

## The Importance of Understanding Māori Greetings to Doing Business in Aotearoa / New Zealand

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### **Introduction:**

An important component of the role of a manager in any organisation is interacting with individuals or groups outside of their organisation as a liaison (Hale, 1986, p. 95). This task requires managers to form and maintain contacts (Kotter, 1982) with a range of groups including; potential customers, suppliers, regulatory bodies and community groups. Often this interaction will involve an initial first face to face meeting. A key component of this first meeting between a manager and any party outside of their organisation will be an initial greeting. In Aotearoa (New Zealand) often the outside party that a manager of a business will find themselves interacting with, will be Māori, and will want to utilise traditional Māori cultural intuitions for greeting. Many non-Māori in Aotearoa (New Zealand) will also utilise traditional Māori cultural intuitions for greeting; in particular individuals representing government institutions.

As a result of a Māori cultural renaissance (Walker, 1990, p.186) many Māori now when greeting someone will utilise traditional cultural institutions, like a pōwhiri, or a whakatau as a process for greeting an individual or a group. A key component of both of these greeting processes is a mihi, mihimihi or pēpeha all of which are forms of introduction unique to Māori culture (Rewi, 2010, p. 45, p.144). Attempts to redress historic breeches of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi by the Crown (New Zealand Government) has seen commercial assets of iwi (Māori tribes) grow and greater participation in the commercial sphere by Māori (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010, p. 2). New Zealand Government policies favouring bi-culturalism have also seen much greater use of pōwhiri, or whakatau for greetings in order to recognise the Crown's partnership with Māori; an underpinning principle of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi.

In this article the authors discuss the issues driving greater use of pōwhiri, or whakatau for greetings and mihi, mihimihi or pēpeha for introductions in Aotearoa (New Zealand). These processes will be outlined as distinctive speech acts (Searle, 1975) and the cultural values underpinning these traditional Māori cultural intuitions discussed. We also will contrast pōwhiri, whakatau, mihi, mihimihi and pēpeha with Western approaches to greetings and introductions in a business context. The authors acknowledge that for many non-Māori becoming comfortable with these Māori cultural institutions is a challenge as they differ significantly from traditional Western approaches to greetings and introductions in a business context. However as the commercial presence of Māori increases; and Māori demographic change makes it unlikely that any future New Zealand government will abandon the policy of biculturalism; the author's content that this is a change that managers in business need to embrace.

### **Issues Driving Greater Use of Māori Cultural Institutions for Greetings and Introductions:**

The authors have identified three trends driving the need for non-Māori to become more comfortable with traditional Māori greetings. The first of these is a growing Māori cultural renaissance paired with a youthful and growing Māori population, the second is the growing Māori economy stimulated by historical treaty claims and the last is the New Zealand Government favouring a policy of biculturalism in the public sphere.

The Māori cultural renaissance is part of a growing ethnic renaissance among indigenous people world-wide, characterised by a reassertion of pride in their cultural traditions and ancestry (Voyle, & Simmons, 1999, p. 1036). According to Webster (2002) the Māori cultural renaissance has built pride and respect for traditional values (p. 341). As part of this process since 2000 there has been a positive shift in attitudes towards the Māori language by both Māori and non-Māori; in particular, Māori and non-Māori are more supportive of Māori language use in public (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010, p. 6). As of 2006, there were 131,613 (23.7 per cent) of Māori that could hold a conversation about everyday things in Te Reo Māori, an increase of 1,128 people from 2001 (Statistics New Zealand, n.d., Language: Ko Te Reo, para 1). There has been in Aotearoa (New Zealand) over a short time, a generational shift where it is now a rare occurrence to hear a Te Reo Māori word deliberately mispronounced on television or radio (O'Regan, 2013, para 7).

