process and relies on other important factors. One of these factors is education, mostly (but not exclusively) directed at Pākehā. In order to accommodate kaupapa Māori, Pākehā need to understand something of Māori culture, and of the history, significance and philosophical implications of Te Tiriti in this country. To be a Pākehā New Zealander, rather than simply a colonist, one has to embrace this history and come to an understanding of how it affects contemporary social, political and organisational contexts. Further, there needs to be a critical mass of people in an organisation who share these understandings in order for progress towards applying Te Tiriti to be made. The bulk of the membership must accept the need for Tangata Whenua representation in order for it to be a positive experience. Time and education are therefore necessary pre-requisites.

One last thought is that a community organisation needs to question its traditional ways of operating as to whether these methods help or hinder the application of Te Tiriti. One of the key changes the Playcentre Federation made was to move from simple majority voting to consensus decision-making. This changed the focus of delegates from devising winning strategies to compromise, dialogue and negotiation. With consensus decision-making, reasons for viewpoints were as important as the viewpoints themselves, and this allowed space for new understandings. There is a commonly held belief in many Pākehā-originated community organisations that democracy is the best way for everybody in that organisation to contribute to decision-making, yet the conflation of democracy with voting often means that minority views are simply ignored. Consensus decision-making can help include more people's voices, and in turn, allow the organisation to consider different governance structures such as Tiriti-based co-presidents. Such dual structures can be seen as non-democratic because they give weight to a particular group of people which is not automatically open to everyone, yet in the cases I have analysed, it is these dual structures that result in more effective application of Te Tiriti. It comes down to priorities of the organisation.

References

- Manning, S. (2013, November). *Presenting Playcentre to the public through posters*. Poster presented at NZARE conference, Dunedin.
- Manning, S. (2014). Democracy meets rangatiratanga: Playcentre's bicultural journey 1989-2011. *History of Education Review*, 43(1), 31-45. DOI: 10.1108/HER-10-2012-0033

Tim McCreanor

Importance of discourse – the realisation that the negative ideas and anti-Māori views that pervade the customary Pākehā talk about Te Tiriti are social constructions that serve particular power relations rather than 'facts' or realities. It sounds pathetic perhaps, but this for me opened up the possibilities for alternative, progressive, decolonising ways of talking, accounting, thinking that are just not available unless this framing is in the mix.

So when we examine databases of Pākehā talk about the issues in research we very quickly encounter and document a particular and constrained set of themes or patterns (with some variability) that constitute the hegemonic forms of discourse that resource and sustain the Pākehā colonial project. Te Tiriti is the focus of one of the themes but it is implied and implicated in most of the others too, so I find it quite hard to separate out from the cluster of anti-Māori themes. One of the striking things about the hegemonic themes is that it is not possible to use them to do decolonising work; they inherently reproduce the racist status quo.

Related to my opening comment is the notion that these ideas are not set in stone but are stimuli for the development, articulation and dissemination of alternative themes that can be used to enact and support – literally talk into being – a decolonisation of society. The materials that Kupu Taea has placed on the Treaty Resource Centre website under the 'media' heading (analysing media representations of Māori) are an example of how this kind of research output can feed into the change activities of community and other organisations.

Racism and privilege – work led by Belinda Borell⁶ on Pākehā privilege has highlighted the relationship between racism and privilege.⁷ The relationship in some ways mirrors the 'hegemonic-alternative' analysis of discourse. Some kind of continuum connects privilege/inclusion and racism/exclusion. We have worked on a kind of structural analysis, realising that virtually exactly the same framework can be applied to both racism and privilege:

- Societal – the imposition of the culture, epistemologies, values and sensibilities of one group on another
- Institutional – practices, policies and processes that reproduce unfair, avoidable inequalities across ethnic/cultural groups
- Interpersonal – interactions between people that embody unfair, avoidable inequalities
- Internalised – acceptance of beliefs or ideologies by members of ethnic/cultural groups about the superiority/inferiority of their group

This analysis has encouraged us to try to develop (usually silenced) hegemonic accounts of the different levels of privilege and subsequently what alternative accounts might entail, but this work is still in progress.

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⁶ <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/departments/centres-research/shore/whariki-research-team/belinda-borell.cfm>

⁷ <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/departments/centres-research/shore/publications/racism-and-privilege.cfm>