

Unveiling – Hura Kohatu

A Hura Kohatu is a hui that is usually held one year after a person has died to unveil their stone. It is also called an unveiling.

The unveiling of the stone itself is a modern adaptation but the principles of the hura kohatu stem from traditional times.

The fundamental principles of the Hura Kohatu is to ensure that the person has not been forgotten and to help the Whanau Pani through the grief process.

Like the Tangihanga, a Hura Kohatu is a chance to re-affirm whanau (family) ties, to meet again with long lost relations, to meet relations that you may never have seen and a chance for the children of that whanau to meet their aunts and uncles again.

It is also a chance for people who may have missed the tangihanga to come and pay their last respects.

Typical Procedure:

Powhiri

As with all Maori Hui, the Hura Kohatu usually commences with a Powhiri.

Preparing the Stone

After the stone has been placed on the grave it is covered until the Hura Kohatu. If the stone is a few days early, it is usually covered with black polythene and on the day of the Hura Kohatu the "Unveiling Cloth" is placed on the stone and then the polythene is removed.

The Unveiling Cloth

Some whanau have a korowai (cloak) or a similar cloth that is used at all of the whanau Hura Kohatu.

For whanau who do not have a whanau unveiling cloth and wish to make one, choose something appropriate to reflect the person and whanau.

Who does the unveiling?

The people who do the unveiling itself are the people that the whanau feels are most appropriate, due to their relationship with the deceased.

The Unveiling

The cloth can be unveiled in two ways, forward, so that it comes in front of the stone, or backward so that it goes behind the stone.

If the cloth comes forward it means that is available to be requested for the next whanau Kura Kohatu. The cloth usually goes forward if there has been another death between the time of the person whose unveiling it is and the whanau have asked for it. It is then formally requested.

If the cloth goes backward it means that the cloth is not up for request or there has not been another death in the whanau. Some whanau make new cloths for each Hura Kohatu and therefore the cloth always goes backwards at those whanau Hura Kohatu.

Speaking

During the powhiri, it is set as to who speaks. At the urupa (cemetery) others usually speak to say their final farewells, similar to the tangihanga.