As of the end 2012, individuals with Māori whakapapa or ancestry, were estimated at 682,200, with a median age of 23.2 (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a) or roughly 15.37 % of New Zealand's 4,435,700 million estimated total population as at December 31st, 2012 (Statistics New Zealand, 2013b). However by 2021 Māori are expected to represent around 16% of New Zealand's population (Department of Labour, Māori in the New Zealand Labour Market, 2011, para. 2) and by 2026, Māori will make up 28% of those under 15, and 19% of people aged 15-39 (Tertiary Education Commission, 2011, pg. 10). As a result of this youthful population profile, most new entrants to the New Zealand labour force for the foreseeable future will be Māori (Department of Labour, 2004). This youthful population are embracing their culture and language and will want to practise both in the work place.

Alongside this cultural renaissance and growing population, historic treaty claims have led to significant transfers of wealth to hapū and iwi, stimulating Māori business. In 2006 the asset base of the Māori economy was 20.4 billion; by 2010 the asset base of the Māori economy was valued at 36.9 billion; this represented real growth of 18 per cent, or 4.3 per cent per annum (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010, p. 1). Māori business contributed 5.9% of Aotearoa (New Zealand) Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2010 and with investment could contribute an extra \$12 billion a year in GDP and 150,000 extra jobs a year by 2060 (Nana, 2011). Māori businesses are a growing component of Aotearoa's (New Zealand's) economy but to engage successfully with these businesses non-Māori will need to be comfortable with Māori culture. As Richard Jones, the Chief Executive of Poutama; a trust that provides business development services to Māori; states "Māori businesses tend to incorporate elements of their culture in the way they conduct business" (Springford, 2013, para 20). A culturally appropriate first approach to Māori businesses is key to beginning a successfully relationship. "In Māori culture greeting others is very important. It is an opportunity for people to show respect, through the language used and its accompanying actions and the tone for the interaction is set" (Kōrero Māori, n.d., Ngā Mihi: Greetings, para. 1).

The growing cultural confidence of Māori saw renewed efforts in the 1970s and 1980s by Māori and some Pākehā (individuals of Europeans descent) that the Treaty (unspecified text) be recognised as the founding document of New Zealand; and over time a general national consensus was achieved regards this goal (Durie, 1994, p. 99). According to Cain (2012) this changing political climate saw the emergence of bi-culturalism as a new policy approach (p.73). Bi-culturalism as a policy of the government of Aotearoa (New Zealand) initiated the possibility of government institutions to move away from being solely dominated by Pākehā values (Spoonley, 1993, p. 69).

“Central to the dynamics of bi-culturalism within Aotearoa is Te Tiriti, as this covenant articulates the status and rules of engagement between Māori and the Crown” (Cain, 2012, p.74). Durie (1994) identifies while the Crown has responsibilities towards all New Zealanders it must also protect the interests of Māori as their treaty partner (Durie, 1994).

An example of the Crown recognising its treaty partner responsibilities is the Māori Language Act 1987 which made Te Reo Māori an official language of Aotearoa/ New Zealand and created the Māori Language Commission (Durie, 1998, p. 62, Walker, 2004, p. 330). The Māori Language Commission was renamed Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Māori in 1991 (Walker, 2004, p. 330) and one of its key functions is promoting Te Reo Māori (Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Māori, n.d., Promotions, para.1). In its promotion role the commission has been successful in normalising greetings in Te Reo Māori and traditional Māori greeting institutions.

In education at all levels the Crown has committed itself to a bi-cultural policy approach to education which requires educators to engage with Māori as partners. In the early childhood sector the 10 year Strategic Plan for early childhood education, Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki has specifically considered Māori in developing the goals of participation, quality and collaborative relationships (Ministry of Education, 2002). At the tertiary level the Tertiary Education Commission’s Statement of Intent 2011/12 – 2013-14 document sets out Māori tertiary education as a priority based on anticipated demographic and economic change (Tertiary Education Commission, 2011, pg. 10). While the Crown’s Tertiary Education Strategy 2010-15, explicitly states that the government expects the tertiary education system to “Enable Māori to enjoy education success as Māori” and that tertiary education providers will engage with Māori (Tertiary Education Commission, 2009, p.6, p.18). This policy has seen the management of tertiary institutions; often non-Māori; looking to develop relationships with their local Māori communities and participating in traditional cultural greeting processes.

