

# Māori Culture and Tikanga Practices for the Workplace



**TŪTIRA MAI NZ**  
STAND TOGETHER

To build strong connections and relationships with Māori clients, customers, iwi or individuals. You must first understand the world in which we live - Te Ao Māori (the Māori world).

This guide will provide you with a basic understanding of the following:

1. Tikanga, kawa, mana
2. The stages of pōwhiri
3. Māori values
4. How to conduct hui (meetings) from a tikanga Māori approach





## What is Tikanga and Kawa?

Te Reo Māori is the kawa. How Te Reo Māori is spoken (dialects) is the tikanga.

Kawa is the policy and tikanga are the procedures on how the policy is realised.

To put it simply, kawa is what we do, tikanga is how we do it.

## What is Mana?

A spiritual power that instills respect and reverence.

It is an absolute and enduring authority that is expressed in many forms imbuing the holder, either animate or inanimate, land or person for example, with a divine presence and locatedness.

# Pōwhiri

A formal welcome carried out on the marae by tangata whenua (local people) to welcome manuhiri (visitors) who are meeting for the first time. The lifting of tapu (sacred spiritual restrictions) and uncovering the intentions behind the manuhiri's visit were always brought to light during pōwhiri.

Today it can also be used in the workplace before a client meeting, at a conference or to welcome new employees or foreign visitors. Pōwhiri focuses on manaakitanga (caring for a person's mana and showing respect).

*The following pages outline the different stages of a pōwhiri process.*





# 1. Wero

## *Challenge*

A wero was carried out to uncover the intentions of the manuhiri (visitors). It was how tangata whenua (local people) could see if the manuhiri had good or hostile intentions.

Tangata whenua would send their kaiwero (male warriors) out to meet the approaching manuhiri.

If intentions were good, they were welcomed onto the pā (marae grounds), however if they were not, they would be challenged by the tangata whenua with war.

Although less common in the workplace, wero has evolved into a ceremonial role that is used for important gatherings or people of status.

## 2. Karanga

### *The Call*

The first karanga was from Papatūānuku (earth mother) whose grief at parting from Ranginui (sky father) set the precedent for the first voice heard on the marae, drawing manuhiri (visitors) into Te Ao Māori (the Māori world).

It starts with the call of the manuhiri onto the pā (marae grounds).

Acknowledging who they are in the call is a direct reference to mana (a spiritual power that instills respect and reverence) that is about to cross the marae.

Midway across the marae the manuhiri and tangata whenua pause to remember loved ones who have passed. This is maharatanga (remembrance).





### 3. Whaikōrero

#### *Speechmaking*

Once seated in the marae, speeches begin. Whai-kōrero means to literally, follow the kōrero (talk).

The spokesperson/s of the iwi will use:

- whakapapa (genealogy),
- kōrero o mua (tribal histories),
- whakataukī (proverb),
- haka (posture dance),
- waiata (song),
- mihi ki ngā mate (eulogy).

This establish's links between themselves and the mana of those who have come onto the marae.

Acknowledging connections is a key component of making manuhiri feel welcomed and recognised.

# 5. Hongi

## *Breath of life*

Following speech-making, connections are affirmed physically when everyone comes together to hongiri (press noses) and hariru (shake hands).

The hongiri entails the sharing of breath; inhale before noses touch and exhale after the touch.

