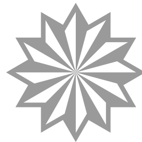
BUILDING NEW BRIDGES, NOT NEW WALLS



A HANDBOOK FOR HOSTING MARAE ENCOUNTERS

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A note about this handbook

This handbook was written originally as a guide for community groups and teachers using the *marae atea* of Ruatepupuke II at The Field Museum in Chicago, IL, U.S.A.

In its present form, however, this handbook is intended for use by people anywhere outside New Zealand who may wish to hold a marae encounter.

Although based on Maori concepts and principles, this handbook is not intended as a guide to Maori thought, practice, or values, and should not be interpreted as such.

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A note to the reader

Do you have suggestions and comments on how this handbook may be improved? We are eager to hear from you. Please contact us at:

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Table of Contents

1. Should you do this? | 1

2. Standing on the battlefield of Tumatauenga | 3

3. Getting started | 5

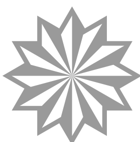
4. Before the encounter | 7

5. Meeting on the marae | 11

6. Sitting down together | 15

Afterword: Chicago's Wharenui | 17

1. SHOULD YOU DO THIS?



Getting people to sit down and talk with one another is not easy. This is particularly true if the people who ought to be talking with one another aren't even on speaking terms—sworn political or religious enemies, say, or people who see themselves as too different in the color of their skins, their cultural backgrounds, their social experiences, or their wealth and educational achievements.

All too often building bridges instead of walls gets put off until something terrible happens. By then, the people caught up in the midst of a crisis may be the very ones who should have been talking to one another all along. Yet by then, they may see themselves as so deeply at odds with one another that asking them to sit down and talk together may seem entirely out of the question.

Does this have to mean that when human conflicts get this bad, all hope is lost? Definitely not. In this handbook you will find step-by-step instructions on how to create both places and opportunities for people of all walks of life to talk with one another and be heard—even people who have not been on speaking terms for years, possibly for generations.

In this handbook, these special places are called *marae atea*. These are two ancient Polynesian words that together mean "open area" or "courtyard." And the opportunities that you will learn how to create for people to talk with and learn from one another are called *marae encounters*.

Building new bridges, not new walls

On April 7, 2009, during his first foreign trip as President of the United States, Barack Obama held a question-and-answer session with college students at the Tophane Cultural Center in Istanbul, Turkey. During the town hall style meeting, he told them how much he was counting on young people to help shape a more peaceful and prosperous future.

He realized, he said, that there had been political tensions and disagreements between Turkey and the United States in recent years. At times, people on both sides had lost the sense that both nations have shared interests and values, and that they can have a partnership that serves their common hopes and common dreams.

So he had come to Turkey to reaffirm the importance of the partnership between Turkey and the United States. “I believe we can have a dialogue that's open, honest, vibrant, and grounded in respect,” he told the students. “We can't afford to talk past one another, to focus only on our differences, or to let the walls of mistrust go up around us. Instead we have to listen carefully to each other. We have to focus on places where we can find common ground and respect each other's views, even when we disagree.”

Creating the right place, the right opportunity

There is something ambiguous and wonderful about the word *place*. The Tophane Cultural Center in Istanbul where Mr. Obama was meeting with students in April 2009 was not just a good place to talk with them about the future. It was also a good opportunity to do so.

As Obama explained: “Simple exchanges can break down walls between us, for when people come together and speak to one another and share a common experience, then their common humanity is revealed. We are reminded that we're joined together by our pursuit of a life that's productive and purposeful, and when that happens mistrust begins to fade and our smaller differences no longer overshadow the things that we share. And that's where progress begins.”

This handbook describes an innovative way—and yet, as you will see in the next section, also an ancient way—of strengthening human relationships grounded on mutual interest and respect, a new (but old) way of creating places and opportunities for people to listen to one another, and thereby find common ground and respect for one another's views, even if at times they may also discover that on some things they must agree to disagree.

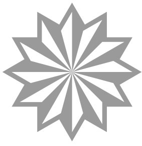
In a nutshell, hosting a marae encounter asks people to:

1. Take a good long look at themselves as a community (even if they haven’t previously thought of themselves as being one).
2. Figure out together what being a community means to them.
3. Explain themselves as a community to another group of people.
4. Raise issues, concerns, or other topics they would like to discuss with these people . . .
5. who are similarly preparing to do the very same thing in return
6. at the place selected to be the marae for the encounter, and at the agreed on time,
7. all followed by a meal together, and then lots of good talk—sometimes serious, sometimes humorous, but always open and down-to-earth.

The world is what you make of it

“The world will be what you make of it," President Obama told those students in Turkey that early afternoon. "You can choose to make new bridges instead of new walls."

We could not agree more with the promise and optimism of this simple observation. Most important, you do not have to be President of the United States to build the bridges described in this handbook.



2. Standing on the battlefield of Tumatauenga

The Maori people of New Zealand in the South Pacific have a word for it: *Temaraenuiateaotumatauenga*.

This long, seemingly unpronounceable word can be written out for easier reading as *Te-marae-nui-atea-o-Tumatauenga*. Either way, this word means “The great open field of Tū of the angry face.”

Tū is the ancient Maori god of war. “Angry face” refers to the fearsome Maori custom of challenging your enemy before battle (or nowadays, before a rugby match) by grimacing menacingly while rapidly thrusting your tongue in and out.

