

TE PŌHIRI KI NGĀ WAI O HOROTIU - THE WELCOME TO NGĀ WAI O HOROTIU MARAE

Marae – The place of welcome

If you are manuhiri (a visitor) to Ngā Wai o Horotiu Marae, you should expect to be welcomed as a guest and therefore you should be dressed appropriately. Depending on the kaupapa (occasion), tidy casual or formal wear should be worn. Men should at least wear dress pants and a tidy shirt, while women should wear either a knee length skirt or tidy dress pants. Generally, the pōhiri protocols explained here can apply to most marae throughout New Zealand. The pōhiri recognises the coming together of two groups that are separated not only physically but also spiritually. It is a profound acknowledgement that we are all creatures of a spiritual realm. The marae ātea (area) is a tapu (culturally sanctioned) space and has been referred to as, 'te umu pokapoka a Tūmatauenga', (the fiery ovens of Tūmatauenga - the God of War).

Karanga – The call of welcome

Manuhiri should congregate at the waharoa (gateway) of the marae and wait for the karanga (call of welcome) from the kaikaranga (the host caller). You embark onto the marae ātea as waewae tapu (first time visitors). It is usual for the karanga to be answered by skilled women in the visiting group who are able to reply appropriately. The karanga is highly spiritual and is the first act by which manuhiri and tangata whenua (hosts) begin the act of union and this is administered by women only.

Whakaeke – Approaching the meeting house

During the karanga the group advance slowly towards the whareniui (carved meeting house). Before reaching the whareniui the manuhiri briefly pause and pay their respects in memory of those who have passed away. Once this act is done the visitors may proceed further. At Ngā Wai o Horotiu Marae, whaikōrero (formal speeches) will take place inside the whareniui and not on the marae ātea as other marae do. Before entering the whareniui, you must remove your footwear; you will be seated to the right of the entrance with your speakers taking the front seats. The principle of removing ones shoes is also a symbolic one. It represents the leaving of the dust of Tūmatauenga (God of War) outside so that it does not soil the house of Rongo (God of Peace). During the formal part of the whaikōrero, the men will fill the first front row of chairs, followed by the women.

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Whaikōrero – Formal speech

The whaikōrero (formal speech) is an intricate speech that recognises and acknowledges special unions of realms, of common themes and of specific representation. During the whaikōrero special recognition is also mentioned about, the elements and the environment, the land and sky, those deceased, those present and the ultimate purpose of the days gathering. Each whaikōrero is followed by a waiata (song). The waiata is an act of support for the orator and the words of his speech. Singing a waiata in support of the speaker also displays the unified strength of the visiting group. So, taking time to practise a waiata before the pōhiri day makes all the difference.

Koha – Expression of appreciation

The koha, an expression of appreciation and respect for the hospitality of the hosts, is normally laid down or presented by the last speaker of the manuhiri; this is usually in the form of money sealed in an envelope. A koha can also be seen as an offering or donation to the marae and hosts that alleviates the pressures of hosting the visitors for their length of stay. A representative from the tangata whenua will then pick up the koha accompanied by a speech of thanks and gratitude.

Hongi – Pressing of noses

Once the pōhiri has concluded, manuhiri are then invited to come forward in a line from a directed position to harirū (shake hands) and hongī (pressing of noses). It is through this physical ritual encounter that peace, oneness in thought, purpose and hope is expressed. The hongī is a sign of life, symbolising the action of the gods in gifting humans the breath of life. Through the action of harirū and hongī, Māori believe that the shared life force is permanently established and the spiritual and physical bodies become a living entity. Men hongī men, men hongī and kiss women. Women hongī and kiss women.

Kai – Meal

The manuhiri are then invited to have a kai (meal) and this completes the formal welcome, thus begins the lifting of tapu (cultural sanctions). The visitors now become tangata whenua or part of the marae and are expected to participate in the other activities that occur on the marae.

Nau mai, piki mai, tauti mai... Welcome, welcome, welcome...