



Human Rights
Commission
Te Kahui Tika Tangata

Taku Manawa

The Human Rights in the Regions
Pilot Project



Grass roots human rights

Under the Human Rights Act, the Human Rights Commission is responsible for education and advocacy about human rights in New Zealand. In order to reach more people and ensure human rights education is ongoing, the Commission has initiated a human rights community development approach.

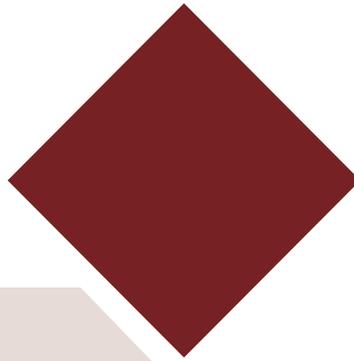
When communities are given knowledge, training and support, they can be empowered to identify, advocate for, and resolve their own human rights issues. They can also foster human rights approaches in local planning and decision-making.

The Taku Manawa (My Human Rights) project grew out of this philosophy. Given the East Coast and Bay of Plenty's economic, social and cultural rights issues such as lack of affordable housing, unemployment and poor access to education and health services, these regions were selected for the pilot.

The first step of working with communities to identify and gauge the scale of their issues revealed most people had little detailed knowledge about their human rights.

The next step was the development of a seven-day human rights education programme with a NZQA adult education unit standard. The initial plan was to educate 14 community-nominated participants but an enthusiastic response saw 20 registered and others put on a waiting list. The Commission paid the costs of the participants, who agreed to hold at least one human rights education activity within a year.

At the end of 2003, the course, supported by the Rotorua-based Waiariki Institute of Technology went ahead. All 20 participants achieved the NZQA unit standard and feedback was positive. It was not long before they, and groups they represent, had organised human rights education activities in their communities.



Between October 2003 and June 2004, 85 human rights education activities took place. These included seminars, workshops, hui, clinics, stalls at events, media information (weekly radio slots and contributions to newsletters), consultations for the Human Rights Commission's New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights, Mana ki te tangata, distribution of information and creative expressions of human rights through music and art.

Although the graduates were not required to continue activities after a year, some of them – and their organisations – wanted to. Six organisations: Te Ha o te Whanau Trust, East Coast Community Law Centre, Tairāwhiti Rural Education Activities Programme, Tokoroa Citizen's Advice Bureau, Rotorua Social Services Council, te Ora Hou, Tairāwhiti Youth Development Trust, Gisborne were selected to develop a more in-depth human rights education programme in partnership with the Commission with eligibility determined by having a Taku Manawa facilitator working with each organisation.

A Taku Manawa Human Rights Network has since formed to continue work in the region.

The people behind Taku Manawa

Key to the success of Taku Manawa are the people. Meet four of the project's frontline people who used their skills, knowledge and training to put human rights advocacy and promotion into their communities' hands.

Human rights through kaupapa Māori

While she was bringing up her four sons in Opotiki, Paula Pirihi started to notice the lack of support for the town's youth. So she and husband Hemi Pirihi, began volunteer work organising youth activities. She joined Te Aria Toka Trust in 1998 (which became Te Ha o Te Whanau Trust) and is now Whanau Development Manager.

In 2003 the Trust nominated Paula to take part in the Taku Manawa pilot programme. "Something that's dear to my heart is kaupapa Māori and I was excited to realise it lined up with the human rights kaupapa – respect for others, right to shelter (our marae), food (kai – an important part of tikanga), education (traditionally, this was a must), freedom of speech (marae hui) and health (hauora).

"The pilot project has supported me to strengthen my networks and supported the way I work. I went in with an open mind and found that the kaupapa was really satisfying to me."

Paula is excited about the Taku Manawa Human Rights Network and likes working with other facilitators. "We're like fingers of the same hand – we share the same passion, the same 25-hours-a day mentality."

She has found the experience challenging but "very fulfilling". The facilitators have managed to make human rights a part of how we work. "It shows in how we treat others, how we approach supporting others," she says and believes that sharing the human rights approach through kaupapa Māori works.

One such example is her work at the Opape Marae near Opotiki which has taken on a human rights kaupapa. When Paula gave her Taku Manawa presentation to the marae whanau in 2004, one of the kuia responded, "That's how we do things anyway."

Ngai Tamahaua is a hapu that promotes "tikanga mai nga tipuna" and under the leadership of their rangatira, has been leading the way in local issues.

The marae has worked closely with Paula to become the first human rights-based marae in Aotearoa. It has integrated the principles into its constitution and encourages participation in decision-making, particularly among women and youth. Whanau who have lost touch or do not feel they can return are found, invited to participate in hui and encouraged to take an active involvement in marae life.

For Paula, a highlight was when the marae hosted a same-sex civil union after a woman had been turned away from her own marae. "A family member of her partner who had come from England said, 'It was a magical experience.'"

"We're like fingers of the same hand, the same passion, the same 25-hours-a-day mentality"



Rap and road improvement on human rights journey

Murray Henare enrolled in the Taku Manawa pilot project to gain a certificate and develop skills to help him with his work at the East Coast Community Law Centre. His role as a community outreach worker had already given him a fair grounding in human rights, but he found Taku Manawa useful for putting these in an international context.

“By understanding the overall human rights picture on an international scale and associating it with our local communities we found out there was a lot in common about rights – like education, and being Māori and the link with the Treaty issues. Also a lack of equity with some of the urban areas, because resources seem to be more concentrated in urban areas.”

When it was time to organise his workshops, Murray found a real hunger for knowledge and discussion. He publicised the events using networks, Radio Ngati Porou, school newspapers, shop notice boards, and most importantly for him, word of mouth.