At the local government level the 78 local authorities representing all areas of Aotearoa/ New Zealand; when making an important decision involving land or a body of water; must take into account the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, wāhi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taonga (Department of Internal Affairs, 2011, Māori Participation in Local Government, para. 5). This statutory obligation to consult with Mana whenua (people of the land) was created by section 6(e) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (Durie, 1998, p. 29). Several local authorities have endeavoured to engage with Māori communities on issues outside of natural resource management. The Auckland Council has set up the Māori Statutory Board, independent of Auckland Council, to give Māori a voice into decisions made by the council (Auckland Council, 2013a, Independent Māori statutory board, para.1). The council has also established a Māori Strategy and Relationships Department to deal with “all Māori-specific policy, planning, research and evaluation, stakeholder engagement, relationship management, bicultural development and training, and Māori protocol and process information and activities” (Auckland Council, 2013b, Māori strategy and relations, para.3). The Auckland Council Māori Strategy and Relationships Department as part of their role will be engaging with Māori communities utilising traditional cultural institutions for greetings.

### **Māori cultural institutions for greetings and introductions:**

The traditional Māori procedure for meeting and welcoming strangers or visitors is the pōwhiri (Mead, 2003, p. 117). It is the most renowned Māori cultural institution used for greetings and introductions. The Classic pōwhiri format begins with the manuhiri (guests) assembling at the waha (gate) of the marae (courtyard in front of the meeting house) waiting for the tangata whenua (hosts) to respond to their presence (Higgins & Moorfield, 2004, p. 78). This was done in the form of a wero (ritual challenge). The tangata whenua would send their best warriors to engage the manuhiri in the wero. In the past, the wero was used to gauge whether manuhiri came in peace or to fight (Barlow, 2004, p. 164).

The crucial point in this ritual is the placing of the offering or taki on the ground (Walker, 2004, p. 73). Acceptance indicates peace while rejection is war. After the taki has been gathered by the manuhiri the next step in the pōwhiri process, the karanga (call of welcome by women), would then be taken. The karanga is a high chanting call of welcome performed by women (Salmond, 2009, p. 137). The first karanga delivered by the tangata whenua invites manuhiri on to the marae, bringing with them the spirits of their sacred dead, to be assembled with the dead of the tangata whenua, to be wept over and acknowledged (Barlow, 2004, p. 39). Karanga were mainly performed by older women beyond child bearing age and is the first linguistic exchange of what Searle (1975) describes as expressives – condolences and greetings- between the two parties. Below is an example of this expressive:

Haere mai rā, e te manuhiri tūārangi e,  
Haere mai, haere mai.

Welcome visitors from afar,  
Welcome, Welcome.

After manuhiri have been called on to the marae a sacred procession takes place called waewae tapu where manuhiri are imbued with tapu, a spiritual force emanating from creation (Walker, 2004, p. 73). Manuhiri would then proceed with measured tread to pay homage to the dead. Women from the manuhiri would then give answers in the form of karanga to the tangata whenua (Salmond, 2009, p.138). Depending on the occasion the next stage would be the haka pōwhiri. The tangata whenua would then chant appropriate tribal haka as a welcome to the manuhiri until they have been seated. Haka pōwhiri was generally practised by iwi on the East Coast of the North Island (Kāretu, 1993, p.44) but has been adopted elsewhere. Once all the manuhiri have taken their seats the tangata whenua are then able to be seated and the whaikōrero or formal speech phase is now able to begin (Higgins & Moorfield, 2004, p. 79).

Whaikōrero according to Barlow is “performed by male elders on the marae and in social gatherings; first, there are the speeches of welcome by the hosts and then the speeches of reply by the visitors” (2004, p. 167). In earlier times, only the eldest most senior men, who by virtue of their qualifications and position in the community were permitted to deliver a whaikōrero (Rewi, 2010, p. 56). As described by Tauroa and Tauroa (1986) there are two main forms of mihi exchanged during a pōwhiri. The pattern followed depends on the tribal affiliation of the tangata whenua. The first pattern is termed pāeke where all tangata whenua speakers speak first and are then followed by the manuhiri. The second pattern is described as tau-utuutu, where the tangata whenua speaks first and then a manuhiri then stands and replies. Speakers will then alternate and the last speaker will be from the tangata whenua which then recovers the mauri (Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986, pp. 60-61).