What is important, however, is how this lengthy word begins: *Te marae*.

Te marae, the place

A marae in New Zealand is a large, open courtyard in front of a community meeting house (or *wharenui*) where two groups of people formally meet and greet one another.

If a *hui* (formal meeting) does not take place on a marae, other locations indoors or out are temporarily set aside and used for the same purpose.

While practices and conventions vary from community to community in Aotearoa (the Maori name for New Zealand), the purpose of a marae encounter remains the same. Before getting down to business, be it social, political, or whatever, the hosts (who are called *tangata whenua*, “people of the land”) must first welcome their visitors (who are called *manuhiri* or *manuwhiri*) to learn the objectives and credentials of those who have arrived from afar.

In ancient times, these opening formal rituals of encounter (today, collectively called a *pohiri* or *powhiri*) on a marae were a tense and spiritually challenging way of finding out whether strangers had arrived with honorable or deceitful intentions in their hearts.

Today, every *pohiri* on a marae remains an emotionally charged and extraordinarily powerful event deeply felt by hosts and visitors alike.

Te marae, the opportunity

A marae encounter in New Zealand is a unique blend of talk, ceremony, performance, and hospitality.

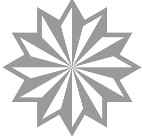
When two communities meet one another on a marae, they are standing—figuratively speaking—on Tumatauenga’s battlefield. However, instead of encountering one another with raised voices and weapons of war, each side brings to the meeting words, music, and song to express pride in the history and accomplishments of their community, and recognition of the similar

standing and accomplishments of those facing them on the other side of the open field.

As discussed in greater detail in later chapters, marae encounters are grounded in basic Maori values. Many of these values are shared by people everywhere, not just in New Zealand: acceptance of our role as stewards of the earth; reverence for those who lived before us to whom we are all indebted; respect and love for family and community; and openness to others, even strangers.

These basic human values are key to creating successful opportunities for open discussion *kanohi ki te kanohi*, as the Maori say, “face to face.”

3. GETTING STARTED



Marae encounters are a proven way of letting other people learn about what you believe in, what you hope to accomplish in life, and how you and others with whom you live, work, or collaborate are trying to answer the age-old questions "who am I?" and “why am I here?”

Hosting marae encounters with other people can turn strangers into friends, and change the dynamics of “us against them” into “them and us."

Hosting marae encounters can also be a positive, constructive, and engaging way of helping you and others cultivate and share a strong—maybe even a definitional—sense of community.

The big difference

There are many ways for people to meet with one another—such as formal debates, town hall meetings, and church services—and talk about interests and concerns of importance. But note that all of these types of gatherings have one basic thing in common. There is always someone directing what happens. There is always somebody in charge.

Marae encounters are different.

In sharp contrast, what happens during the formal welcoming (*pohiri*) of strangers on a marae takes place between two groups, or communities, of people. While speeches are given by individuals who stand up to do so on behalf of everyone in their community, nobody introduces each speaker (they do this themselves), and care is taken to balance the number of speeches so that each community is equally represented.

In some parts of New Zealand, those who stand up to talk take turns. First a speaker on the host’s side will address the crowd; then a speaker on the visitors’ side—back and forth, speaker following speaker, ending finally with a speaker on the side of the hosting community—the “people of the land” where the marae is located. In other parts of the country, all of the designated host speakers will talk first; then the speakers for the visitors will do the same.

You can see, therefore, the two major reasons marae encounters are so different from what most of us think of as town hall meetings, church services, or presidential debates.

First, the individuals who stand up to speak are not just speaking for themselves. They are speaking on behalf of everyone else on their side of the *marae atea*, the open courtyard or assembly ground.

Second, regardless whether the speeches are presented back-and-forth across the marae, or are first given all on one side, and then on the other, the guiding principle or rule remains the same. Unlike during most public gatherings held outside New Zealand, just who it is who is “on stage” at any one moment, and who is “in the audience,” changes by design during the course of a marae en-

counter. Said differently, first one side is “the audience” and the other side is “the actors.” But then these roles are reversed. Those in the audience become the actors. Those who were formerly the actors become the audience.

You can see here what is the wisdom and strength—the pivotal strength—of every marae encounter. This way of holding public gatherings favors not only *talking* to other people, but also *listening* to what other people have to say.

Decisions, decisions

Marae encounters are held in New Zealand for many different reasons—for example, to welcome visitors, mediate conflicts, honor the dead, or hold public talks on any number of topics.

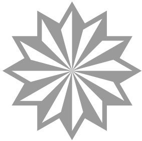
Outside New Zealand, if you also want to hold a marae encounter where you live or work, there are two things you must decide before you begin planning for such an event.

- ***Why?*** The reasons for holding a marae encounter do not have to be earth shattering or somber. Nevertheless, you can’t expect people to participate if you don’t make it clear to them what the encounter will be about.
- ***Who?*** Although often it may be obvious to you who you would like to see show up for an encounter you are planning, the question “who?” is not always an easy question to answer. The hard part may not be deciding who you want to see sitting or standing on the other side of the marae, but instead who you want to have on your own side of Tumatauenga’s battlefield. Most of us belong to many different communities. Which of the ones you belong to is the right one for the encounter you have in mind? This may not be an easy question to answer.