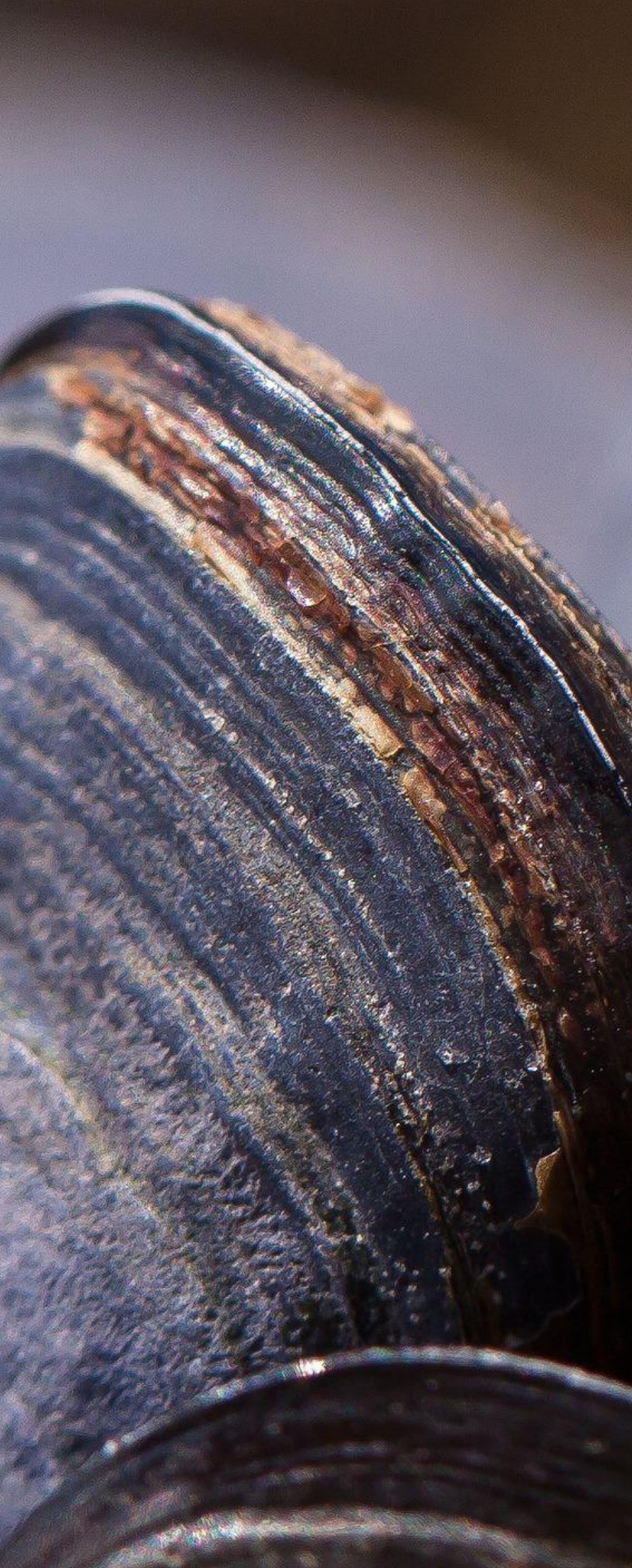
The act of shaking hands at the same time doubles the experience.

In the moment of hongiri we are connected. We come together as one heart and one mind united in an act descended from the heavens.

It is a unique and genuine gesture that signifies peace, life and well-being.







# 6. Kai

## *Food*

The final stage of welcome and the extending of manaakitanga (process of showing respect and care) is kai.

Food symbolizes the freeing of tapu (sacred - spiritual restrictions).

It is a time to share sustenance, enjoyment and companionship.

# Māori Values

Culture stands on the strength of values and beliefs that inspire and connect us to a way of being. Our culture endures when we as the culture keepers 'walk the talk' and follow the tikanga (Māori practices).

In the workplace 'walking the talk' and following the tikanga marks the integrity of our actions. We must be seen to be doing what we say. When we do this consistently we build trust, a quality borne from tikanga.

*The following pages describe key values that help build strong, healthy communities and organisations.*





## Whanaungatanga

The tuapapa (foundation) where identity and a sense of who we are comes from.

I am we/us. It is a kinship belonging to the shared values and strength of the group.

'Me' does not have a place in whanaungatanga.

Collectivism is valued and not individualism, 'I' is subsumed because the whānau (family) group is all that exists.

Build inclusive work teams and partnerships founded on shared experiences and understandings.

This will be the pou (pillar) that builds a sense of belonging and place.

# Manaakitanga

This is to care for a person's mana. This is about values of integrity, trust and sincerity.

It encompasses the way you greet your customers or clients when they arrive to your workplace or office and acknowledging who and where they come from.

On the marae it is demonstrated through each stage of the pōwhiri process - karanga, whaikōreo, hongi, hariru and kai.

Manaakitanga is realised through connection and whakapapa.

If the mana of your organisation is important then it is vital to manaaki the mana with respect.



# Kotahitanga

The base kupu (word) is 'tahi', a numeral meaning one, individual or single.

'Tanga' changes the word into a noun meaning unity or togetherness.