The core elements within a whaikōrero include; a tauparapara or ritual chant which can include pēpeha; mihi mate or eulogies to those who have passed; mihi ora or acknowledgements to the living and the reason for the pōwhiri (Rewi, 2010, p. 135). These speech acts can be described as a mixture of assertives and expressives, The following is an example that tangata whenua could use:

Ko Ranginui e tū nei  
Ko Papatūānuku e takato nei  
Tēnā kōrua

The great sky-father who is above  
The earth-mother who lies beneath  
Greetings to you both.

The structure of this mihi begins with two assertives regarding the nature of the Māori cosmos and concludes with a greeting to both deities.

During the pōwhiri process each speaker's whaikōrero is concluded with a waiata (song) that are sung to support the speaker. These waiata proclaim tribal identity and mana. Waiata are an important demonstration of solidarity for the iwi, hapū or whānau. The speaker speaks on behalf of the people and the people reciprocate this by singing (Higgins & Moorfield, 2004, p. 80).

After waiata have been sung, a koha or gift from the manuhiri will be given to the tangata whenua. This is generally carried out by their last speaker (Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986, p. 63). Traditionally this gift would consist of food, usually something that is in abundance to the area of the manuhiri. But today money is given to assist the tangata whenua with the expenses of the marae (Higgins & Moorfield, 2004, p. 81). This ritual is concluded with the intimacy of physical contact. This physical greeting is called the hongī and is associated today with the harirū (handshake). The inclusion of shaking hands as part of the hongī is the result of cultural adoption from Pākehā. This procedure involving physical contact removes the tapu that existed as the result of the pōwhiri process (Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986, p. 69). This process is a re-enactment of the traditional narrative of Tāne Mahuta (the God of the forest) and Hine-ahu-one (the first woman), who was made from clay (Robinson, 2005, pp. 36-38). Tāne Mahuta breathed life into Hine-ahu-one," upon which she sneezed, exclaiming, 'Tihei mauri ora' the sneeze of life" (Higgins & Moorfield, 2004, p. 82). This re-enactment of tradition reinforces the importance of the physical greeting to Māori. The manuhiri are then taken to the wharekai (dining hall) to eat. The sharing of food is another important component in the removal of tapu and completes the ritual decontamination (Walker, 2004, p. 74).

The key value and belief system most demonstrated through this particular process is manaakitanga, which means to express love and hospitality towards people (Barlow, 2004, p. 63). It is the most important concept in relation to the marae, and reflects the mana of the tangata whenua (Higgins & Moorfield, 2004, p. 82). Through this process, the iwi, hapū, and whānau are showing casing their hospitality to the people. Every time new visitors come to their marae the mana of the tangata whenua is potentially at risk. As described by Mead (2003) the importance of manaakitanga no matter the circumstance cannot be stressed enough.

There is an expectation and a judgement made on how the tangata whenua perform during the process ( p. 29). There are many well-known whakataukī and pēpeha that express the importance of manaakitanga. ‘Tangata takahi manuhiri, he marae puehu’ translated means ‘if guests are treated without respect, the marae will become dusty’. Manuhiri are to be treated with the extreme respect that includes entertaining and feeding them. If manuhiri are ill-treated this whakataukī expresses that dust would settle on the marae and the mana of that marae would diminish (Kāretu, 1974, p. 59).

Pōwhiri today are primarily reserved for high dignitaries and or significant events within a Māori community or wider New Zealand society. The ceremonies surrounding the welcoming of guests or visitors are now adaptable and flexible when conducted outside of the marae context (Mead, 2003, p. 119).

The less formal exchanges of speeches- mihimihi, mihi whakatau- are similar to whaikōrero, in that there are words of acknowledgement, including sentiments of welcome, and include information sharing, especially with reference to the purpose of the meeting but are relatively short in comparison to whaikōrero (Rewi, 2010, p. 45-47). Whakatau also constitute an exchange of assertives and expressives that reduces or removes the feeling of unfamiliarity. Mihi whakatau are use today to make a “person feel more comfortable in their surroundings.