The key to success

The most important thing to remember is that marae encounters are not simply about people meeting people, or only about people talking to people. They are first and foremost about one community greeting and meeting with another community.

4. Before the encounter



Any large, open, and relatively quiet area can be a great place to hold a marae encounter. A private lawn or at a public park will do, but so will a school gymnasium, hotel ballroom, or any other large indoor space. Particularly appropriate would be a place that has special significance or meaning to your community or group, such as a community center, church, synagogue, mosque, or other similarly established gathering place.

The reason for the encounter

We have learned to live and prosper all over this planet of ours. Yet nowadays we are brushing elbows with our neighbors as never before. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the same issues keep cropping up. Who has a right to live where? Who really owns the earth's resources? What are the proper social and religious values and public laws for maintaining peace, resolving conflicts, and making life worth living?

Given the way the world is now and has long been, it is also not surprising that building walls between people has seemingly been a human preoccupation. Consider some of history's famous examples. The walled cities of Troy and Jericho. The Great Wall of China. Hadrian's Wall, built by the Romans in northern England in the 2nd century A.D. The hated wall dividing Berlin built after World War II.

Building walls may not work in the long run as a social strategy, but clearly we humans are predisposed to believe that walls work. But what kinds of bridges rather than walls can be built instead?

There is no doubt that marae encounters can be an effective way of helping people resolve conflicts.

However, hosting an encounter with another group or community does not need to be done solely to solve difficulties that are keeping people at odds with one another. The pivotal strength of every marae encounter is that this way of holding community or group meetings favors not only *talking* with other people, but also *listening* to what others have to say.

Therefore, if you would like your group or community to host an encounter, don't overlook that hosting such an event can be fun, enjoyable, and a fine way of getting to know what other groups and communities are thinking, trying to do, and see as important.

While holding marae encounters to help resolve social problems, political differences, or ethnic conflicts makes sense, this form of human engagement can also be a great way to learn directly from people whom you might otherwise rarely, or possibly never, encounter.

Regardless of the reason for holding a marae encounter, what really lies at the heart of every successful meeting of this sort is the honesty, openness, and

willingness of every participant to share their lives, experiences, and concerns with others.

Here are only a few of the many good reasons for hosting a marae encounter:

Welcoming visitors. Any time you are being visited by people from outside your community, school, place of work or worship, consider greeting them as a group on their arrival by honoring them in this unusual way—with a marae encounter, a welcome that they will never forget.

Handling quarrels & disagreements. Hosting an encounter can be an astonishingly successful way of getting people who are strongly "taking sides" to sit down and talk directly with one another.

Learning from others. Holding a marae encounter can also be a good way of encouraging people of different faiths, political parties, social points of view, and life experiences to listen and learn from one another.

Sharing common interests. Inviting people to an encounter can be a great way of reaching out to other groups and communities having similar interests or concerns.

Who should participate?

The group or community organizing a marae encounter has the responsibility of inviting another group or community to the proposed meeting. Given how unconventional marae encounters are outside New Zealand, it may be necessary to explain in some detail to those being invited what is to happen and what will be expected of them.

Selecting the speakers

Among the Maori, the art of formally speaking (*whaikorero*) on a marae is a highly cultivated and much celebrated form of expression, a true art form. The prestige (*mana)* of a community and its marae may be closely tied to the oratorical renown of its speakers.

How you go about picking people to speak for you on a marae outside New Zealand is largely up to you and your group or community. Yet keep in mind four basic points:

1. The prominence of a gathering anywhere on earth is often weighed by the number of people who get to stand up and speak. It is always a good idea for the invited group or community to ask ahead of time how many speakers their hosts plan to have on their side of the marae during the welcoming ceremonies, so that a like number of visitors can come prepared to speak in reply when their time comes.
2. Those speaking for each community should come prepared to do their best. It is a good idea to ask all speakers to practice beforehand. It is not just the number but also the skill of the speakers that makes for a rousing and successful encounter.

3. Speakers should never read their speeches from a prepared script or set of notes. A good speech during a marae encounter is judged not just by the words chosen, but also by the polish, feeling, and skill of the person delivering them.
4. Speeches on a marae should not be delivered from behind a podium. Each speaker simply stands up and addresses those on the other side face-to-face across the open field or area separating the visitors from the hosts.

Preparing the speeches

The speeches given on a marae on behalf of the two groups or communities meeting there do not need to be lengthy or elaborate. However, it is important they be sincere and heartfelt. It is also important that they capture the spirit of the day, and that they are presented in as genial and skillful a way as possible.

In New Zealand, speeches on a marae are not impromptu, impulsive, or haphazard. While the form and content may vary based on the community, the elements of a successful speech are often both familiar and predictable. While the skillfulness and conviction of these speeches are considered a measure of the importance and sincerity of the gathering, poor speeches and poor speakers weaken the quality, resonance, and gravity (all of which in the Maori language are encompassed by the word *mana*) of the entire occasion.

We are reluctant to spell out too fully what we see as some of the ideal ingredients of a good speech on a marae outside New Zealand. With the understanding, therefore, that these remarks are offered only as general guidelines, here are some elements you might want to consider including.

Even if everybody on both sides of the marae already knows for sure what the meeting is to be all about, speakers for the hosts should make their remarks chiefly ones of welcome, delight at seeing the visitors, and so forth. Pleasing words do not have to be insincere. Showing that you are aware of how accomplished are your visitors is always a good way to demonstrate respect and gratitude.

