

Manukorihi Pā Reserve Trust

Effective governance is vital for the success of any charity. Successful charities spend time thinking about what effective governance means to them and how they can ensure their charity continues to be well governed. In Māori charities, governance has its own unique challenges given the tikanga principles that may be put into practice alongside governance principles. Tikanga principles that meet the goals of whānau, hapū, and iwi often guide the mahi of Māori boards.

The following is a story of a Māori charity that has worked hard to put in place an effective governance strategy.

The registered charity Manukorihi Pā Reserve Trust (CC37252) (the Trust) is a historical pā in Waitara with a deep-rooted and treasured past. The Trust works to advance the education of visiting groups, of which the pā has many. Schools and dignitary groups are often hosted onsite to hui and to experience tikanga and mātauranga (knowledge) Māori. The Trust is active in linking whānau of Te Atiawa Nui Tonu iwi back to their marae through fundraising efforts, special events and providing a gathering hub for the wider community.

Today, the Trust is an effectively run charity with over 100 dedicated volunteers. The successful running of the Trust wouldn't be possible without the collective strength of everyone involved – ngā kaitiaki (the trustees), the community and the volunteers. Despite the effective governance and organisation of the Trust today, they have had to address certain areas of governance in the past.

Several years ago, the Trust requested an audit of their finances which consequently uncovered discrepancies and missing money. Faced with these disappointing facts, the Trust took immediate action and laid a complaint with the authorities. Filing the complaint with the New Zealand Police was ultimately about effective governance. Ensuring funds and assets are properly used to advance your organisation's charitable purposes is critical.

Reflecting on what went wrong, ngā kaitiaki note that forming a strong trust can be challenging because of the natural turnaround of kaitiaki (trustees). The Trust also notes the difficulties of balancing the diverse skillsets of their kaitiaki. Responding to these challenges, the Trust recently implemented some practical changes. Professional development and support for new and current members is now available for all kaitiaki and the Trust has clearly outlined the roles of ngā kaitiaki in their Te Tūtohunga (charter).

It was a very difficult time for the Trust, but misfortune eventually led to good results. Continually thinking about best practice, the Trust now has safeguards in place to make sure they keep going from strength to strength.



Trustee, Patsy Bodger, and daughter, Alice, preparing hangi kai at WOMAD.



Me mahi tahi tātou mo te oranga o te katoa. Trustees, hapū, whānau and community members caring for the marae grounds.

Looking back on their past governance challenges, the Trust has some governance tips for Māori charities so they can avoid the same fate:

- **Don't be scared to be open and transparent!**
- Ensure you have the right people in the key roles of secretary and treasurer.
- Make sure your financial accounting and reporting systems are accurate and expect to see monthly financial reports.
- Provide training opportunities to your kaitiaki – nurture and seek to grow your group's governance capabilities.
- Remember that **it's okay to ask questions** about your charity's financials, in fact, the treasurer is more than likely waiting in anticipation to answer your questions and to share as much information as possible!
- **Don't be afraid to ask for help** from Charities Services, your accountant or other similar trusts. People recognise the good work that charities deliver to communities and would be more than willing to assist or point you in the right direction.
- Finally, **be open to opportunities**. It will surprise you where your support will come from – so often it can come from the most unlikely quarters.