



Tikanga at NZICC



NEW ZEALAND
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE

Understanding Tikanga

In Aotearoa New Zealand, we proudly incorporate indigenous Māori culture – including language, customs, and values – into our events. These practices uphold the mana (spiritual power) of the tangata whenua, the first inhabitants of these lands.

This document outlines the tikanga, or cultural customs, observed at the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC). It also highlights the cultural services available to enhance your event, including the appropriate whakatau, pōwhiri, or formal welcome.

Te Reo Māori (Māori language) terms are used throughout this document, with the English translations provided for clarity.

Tikanga is a broad term used to describe the customs, protocols, and values within te ao Māori, or the Māori world. Tikanga can vary across Aotearoa New Zealand and is defined and upheld by mana whenua, the custodians of the land.

For NZICC, this means the local iwi, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, holding ahi kā (continuous

occupation) across the central isthmus of Tāmaki Makaurau, and are responsible for establishing the tikanga for our space.

They work in partnership with NZICC partners, stakeholders, staff, and clients to ensure these customs are understood, respected, and upheld.

Our tikanga informs key aspects of how we host and engage, including:

- Whakatau, formal ceremonies to open events
- Mātāpono, the values and principles guiding appropriate conduct at NZICC
- Other formal protocols, such as pōwhiri (more formal welcome), whakatuwhera (formal openings), and karakia (blessings)

As visitors to our space, it is important that you feel both welcomed and supported.

The NZICC team is available to guide you through these practices, ensuring they are observed appropriately and with confidence.



About us

In 2023, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei afforded special status to the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) by gifting the name *Te Tumu* to our building.

Te Tumu was given in recognition of the enduring partnership between NZICC and Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, the tangata whenua of the land we stand upon. This is a partnership we treasure.

The translation of Te Tumu is '*the foundation*', or more literally, '*the tree stump*' (base of the tree). Te Tumu NZICC embodies the essence of foundation — a steadfast platform.

Like the tumu, the core of a tree grounding its existence, this building serves as the hub of interactions, fostering meaningful connections that reach across cultures and communities.

It is the strong, and sturdy platform where ideas flourish and relationships are formed - a reflection to the roots anchoring this vibrant meeting place.

In appreciation of this gift and partnership, we recognise and respect the following cultural guidelines, in all that we do:

- **Manaakitanga** – to encourage respect and care of people, place, and diversity, and respect for each other's roles and responsibilities;
- **Rangatiratanga** – to live and practise positive leadership;
- **Kaitiakitanga** – to look after people, lands, resources, and taonga for present and future generations; and
- **Pūataata** – to be honest, transparent, and open with each other.



Tikanga at NZICC

Guided by our Pou Tikanga

At NZICC, tikanga is woven into how we welcome, host and care for our manuhiri (guests). It is not an add-on, but a principle that shapes the experience from the moment your event begins.

Central to this is our Cultural Advisor, our Pou Tikanga. This role acts as a cultural pillar, guiding how Māori values, customs and practices are expressed with integrity across every event. It is part of what makes NZICC distinct, ensuring events held here reflect the identity and spirit of Aotearoa New Zealand in a genuine and considered way from the lens of our local iwi, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei.

For our clients, this means having expert support to navigate cultural elements with confidence. Whether you are incorporating tikanga for the first time or building on existing ideas, our Pou Tikanga provides clear, thoughtful guidance on what is appropriate and how it can be brought to life.

Equally important is the role our Pou Tikanga plays in creating a culturally safe environment. Through guidance on protocol, language, storytelling and ceremonial moments, we

help ensure all guests feel respected and at ease, particularly when engaging with Māori cultural elements.

In this role, **Te Raukura Hawke** is the Pou Tikanga for NZICC. As an uri (descendent) of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, this connection is central to upholding and sharing the stories, identity and mana of the local tangata whenua (people of the land) within each event.

He brings deep cultural knowledge, strong relationships with mana whenua (people who hold the authority over a specific territory i.e Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei hold authority over the Central Tāmaki Makaurau isthmus) and a commitment to upholding tikanga across NZICC. Working alongside your team, and connecting you with the right people, he helps shape experiences that feel seamless, respectful, and uniquely reflective of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and Aotearoa New Zealand.

From welcoming your guests, to weaving cultural narratives throughout your event, you can be confident each element is guided with care, creating a richer and more meaningful experience.



Opening with a whakatau

At NZICC, every event and gathering begins with kia ora and a whakatau – a welcome that acknowledges our guests, the land and waters of Tāmaki Makaurau, and the significance of the occasion.

A whakatau is a formal welcome used to receive guests and open events.

While it is shorter and more flexible than a pōwhiri, it carries the same intention: to ensure that guests are no longer strangers and are respectfully welcomed and comfortably settled into NZICC.

At Te Tumu, this is how our staff will greet you.

What's involved in a whakatau

A whakatau is an informal welcome to people and place. Whakatau can take place in any of our event spaces, both inside and/or outside of the venue. Our team will work with you to determine the most suitable location for your event.