On the other side of the marae, it is appropriate for speakers on behalf of the visitors to begin by similarly acknowledging the accomplishments and prestige of both the place where the gathering is taking place and of those who are there to welcome them as hosts.

It is usually the duty of the speakers for the visitors to elaborate on where they have come from and why they have made the journey to be with their hosts on the marae atea.

Supporting your speakers

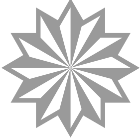
In New Zealand, it is conventional to follow each speech on a marae made during a formal welcome with a *waiata*, a chant or song, performed by the speaker’s own group or community. This communal gesture confirms that the

speaker who has just finished talking has spoken not just as an individual but for everyone in the speaker's community.

It is strongly recommended that marae encounters outside New Zealand adopt the same practice. It must be emphasized, however, that these entertaining moments should not become entirely separate public performances by those participating, and those stepping forward to join with their speaker should be careful not to move farther out on the marae than where he or she is standing. Instead, they should position themselves beside or behind him. The aim, after all, is to show support for the speaker by reaffirming the worth, sincerity, and substance of what has just been said.

Such a finishing touch, or garnish, to a fine speech can be both fun and a wonderful way to uphold the mana of both the speaker and of all those on his or her side of the marae.

5. Meeting on the marae



In New Zealand, a marae is not just a place where people meet. A marae is also a family gathering place—a *turangawaewae*, a word literally meaning "standing place" (*tūranga*) for "feet" (*waewae*), and commonly translated into English as "a place to stand." However described, a New Zealand marae is a place for *tangata whenua* (hosts) and *manuhiri* (visitors) to honor and take part in Maori ways of being with others.

Step 1. Assembly

While visitors may arrive at the place set aside for the encounter individually, or in small groups—as families, for instance—all visitors should gather together prior to the encounter somewhere near but away from the marae.

As they arrive, those in the visiting group or community may greet one another quietly. However, it is critical to the success of the encounter that nobody among the visitors makes the cardinal mistake of greeting anyone over on the host's side of the marae. Furthermore, visitors should never walk on to the area being used as the *marae atea* before being formally invited to do so by the hosts (see **Step 2**).

It is normal, and indeed quite appropriate, for all those who arrive as visitors to feel apprehensive. Who knows what the hosts want to say to them? How really welcome are they? Will those speaking on behalf of the visitors truly rise to the occasion? Or will their words spoken on the marae fall flat? Feeling tense, even worried, is also only to be expected if the encounter about to take place has been organized in hopes of resolving old disputes, misunderstandings, or rivalries.

Step 2. Call to the marae

It is the right of the host group or community to determine when visitors should be called to approach the marae atea. Usually this step is taken after it is clear that all the visitors have arrived, and everyone is waiting quietly in anticipation.

Keep in mind that this is a community occasion. Visitors should not move on to their designated side of the marae in single file, nor as couples or families only. The time has come to show to one and all that you are there together as a single group or community. And please, no stragglers. Remember, too, that there should be no talking, smoking, or giggling. The movement of the visitors to the marae should be done in a respectful and dignified manner.

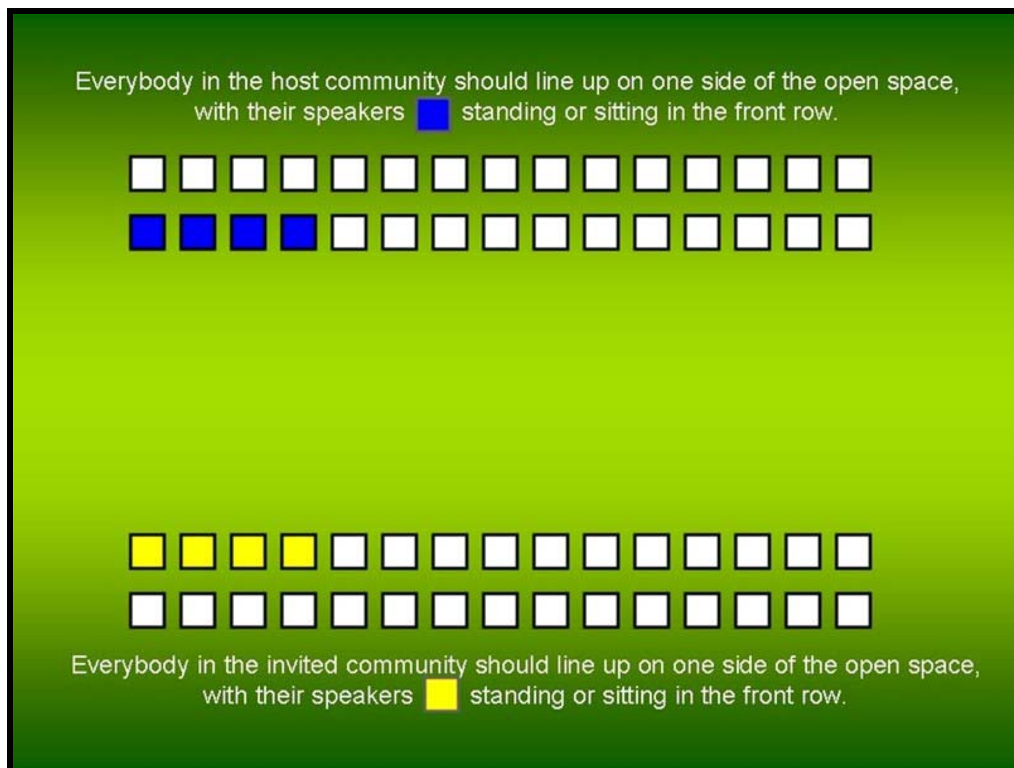
The call (*karanga*) to the visitors initiating a marae encounter in New Zealand is always done by a woman (who is called the *kai karanga*). The call itself is typically a short, unearthly incantation, a ritual poem comprising set phrases such as “come forward, visitors from afar, welcome, welcome.” These calls are ethereal and awe-inspiring. In response, a woman among the visitors (she is

