How to answer the Treaty of Waitangi question

Have you ever been asked in an interview

"How will you uphold the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in this job?"
or "what is your understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi?"

You may know the principles of the Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi), but this question can still be scary.

Questions about the Tiriti (Treaty) are commonly asked in jobs with a social and community focus, such as healthcare, case management, social work, and teaching.

So, how could you answer these questions?

How to answer questions about the Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) in an interview

What is the Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi)?

Signed in 1840, the Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) is an agreement between Māori chiefs and the Crown.

As outlined on the *New Zealand History website*, the three articles of the treaty:

- give protection, rights and benefits to Māori as British subjects
- give Māori full ownership of their lands, forestries, fisheries, taonga and possessions
- give the Crown exclusive rights to buy Māori land
- give sovereignty/governance of New Zealand to Britain.

When answering a question about the workplace, the Tiriti (Treaty) articles can be summed up in the concepts of participation, protection, partnership.

Participation:

acknowledges sovereignty/governance. In your workplace this means ensuring equal participation at all levels, and also that Māori have input into decision-making that directly affects them.

Protection:

acknowledges the protection of rights, benefits and possessions. In your workplace, as well as ensuring equal rights and protecting possessions, it means that Māori tikanga (culture and protocols) and taonga (treasures) such as Te Reo (Māori language) are respected and given equal footing to the tikanga and taonga of other cultures.

Partnership:

acknowledges sovereignty/governance and working together with the same rights and benefits as subjects of the Crown. In your workplace that means working together at all levels of the organisation and having a say in the policy and management of the organisation. If you work with Māori in the community, it means engaging with them when planning work and strategies.

Examples of an answer to the Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) question

If you are applying to work in forestry or fishing, the question of the Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) is a bit more clear cut. But what if you are applying to work as an admin assistant or caregiver?

- First, to give yourself breathing space, repeat the question:

  How would I uphold the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in this job?

- Next, make it personal to you:

  To me the Treaty means that… *or*
  I believe I can uphold the principles by…

- Use the sense of participation, protection and partnership. If possible, give examples of work you may do:

  From a caregiver:
  To me the Treaty means that I take care of my client in a way that supports and acknowledges and protects their culture. That I work with my client and their community in partnership when writing a health plan or making a decision about my client's health. That I treat my Māori colleagues equally, respect their tikanga and consult them.

  From an office worker:
  I believe I can uphold the Treaty by making sure that Māori have input into projects I run. That I treat my Māori colleagues equally, respect their tikanga and consult them. I will support planning and management decisions that have Māori input and respect Māori culture.

  From a site manager:
  I will consult with the property developer and/or local iwi to check any land that we break ground on. I will treat my Māori staff equally, respect their tikanga and consult them on leadership.

As you can see, each job is different, but the core is the same: respect, inclusion and acknowledgement.

* This post was originally published on the Careers New Zealand blog in February 2015.