

## **Marae protocols for Araiteuru Marae**

### **Ma whero, ma pango, ka oti ai te mahi.**

*With red and black the work will be complete*

*(This refers to cooperation where if everyone plays their part, the work will be complete. The colours refer to the traditional kowhaiwhai patterns inside the wharenuī)*

### Background

A pōwhiri is an extraordinarily rich platform of communication between two groups of people who encounter each other. It is a ceremonial experience which propels us into a sacredly held space within the physical and spiritual realms, intertwining and immersing us in all the elements that make up our universal creation.

Traditionally, this process revealed whether the encounter was with a friendly group or a rival group! However today a pōwhiri (traditional welcome) is the Māori protocol in which the hosts or tangata whenua/mana whenua (literally, “people of the land”) welcome visitors, or manuhiri, to their area.

A marae was the centre of the pa (village), consisting of an area or courtyard (ātea) in front of the wharenuī (big house) where important discussions were held and decisions made, where visitors were welcomed, challenges were laid out as well as all events of life taking place. These days, marae are still very important cultural and community centres.

The pōwhiri is important because it is a formal way for tangata whenua, as the first nation, to extend their welcome to the newest arrivals. This is their customary role and it is taken extremely seriously.

The kawa, or customary way of doing something, varies from marae to marae. These are a few specific observations regarding being welcomed onto Araiteuru Marae.

### The process

Assemble at the entrance to the marae, just under the shelter at the end of the path opposite the wharenuī.

Do not walk into the building until you are invited, but wait together in a group.

Here you will discuss, if it has not been decided previously, who will formally speak (kaikōrero) on behalf of your group to the home people, and if there is a wahine (woman who is called a kaikaranga) to lead you on and return the karanga (call or summons) which invites us onto the marae, what waiata (songs) will be sung in support of the speaker(s), and have we collected the koha (gift) to lay down at the end of the speechmaking.

When you hear the karanga, you start to walk together towards the main building, called the wharenuī. Women walk ahead, with men at back, and also sometimes flanking the last groups of women.

Walk slowly, staying together as a group. At a point somewhere before you arrive, the kaikaranga may pause and this is also a signal for the group to pause to remember those who have passed on (the dead, ngā mate, or ancestors, tupuna).

Take your shoes off at the entrance to the wharenuī. **Some people bring warm socks to wear if the weather is cold.**

There may also be a haka pōwhiri performed as you enter. This is an action dance of welcome and could be quite loud, so be prepared for that.

Another ritual that may take place as you approach is a wero, or challenge. This is the traditional way of determining whether the manuhiri are friendly or hostile. In modern times a wero or taki (ritual challenge) occurs when a particularly important visitor is being welcomed. A toa (warrior) will approach the manuhiri and lay down a token such as a small branch or a sprig of leaves. Traditionally, if the visitors did not pick up the token, it meant that their intent was hostile. If they pick it up, they come in peace.

Once inside, you will be directed where to sit. It is traditional for the women and children to be seated behind the men, who are in the front row.

Once everybody is seated, it is time for the speechmaking, or whaikorero. This will start with a speech by one of the hosts, usually an elder, or kaumatua, who will welcome the visitors. The speech will probably include acknowledgements to the ancestors, and to the leaders of the visitor (manuhiri) group. After a speech, the speaker is supported by a song (waiata) which is given by all on the host (tangata whenua) side. This process may be repeated any number of times, but for our powhiri for former refugees there will probably only be two speakers for the tangata whenua.

Then it is the turn of the manuhiri to respond. The same process is followed; a speech given by a leader, then a waiata to support him. Again, there may be several speakers. The manuhiri should have somebody to speak on their behalf, and they should have a song ready for when he is finished.

After the whaikorero, the **koha** (gift) is presented. In old days depending on the occasion this could have been food, or goods like a woven cloak (korowai) or treasure (taonga) such as pounamu (greenstone). These days it is usually cash, in an envelope. It is customary for those being welcomed to contribute to the koha.

After the koha is presented and accepted, it is time to hongi each other. You will be invited by the tangata whenua to come forward for a hongi. This is to lean in close, and lightly press forehead and noses, and breathe together. In the hongi, the hā (or breath of life), is exchanged. Usually you will take the other person's hand as well, and sometimes they may hold your shoulder. The hongi is a traditional act of acknowledgement to one another at a soul level, acknowledging our life, and all of the ancestors that we carry with us, through our breath.

It can sometimes take a while to hongi everybody, especially if people start a conversation because they have not seen each other for a long time. But it should not be rushed.

*(Culturally, there are differences for many former refugees or Muslim men and women when it comes to hongi. In particular, most women will not hongi, and Muslim men might not hongi a woman. There is no expectation that a person should hongi if it is uncomfortable for them. This is about making somebody welcome, not making them uncomfortable. However, it is preferable that you participate in the act of the hongi, due to the cultural and spiritual significance it holds for tangata whenua. Choosing to hongi is important, since you have now chosen to dwell on the land of the Māori people and have come to the marae, where they uphold their natural protocols and practices in their spiritual and cultural home. Please note, each marae is different, and some may not allow you to stay if you will not hongi, as it can be viewed as an act of disrespect to the tangata whenua and our culture.)*

After the hongi, everybody goes through to the dining room (whare kai) to whakanoa (bring us back to an ordinary space, out of a ceremonious space) for the feast, or hakari. There will be a karakia (prayer) to bless the food. Then guests should go first.

While you are enjoying the meal, there is often some singing from the hosts as a further part of the welcome. Afterwards, you are able at this stage to give a waiata as well, or as has happened previously, there could be some dancing.

### **Some general points to observe when on the marae.**

If you have children with you, make sure that they do not go running around inside the wharenuī.

Please do not take any food with you into the wharenuī.

You may wear your shoes in the whare kai, but do not wear them in the wharenuī unless you are a kāumatua (elder) or for health reasons you need to wear them.

Cellphones can be very distracting. Please turn down the sound before you enter for the pōwhiri. Please do not use your cellphone to record the pōwhiri.

A great way to become more informed about Maori culture is by downloading the Te Kete Maori app which is available for both android and iphone.

Also this link

He Reo Tupu, He Reo Ora

<http://hereoora.tki.org.nz/Videos/Te-marae/Powhiri-on-a-marae>

Tauroa, Hiwi and Pat (2009)

*Te Marae. A Guide to Customs and Protocol.* Penguin Group NZ

(Available in Dunedin Public Library)