the *kai whakautu*) will return the host call in an equallly ethereal and moving fashion generally using similarly traditional words and phrasing.

It goes without saying that outside New Zealand this powerful, emotionally-charged moment at the beginning of an encounter does not need to be done in Maori, but whatever call you use should be more than just a hand signal, or an everyday greeting such as "y'all come!" These calls are the first words spoken between the hosts and the visitors, and they are intended to awaken the emotions.

Step 3. Advance

In New Zealand, different communities follow different conventions regarding how visitors should approach the marae when called to do so. Some ask that all of the visiting men to be out in front, with women and children behind. In such instances, the speakers for the visitors and other important individuals may lead the procession. In other areas, community leaders will be out in front and immediately behind them will be women and children, with the rest of the men walking beside and behind (the reason: to protect women and children as they enter Tumatauenga's battlefield). Alternatively, it may be women and children who lead the way, with the speakers and other important persons walking beside them. However the visitors decide to move on to the marae, it is important that they do so slowly and with dignity. As a group, the visitors move to their side of the marae and silently take up position there.



Step 4. Moment of remembrance

Before anyone takes their seat, all of the visitors should reassemble as a group on the threshold of the marae atea, and then bow their heads for a few moments of remembrance for those who are no longer alive. The hosts should do the same. In New Zealand, it is entirely fitting at this time in an encounter for the living (*hunga ora*) to cry aloud and shed tears for the dead (*hunga mate*). Those taking part in an encounter outside Aotearoa should feel free to do the same.

This step in an encounter gives everyone time to reflect together on how and why they are all able to be there—and how others can no longer do so.

Step 5. Formal exchange of speeches

In New Zealand, orations given on a marae during a formal welcome usually follow a fairly set pattern, although they will often include, for example, humorous asides and other less predictable elements.

Normally, although not invariably, the speakers for both the hosts and visitors will be men, not women. When his time comes, each speaker rises from his chair or bench to claim the stage, or rather the marae, while announcing his intention to do so with a set phrase such as *tihei mauri ora* (which roughly translates as "I breathe, it is life!"), strides on to the marae, and begins to address those on the opposite side.

Each oration concludes with a song (*waiata*) or dance (*haka*) during which the speaker is joined and supported by members of his group, as described in the previous section. Then he finishes his oration with a few last words.

In some parts of New Zealand, the speeches on a marae shift back and forth between the two communities meeting on Tumatauenga's battlefield. Normally a speaker on the hosts' side will stand up and talk first, then one on the visitors' side, until all of the orators on both sides have spoken. When following this convention (*tau utuutu*), however, the last speaker is always a speaker on the hosts' side.

Alternatively, all of the speakers on the hosts' side may speak first; then those for the visitors (a marae protocol in New Zealand called *paeke*). When this protocol is being followed, the last person to speak will usually still be someone on the hosts' side of the marae to assure that the responsibility and authority (*mana*) for the occasion remain on the shoulders of the hosts. Otherwise it might seem as if the visitors had taken over the encounter and stolen all the glory.

We suggest that outside New Zealand it is appropriate for the hosts of a forthcoming encounter to tell their visitors-to-be in advance how many people they should have ready to stand up and speak on their behalf.

Additionally, what the speakers on both sides will talk about should be discussed and agreed upon in advance within each participating group or community.

As a final note, welcoming speeches on a marae are not direct debates. During welcoming ceremonies, it is appropriate to present what you want to talk about later in the day, but marae welcomes are not the same thing as college or courtroom debates during which points raised on one side are to be argued for or against by speakers on the other side of the marae. That can wait until everyone is sitting down afterwards (*see* the next division of this handbook).

Don't forget that each speech will require a communal show of support by others on the same side of the marae after the speaker has concluded his or her remarks. It is not necessary for everyone on the speaker's side to stand up and join in. But if nobody does so, it would be hard to avoid giving everybody the impression that the speaker had by then lost the support even of his own people.

Rest assured, it's not just the skill of the performers that counts; it's the spirit in which they join their speaker in song, poetic words, or dance.

STEP 6. Presentation of a gift

After the final speaker on the visitors' side of the marae is finished and has been supported in an appropriate fashion by those in his or her community, he moves toward the center of the marae atea and places an envelope containing a *koha* (gift) on the ground. In New Zealand in earlier times, the koha would have normally been a gift of food. Today, it is generally a monetary contribution to help defray the expenses of the *hui* (gathering). The speaker returns to the visitors' side, and the koha is then picked up by someone from the hosts' side.