When locals met staff from the Commission they saw an opportunity to voice their needs around health and isolation, education and housing – all issues that are dominant in these rural communities.

“We became a sort of central focus for

these needs and tried to develop some better outcomes.”

One outcome was an improvement in roads following a meeting with Transit New Zealand and their contractor. Residents expressed their concerns about the poor condition of SH35 running between Tokamaru Bay and Potaka, the heavy logging traffic using the road and safety. The highway has since been improved.

Murray and Commission staff also organised a hui at Awatere Marae, south of Te Araroa with representatives of Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) and housing, education and disability agencies.

“Watching people who are really shy in their speech gaining the confidence to get up and tell their stories... I think that was really quite powerful.”

Murray also brought in youth-focused Taku Manawa facilitators to hold workshops for secondary school students and school leavers. Those running the workshops were pleasantly surprised at the young people’s responses.

“Some of the facilitation styles we learnt brought it out of them and gave them the confidence to speak.”

Music was used to help them feel confident enough to contribute and young Māori males “who are a very hard group to get to open up” responded particularly well. Some even ended up composing human rights rap songs.

Another workshop in Ruatoria brought kaumatua and youth together to discuss human rights and discrimination. The groups discovered common themes and both asked for more interaction to bridge the generation gap.

Balancing human rights education with his law centre work has, at times, been challenging for Murray and he credits an understanding manager and organisational support as important factors.

Financial help from the Commission also helped him reach the spread-out communities in the region.

Murray is part of the Human Rights Network.



“We found out there was a lot in common about rights”

Rights and life-long learning

Doris Walker had just begun her job at Rural Education Activities Programme (REAP) when she signed up for the Taku Manawa project. The community educator who has lived in Ruatoria for most of her life, wanted to develop her facilitation skills and gain an NZQA qualification.

Although she had been out of the workforce for some time caring for her three children, Doris was not daunted by the prospect of her new job. "The beauty of being on the Coast and working is that you're working with your own. The more you get out there and talk to people the easier it becomes."

She found similarities between human rights approaches and kaupapa Māori, particularly the concept of mutual respect.

When REAP managers saw the positive response to Doris' human rights workshops they decided to put these values into their organisation. The organisation is funded by the Ministry of Education to provide life-long learning opportunities in rural communities.

"We met and talked about what it meant to become a human rights organisation.

Although REAP is a Pakeha structure, the majority of our staff are Māori. The people we work with and service are Māori," Doris says.

"As part of examining what a human rights organisation would look like we needed to make sure our whanau and communities were served... It's a long way from being perfect but it's a start."

Doris is passionate about working with youth and remembers a workshop between youth and kaumatua as a highlight. She has also undertaken a youth project in Tikitiki, north of Ruatoria, which included a noho or stay on a marae for young people and their families which involved learning about and experiencing pounamu carving (pounamu wananga), and a school holiday programme.

With Paula and Murray, she is a founding member of the Taku Manawa Human Rights Network, and sees it as one of the project's big successes. Although she's moving to Australia in June, she's preparing a colleague to take her place in the network and is confident it will continue to grow.



"The beauty of being on the Coast and working is you're working with your own"

Front line human rights

Rotorua-based Ngarue Ratapu was regional chair of the community organisation Supporting Families in Mental Illness when he was recruited for Taku Manawa. But Ngarue, a police officer for 28 years, soon realised the programme would be useful in this work too.

He is enthusiastic about his Taku Manawa training and credits it with giving him new perspectives on issues such as ‘finding out how we can do things from a police perspective that don’t indirectly discriminate against people’.

Following his training, Ngarue held human rights workshops in Rotorua. In 2006 he took part in the Police Human Rights Train-the-Trainer programme working with police staff in the Bay of Plenty.

He moved to the Wellington Central Police District as a trainer and has held human rights workshops with about 1000 sworn and non-sworn police staff.

Feedback has been positive and an officer who’s been in the force 30 years told him the training ‘was like pressing a refresh button on my soul’.

Ngarue believes human rights principles intersect with core police values such as integrity, respect and professionalism.

Increasing awareness and letting people know it’s okay to ask questions are key, according to Ngarue who likes to use interactive methods. “I have an absolute passion for this training. I love it; it’s nice to hear the cops tell their stories.

“Making people more aware and making them feel more comfortable [about the knowledge] for me, that’s human rights.”

Ngarue is now part of a Police national focus group developing a strategy to integrate human rights into police practices.



“Pressing a refresh button on my soul”

The way forward

An external evaluation by Robyn Rauna Ltd found Taku Manawa facilitators and their organisations have the skills and commitment to undertake community human rights work.

A hui at Opape Marae in May 2008 celebrated the outcomes of the five-year project and looked forward to two new Taku Manawa projects, one in Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) launched in January, 2008 and another in Murihiku (Southland) set to begin in January 2009.

The model has been adopted and extended into a bilateral aid project between the New Zealand and Philippines Human Rights Commission. This project focuses on the human rights violations faced by indigenous peoples of the Philippines.

Six principles of the human rights community development approach

- 1 Linking of decision-making** at every level to the agreed human rights norms.
- 2 Identification** of all the relevant human rights of all involved and, in the case of conflict, the balancing of the various rights to maximise respect for all rights and right-holders, prioritising those of the most vulnerable.
- 3** Emphasising the **participation** of all in decision-making.
- 4 Accountability** for actions and decisions, which allows individuals and groups to express concerns about decisions that affect them adversely.
- 5 Non-discrimination** through the equal enjoyment of rights and obligations by all.
- 6 Empowerment** of individuals and groups by allowing them to use rights as leverage for action and to legitimise their voice in decision-making.



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