

A General Guide on:

Marae Concepts
Processes and Protocols

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INTRODUCTION

The information in this paper is based on the personal experiences of Council staff working directly with both iwi, Te Kawerau A Maki and Ngati Whatua and the Maori community within the City. Guidance has also been sought from kaumatua and kuia from the community on the content about customs and rituals.

This paper only serves as a **general** guide into the iwi and Maori framework of marae protocol. It will provide important concepts, outline key processes and provide some explanations on the activities that occur at marae. Please note that explanations for the range of activities that occur on a marae will vary from one marae to another because of the different events, traditions, and history associated with each.

BACKGROUND

The world view held by Maori is the traditional belief that everything (tangible or intangible) and every living creature is interconnected, physically and spiritually. Basically everything has a purpose, reason for existing and has a meaning, this is known as **mauri – a spiritual life force**. If the mauri is disturbed or interfered with in any way, this affects everything and everyone. For example, with water if a stream is polluted, then the natural state or mauri is polluted too and this also affects everything and everyone in and around the stream. Spirituality underpins the way in which Maori interact with their environment, with each other and others.

Associated with this spiritual dimension is the notion of **reverence or sacredness**. This is known as **tapu**. To be free of this state is to be **noa**. Therefore, according to Maori tradition care and protection is paramount in everything that is performed to ensure that states of tapu and noa are in place and acknowledged at the right time. Wherever possible, whether it be on a marae, welcoming visitors, during speeches or any kind of gathering, acknowledgements are made directly to the gods by way of **karakia (prayer)** and **mihi (greetings)** as well as to those ancestors that had been **kaitiaki (guardians)** of this knowledge and these values.

In addition to this world view, Maori have a strong sense of responsibility and duty to provide for the sustenance and preservation of their customs and culture that have been handed down from one generation to another, to protect the environment, as well as to support and **manaaki (take care of)** the diversity of other cultures.

This view point is not easy to understand, but it is important to be aware of in any relationship with iwi or the Maori community. Often people unfamiliar with this view tend to define and interpret "Maori experiences" according to their own values and beliefs and this gives rise to misunderstandings and conflict.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES ON MEETING WITH IWI AND MAORI GROUPS

It is often said that when meeting people for the first time, that first impressions are important. This certainly an important principle held by both iwi Te Kawerau A Maki and Ngati Whatua, and the wider Maori community. Whether the meeting is to be "informal" or "formal" there are some clear principles and protocols to be followed before and during this process. If the meeting is held on Council premises it is important too that opportunities are given to Maori to feel able to participate comfortably. For example, extending the invitation for those that may wish to provide karakia (prayer) and mihi (greetings).

Firstly, there are general principles that are common throughout iwi and urban/pan – tribal Maori groups:

- guidance and direction – background information
- courtesy and respect – to avoid offence
- whakapapa – kinship ties
- wairua – tapu (sacred) and noa (freed from)
- powhiri – "welcome to my world"
- manaakitanga – creating a safe environment
- tangihanga – total expression of Maori traditional culture and customs
- poroporoaki – farewell and protection

Secondly, the way in which Maori give expression to these principles will differ from iwi to iwi and from group to group. This will be dependent on their **particular procedures, known as tikanga or kawa.**

This can be best illustrated in a marae situation where all the dimensions of Maori philosophy of life are fully expressed.

WHAT IS A MARAE

There are a number of definitions for the term marae. **All of these are correct.** Each is defined in the context that the term is being used.

Traditionally, the term marae centred on a particular area/village area and land associated with a whanau, hapu or iwi and within a particular location. The marae was an important part of a **village or kainga**. And the marae also referred to a set of building complexes that included a large **wharenuī/wharetipuna/wharewhakairo (meeting house)** providing shelter for large gatherings, ceremonies and important decisions, learning institutions, dining rooms, toilets, urupa (cemetery close by) and other activities. The people on a wide range of historical, social, political, spiritual and economical factors determine the nature of a marae.

The physical concept of a marae does not stand alone but always in relation to the natural environment. For example when Maori identify themselves with each other in accordance with traditional practices, they pay homage firstly to their mountains, rivers, marae, tribal people and finally introduce themselves. It is the belief that a person born in a particular genealogy to a whanau, hapu and iwi are also bonded spiritually to the land that their ancestors also shared. The land that a person is born to is commonly expressed as **turangawaewae (birthright to land)**. It is not a birthright in terms of individual ownership, where the land may belong to your particular family, but quite the opposite. You are part of a collective/multiple ownership, with only an interest; **you belong to the land**.

There are mutual obligations that follow ones turangawaewae – equally rights of access, contributions to collective activities and decisions, and a place to establish a home and the place to return to.

The process of formal identification amongst Maori is still every important today which recognises and reaffirms the relationship that generations of Maori have between the physical and spiritual world. For example:

Ko Tokatoka te maunga
Tokatoka is the ancestral mountain

Ko Wairoa te awa
Wairoa is the river

Ko Ripia te marae
Ripia is the marae

Ko Ngati Whatua te iwi
Ngati Whatua is the tribe

Ko Georgina Parata, taku ingoa
Georgina Parata is my name

A marae can also be a place without complex buildings, but recognised that at one time the area was a marae proper, eg Te Henga (Te Kawerau A Maki).

Another use of the term is in relation to the area immediately in front of the whareniui, also known as the **marae atea**. In some tribal areas formal ceremonies are performed on the marae atea, where others perform inside the whareniui. One explanation provided by a kaumatua on the activities of the marae atea is that this is the domain of the god, Tumatauenga, the god of war and if people feel the need to express themselves openly this is the appropriate place. Once inside the whareniui, there is a great deal of self-discipline required as the god of people Rongomatane resides.