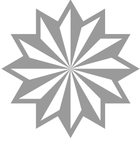
We strongly recommend that this step be included in marae encounters outside New Zealand, even if the koha is merely a token gift—something, say, readily identifiable as coming from the visiting community that will later serve as a warm reminder of the visitors and the encounter held with them.

STEP 7. Crossing the marae

After the presentation of the koha, the two communities have arrived at the moment in an encounter where everybody may at last greet one another as friends, even as "one family."

At this time, the leader of the host community should formally invite all of the visitors to cross the marae for the first time, so that all the hosts may say hello to all the visitors. This is the final step that completes the transformation of strangers (*manuhiri*) into family members (*tangata whenua*) for the duration of their stay with the hosts.

6. Sitting down together



Sharing food together

All encounters should include a communal meal of some sort following the formal welcome on the marae. There are no specific guidelines for the type of food that should be offered. It can range anywhere from tea, coffee, milk, and cookies to more elaborate meals. The food should be provided by the host community, which is something the visiting community may want to keep in mind when deciding the nature of their *koha*.

An honest exchange of views

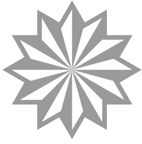
Following the meal, everyone makes their way back to the marae. At this point, there is no predetermined seating; seats are often arranged in a circle, which reflects the new relationship created between the two communities and the sense of equality between all individuals participating.

All those wishing to do so are given the opportunity to say a few words about themselves, their community, or the encounter. There are no rules or limits about what can be said other than the usual rules of civility and good humor. Everyone should have the right to speak without interruption or interference

Saying good-bye

Speeches of farewell at the end of an encounter are as important as those of welcome at the beginning. Since the visitors, not the hosts, are the ones who are about to depart for home, it is appropriate for the visitors take the lead in saying good-bye. Since everyone is now, figuratively speaking, on the same side of the marae, these farewells should be informal and heartfelt.

And don't forget that it is never wrong to include a song or two.



AFTERWORD

CHICAGO'S WHARENUI

John Edward Terrell, Regenstein Curator of Pacific Anthropology,
The Field Museum, Chicago, Illinois

In 1905 George Dorsey, the Curator of Anthropology at the newly established Field Columbian Museum (now the Field Museum), was traveling through Europe to purchase interesting specimens to enrich the collections of this fledgling scientific institution in the New World.[1] On July 22, Dorsey wrote to the Museum's Director, F. J. V. Skiff, asking permission to purchase a long list of things from the firm of J. F. G. Umlauff of Hamburg, Germany's foremost dealer in natural history specimens and cultural objects.

Item no. 14 on Dorsey's list read as follows: "New Zealand house . . . 20,000 [German] marks" (about $5,000, a goodly sum in 1905). As he explained to Skiff: "This is the only complete Maori house in existence outside of New Zealand." Umlauff himself had purchased this house a few years earlier, Dorsey reported, from an Englishman who had purportedly owned it for many years. This ornately carved wooden building had been pronounced by an authority at the Berlin Museum to be one of the most interesting museum-worthy specimens ever offered for sale in Europe.

Dr. Dorsey attached a description of the house, together with a boxed set of mounted photographs showing all its carved wooden panels, a "catalog" now stored in the Rare Book Room at the Field Museum. His recommendation to Skiff was unmistakable. "I should consider that we were extremely fortunate in being able to secure such a unique habitation at a price not much in advance of the cost of transportation from New Zealand to America."

In a letter to George Dorsey dated July 8, 1905—two weeks before Dorsey had sat down to write Skiff— J. F. G. Umlauff had already made it clear that he was under the impression that Dorsey had received, or would soon have, Skiff's permission to take this magnificent building back to Chicago. "Besides these collections [listed earlier in the same letter to Dorsey] you bought still a Maori-house as photographed and described for the sum of $ 5000.– with the condition, that you can cancel this purchase till the 22nd. inst[ance], by telegraphing the word 'no'." Dorsey did not receive this letter in time to telegraph back yea or nay.

Umlauff wrote again on the 24th. "Enclosed I beg to hand you my letter of the 8th. Inst[ance]. with the confirmation of your order, which I had addressed to Southampton. But as the ship had already sailed, it did not reach you, and was returned to me, but it came in my possession only the 22nd. inst." Since Dorsey had not said the magic word "no" by the 22nd, "you bought from me a Maori-house as photographed and described for the sum of $ 5000.–. The house will be packed and made ready for shipment with the other goods."

Thus the fate of this remarkable Pacific Islands artifact was sealed by chance more than human choice.

While this house reached America safely, it was not exhibited in Chicago for another twenty years due to lack of space in Field Museum's original building on the south side of the city (the building which now houses Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry). In 1925, after Field Museum had moved a few miles north to its current location on the shore of Lake Michigan near the heart of the city, its many pieces were taken from storage by Curator Ralph Linton and erected more or less exactly as Umlauff had tried to reconstruct them in Hamburg at the turn of the 20th century. The Museum's annual report for that year boasts that "it is the only

[1] This account of the history of our Maori meeting house after its removal from New Zealand sometime at the end of the 19th century is adapted from my account published in: Arapata Hakiwai and John Edward Terrell, *Ruatepupuke: A Maori Meeting House*. Field Museum, Chicago, 1994.

Maori building extant that has a completely carved front, and its decorations show Maori art at its best."

