

INFORMATION ABOUT WELCOME CEREMONIES IN MĀORI

Pōwhiri or Pōhiri is a central part of Māori protocol and is a ceremony to welcome manuhiri (visitors) to the area by the tangata whenua (people of the land). Within this area of Tāmaki Makaurau and Massey University Albany, Ngāti Whātua are tangata whenua and as such it is their duty to manaaki (offer hospitality to) visitors.

The pōwhiri in general signifies two groups coming together, negotiating their terms of engagement and finishing with guests joining their hosts as one. A simpler version of the pōwhiri is the mihi/whakatau, a greeting on arrival. Once the tangata whenua have welcomed the manuhiri, an opportunity is given to the visitors to respond. During the formalities some concepts likely to be encountered from a Māori worldview include:

Kawa /Protocol. This is the way in which the pōwhiri is conducted and may change depending on which iwi (tribe) is hosting and what the occasion is. However the basic elements of pōwhiri include:

Karanga/Welcoming call. Performed by the female elders of the iwi. The welcoming call refers to the loved ones who have passed on from this world and acknowledges the importance of the spiritual world on this occasion. This is done on more formal occasions.

Whaikōrero/Formal speeches. Performed by the male elders of the iwi. This is also true for the manuhiri (visiting group). This is an important part of Māori culture – where the rangatira (chiefs) formally greet the visitors and in this way protect their women and children.

Waiata tautoko/support song. This is most often led by the women in the group the orator represents in support of what he has said on their behalf and it is important because it adds emphasis to his whaikōrero.

Hongi, hariru/pressing of noses, greeting one another. The pressing of noses represents the sharing of wairua (life force) and in this instance the joining together of the tangata whenua (local people) and the manuhiri (visitors). Māori believe that the first person created had the breath of life enter through the nose. Sometimes within this area, the hariru is done before the speeches of welcome.

Kai/food. After the formal welcome, kai (food) completes the ritual. By sharing food together you move from the tapu (sacred) space to the noa (non-sacred) space and become one with the tangata whenua (people of the land).