

Welcome - Powhiri

The powhiri (pohiri in some places) is the traditional Maori welcome ceremony which takes place usually when going onto a marae.

Here are the 10 Stages of a Powhiri;

1. Ko Nga Tangata (The People)

If there are no people, then there can be no powhiri. There are two groups required for a Powhiri to commence, Tangata Whenua (hosts) and Manuhiri (visitors). The minimum number required for a Pohiri is 4. Two males and two females. One female to do the karanga (call) and one male to do the mihi (speech) on either side.

2. Inoi (Prayer)

An inoi is said to ensure the safety of the people and to ensure that all stages are carried out without disturbance. An inoi should be said by both Manuhiri and Tangata Whenua.

3. Wero (Challenge)

Although wero are not often seen on a regular basis today, traditionally these were carried out to ascertain the intentions of the visiting group. Wero were executed by the fastest and fittest male warriors of the Tangata Whenua. Dependant on the way in which the taki (dart) was placed down and picked up, would deem whether the Manuhiri had come in peace, or with warlike intentions.

4. Karanga (Call)

The karanga is the first voice to be heard in powhiri. The karanga is traditionally carried out by a female elder. The caller for the Tangata Whenua holds the title of kai karanga and is the first to call. The caller who replies for the Manuhiri holds the title of Kai whakatu. The purpose of the karanga is to weave a spiritual rope allowing safe passage for the Manuhiri to enter onto Te Marae nui atea o Tumatauenga (courtyard in front of the Whare Tupuna (Ancestral House)).

5. Haka Powhiri (Welcome Dance)

The Haka Powhiri is executed by the Tangata Whenua. The purpose of the Haka Powhiri is to pull the waka of the Manuhiri onto the Marae atea with the rope that was woven during the karanga and to uplift the mana (prestige) of the Tangata Whenua, their marae, iwi, hapu and their tupuna (ancestors).

6. Mihi (Speeches)

Traditionally only the experts in the art of Whaikorero (Oratory) would stand to speak to the opposite group. The purpose of the mihi is to acknowledge and weave together the past, present and future, by acknowledging the creator, guardians, the hunga mate (the dead], the hunga ora (the living - those present at the powhiri) and laying down the take or kaupapa (the reason) for the Powhiri or event that will take place.

7. Oriori - Waiata (Chant - Song)

The purpose of the Oriori is to show that the people support the speaker and what he has said. Oriori often compliment what has been said, the occasion surrounding the powhiri, acknowledge the speakers whakapapa (genealogy) or the group itself.

8. Koha (Gift)

Koha is given by the Manuhiri to the Tangata Whenua. The koha is laid by the last speaker of the Manuhiri to indicate that they have no more speakers and have finished. The koha is the first contact between the Tangata Whenua and the Manuhiri. Traditionally koha were in the form of precious materials - pounamu, whale bone etc, korowai (cloaks) and numerous other taonga. Delicacies were also gifted. In today's society money is the normal form of koha. The purpose of the koha is to help with the upkeep of the marae and to cover general running costs associated with powhiri and hui. The size of the koha show the mana of the Manuhiri.

9. Hongi (Traditional Form of Greeting)

The hongi is the first physical contact between the two groups. It is not the widely popularised 'Rubbing of Noses' but the gentle pressing of nose and forehead.

10. Kai (Food)

This is the final stage of the powhiri. It is the stage where the tapu of the powhiri is removed by the sharing of kai. The tangata whenua and the manuhiri are now one.