Official Conference Welcome: Sunday 17 August, 16.45–19.00

The conference welcome will take place at the Orakei Marae, which is 10-minute coach ride from the Hilton Hotel. Participants are requested to assemble in the foyer at the Hilton Hotel at 16.45 sharp. The coach will return to the hotel at 18.00, and refreshments will be served in Bellini Bar at Hilton Hotel until 19.00.

What is the Powhiri?

The powhiri (also known as pohiri) is the traditional Maori welcome ceremony that usually takes place when going to a marae. However we will be conducting the powhiri at the conference venue on the pier in front of the Hilton hotel. The purpose of the powhiri is to remove the tapu of the Manuhiri (visitors) to make them one with the Tangata Whenua (home people). It is a gradual process of the Manuhiri and the Tangata Whenua coming together. This summary of the 10 stages of powhiri, the traditional Maori welcome ceremony, is available at http://www.maori.org.nz.

1. Ko Nga Tangata (The People). Without people, there can be no powhiri. Two groups are needed for a powhiri to start: Tangata Whenua (hosts) and Manuhiri (visitors). The minimum number required for a powhiri is four: two males and two females. One female will do the karanga (call) and one male will do the mihi (speech) on either side.

2. Inoi (Prayer). An inoi is recited by both Tangata Whenua and Manuhiri to ensure the safety of the people and to ensure that all stages are carried out without disturbance.

3. Wero (Challenge). Although wero is not often performed on a regular basis today, traditionally it was carried out to ascertain the intentions of the visiting group. Wero were executed by the fastest and fittest male warriors of the Tangata Whenua. The way in which the taki (dart) was put down and picked up indicated whether the Manuhiri had come in peace or with warlike intentions.

4. Karanga (Call). The karanga is the first voice 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 into Te Marae nui atea o Tumatauenga, which is the courtyard in front of the Whare Tupuna (Ancestral House).

5. Haka pohiri (Welcome Dance). The haka pohiri is executed by the Tangata Whenua. The purpose of the haka pohiri is to pull the waka of the Manuhiri on to 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 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) and the hunga ora (the living – those present at the powhiri), and by 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 oiori is to show that the people support the speaker and what he has said. Oiori often compliment what has been said, explain the occasion surrounding the powhiri, and 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 there are no more speakers. The koha is the first contact between the Tangata Whenua and the Manuhiri. Traditionally koha were offered in the form of precious materials – pouanamu, whale bone etc, korowai (cloaks) and numerous other taonga. Delicacies were also given. Today, money is the usual form of koha. The purpose of the koha is to assist with the upkeep of the marae and to cover general running costs associated with powhiri and hui. The size of the koha shows 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, when the tapu of the powhiri is removed by the sharing of kai. At the conference, we will enjoy finger foods and beverages at the conference venue following the ceremony.

The Tangata Whenua and the Manuhiri are now one.