THE ROLE OF MARAE TODAY

There is growing pressure by iwi and the wider Maori community of the city for Council to support the concept of marae. This has already been acknowledged by Council (see sessions one – handouts of "Marae Policy"). Council staff are working closely with the groups to look at practical ways of addressing these needs.

In the broader sense, the term marae can be adapted to any place that provides for the expression of Maori protocols such as places today exist in work places, government departments, local authorities, schools and hospitals.

The physical concept of marae has evolved over time adapting to the different needs of the people and there is a need to clearly distinguish between the different types of marae present today:

- **iwi based marae**
historical, legendary and symbolic centred on a particular area and its tribal boundaries
- **urban or community based marae**
evolve out of need, a focus point for Maori that have tribal links elsewhere or may not, but identify with Marae cultural values
- **institutional based marae**
fulfil a specific function ie educational and church needs also

There are several marae within the city that provide for a wide range of groups:

- Hoani Waititi Marae - Parrs Park, Glen Eden
- Te Piringatahi o Te Maungarongo Marae - Luckens Road, Massey
- Kakariki Marae – Green Bay High School
- Kotuku Marae – Rutherford High School
- Panuku Marae – Henderson High School
- Ruamoko Marae – Kelston Deaf School
- Mahanahana Marae – Massey High School

Please note that Council has made a commitment to support Te Kawerau A Maki in its establishment of their marae at Te Henga. The proposal for a marae on Te Atatu Peninsula is also to be explored.

SIGNIFICANT OF MARAE

The concept of a marae is valid today as it was traditionally. Marae are places of refuge for Maori people and provide facilities to enable them to continue with their own way of life within the total structure of their own terms and values.

- central to the concept of Maoritanga (Maori customs) and symbolises cultural identity
- full expression of tangihanga (bereavement), powhiri (welcome) and poroporoaki (farewell)
- preserves values, legacy, history and traditions
- accordance with Maori traditions
- expression of Maori oratory, language, values and social etiquette
- sets of values that is reflected in its physical, procedural and human structure
- it's a relationship between marae and people
- common meeting ground
- provides a reference point for the connection of people to the land.

MARAE VISIT

When visiting a marae for the first time, there are a number of matters to consider to avoid offending the host. Remember that the concept of a marae and all things within are important to the people of that particular marae.

EXPECT A FORMAL WELCOME

For Council staff intending to go to a marae for the first time, are considered **manuhiri (visitors)** and are **waewae tapu (sacred feed, simply that visitors must be properly received with dignity and respect)** by **tangata whenua (hosts or local people of the marae)**. And under these conditions a **welcome** known as a **powhiri** is extended to all that are not known to the marae.

There may be other circumstances that Council staff may need to visit the marae, such as **tangihanga (bereavement)**. Whether they are known to the tangata whenua or not, a formal welcome is always extended by the tangata whenua, recognising the visit is respecting the deceased and what the process also recognises – the fragile nature of life and death (see section on tangihanga).

ROLE OF VISITORS AND HOST ROLES

Visitors are known as **manuhiri** throughout the proceedings until all the formalities are over. After **hongiri (pressing of noses)** and **hariru (shaking hands)** process, visitors are considered tangata whenua in terms of the ability to move freely, help in the kitchen or wherever directed by the people of the marae.

The hosts are known as **tangata whenua**, in this context it means local people. And it is the tangata whenua that will determine the protocols of the meeting. Under very exceptional circumstances tangata whenua may adapt its protocol, but this decision is not an easy one. The process involves all the people of the marae and this request is measured against existing marae protocol and the impacts of this long term. Whatever the decision, it will also be the mana (authority, integrity) of the marae that is being recognised. For example, the position of speaking rights of women in the formal proceedings.

PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS

There are a number of people in the community that are familiar with tikanga/protocol that are able to provide guidance to those intending to visit a marae. Also, the marae itself may have a person delegated with the responsibility of advising visitors on these matters.

It is suggested that where Council staff are not familiar with these processes, that they be accompanied with a kaumatua (elder) or someone that is familiar with the marae. This ensures that these processes and any existing relationships are not compromised.

HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL HINTS ON PERSONAL CONDUCT

Much of the protocols on the marae is common sense.

- If you're not sure, ask appropriate local Maori
- There is a time and place for everything. Eating during formal proceedings either inside the wharenui (meeting house) or on the marae atea (courtyard) is considered bād manners. These formalities are important acknowledgement of who and what the marae and people are about. Therefore, the utmost courtesy is required. Refreshments and meals will be provided after the formalities. Where there are young babies, parents today have become very skilled in ensuring that the children have had a meal before coming or parents can discreetly withdraw from the proceedings to tend to their children. In these cases the host will assist the visiting parents.
- Children are welcome but should be supervised during formal proceedings.
- When entering a wharenui you are required to remove your shoes.
- Remember not to sit on pillows as these are used for the head to lay on. The head being the sacred part of the body.
- It is unacceptable to sit on tables or wherever food is prepared or eaten. The lower part of the body is considered unclean.
- It is inappropriate to step over another persons body at any time (some marae this is particular to women not to step over a man). It is courteous to ask people to remove themselves to enable others to move freely.
- Wash areas have specific functions and these need to be maintained at all times.

Toilets:

Face/hand basins are not to be used for washing underwear. Again, anything connected to the lower part of the body is unclean.

Kitchen:

Washing a baby or washing of hands in the kitchen (after using the toilet) is unacceptable. Utensils used for preparing food are kept solely within the confines of this area. Therefore, anything to do with the toilets such as cleaning buckets are separate.

- Dress according to the occasion, particularly at tangihanga.
- If you are need to withdraw while formal speeches are in progress, do this discreetly by bending down and moving quietly. This is not to disturb the speaker and the listeners.