



BLUE CRADLE FOUNDATION

2021 - RESTRUCTURING, FINANCE & OPERATIONS

9 April 2021

The Blue Cradle Foundation was born and initiated during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown out of an *idea* by James Nikitine. Working as an international science & policy consultant, with IUCN, Pew, WWF, IOC-UNESCO, and based in Aotearoa New Zealand since March 2019, Nikitine identified an important gap to fill, to promote marine science education, ocean literacy and the sustainable blue economy. He acted upon it and materialized it into action.

Originally from Geneva, and with a background in marine science and policy, but also filmmaking, Edmund Hillary Fellow Nikitine seized the opportunity to launch his vision during a time of uncertainty, but also at the start of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

The challenge before him was steep, and the pandemic context unfavourable.

Named “Blue Cradle” (short for Blue Cradle Foundation) to highlight the importance of caring for the ocean, with a logo and tagline reminiscing the fact we have the ocean “in our hands”, James sought to equip Aotearoa New Zealand’s second largest City and third largest port, Ōtautahi-Christchurch with a sustainable research vessel sailboat. With this, his overall objective is to make ocean science accessible, inspiring many in conducting marine scientific research expeditions, in New Zealand, but also in the South Pacific and Southern Ocean.

In April 2020, having done all the strategic design, science & policy gap analysis, with his own energy and funds, James launched a website, branding, and created a Trust working with the Parry Field law firm. He subsequently invited Jocelyn Papprell, Ben Parker and Geoffroy Lamarche whom he knew to be trustworthy, competent in their fields and supportive, to form a first Board, of which James became Chair, as well as Director. The Blue Cradle Foundation then became a NZ registered Charity (CC57834) in June 2020 with absolutely zero funding.

In November 2020, the Blue Cradle Foundation was the recipient of grants from the Rātā Foundation and Environment Canterbury, for a citizen science Banks Peninsula project on the white-flipped penguins led by the Pōhatu ecotourism company. With a couple of anonymous private donations, this enabled the Foundation to have basic operational funding, most of which went to create a documentary, a report, branded materials and starting new areas of work and projects.

Simultaneously, Nikitine developed relationships with Cawthron, ESR, and Algalita to start a collaborative scientific expedition looking at the impacts of microplastics and biosecurity in Northland and Fjordland, working from different research vessels, Manawanui (Far Out Ocean Collective), and Strannik (Strannik Ocean Voyages). Up to 6 volunteers are now helping Blue Cradle in several aspects from social media to planning, to photography, report writing and fundraising. Contractors were hired for accounting, video production, digital website design and branding. Materials were created (T-Shirts, water bottles, stickers, and brochures), and events were organized before and during Seaweek, including a film screening, a panel, and an outdoor fair.

Moreover, Nikitine begun the process to bring the 6th International Marine Protected Area Congress to Christchurch (IMPAC6), while consulting and engaging widely. A separate website was launched, while Tourism NZ were brought on board to conduct a feasibility study. Economic development agency Christchurch NZ were consulted and are now waiting to hear from advancements to support the bid to bring what is viewed as an exciting event. Nikitine also signed up Blue Cradle to the Christchurch Antarctic Network, led by Christchurch NZ and bringing many stakeholders together. Ultimately, Blue Cradle's path ahead is to design ocean literacy activities including a 'Blue Cradle camp' field trip, stands and events during 'Days of Ice', and experiential exhibits at the International Antarctic Centre.

One year on & the future

Approaching the one-year anniversary of Blue Cradle, some significant milestones have been reached. The first has been the visibility of Nikitine's initiative, so far widely supported across Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond. The second has been the ability to receive funding, albeit minimal and despite a lack of capacity, Blue Cradle has delivered on the expectations. While outcomes are yet to be measured, already Blue Cradle has achieved much in the sense that it resonates with a lot of people that something needs to be done in the oceanic space, that this initiative is welcomed, that it fills a gap, and it does so bringing together multiple partners, stakeholders, and beneficiaries.

Crucially, Nikitine now senses it is time to *overhaul* and thoroughly revamp the Blue Cradle Foundation initiative. Principally, Nikitine proposes to significantly reform its governance structure, by appointing a Manager (other than himself), while remaining Chair of the Board. He also wishes to expand the Board with a more local and physically present members with regular meetings (every 2 months) and bring significant operational funding to the Trust. Of the four Trustees, Ben Parker (based in Madagascar) will be leaving his role as a Trustee, for the reason of being too distant from Blue Cradle's day-to-day activities, at risk of impeding with decision-making needs that are increasing. The three remaining Trustees, Nikitine, Geoffroy Lamarche and Jocelyn Pappill will remain in their roles. Moving forward, four new Trustees will be brought on board, to arrive at a total of 7 Trustees with clear roles. According to the Trust Deed, there is a minimum of two and a maximum of seven Trustees possible.

The new Trustees will have remarkable and unique qualities, skills, and expertise, and it is the intention to reflect diversity of gender, ethnic origin and represent youth in this new Board.

In terms of its operational finances, significant funding of NZ \$ 100,000 per annum for three years will be sought with corporate and / or institutional sponsors, to hire an 0.8-1 FTE Manager at \$50k p.a., and 2x 0.2 FTE coordinators at \$20k p.a. each, while the remaining NZ \$ 10K will cover basic administrative expenses and branding. Grants, donations, and documentary distribution will enable additional funding, and allow Blue Cradle to run all of its operations including hiring contractors, vessel development programme, educational activities, field trips, documentary production and events.

We firmly believe we have the start of a great project that now simply requires a "moulding" exercise, one year on, at an important time as projects and activities are likely increase to a new level.

The need for locally based, accessible, and available Trustees will be fundamental.

Thank you for your ongoing support,

Yours sincerely,
Ngā mihi nui,

James Nikitine, Director & Chair, Blue Cradle Foundation