Ruatepupuke II*, the Maori* wharenui *(meeting house) at The Field Museum in Chicago.*

Wharenui

In 1986 Field Museum was the fourth, and last, American venue for a traveling exhibition on Maori art from New Zealand collections. Over 100 Maori tribal elders, dignitaries, artists, and others came to Chicago to open this beautiful exhibition with full Maori formality. At the Museum's request, elders from Tokomaru Bay, the Maori community in New Zealand where the house (we now know) had been built in 1881, were part of this foreign delegation. For the first time since the Museum had purchased this structure in 1905, it was possible for us to meet directly with native New Zealanders to talk about their house and its future.

Several weeks after the Chicago opening of this traveling exhibition, I led a group of 18 Chicagoans to Tokomaru Bay to continue the dialogue between Chicago and the Maori on their own turf. These conversations led to a pivotal resolution. The people of Tokomaru Bay decided that this house should remain in Chicago so that they—working side by side with the staff at the Field Museum—could restore it as a living outpost of Maori art and culture in the New World.

By the early 1990s, the Museum and the people of Tokomaru Bay had dismantled the Museum's old 1925 restoration of the house, cleaned and stabilized all its wooden pieces, and rebuilt it in a special gallery on the 2nd floor of the Museum. New woven reed panels (called *tukutuku*) for the house were made at Tokomaru Bay and then shipped to Chicago. The house was formally opened again to the public by a delegation of 15 people from Tokomaru Bay on March 9, 1993.

You can get an idea of just how huge the exhibition halls at the Museum are when I tell you that this house—which is over 56 feet long, more than 22 feet wide, and stands about 13 feet, 10 inches high—fits quite comfortably in about a quarter of the exhibition space devoted to it. Calling this intricately carved wooden building a "house," however, is misleading. Although there are only three fully intact examples of old Maori houses outside New Zealand, there are hundreds of these buildings in their country of origin where they serve many purposes. These structures—in Maori they are called *wharenui*, or "big houses"—are at one and the same time meeting places, lecture halls, schools, hotels, training academies, day-care centers, drop-in centers, civic centers, museums, landmarks, and many other things.

What can be difficult for outsiders to understand, however, is that to people in New Zealand, these structures are a lot more than useful buildings to have around. They are also seen as living people. Or more accurately, they are also seen as gathering places not only for those now living, but for their ancestors, too—for everyone who was once a living member of the local communities that erect and look after such houses.

In short, while it is not wrong to call these buildings *houses* in English, seeing them merely as houses would be missing their real significance. To people of New Zealand Maori descent (and today they are not alone in feeling this way), these *whare whakairo* (carved houses) are alive with the energy and spirit of all those who are—we would probably be more inclined to say *were*—the ancestors of the builders of each of these houses and their currently living owners.

It is probably not surprising, therefore, that people in New Zealand look upon these houses metaphorically in a number of ways. They are often built so that the front doorway faces the rising sun. The floor inside, which in earlier times was of beaten earth, is said to symbolize *Papatuanuku*, the Maori earth mother. The roof represents *Ranginui*, the sky father. The carved wall posts, *poupou*, are seen as the children of these two primeval parents who, it is said, literally forced the earth and the sky to break apart from their primordial embrace, a youthful act of rebellion that brought light to the world. The rains that moisten the earth are Ranginui's tears he has shed ever since that fateful first dawn.

While these houses are seen as sacred gathering places for both the living and the dead, each house is also considered to be the embodiment of a special ancestor whose name it bears. As one consequence of Field Museum's close collaboration with the people of Tokomaru Bay, we are now certain that this house in Chicago was built in 1881 at Tokomaru Bay to honor *Ruatepupuke*, a legendary figure who is said to have brought the art of woodcarving to the Maori people from the underwater house of the sea god, Tangaroa. The ridgepole of the building is his spine; the rafters are his ribs, and the wide boards along the roof at the front are Ruatepupuke's arms outstretched to welcome visitors to the *marae*, or gathering ground around the house in the hall where it now stands.

We also know that an earlier house built at Tokomaru Bay to honor Ruatepupuke was dismantled sometime in the 1820s to get it out of harm's way during a local war. Its precious carvings were soaked in whale oil and hidden in the bed of Mangahauini River at Tokomaru. Time passed and the channel of the Mangahauini moved. The carvings were lost. Or as some would say at Tokomaru Bay, "they returned to Tangaroa's domain." Eventually, people at Tokomaru Bay decided to erect a new house honoring Ruatepupuke. Ruatepupuke II, now in Chicago, was opened on September 23, 1881. Hundreds of people, Maori and European, came from miles around to attend.

Judging by photographs apparently taken at Tokomaru Bay at the end of the 19th century, this building was in considerable disrepair by the late 1880s or early 1890s. It was eventually sold to a local dealer in Maori curios, George Hindmarsh, sometime in the 1890s. Afterwards, of course, it somehow reached the salesrooms of J. F. G. Umlauff in Hamburg, Germany, where Dorsey first encountered it.

A house is not just a home

It is much more difficult to describe how New Zealanders feel about these remarkable architectural achievements. During community gatherings in New Zealand, for instance, speakers talk directly to such houses both as the living expression of the famous ancestor whose name it bears and also as the living expression of all those in the community who are no longer alive. It is also customary for anyone, including formal speakers on a marae, to cry quite publicly in front of these houses especially at the start of community gatherings. It would be wide of the mark to see such open expressions of human emotion as merely make-believe, role-playing, or public theatrics.