Kotahitanga is a unique word because it cannot exist without there being more than one. It begins from two or more.

Kotahitanga is the ultimate mātāpono (principle) combining different aspects into one fluent and united sense of being.

When making important decisions for your organisation, let your team be involved, hear them out and get their whakaaro (thoughts). This will create a space of collective action and solidarity.



# Rangatiratanga

Leadership and self-governance is captured in Rangatiratanga.

An absolute power, of mana, of the highest realm.

It is Māori centred on affording the absolute right to be self-determining and in control of one's resources and affairs without impediment.

Arikitanga (supreme mana or power) can be used to further understand the role in which Rangatiratanga plays.

It is the supreme authority.



# Hui

Hui is a gathering or the assembly of people to discuss a particular topic, issue or project - commonly known today as a meeting.

Hui were and are called for many reasons and traditionally always held at the marae (meeting house). The attitude and wairua (spirit) of participants change when we are surrounded by Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) - to be respectful and conciliatory.

*The following pages outline how to conduct hui from a tikanga Māori approach.*





# 1. Karakia

Always start with karakia. It calms the mood and settles the wairua (soul).

People are transported into the spiritual world, to the domain of atua tūpuna (ancestor god) Rongo and peace.

When we karakia we know automatically to be respectful and quiet.

Here is a karakia you can use in the workplace to open meetings with clients, customers or colleagues.

## Karakia to Open: Tūtawa Mai

**Tūtawa mai i runga,  
Tūtawa mai i raro,  
Tūtawa mai i waho,  
Tūtawa mai i roto,  
Kia tau ai te mauri tū,  
te mauri ora ki te katoa.  
Hāumi e, hui e, taiki e!**

I summon from above, below, within, from the outside environment, to calm and settle the vital inner essence, the well-being of everyone, Be joined, together, united!



## 2. Mihimihi

All people present, acknowledge who they are through mihimihi (greetings), pepeha and whakapapa.

Those disconnected from their Māori world who cannot do this, support them to do as much as they can anyway.

We do this because on the marae no business starts until the formal procedures of welcome are completed.



### Mihimihi Example

**Kei ngā maunga whakahi,  
Kei ngā wai tuku kiri,  
Kei ngā mātāwaka o te motu,  
Ka nui te mihi.**

To those who connect to the mountains, the rivers and oceans across the land.  
Hello and welcome to you.



## 3. Pepeha

Pepeha is a unique Aotearoa way to introduce ourselves.

We acknowledge our tangata whenua (people of the land) origins, that connect us to mountains, land, water and people to describe who we are.

A unique acknowledgement of the natural world and our place in it.



### Pepeha Structure

**Ko** (name of mountain you descend from) **te maunga**

**Ko** (name of river/ocean you descend from) **te awa / moana**

**Ko** (name of meeting house you descend from) **te whare**

**Ko** (name of canoe/ship that brought you here) **te waka**

**Ko** (name of your tribe) **te iwi**

**Ko** (your name) **ahau**

## 4. Mahi

After the meeting has been opened following tikanga practices - karakia, mihi, pepeha, and hongi, the work may begin.

Arrange seating in a circle, this encourages a sense of community, inclusivity, 'we and not me.'

Our tūpuna were group focused and community-minded with everyone working for the benefit of everyone else.



### Whakataukī - Māori Proverb

**"Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini."**

"My strength is not mine alone, it comes from the collective."

This whakataukī is used to acknowledge that a person's success is not achieved alone but rather with the help and support of family, friends and colleagues.



## 5. Karakia

End the hui with karakia. Like the opening karakia, it settles the wairua (soul) after the mahi (work) has been completed.

It is a way to pay gratitude, wish goodwill to people and ensure everyone travels safely on their next journey.

Here is a karakia you can use in the workplace to close meetings with clients, customers or colleagues.

### Karakia to Close: Unuhia

**Unuhia, unuhia.  
Unuhia ki te uru tapu nui,  
Kia wātea, kia māmā te ngākau,  
te tīnana, te wairua, ki te ara  
tangata. Kōia rā e Rongo,  
whakairihia ake ki runga.  
Kia tina! Tina! Hui e! Taiki e!**

Draw on, draw on. Draw on the supreme sacredness, this is Rongo, the god of peace, fully immersed. Draw together! Together! Draw together! Together!



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