Therefore one would expect that following the whakatau visitors would feel relaxed, less inhibited and psychologically reassured. This would encourage a total stranger to befriend and talk with the newly met hosts” (Rewi, 2010, p. 45). Manaakitanga again is the underpinning value expressed during a mihi whakatau and why they are becoming more widely used in many sectors of New Zealand society; in particular the government and education sectors. These ceremonies have in fact now become a necessary and expected part of New Zealand culture (Mead, 2003, p. 131).

This expectation gives opportunities for other speakers to engage in discourse during the mihi whakatau and mihimihi that normally would be able during a pōwhiri. Traditionally these mihimihi would take place after all the formalities were completed and generally at night. “In some areas speeches circulate round the house starting with the leading local elder by the door, and ending with the guest of honour in his place by the front window and on other occasions speakers stand at random to discuss burning issues of the day, re-tell traditions, and sometimes just to be amusing. Unlike the speeches of welcome, bound by ritual patterns, the evening speeches are loosely structured and discursive. In this relaxed atmosphere younger men and even women stand to speak, although they would be censored if they tried to do so on the marae” (Salmond, 1975, p. 110). Generally mihimihi would contain mainly assertives and some expressives which is in contrast to whaikōrero during pōwhiri and mihi whakatau; for example:

Tēnā koutou katoa.  
Ko John tōku pāpā.  
Ko Mary tōku māmā.  
Ko Daniel tōku ingoa.

Greetings to you all.  
My father is John.  
My mother is Mary.  
My name is Daniel.

Within Te Ao Māori (the Māori World) there are several cultural institutions that facilitate the introduction of an individual or group to another individual or group. Pōwhiri are generally reserved for formal occasions and contain several distinct stages which are designed to remove the tapu of a visitor created through the pōwhiri process itself. A key component of the pōwhiri process is the pēpeha which allows an individual to vocalise their connections to the physical landscape through whakapapa and their connection to famous ancestors or objects; to potentially create connections between themselves and those they are greeting. Following the pēpeha is mihi which involves acknowledging the dead the living and finally the speaker introduces themselves. For less formal occasions a whakatau may be used instead of a pōwhiri. A whakatau may involve manuhiri been assembled in a group facing their hosts and then a series of alternating mihimihi concluding with a hongī and sometimes food. A very informal type of whakatau can involve individuals simply sitting around a table or room who take turns introducing themselves using a mihimihi. For this type of whakatau there is no concluding hongī though food may be present.

### **Western Cultural Institutions for Greetings and Introductions:**

Western cultural institutions for greetings and introductions have evolved to facilitate the sharing of identity information in a way which is viewed as polite by both parties yet also recognises status differences. Chen (1993) in researching the impact of status on introductions in a Western context observed four basic rules regarding introductions among native speakers of English at the University of Pennsylvania:

1. In situations of unequal status, a person of lower status can first be introduced to a person of a higher status (and then vice versa).
2. In situations of equal status, the person who has lower (closer) social distance to the introducer will first be introduced to the person who has greater social distance from the introducer (and then vice versa).
3. In situations of equal status which involves a new person entering a conversation, the old participant will first be introduced to the new conversant (and then vice versa).
4. In situations of equal status within a context where a speaker wishes to continue conversational from without abrupt interruption, he/she introduces the silent third party besides him/her to the person who is talking of whom he/she is conversing with (pp. 16-17).

Pillet-Shore (2011) after examining video recorded introductions between English-speaking persons coming together to socialise and/or do work, found that when a known-in-common person is present, parties treat mediator-initiated introductions as preferred over self-initiated introductions; when launching introductions. Within a Western context individuals will expect to be introduced to an individual whom a companion has a prior knowledge of. For example:

Jane: The weather today is cold.  
Jack: Yes the weather is cold.  
James: Hello Jack.  
Jack: Hello James, this is my friend Jane.  
Jane: Hello James.

