

Teaching about the Treaty — Te Whare: reaching out through film

Richard Green

Richard Green is a Treaty educator and film-maker.

When you talk about the Treaty, people often have trouble understanding concepts like sovereignty and governance – the right to make your own decisions, no matter on what level. Richard wanted to come at it from the point of view of relationships so that is easier for people to grasp. Everyone has lived in a house and with other people, so it creates a point of identity and understanding for people. It's designed to explore such questions as: Is there hope? Can Pākehā be trusted? What might have happened earlier to stop the situation going down? How could the relationships be managed differently? rather than 'Why didn't he kick him out?'. The film presentation needs support beforehand and afterwards, talking about what the relationship is about. The booklet that comes with the DVD gives lots of ideas for discussion. Richard did consider other endings, especially since it was at the time of the Foreshore and Seabed Act, but in the end decided to go for something positive.

It's best to have a context of discussion before and after showing the DVD. It works well as part of a professional development day, with three hours in the morning, three in the afternoon, and then debriefing. It's quite crucial to explain the difference between the two versions of the Treaty before you start discussing relationships, and it's best to show it to people who already have some understanding of the Treaty.

The film has been well received and shown widely, so much so that the stage play has never been performed. It's also been well received in the U.S. It's really a universal story of colonisation.

Key points from discussion:
A question was asked about the other possible endings, which Richard described, but the present ending really turned out the best. Someone asked if you could show it, if you bought a copy. Richard explained that you can show it in non-commercial settings, as long as people are not charged to see or use it.

Key points from discussion:

Another question was how to present it. Richard referred people to the booklet, and to setting the film in the context of a Treaty workshop, as outlined above.

The person also commented that it could be applied very well to North America, and she was wondering about showing it there when she returns, although the situation with each American Indian tribe is different.

Someone said she was interested in using it at her work, where she is trying to get Treaty workshops going. Richard made the point that trying to cover everything in a two-hour workshop is very difficult, and that a PD day is best, with the film being part of that. He also noted that sometimes companies say they are aware of the Treaty and adopt its principles when in fact they don't. Richard advised the group of the easy availability of the DVD and booklet from the Treaty Resource Centre.

Notes by Peggy Haworth

Copies of *Te Whare - the House* can be ordered online from the Treaty Resource Centre:
<http://www.trc.org.nz/resources>