It is true that there are some places in America (churches, for example) and some occasions during the year (say, Sundays) when people can be seen talking to—or so it would seem—what most of us would probably agree are "just things." Prayers said in front of statues of the Virgin Mary come to mind. Yet in our part of the world, someone observed to be crying in front of a building while talking directly to it would be likely to elicit overt stares, rude comments, laughter, or some other way of publicly registering disapproval. If such odd human behavior were to go on for any length of time, the person acting in such a decidedly peculiar fashion would risk being branded as crazy, and carted off to a hospital for close and prolonged observation. In sum, behavior seen as quite normal, and that is even encouraged under certain circumstances in New Zealand, is almost sure to be scorned in our own country. Why? Because such behavior does not make good sense to us. From our way of looking at things, no sane person is going to talk to buildings and cry over them.

But wait a moment. Yes, while it may be hard to put into words—and harder, perhaps, to justify—why someone in New Zealand would consider a building to be *taonga tuku iho* (a Maori phrase roughly referring to anything "sacred" or "treasured" that has been handed down over generations, including intangible things such as stories and songs as well as physical things like houses[2]), is it really as difficult as it might at first seem to relate to how the Maori of New Zealand see the world even if we ourselves do not see things in quite the same fashion?

The closest I have been able to come to putting into words what I think people in New Zealand may be feeling when they talk to taonga tuku iho is an allegory I call the "parable of the brooch." Imagine in your mind's eye some cherished possession that you have inherited from, say, your grandmother or great-grandmother—perhaps a locket or a silver brooch that she liked to wear when she went out to visit friends. Every time you hold this taonga tuku iho in your hand, this old locket or brooch, and you think about her, in a sense she *is* with you, for she lives in your memories. In a sense, too, it is almost as if you *are* touching her by the very act of holding what she once held in her own palm. As this locket or brooch warms in your hand from the heat of your body, it is almost as if it were still warm from the heat of her hand. Therefore, depending I suppose on your personal convictions about death and the possibility of life after death, does it actually seem too far-fetched to say that if there is any way at all to "touch" those who are no longer living, then holding their brooch or locket might be one way this can be accomplished? Or that it might not be insane to talk with your "ancestor" in your mind or perhaps under your breath?

I do not know your own reaction to this story about The Field Museum's Maori house, and about how people in New Zealand look upon such houses in a strikingly different way than I can imagine most Americans would. What "makes sense" when you have Maori good sense running in the hidden reaches of your mind may make less sense to anyone running on American common sense. Yet I think my parable of the broach may show that given the right parallels, Americans *can* see how the Maori way of looking at houses such as Ruatepupuke II *does* make sense, even if it is not exactly our own kind of sense.

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[2] Sidney Moko Mead, ed. (1984), *Te Maori: Maori Art for New Zealand Collections*. New York, Harry N. Abrams, page 238.

Chicago's marae

In April 2007, a delegation of over 50 people from Tokomaru Bay visited Chicago to honor the 125th anniversary of the first opening of Ruatepupuke II in 1881. During the visit, The Field Museum adopted some of the general rules of welcome widely used in New Zealand for welcoming others. However, since none of those at the Museum were Maori, we had to adapt the rules of encounter in the spirit of the City of Chicago. Quite early in the planning we decided that the speakers on our side of the marae at the powhiri for our visitors from Tokomaru Bay should be a sampling of the multicultural realities of Chicago. Therefore, the first to speak on our behalf was John McCarter, President of The Field Museum. After his words of welcome, Lionel Dunn, who is a member of the Museum's security staff, played the saxophone, something he does movingly and well. Then Jan Lorys, Director of Polish Museum, spoke. He, too, was subsequently "supported," as they say in New Zealand, by another song, this time one in Polish sung by Aleksandra Podowski, a young woman from the Kolbe School of Polish Language. The third speaker was Laura Washington from Museum's Board of Trustees. Afterwards she was supported by a spiritual sung by Janine Weathersby, also from the Museum's security staff. Our fourth and last speaker was Joe Podlasek, Executive Director of the American Indian Center in Chicago. He was afterwards supported by a Native American dance performance by the Center's Jingle Dress Dancers and Drum. After those on our side were done, four speakers from Tokomaru Bay stood up in turn to match our welcoming speeches. They spoke to us mostly in Maori, as is customary, and they were supported by *waiata* (songs) done in far more traditional Maori fashion.

There is much that I could add to this account of our Chicago powhiri in 2007. The really important thing to say, however, is that from this encounter inspired by Maori ways but carried out in the spirit of Chicago, there came a renewed sense of purpose on both sides of Ruatepupuke's marae. We are alike now even more resolved than ever to make this unusual marae a multicultural place of encounter for all the people of Chicago, as well as for visitors to the Museum from all parts of the globe. In this way, we are all honoring the spirit of a traditional Maori proverb often quoted nowadays in New Zealand:

> *Hutia te rito o te harakeke Kei hea te komako e ko Ki mai ki ahau He aha te mea nui o te ao Maku e ki atu He tangata He tangata He tangata.*
>
> If the center shoot of the flax is pulled out, where will the bellbird sing? If you were to ask me what is the most important thing in the world, I would reply: It is people, it is people, it is people.