The whakatau is delivered by a representative of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei as tangata whenua and custodians of the land and sea, seeking to orient visitors to the area.

As manuhiri (visitors), you are not required to provide a formal response to the whakatau; however, a response is welcome. If you are an international guest hosting an event with us, a response delivered in your native language is encouraged and welcomed.

Once the formalities conclude, the whakatau ends with a karakia used to set the intention for the gathering, encouraging key messages set out by the event or conference.



What is a pōwhiri?

A pōwhiri is a formal Māori welcoming ceremony. It acknowledges visitors, establishes relationships, and creates a shared space by removing spiritual restrictions (tapu) before moving into the purpose of the gathering.

At NZICC, pōwhiri are delivered in a way that is culturally authentic, welcoming, and appropriate for modern events, while remaining grounded in tikanga Māori (customs and protocols).

No prior knowledge of Māori culture is required to participate, as guidance is provided throughout the experience.

The elements of the ceremony can be understood as follows:

- **Whakaara** - Sounding of pūkaea/pūmoana to signal the commencement of the ceremony
- **Wero** - The warriors' display of power and authority, assessing the intentions of the visiting party
- **Karanga** - The acknowledgement of ancestors and the spiritual realm
- **Whaikōrero** - Formal oratory
- Welcome address
- **Waiata** - A song of support
- **Hongi** - Traditional Māori Greeting
- **Kai** - Shared light snack



What are the differences?

Both ceremonies are designed to bring people together and foster connection.

The most visible distinction is that pōwhiri incorporates additional ceremonial elements, such as the karanga (caller - female) and kaiwero (challenger - male).

Key differences include:

- **Formality:** Pōwhiri is highly structured and ceremonial; whakatau is more flexible and adaptable.
- **Location:** Pōwhiri traditionally takes place on a marae (traditional meeting grounds), whereas whakatau can be held in a variety of settings, including business, education, and conference environments.
- **Protocol:** Pōwhiri typically begins with a karanga (maiden call) and concludes with a hākari (feast) to lift tapu (spiritual restrictions). Whakatau may omit the karanga and allows for greater flexibility in delivery.
- **Purpose:** Both ceremonies aim to connect people; however, pōwhiri is generally reserved for more formal occasions or welcoming onto traditional land, while whakatau is well suited to welcoming guests in everyday or corporate settings.
- **Commonalities:** Both include elements such as mihi (speeches) and, at times, waiata (songs), supporting the process of connection between hosts and visitors.



Unsure which is right for your event? We're here to help.

Contact NZICC Pou Tikanga, Te Raukura Hawke

E: kiaora@nzicc.co.nz

FAQs

What is expected of me as a visitor?

- Arrive on time
- Follow guidance from the facilitator
- Remain respectful and attentive during the ceremony
- Phones on silent
- Photography only if approved beforehand

Why is this important in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Pōwhiri reflect the relationship between people and place in Aotearoa. At NZICC, we value our standing relationship with the host tribe and are guided by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, as tangata whenua and ahi kā of the central isthmus, acknowledging both the land and the people who gather upon it.

How long does a pōwhiri take?

Most pōwhiri at NZICC take 10-15 minutes, depending on what is needed or required for your event. Pōwhiri are carefully timed and integrated into the event schedule. They often enhance the experience by providing a meaningful and memorable opening.

Is the pōwhiri religious?

No. A pōwhiri is a cultural welcoming ceremony, not a religious service. While it may include spiritual elements expressed through the Māori worldview, it does not require any religious belief or participation.

Can international guests take part?

Yes - pōwhiri are especially meaningful for welcoming international visitors, especially those who speak other indigenous languages. This is a connection and sharing of culture.

What if our group includes people of different cultures or beliefs?

Pōwhiri are inclusive and designed to welcome people of all cultures. No one is excluded based on background, belief, or nationality.

Can we take photos or video?

Photography and filming must be approved in advance.

What happens after the pōwhiri?

After the pōwhiri, visitors and hosts are considered part of the same space. As such all attendees now move through to the kai (food) to share in food together following the formal welcome. This is where the event programme can begin.

Why does it say I may need to book catering and/or another room for a pōwhiri?

In Māori culture, once the pōwhiri begins we are together in a tapu (sacred) space. As such, this tapu space remains free of food and beverage (water is fine). Following pōwhiri, sharing kai (food) together, usually in a separate space, returns us to everyday life, as whānau (family). Please discuss this with your Sales Manager, Event Planner, or with our Pou Tikanga.



To plan or book a cultural element for your event, please complete the Cultural Services Request Form via the link below.

**Cultural Services
Request Form**

We will coordinate directly with Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei on your behalf.

If you are interested in additional cultural performances or experiences, we can connect you with trusted partners to discuss your requirements and associated costs.

For more information about our tikanga services, please contact us at kiaora@nzicc.co.nz.

Tāpuia tō kaupapa.
Book your cultural experience with us.



Contact our team today.

| www.nzicc.co.nz

| kiaora@nzicc.co.nz

Please note that this document should be used as a guide only. Timings and costings may vary depending on your event's specific requirements and programme.