This hypothetical exchange would be classified by Searle (1975) as containing assertive and expressive speech acts. Jane greets Jack with an assertive about the nature of the weather. Jack replies with an assertive that confirms Jane's opinion of the weather. James arrives and greets Jack with an expressive, Jack responds with an expressive and his introduction of Jane is an assertive speech act.

According to Bixler (1997) it is important in a Western context to make introductions smoothly and correctly; introducing the person by name you want to honour most first. Bass (2010) outlines the following dialogue for an appropriate introduction:

*For instance, if you are introducing Ms. Alice Sawyer, vice president of your company, to Mr. Frank Taylor, a coworker and sales representative in your division, you might say, "Ms. Sawyer, I would like to introduce Mr. Fred Taylor. Fred, Ms. Alice Sawyer." Follow your introductory statement with a few appropriate comments about the individuals, such as their length of service in the company or a common interest, to enable them to begin talking with one another (p.59).*

The limited information that is usually exchanged between individuals as part of a Western introduction means that often in a meeting the only information participants may know about each other initially can be their names (O'Sullivan and Mills, 2009, p.25). Western introductions and greeting institutions often only result in individuals exchanging names and sometimes job titles. A key component of Western introductions in business is the handshake, which is a near universal behaviour in Western societies that initiates and sometimes constitutes social interaction (Hall and Hall, 1983). In some Western societies individuals may exchange a kiss on the cheek as part of a business greeting but generally those Western societies where Anglo-Saxon values are dominant do not.

### **Contrasting Māori Welcoming Processes with Western Welcoming Processes:**

In contrast to the at times very formal greeting processes of Māori; in general the cultural institutions surrounding greetings in the West are more informal; involving fewer distinct stages and exchanges of information between the parties meeting. The pōwhiri process is a very formal way of two parties being introduced to each other. While it can be time consuming the information shared by the respective parties can facilitate connections between participants based on whakapapa which has the potential to bond participants to each other in kinship.

With Western greetings and introductions in a business context, the only information exchanged in an initial greeting between individuals may be names and job titles. Physical contact if it occurs between the parties will often only be a handshake or perhaps a kiss on the cheek. Pōwhiri and sometimes whakatau however, involve a hongi which is far more intimate than a handshake or kiss.

### **The Challenge for Business People Used to Western Welcoming Processes:**

One major barrier for business people engaging in Māori cultural institutions of greetings and introductions will be their proficiency in Te Reo Māori. There is an expectation that if an individual is a prominent member of the manuhiri that they would be able to deliver a pēpeha and mihi in Te Reo Māori. Even for a whakatau a few words of Te Reo in an individual's mihimihi are becoming the norm.



The physical proximity and touch required by the process of the hongi can also present a challenge; for many individuals used to Western greetings. The hongi with its pressing of noses is far more intimate than a handshake or simple kiss on the cheek. For many non-Māori there is a degree of uncomfortableness with a stranger entering their intimate zone of personal space.

Time presents the final challenge to business people wanting to participate in pōwhiri as the institution requires more time than traditional Western greetings. A pōwhiri is a formal greeting process that cannot be rushed through by manuhiri without them appearing disrespectful to their hosts.

## **Conclusion**

The Māori cultural renaissance, a growing Māori economy, a youthful population and the Crown's policy of bi-culturalism are all compelling reasons why non-Māori business people in Aotearoa (New Zealand) need to become comfortable with Māori cultural greeting processes and introductions. Pōwhiri are a formal way of greeting a group and comprise pēpeha and mihi which as speech acts include assertives and expressives. Whakatau is a less formal way of facilitating greetings and introductions and involves individuals giving a mihi mihi; which generally contain more assertives than expressive speech acts. Western greetings recognise status but there is less personal information shared between participants than in a pōwhiri or whakatau. Western greetings also tend to contain assertive and expressive speech acts. While a lack of Te Reo Māori proficiency, un-comfortableness with hongi and a perceived lack of time may prevent non-Māori from engaging in pōwhiri and whakatau the authors would encourage non-Māori to become comfortable with these Māori cultural institutions.

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