

## Kaumatua

What is a Kaumatua?

A Kaumatua is an elder, either male or female.

What makes a person a kaumatua?

This definition is based on traditional Maori concepts.

Firstly there is mana. If someone tells you they are a kaumatua, they are not, as this goes against the rules of mana. A true kaumatua will not have to tell anyone they are, as the people will tell you. Also, by going around saying that they are a kaumatua, they are showing a lack of humbleness and are being whakahihi (vain, conceited.)

'The Kumara does not talk about its own sweetness

Honesty and integrity shown through their spoken word and actions.

Knowledge of Tikanga, history and Te Reo are another part of being a kaumatua, as well as the desire to share, teach and guide the up and coming generations, to ensure that the mana of the whanau, hapu and iwi are maintained. By doing this of course, the mana is increased even more.

Wisdom to balance the sharing, teaching and guiding of people.

The people decide who they consider their kaumatua. If someone has not had much to do with their whanau over the years, they will not be considered a kaumatua by the people as the people will not know if they have the right traits, knowledge and skills to fulfil this role.

What age do you become a Kaumatua?

This depends on the whanau.

Some whanau live long lives so their kaumatua can be in their 80's, 90's and 100's. It is quite common to have 4 generations alive at the same time, and in a few cases, 5 generations. Three generations alive at one time is the norm. However, other whanau live shorter lives and therefore the age of their kaumatua reflect this.

Some people today think that when they turn 60, get grey hair and a tokotoko (walking stick) that they automatically become a kaumatua. However, the people decide, not the person themselves.

### Role of a Kaumatua

This definition is based on traditional Maori concepts.

The role of a kaumatua is to share, teach and guide the up and coming generations in the history, tikanga and te reo of their people, with wisdom, to ensure that the mana of the whanau, hapu and iwi are maintained.

Formal "lessons" do not need to be arranged, as a kaumatua would have been taught by their kaumatua over the years through korero and attending different events. It is by this same style that a kaumatua passes on what they know.

A kaumatua is not necessarily the person who speaks on the marae or who does the karanga for if that is not their skill, by doing so could bring the mana of the marae down.

A kaumatua usually has a specialty field, ie: whakapapa (genealogy), history, tikanga etc. However, they will also know people who are specialists in the areas that they are not, and can call on them when the need arises.