

Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa – An Indigenous Model

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Introduction

In order to align to the theme of this conference, an opportunity has been taken to look at Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa as an indigenous model, an organisation established to better meet the needs of whānau, hapū and iwi. This particular stance was taken at a time when it became apparent by every one concerned, that in order to have some degree of prosperity, progress needed to advance in all areas where whānau, hapū and iwi could take care of themselves, in order to move from both a dependant and poverty stricken state. It was clear at this time that an organisation such as Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa could play a vital part in assisting with the development of potential.

Founding members of Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa considered, at this time, that in order to be able to assist whānau, hapū and iwi within the traditional structure it was essential to structure up an organisation that encapsulated a matauranga Māori world view throughout the organisation. This was recognised as essential if Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa was to gain credibility with the tangata whenua (indigenous people of the land).

After the initial establishment of the organisation, at a professional development workshop for both governance and staff, the trainer at that time, offered the following challenge.,

“ How do you know you are a Māori organisation?”¹

This statement was in fact instrumental in the development of this organisation. Much training, research and study has been completed. All are ongoing. All that is offered in this paper has contributed to finding the answer.

This paper will examine a ‘not for profit’ incorporated society, Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa, an autonomous interdependent community organisation working nationally with Hapū and Iwi community groups throughout Aotearoa, who provides training, education advice and information.

The history of the organisation, the kaupapa, vision, structure and the commitment to complement and protect a Māori worldview will be described. A critical analysis will be drawn from these descriptions.

Background

1988 Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa Inc. was founded when, Marriage Guidance New Zealand a national community organisation made a public commitment to bi cultural development. This announcement provided an opportunity for the Māori caucus within this group to make the challenge

“... give us the resources and we will work with our own people”,

In the spirit of the Tiriti O Waitangi, resources were devolved and the vision of Māori working with Māori for Māori was realised. A parallel structure was originally established between these two groups.

¹ Kruger Tamati; Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa staff professional development workshop, Palmerston North, 1997

The kaupapa, “**Ma te korowai aroha e whakapakari te Whānau kia puawai, kia toitu te Iwi**” was created in an endeavour to make a statement that outlined a commitment to Te Tiriti O Waitangi through practical expression by assisting Whānau, Hapū and Iwi to develop a resource base in professional social services focussing on Whānau well being.

1994 – 2000

Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa services have continued to expand. This has included developing networks with NGO’s, other indigenous peoples and Māori organisations throughout the country.

The Organisation

Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa primarily delivers a service to tangata whenua that provides them with;

- specialised skills in training and/or
- a knowledge base in Māori processes, and/or
- expertise in policy development, monitoring, reviewing and evaluation services

Inherent in the kaupapa of the organisation is the quality management systems that have been developed to guide the delivery of the three services mentioned above.

Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa has the united support of Iwi groups, provides a unique service that is Māori specific (a service developed by Māori for Māori) recognises the Berne convention as a protector of Indigenous Intellectual property, is a signatory of the Mataatua Declaration and is committed to work within an indigenous framework.

It is a pan tribal organisation committed to the driving force of the kaupapa and vision and the demand these statements make to provide the best for Māori.

The structure of Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa is such that it has nine persons as Board of Trustees (governance) known as Komiti Tumuaki.

The operation staff, are accountable to the Chief Executive Officer (Kaiwhakahaere), who in turn is responsible to the Board of Trustees (Komiti Tumuaki).

At this point in time, Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa has seven full time and ten part time staff who are employed.

The shape of the organisation is such that the kaupapa is the foundation of the organisation and along with the Mission statement and vision of Tino Rangatiratanga driving the organisation, these declarations are held together, like the tāhuhu in a Wharenui, (ridge pole in a meeting house).

The Associates

The thirteen Associate members and other Māori organisations who utilise Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa services are placed throughout Aotearoa and cover a variety of Iwi and Hapū groups.

These groups all provide social services within their community, that comprise a wide scope including, a magnitude of health services, counselling services, training services.

Training from Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa includes skills to manage the above services that have culturally appropriate models and processes that come from a mātauranga world view.

Training is done in modules within residential programmes. Each module is three days long.

All participants are required to complete practical work, assignments and readings between modules.

All skills/knowledge learnt are practiced and tested back within Iwi. Supervision is offered to students regarding 'the practise' of skills between modules.

Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa is a Māori Qualifications Authority and is committed to quality validation. Each supporting organisation plays a part in the final assessment. This is particularly in relation to practical expertise and quality of service delivery back within iwi.

Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa recognise achievement of iwi qualification through their Annual Graduation.

Applications for Associate Membership are considered annually by Komiti Tumuaki and are chosen according to specific criteria. Once chosen and brought into the network of Associate Members, each Agency is required to maintain the standards set for the quality of service delivery. They are also required to account for their contribution to provide positive learning to assist with the development of potential for their own people.

The Deed of Understanding/Strategic Alliance

A reciprocal contract exists between the members and Iwi with Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa. These contracts are known as a 'Memorandum of Understanding' and a Memorandum of Strategic Alliance.

The Policy documents,² determine these relationships between Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa and Iwi and their organisations. They include:

Policy 1 Indigenous Framework recognises that every culture operates from their own cultural frame of reference.

Policy 2 Kaupapa recognises that tangata whenua have the right to their identity and whakapapa. It is not a right but a privilege to have access to Iwi knowledge.

Policy 7 Associate Membership where Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa offers Tangata Whenua Agencies the opportunity to link into Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa infrastructure to provide culturally appropriate training and educative processes that can be utilised through service delivery to Whānau, Hapū and Iwi.

The review process completed annually with Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa investigates the aspects of accountability.

Regulations for physical layout for each Agency is not a requisite, however each Agency would be expected to have a physical presence, a physical building that reflects that it is a Māori organisation who strives for excellence in the belief that our people deserve the very best.

A requirement of Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa Certification includes the assurance that trainees will return to the Agency and will complete quality practical work for them. This aspect is also reviewed.

Governance and Operational Issues

² ibid

Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa has developed governance and operational structures that reflect a Māori world view and philosophy.

Komiti Tumuaki (the governance body) are guardians of the 'mauri' or 'life essence' of the organisation. They ensure that the organisation is 'kaupapa' driven, ie driven by its guiding principles and philosophies.

Checks and balances within the tactical and operational structure, have been established to ensure the integrity of Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa's kaupapa is maintained.

Tikanga and practices

Tikanga is the word in our culture that expresses the way that Māori put into practise their world view and philosophies.

This world view is based on the 'connectedness' of human kind to each other and the environment. This is expressed as 'whakapapa' or genealogical links that pre-existed human kind since the genesis of the cosmos. eg all whānau, hapū and iwi can express their links through whakapapa to their mountains, rivers and land (whenua). However Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa is not sourced in whānau, hapū and iwi, but its connection to whānau, hapū and iwi and Māori organisations generally is expressed as 'a-kaupapa' ie. it shares a 'common vision' with them, that has its basis in a shared philosophy and view of the world. This philosophy focusses on contribution to the self determination (mana motuhake) of hapū and iwi throughout Aotearoa.

Accountability

A wide range of accountability measures have been developed over the last year that align with a Māori worldview. Much work is still to be done, however it is recognised that if the organisation works hard to be accountable first and foremost to Tangata Whenua then credibility will be achieved throughout the wider community.

At the time of writing, the organisation has established credibility with both the people that they service and a range of government agencies. Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa works diligently to remain credible.

The commitment to 'closing the gaps' by the present labour government has offered the opportunity for Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa to broaden its range of services. The implementation for the first time of a marketing plan has assisted with the present increased workload.

Conclusion

Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa as a pan tribal 'not for profit' incorporated society legally obligated under the Incorporated Societies Act 1908 to the objects and powers within its constitution, has an obligation to give back to Hapū and Iwi if it is to call itself a Māori organisation.

The group has a solid infrastructure that has clear lines of accountability and a guarantee to maintain a standard of professionalism. This ensures both workers and Trustees will provide the best that they can in their endeavour to meet the requirements of the organisational kaupapa and the needs of their client group.

In conclusion, the commitment that Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa brings to assist the development of potential amongst the indigenous people of Aotearoa, has contributed to their progress. Regular research and reviewing of the organisation has clearly indicated this contribution. Each iwi nation strives for their own prosperity. Te Korowai Aroha Aotearoa will continue to provide service as long as these same peoples require assistance to develop potential.

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